Towards more sustainable Community Organisations for Older People

Working paper 114

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Abstract

Over the last forty years sustainability theory has been developed as a tool for assessing the health and viability of businesses, communities and organisations (McKenzie 2004). This paper will review emerging concepts of sustainability in the context of small community organisations that provide services to older people. It will identify the measurements and indicators that can be used to assess sustainability in this sector. The second part of the paper will consider several case studies of community organisations for older people in Australia and the United Kingdom. The paper will identify sustainability issues that impact on the operational and long term outcomes of these organisations. The final part of the paper will highlight areas of good practice that allow community based organisations to remain sustainable.

Introduction

In Australia and the United Kingdom services for older people are often provided by small community based organisations. Many have been created as a direct response to an unmet need in a particular community. In the last twenty years these services have become more specialised as they respond to increased demands from a diverse population that is living longer and wishes to remain independent. Organisations such as Seniors Computer groups, Home and Gardening Maintenance Services and Men's Shed programs have been developed in both Australia and the United Kingdom (AMSA 2010; Care and Repair England 2006).

Research has indicated that the sustainability of smaller community organisations will be vital for older people in the community as they provide a range of opportunities for engagement and support (WACOSS 2010; Productivity Commission 2011). While Governments promote concepts such as 'Ageing in Place, and Healthy Ageing' the relationship between different levels of government and small community organisations that provide services to older people often appears to be tenuous and contradictory. Governments are increasingly placing a much greater emphasis on efficiency and accountability on Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) but many small community based organisations are becoming more dependent on small annual grants that necessitate significant time spent on reporting and complying with standards (Productivity Commission 2011). Many community organisations rely on volunteers who fill key service delivery and management roles as well as being 'housed' in subsidised rental premises (Shergold 2008; NSROC 2013). If these circumstances were to change due to social and economic challenges the future sustainability of many of these small community organisations will be undermined (Shergold 2008).

Sustainability as a concept

The concept of sustainability was developed in the late sixties as an environmental term. Over time the concept has been broadened to include economic, social and corporate sustainability (McKenzie 2004). Terms such as the triple bottom line and sustainable development are now widely used in the private and community sector. Sustainable development is understood as being development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987). This definition has been contested on the ground that it allows major developers to do what they want now and pay lip service to future generations. Jacobs (1999)

argues that sustainable development can be divided into egalitarian and non-egalitarian sustainable development. The major differences being that equalitarian sustainable development puts an emphasis on economic redistribution in favour of poorer countries and social development of marginalised communities. Ife (2003) sees sustainability as a process. He argues that all organisations need to be evaluated not only in terms of their immediate role but also in terms of their long term viability, the energy they consume relative to outputs and their relationships with other organisations. De Vita and Fleming (2001) suggest that sustainable development is about managing change and not having a focus on the end goal and fixed outcomes.

More recently a 'brown agenda' has been developed which argues that environmental sustainability must go hand in hand in with both economic and social sustainability to be successful. McKenzie (2004) notes that recognition of the economic and social sustainability does not ensure that equal weighting will be given to the different issues identified in these areas.

Economic sustainability is often used in a global context but can also be applied to individual companies and organisations. According to Doane and MacGillivray (2001) economic sustainability is 'the business of staying in business'. They argue that economic sustainability can be measured by 8 key impacts including: profit, human capital, investment, employment, community development, procurement, goods produced and public policy. Like the concept of sustainable development with this definition there is limited relevance to small community organisations. This is not the view of the American Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC). The institute defines economic sustainability in terms that are applicable to small communities. The focus of the Institute is on promoting local economic activity, meaningful employment for local people, maximization of local ownership of business, and a diverse, viable economic base (ISC 1997).

In the context of smaller community based organisations economic sustainability is often broken down into particular areas of interest. In a study of Lunch Clubs in North East Wales, *Age Concern* focused on operational and financial sustainability (Spencer 2011). Operational sustainability was defined as the planning, networking level of activities, support and recruitment. Financial sustainability included the management of existing finances, level of financial support and ability to gain resources from different sources. The *Age Concern* research also focused on different models of community organisation e.g. those that undertook self-catering and the level of self-funding.

Social sustainability is much harder to quantify according to McKenzie (2004). He argues that any indicators or measures are often developed within the context of the organisation or local community being studied and so its usefulness to comparative study is limited or questionable. He also suggests that in most instances local communities and organisations are often working towards achieving a certain level of social sustainability rather than an end goal. However, Mckenzie (2004) claims social sustainability is a positive condition and process within communities.

