

ChangeMakers' Networks

Identifying the key people driving positive change in local areas

Summary

ChangeMakers can be defined as those individuals who are, or who could be given more support, highly effective in tackling the social, economic and environmental challenges facing society, and who are driving and achieving positive change within their own fields of interest and work. Many of these individuals occupy professional positions within public, private and third sector organisations, while others take up more informal roles as active community members who are well-known among their peers and neighbours, yet who may lie hidden under the radar to the local authority and public services. In practice, this could mean a particular police officer instrumental in tackling anti-social behaviour, an active local resident bringing estranged communities together, or a leading light in the business sector driving private investment into a local area.

Through the use of 'social network analysis', we can assist local authorities and other local stakeholders to identify the ChangeMakers present in their own local areas, and to form a variety of 'ChangeMakers' Networks' designed to fit the particular social, economic or environmental challenges of different places, whether that be anti-social behaviour, fragmented communities or low levels of economic growth. These Networks would be geared towards surfacing, connecting together and further developing the capacity of these individuals to achieve a greater impact.

Why focus on 'ChangeMakers'?

Against the backdrop of an enduring financial crisis, the majority of local authorities are being obliged to shoulder cuts in the region of 10 per cent over the next four years. Marry this with the fact that public sector productivity has fallen by an average 0.3 per cent a year between 1997 and 2008, and it becomes clear that local bodies and public services will have to change their ways of working in the years ahead and begin to experiment with more innovative practices.¹ Central to this will be adopting what the 2020 Public Services Trust has called a 'socially productive' model of public service delivery, where citizens and practitioners of all stripes are involved in 'identifying, understanding and solving public problems dynamically using all appropriate means'.²

In practice, such an approach means mobilising the latent social assets and potential of public, private and third sector networks alike, and developing a larger role for citizens to play in shaping and delivering the public services they use and the places in which they live. For local policymakers and public services, this will mean breaking down silos and encouraging greater collaboration between different sectors and between top-level management and grass-roots activists. The ability to recognise the untapped potential of individuals who are, or who could be, driving change in their work and communities is of particular importance.

¹ 2020 Public Services Trust at the RSA. *From Social Security to Social Productivity: A Vision for 2020 Public Services*. (London: 2020 PST, 2010).

² 2020 Public Services Trust. *2020 Welfare: Life, Work, Locality*. (London: 2020 PST, 2010).

These people, who we term ‘ChangeMakers’, can be defined as those who are (or who could be, given better connections and resources) highly effective in tackling the social, economic and environmental challenges facing society, and who are driving and achieving positive change within their own fields of interest and work. They exist in both a formal capacity, such as dynamic public service practitioners or local government officials, as well as an informal capacity, for instance as prominent community activists, dynamic local businessmen or knowledgeable local residents.

The potential benefits of unlocking the talents of such ChangeMakers are considerable, particularly if we consider them in network terms:

- First, because of their expert status, ChangeMakers can be valuable conduits for **transferring local information and news of opportunities**.
- Second, ChangeMakers are likely to occupy central or key positions in the structures of community networks and are therefore well placed to **‘transmit’ positive behaviours and attitudes** through their local areas and communities of practice.
- Third, ChangeMakers are likely to store **an easily accessible pool of information and expertise** relating to their fields of work and their local area, and have their finger on the pulse regarding what matters most to local people.

The box below presents the character traits of ChangeMakers, based on our experience and analysis of the capabilities that people need to help drive positive change. It is expected that different areas may slightly amend these criteria depending upon the type of challenges faced and the change required. It is also expected that not all ChangeMakers would possess every characteristic, but that all would reflect the majority of these key traits.

Box 1: ChangeMaker Characteristics	
Characteristic	Impact
Highly knowledgeable (experts and generalists)	They have expertise (enough to advise others) on specific issues, and/or they have sufficient knowledge of a variety of relevant fields, and/or are able to bring knowledge and analysis to bear on a particular situation in ways that add value to a specific issue. They can connect their knowledge to the local area.
Well-connected	They have multiple links in their areas of interest and work, both in terms of the number and diversity of contacts they have and the depth of those relationships.
Generous and open	They impart their knowledge and share their insights. They have an open approach to collaboration and work well with others.
Reliable and trustworthy	They are honest in their dealings with other people, mean what they say, are consistent in how they value and work with different groups, and can be relied upon. They have integrity and are respected.
Impactful	They apply their abilities to achieve positive change and are well-known for their persistence in making a tangible impact. They get things done.
Communicators	They are good communicators, are able to inspire and persuade, can explain clearly, and can connect to different people. They can be strong advocates for issues and/or people.
Visionary and creative	They are forward-thinking, view problems strategically and through a long-term lens, and are willing to consider using new techniques.
Facilitators	They bring and link groups of people together, particularly from different organisations, areas, issues or viewpoints. They share and pass on information and opportunities.

