



CHALLENGE AND CHANGE

THIS IS HOW WE DO IT

2024
THE BLAGRAVE TRUST

INTRODUCTION



The Challenge and Change Fund is designed by young changemakers for young changemakers. It funds young people directly, supporting them to create the change they want to see. It prioritises young people who are emergent and have lived experience of the injustices they are trying to change, supporting youth led collectives, social enterprises, movements and CICs across England.

The Fund is guided by the direct experiences, knowledge, insights and visions of young people who are working to create meaningful and lasting change. We invited the second cohort of Challenge and Change Partners to participate in a roundtable discussion in September 2023, at which some of them shared the lessons they have learned as they navigate changemaking in different geographical and cultural contexts, shifting political and funding landscapes and within their multiple and complex personal identities.

This Is How We Do It is a guide for young people who are challenging and changing the injustices that are affecting them and their communities. It is also a call to action to funders, youth and third sector organisations to create infrastructure that sufficiently fortifies the work of young leaders with lived experience.

In 2022, The Blagrove Trust began a process of storytelling to support Challenge and Change Partners to reflect on their journeys and learning, help them to communicate their activities and visions and build momentum in support of their work. **This Is How We Do It** was created in collaboration with Challenge and Change Partners through this process. The Trust has also published a suite of stories co-authored by the second cohort of Partners on the Blagrove website: www.blagrovetrust.org.

How did you take your lived experience and turn it into an idea and an approach for creating change?

Isabelle, Care Experienced Movement

I took a lot of my own anger that I had about my lived experience and channeled that into a bit more passion and taking that anger and making it a bit more productive so it's not just within myself.

Bethany, Bethany Tutor Talks

My lived experience has helped because when I'm working with anyone that has a similar experience to me, it helps me build a better rapport with them and helps me to understand. It's not like I'm doing something and they feel like I don't understand what they're going through. It gives me a better approach to understanding what people need support with.

Kimberly, The Social Change Atlas

I feel like my lived experience helped me by giving me a starting point. My project was focused on young people in school and I'm not in school anymore but it allowed me to think, what would I have wanted? I didn't have the language for the work I was doing to make change and, although I found there was more to learn to grow my idea and approaches to fulfilling my project, I had to start within my personal experience first and ask what was missing?"

Mark, Joyfully Different

Trial and error is the biggest thing. My road to where I got from where I started to where I am now had a few learnings and a few public learnings as well. The one thing I learned is not being fixed or attached to a particular execution of a vision because my project changed about seven times before the final version and the second thing would be adaptation.

Jemmar, The Collective Punishment Campaign

My lived experience grounded me in what was missing and what went wrong. Reflecting on how this thing should have happened or this thing should have been in place or I wish I had this other thing. What was missing and what went wrong in my experience were my two guiding principles for what I'm going to do. If I could go back in time and put everything in place, what would I do? Let's work towards that.



How important is planning?

Demetri, The Formula

For us, I'd say it's important so you don't lose sight of what you're doing. When we're researching and designing, we think about the purpose of what we're doing and then also our work is in schools and things happen and change, so it's important to have a backup plan. One of the school sessions was scheduled on a strike day and things had to get moved around but had there been no plan in the first place, trying to sort that out would have been a mess. Plans and backup plans make things run smoothly.

Rose, Care Experienced Movement

I'm neurodivergent and planning and neurodivergence don't really go together very well, however my job is to plan the movement and be in charge of organisation. As a movement in general, we spent a weekend away with our entire steering board going through our theory of change so we have long term and short term goals to try and keep on track. I would also highly recommend job sharing. Isabelle and I are both CEOs of the organisation and we try to have at least one day in the office together which makes it so much easier and it means the responsibility isn't solely on one person.

Shekeem, The Formula

Everyone's been there when someone's come in to do a session and it's been the most boring thing you've ever done and it's not engaging at all, so the planning side of things helps us to keep everything structured while also feeding off the energy of the young people and tailoring it to them.

Ava, Not a Trend

I started the organisation with a friend and she did all the operations and then she left and it moved over to me so I had to really learn how to change with the times and with new people. We had a set plan but it's changed quite drastically. With my co-founder leaving, I had to put things on pause and what I've learned from planning is that sometimes it's ok to take time out and leave the work for a bit, think about it and return to it. Planning- yes, but also adapting is important.

Mark, Joyfully Different

One of the things that helped me greatly is acting on instinct and making big decisive steps forward but it's also a balance. Sometimes you need planning so you can make use of all the resources you have at your disposal.

How do you deal with setbacks?