Mckenzie (2004) identified a number of indicators that could be used to assess social sustainability, including: equity of access, equity between generations, sense of community ownership, positive cultural relations in which positive aspects of disparate cultures are valued and protected, a system for transmitting awareness from one generation to the next,

wide spread participation, mechanisms for a community to meet is own needs and mechanisms for political advocacy.

The Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS 2010) model of social sustainability for community organisations is based on five similar principles: equity, diversity, Interconnectedness quality of life, democracy and governance. This model was designed for people working in marginalised and low income public housing communities. Intergenerational relationships are viewed as very important to ensure on going sustainability (Biggs and Lowenstein 2011). This view is supported by DeVita and Fleming (2001) who suggest that leadership mentoring the next generation as an essential element of the social sustainability process for small community based organisations.

Indicators of sustainability for small community organisations.

Sustainability indicators have been developed to cover all areas activity and for many different purposes. In some cases they can be used to justify funding and resource allocation, or as a tool for social planning and community needs analysis. Bell and Morse (2011) argue that policy makers need to be aware that not all sustainability indicators carry equal weight, and economic indicators tend to dominate discussions and analysis. Policy makers also need to take into account the type of community or organisation in which indicators are to be applied. For example a rural, urban or suburban setting can provide very different responses (Pepperdine 1998)

The sustainability indicators used by some Local Governments in Australia provide a useful example of indicators that cover most areas of sustainability, and they can also be applied to smaller organisations. Edwards and Ingvarson (2013) researched responses from different local governments in Victoria and identified key indicators for measuring different areas of sustainability; such as the numbers of local of volunteers, level of local procurement, self-financing ability and use of sustainable energy and transport. When applied to smaller organisations the economic wellbeing translates into financial income and level of independent income generated. While in the UK the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in their most recent strategic plan identified sustainability indicators for their organisation and small voluntary organisations as being financially independent, celebrating volunteers, creating a learning environment, engaging membership, encouraging wider involvement of volunteers and reducing the carbon footprint (NCVO 2014).

Research Methodology

While the concept of sustainability is problematic because it relates too many different conditions and circumstances, the main purpose of this research was to assess how it could relate and be usefully employed to guide small community organisations providing services to older people. Relating concepts of sustainability to smaller organisations was the key challenge in developing the paper. The findings of WACOSS (2010) and the Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute (2012) were relevant as they both examined the application of sustainability concepts to smaller organisations. The indicators for sustainable 'ageing in place' were also relevant in terms of the use of volunteers, public transport and community centres (Stanford 2013). Based on the areas identified and indicators employed in their research, nine key areas of sustainability were identified as suitable indicators for small

community organisations. Informed discussions with community service providers and aged service workers also assisted with selecting the sustainability indicators.

Several small community based organisations that are providing services and activities to older people are investigated. For the purposes of the research 'small' community based organisations were defined by the fact that they relied mainly or solely on volunteers and were not of a size to have a dedicated performance management section (Jones 2012) rather than by the number of staff. In some instances organisations were small enough to be considered but were part of larger national network on a regional or national basis. Information was obtained from organisational web sites and a number of services visit. A series of semi structured interviews was also undertaken with staff and volunteers from each organisation.

To provide comparative analysis of different support and resourcing systems one area of Australia and one area in the UK were selected for further research. In Australia the case studies were taken from the local government areas (LGA) of North Sydney/Lower North Shore. The population of the Lower North Shore which is covered by four small local authorities is 192,000 (ABS 2011). In the UK the Bath and North Somerset local government area (LGA) has a population of 176,000 (UK Census 2011). While both areas have a similar size of population, higher than average property prices and higher rents, they are both classified as mainly urban, one notable difference is that North East Somerset has a higher percentage of older people aged 60+ at nearly 23% of the population (UK Census 2011) compared to the North Sydney/Lower North Shore which has only 18.6% of the total population (ABS 2011).

In North Sydney/Lower North Shore LGA there are 8 organisations that were identified as being small and having limited funding to provide services and activities for older people (See Table 1). Of these organisations four had been developed in the past twenty years. Three organisations received State Government funding to provide services to older people. The other community organisations provided mainly social activities, except the Greenway Tenants Group which provides both activities and support services (see appendix).