How are the ChangeMakers' Networks created?

ChangeMakers' Networks are groups of ChangeMakers who have been brought together to address certain economic, social or environmental issues. Each Network can be based around a particular challenge (e.g. strengthening social cohesion) or around a defined locality, whether that is an entire city or a particular neighbourhood. In order to pinpoint ChangeMakers and generate these Networks, we use a particular type of research methodology called 'social network analysis'. This process has a number of phases, outlined in the figure below.

Figure 1: Process for generating ChangeMakers' Networks

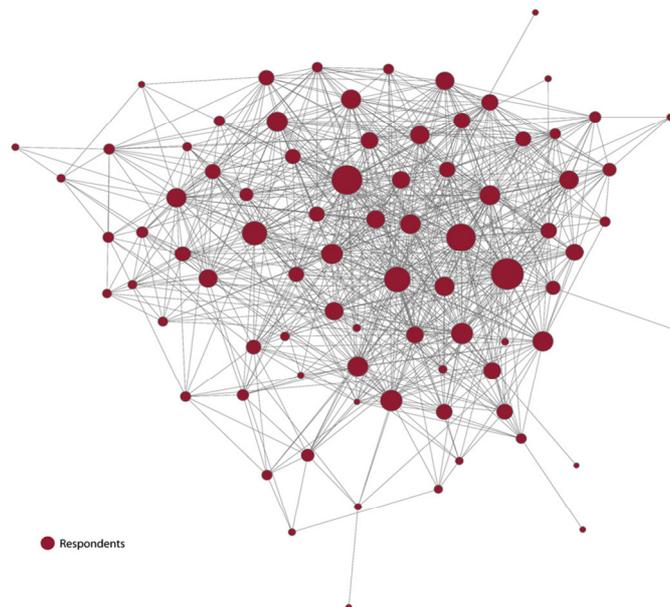


To identify ChangeMakers we use a 'snowball sampling method', whereby each initial respondent is asked to consider the given criteria for ChangeMakers and to nominate people in the area of concern who fit that definition. The people named as ChangeMakers are then contacted and in turn asked to identify any ChangeMakers who they might know. After this has continued for several iterations, an extensive master list is formed which contains all the names of these ChangeMakers. Once we have decided upon a final cohort of individuals, we then ask them to complete a more in-depth survey which assesses their capabilities for making change; their interest, expertise and influence in different local issues; and the type and strength of their connections to the other ChangeMakers in the final list.

Once these results have been analysed, the findings are circulated to all ChangeMakers who are invited to a workshop to explore the results and to co-design the ChangeMakers' Network. Workshops also explain to attendees how networks operate and how they might use this understanding to change their own practices.

Figure 2: A network map showing ChangeMakers in Peterborough

The below map illustrates the network of ChangeMakers that were identified in Peterborough.



What can ChangeMakers' Networks be used for?

ChangeMakers' Networks are a means of bringing ChangeMakers together to work towards common ends. Networks would be geared towards surfacing, connecting together and further nurturing the capacity of its members to drive positive change. In practice, this means holding regular events and providing members with the resources, training and other forms of assistance necessary for them to grow as individuals as well as to work together as a collaborative movement in a local area.

ChangeMakers' Networks would be designed to have a number of benefits both for local authorities and other local bodies, as well as for the ChangeMakers themselves:

For local bodies, the Networks would offer:

- A pool of readily accessible expertise and knowledge on particular issues or specific local areas
- A sounding board for testing new ideas and strategies
- A source of partners for joint ventures
- A conduit for spreading information and messages throughout the city

For ChangeMakers, the Networks would offer:

- A space to network and forge stronger partnerships with those from other sectors and organisations
- A space to share ideas and to receive advice from likeminded individuals
- A forum for the development of new ChangeMaker-led initiatives
- A place to hone their own skills and grow their knowledge in different areas, for example through training exercises and lectures

Networks would typically begin with a loose and informal structure and gradually grow to take on more sophisticated functions. The box below spells out a set of potential activities for Network meetings, ranging from the informal to the more complex and resource intensive.