Chrissie Okorie

When you get funding you have a deadline so communicating with the funder that you've had a setback is important. I communicated with Blagrove and said 'this is what I've been going through' and explored if I could have an extension on my deadlines. My project is about the mental health and wellbeing of changemakers and we have to support ourselves first. For the project to get done and for me to put my all into it, I need to communicate with everyone who supports me, my funders, my partners and more.

Vinay, The QSA Space

It can be quite stressful and overwhelming but what helped us was reframing how we saw the setback and seeing it as a really good way for us to grow and learn. Whether you're putting on events and your setback is one of those or you're getting backlash on social media, the next time it happens again, you'll be in a better position to deal with it. It's really important to remember everything you've done right when something's gone wrong. We've created a folder of all the positive feedback we've got from people.

Cherif, Revoke Group

Wellbeing should be a core part of a project. In our work, we have to challenge the Home Office and their allies and you can't do that unless you're mentally and physically strong so, for us, we decided to make sure our wellbeing was part of our project. We don't need to put the project to one side to take care of ourselves. Taking care of ourselves is part of the project itself.

Bethany, Bethany Tutor Talks

One thing that solves and can prevent setbacks is communication. Lack of communication will get you in a situation where people come up with their own idea of what you mean. Having regular meet-ups with anyone you're working with can prevent and solve a lot of issues. Talking to people a bit more meant I could always come to a resolution when dealing with a setback.

How do you deal with setbacks?

Ali Mohammadi

Having confidence in myself when mentoring young people to help them gain places at university and funding for themselves. I wasn't always sure that what I'm saying to them is constructive but I'm trying to get confidence in myself and work on it.

Bronwen, LGBTQ+ group

If you're struggling, seek support. That's the biggest thing. Remember that your project doesn't define you just because you've set the projects up. Yes, you have a connection with it because you have lived experience but you are still a person and if it is affecting you that bad, you need to seek support to help it, to change it, to get better. If you have to walk away, that's ok. It's fine if things go really well and it's fine if they don't. I was expecting that, in a year, the project we run would be buzzing but we've just gone back to the drawing board again. Now I see the last year as a complete learning curve.

Ibrahim Salah

When I reflect on the first workshop I delivered, I was a bit disappointed because of the turnout and it's easy to get disheartened when you know the planning you put in but I changed my mindset to focus on the small wins and the positives that came out of the launch of the workshop because it allowed me to build traction and move in the right direction. It might not plan out the way you want it to but it's about how you react to the situation.

Adjei Sun

Something I've been doing is continuing to follow my heart, my gut and that's a process and, each time there's a setback of some sort, remembering there's a lesson learned. Following my gut doesn't mean everything's going to be perfect or romantic but it also doesn't mean that when there's a setback because I followed my gut that I shouldn't continue doing so.

How do you handle being the public face of your work?

Jemmar
Collective
Punishment
Campaign

I have to constantly consider what I'm willing to share and I was taught that the more I shared, the more I could get people to support my work. People ask very specific questions like what my Dad went to prison for and if I visit him. It's my lived experience but it also includes other people so I'm very mindful of what I share and who I share it with.

It all comes down to your self care practices. There's been times when I'm really hard on myself and I call my friend and say 'speak goodness into my life' and he, for five minutes, will sing my praises. These are things he honestly believes about me but I needed to hear that. Self care is hard to do but you can choose not to read the comments or go to your friend and say 'take my phone for the day' or decide you're not going to be on social media for a day. Treat yourself. Do something that you like. Find a fitness routine or eat a slice of chocolate cake. Self care is physical, mental, spiritual, communal: tap into what works for you.

Give yourself a pat on the back that you started something. It's going to work out. I don't know how and it might take me a minute, but it will work out.

Isabelle
Care
Experienced
Movement

I did a Channel 4 interview and got, not backlash, but not nice stuff to read. In counselling, I really broke it down and had a support system in place. When I deal with things like comments my friends roast those comments and take all the negativity and make it hilarious. As a movement, that's how we support each other because we know any media article or TV coverage is terrifying, especially when you're young.

How do you handle being the public face of your work?

Shekeem
The
Formula

When it comes to online comments, what a lot of us need to realise is when you see someone talking about something you're very in tune with and people don't agree with it, it's because they feel triggered because they're ignorant. So are you going to listen to the ignorant point of view or are you going to listen to what you know and respond to the people who actually give you constructive criticism?

Bethany
Bethany
Tutor
Talks

One of the things about sharing your face, doing events or supporting people is that safety is an issue. It's always something that I'm thinking about. Say, for example, if we have an event, I have to think about the way we show tickets and share the address, the way we can get content without showing people's faces. It's not just about my own safety.