Box 2: Potential activities for the ChangeMakers' Networks	
Activity	Event Description
Informal networking	Informal opportunities for ChangeMakers to get to know one another, form connections, exchange contact details and hear about the initiatives that other ChangeMakers in different fields/sectors/positions are working on.
Pitching ideas and sharing advice internally	Semi-structured events where ChangeMakers can pitch ideas for new projects or talk about particular challenges they are trying to overcome, and to receive advice/feedback from other likeminded individuals in the group.
Supporting external projects	Non-ChangeMakers are invited to talk about their projects and to receive advice, ideas and other forms of support from ChangeMakers in the group.
Training sessions	Events that are geared towards providing ChangeMakers with relevant training that will help to increase the impact of their work. Training exercises could cover the likes of project management, fundraising, events organisation, business management and effective use of social media.
Lectures and special guests	Meetings where external individuals and organisations are invited to talk about innovative and inspiring initiatives taking place outside of the local area. For example, this could be a particular award-winning social entrepreneur or a public service organisation pursuing a radical new model of delivery.

Supporting local bodies on new and existing initiatives	Events where ChangeMakers come together with the local authority and other local bodies to support them on a particular piece of work. For instance, this might involve discussing and providing feedback on certain strategic plans, or working directly with the Council on a practical project.
Initiating new ChangeMaker-led projects	Events where ChangeMakers come together to design, develop and deliver new projects which they themselves take ownership of.

Box 3: Piloting the ChangeMakers approach in Peterborough

As part of the RSA's Citizen Power programme in Peterborough, we sought to develop and pilot the innovative ChangeMakers identification process. Like many local areas, Peterborough is facing something of a mountain to climb when it comes to meeting its share of public sector cuts. Yet unlike many others, the city is doing so at a time of considerable social flux, with a population that is set to rise by over 20 per cent by 2021.³ Tapping into and 'weaving' together the assets of key individuals already making headway in Peterborough was seen as critical to helping the city achieve its strategic ambitions, for instance in tackling anti-social behaviour, becoming the environmental capital of the UK and promoting job creation and skills development.

Therefore during the summer of 2011, we attempted to use our ChangeMakers method to identify and map the key individuals who are driving positive change across the city. In total we identified nearly 250 unique ChangeMakers in Peterborough, spanning all sectors and operating in various different positions within their organisations. Among the individuals we identified were members of the clergy, artists, head teachers, entrepreneurs, housing officers, charity workers, police officers, members of the local chamber of commerce, representatives from the local PCT, businessmen and everyday council officers. Of those who answered our more detailed survey, our findings show that they are rooted in their communities, hold an impressive repertoire of capabilities, and have an appetite to apply those abilities to address local issues.

Building on the work of our pilot initiative in Peterborough, we intend to establish a self-sufficient ChangeMakers' Network in the city, made up of all those individuals identified through our research. Our task in 2012 will be to ensure that this Network has the right foundations and a stimulating, supportive environment in which to flourish.

³ Peterborough City Council. [Briefing paper] *Peterborough Facts and Figures: Population and Dwelling Forecasts* (PCC, October 2008).

Tailoring the approach

The RSA has extensive expertise in social network analysis and is at the forefront of delivering innovative projects that are improving public service delivery and place-shaping throughout the UK. By drawing upon our existing insights and the experience of our work in Peterborough, we can help local areas harness the potential of their ChangeMakers as they attempt to realise their own ambitions, whether that be improving levels of public health, increasing levels of community cohesion and participation, or developing a more resilient local economy.

Each approach is tailored to specific needs and the local context, and can be delivered at varying degrees of depth and detail. We recommend discussing which approach best fits local circumstances, but as a guide we have laid out broad options below (see Box 4). Packages should be treated as a guide only and should be discussed further.

Box 4: Research packages and costings
<p>Light-touch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ChangeMaker criteria ready defined• Use existing (off the shelf) survey instruments• Rapid rate of research and analysis• Report detailing recommendations• ChangeMakers workshop to replay findings and introduce network learning and practice
<p>In-depth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ChangeMaker criteria and surveys designed with local stakeholders• Increased number of survey 'waves' to build up a larger and more diverse list of ChangeMakers• Report detailing recommendations• ChangeMakers workshop to replay findings and introduce network learning and practice, and co-design responses• Follow-up events for ChangeMakers' Network
<p>Comprehensive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ChangeMaker criteria and surveys designed with local stakeholders• Substantial number of survey 'waves'• Face-to-face interviews and analysis with ChangeMakers• Report detailing recommendations, along with step-by-step process for enacting these• Network maps and ChangeMakers workshop to replay findings, introduce network learning and practice, and co-design responses• Extensive number of follow-up events for ChangeMakers' Network• RSA Fellowship services for the Network (for example, signing ChangeMakers up to the RSA Skills Bank)

To hear more about our method or to discuss options for forming a ChangeMakers' Network in your own area, please contact Benedict Dellot at benedict.dellot@rsa.org.uk or on +44 (0)20 7451 6836.