Kimberly
The Social
Change
Atlas

It was tough working alone and lacking an organisation backing which made credibility and access to contributors a challenge. However I did find being the project's face a positive experience after persevering and creatively showcasing my ambitions. I used my LinkedIn and socials to share my experience and expertise with the organisations, schools and young people I engaged. Going forward I aim for my project to transcend me, involving others and evolving into a movement beyond one face.

Chrissie Okorie

I'm always vulnerable about my process. I tell young people that I've had so many applications rejected and they don't understand the amount of tears I've cried. I tell them I'm a freelance creative part-time and have another part time job. I haven't always been paid for my work. Just because I'm on social media, doesn't mean I'm established. I try not to live up to the image.

How do you handle being the public face of your work?

Rose
Care
Experienced
Movement

We had lots of backlash on Twitter and Blagrove had to safeguard me which was an interesting thing: being 24, a CEO and with three kids and having safeguarding put in place. I'd say make sure safeguarding policies are up to date, that you have a process, you have everyone do safeguarding training and you are trauma informed because you don't know how that's going to affect you.

Demetri
The
Formula

We go directly into schools and, when you go places in person, it allows you to leverage people's preconceptions about you. When we go to meetings, when you see us, you'll think certain things about us but when we articulate ourselves, where they think the bar is and where the bar actually is works in our favour sometimes. Being the face of the project has been beneficial.

Adjei Sun

If you're taking on too much of people's perceptions or image they have of you and then have a setback it can be harder to deal with because you're trying to live up to a certain image. For example, if you work within mental health and post things online some people might view you as being perfectly ok and knowing how to deal with things. It's important to remember that we're all people, still human.

Josh
The
Formula

Probably the best thing about working as The Formula is that we're working with kids because we have lived experience ourselves in the things we're trying to teach back to the children. The kids can relate to us and we're not the only group that comes into the school and tries to teach them, but because we're the most relatable, they want us to come back and they understand the perspective we're trying to give them.

How will you know you've been successful?

Bronwen, LGBTQ+ group

Don't just measure success as a big thing. Measure every little success. That could be a conversation you've had with someone and you got something from it. That's a success. We're in a world where you're successful if you do amazing, get the best grades or the promotion. Actually, success is if one person walks through the door or comes to your event. You'll be successful if you start. You realised there needs to be a change and you aimed for it. That's successful. Keep going.

Ali Mohammadi

Every little thing matters. In my case, it was writing the application and getting the interview to become a student, passing the interviews and going to university. When I see there's a change in somebody's life, that's a big success for me because that was the main point of doing the project. That's how you give back to society. I see that as a big success but it's good to have many small successes also.

Rose, Care Experienced Movement

It can be as simple as getting a business meeting with someone you wanted. Success can be as simple as making those connections you wanted.

Josh, The Formula

Most businesses fail in the first year so if you make it through your first year of business, that's a success. Throughout the year, we try to focus on tangible things because you don't want to delude yourself when you're really not having an impact on the community.

We ask young people after every session what they actually learned.

What did you take away and, furthermore, how do you think you could use this information and apply it in your life on a daily basis? We had to learn to brand ourselves and make a logo and where to go to make t shirts or whatever: that's all successful because now I know how to do that and I can improve on it for the next time.

Cherif, Revoke Group

Success is doing the work, having a network in our lives, a lot of people coming to us to work together. We've been doing a lot and are still doing it without stopping. That's a success.

Mark, Joyfully Different

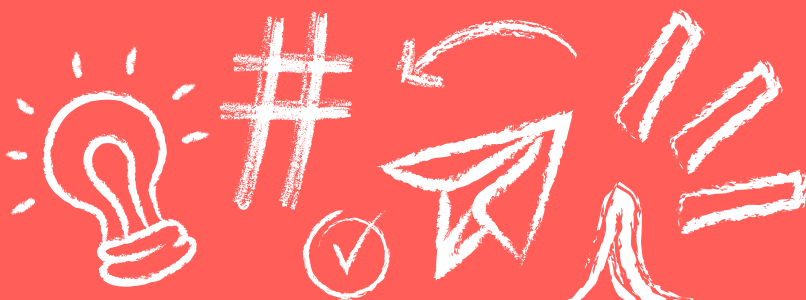
Being a little better tomorrow than you were yesterday. We attach our concept of success to tangible markers but I think it's as simple as saying 'how can I be a better person than I was yesterday?'

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