In Bath and North East Somerset a similar number of small organisations providing services to older people were identified. Three of these organisations received significant funding from government and employed full time staff. Two other organisations were founded within the past ten years to meet emerging needs in the local community (see appendix). Three organisations were selected from the two research areas and assessed against the sustainable indicators (where applicable).

Table 1: Examples of key sustainability indicators selected as suitable for small community organisations providing services and activities for older people.

Indicator and area of sustainability	Measures	Issues to be explored in further detail
1.**Sustainable transport is used and promoted** Environmental /Social	Organisation promotes the use of use of sustainability transport.	Proximately and use of Public and community transport
2.**Energy and recycling is promoted** Environmental Economic	Organisation promotes and supports use of sustainable energy systems and recycling. Organisation supports social procurement of products its uses and sales.	Alternative energy use Recycling activities
3.**Contribution and value of volunteers is recognised by the organisation** Social	Adequate levels of recruitment and support of volunteers Volunteer recognition events	Adequate numbers of volunteer Training and resourcing Qualifications and experience
4.**Access and inclusion is promoted** Economic/Social	Membership of the organisation reflects the diversity of the local community Premise and activities are accessible for people with limited mobility Membership is affordable for the service users and Membership levels maintained increasing	Strategies employed to engage the local community Accessibility
5.**Accountable and effective business operations** Economic/Social	Corporate Governance is effective and appropriate for the organisation. Effective use of technology.	Board membership Qualifications and experience Legal structure
6. **Independent income is generated** Economic	Percentage of independent income generated Diversity of income sources	Level of independent income Diversity of income.
7. **Employment opportunities are created**	Employment opportunities for older people created	`Employment of older people Including part time

Economic /Social		
8 Resource sharing is promoted Environmental/ Economic	Opportunities for resource sharing with other community organisations are created Opportunities for Intergenerational relationships	What resources are shared or jointly owned with other organisations /age groups
9.Participation and empowerment is encouraged Economic/Social	Activity/Service organised as a social enterprise Service users involved with management of the service.	Does this provide for more opportunities for older people? How does it improve wellbeing for older people?

Case studies

In North Sydney/Lower North Shore three organisations were selected for the study reflecting the range of activities, diversity and size of organisations providing services to older people. The Greenway Tenants Group (GTG) while not specifically intended for older people was selected as it predominately serviced older people and was a relative new organisation. The Neutral Bay Seniors (NBS) were selected as they were well established and had been through a serious of changes over the years. The third group, Lower North Shore Community Transport (LNSCT) was selected as it was bigger in size, serviced more people and received funding from two different levels of government. As an organisation it was facing significant changes to funding and service operations. In Bath and North East Somerset the three community organisations selected for assessment against the sustainability indicators were selected as they reflect three different service types with different levels of funding and resourcing. The smallest group which was the Bath Ethnic Minority Seniors Citizens Association (BEMSCA) was selected because it had recently experienced funding cuts and was in the process of developing a Social Enterprise. Age UK Bath was chosen as it was involved in the provision of multiple community services, such as luncheon club, day centre, community well-being and information provision. Bath Community Transport was selected as it was membership owned and could be compared to Community Transport in North Sydney/Lower North Shore.

Greenway Tenants Group (GTG)

The GTG provides activities, services and support to social housing tenants in the Greenway estate. The present group was founded in 1998. It is estimated that there are about 400 residents living in Greenway of which 75% would be aged 60+ (Greenway 2013).

The GTG is provided with an office and community room on the estate by NSW Housing. Electricity and the phone line are also provided by NSW Housing. The GTG is managed by a committee of nine volunteers elected on an annual basis as required under the rules of

incorporation. Activities involve 20-30 volunteers from the housing estate. The group is supported by small grants/subsidies provided by the North Sydney Council and goods in kind from other organisations. Annual funding grants and income normally amounts to less than $10,000. Independent fund rising would account for approximately 20-25% of the total budget. In 2013 the GTG successfully submitted for an open space improvement grant of $30,000 from the New South Wales (NSW) State government. The first time the group had received significant funding. The GTG has also developed some successful partnerships with the private sector in terms of landscaping and assistance with computers.

The major sustainability issues facing the group are maintaining, supporting and increasing the levels of volunteers, engaging the 25% of residents who are Chinese speaking, providing support and information to frail aged residents, increasing the level of income by fund raising and dealing with corporate responsibilities, such as reporting and insurance. The GTG also has to maintain computers and other items of technology.

Neutral Bay Seniors

The Neutral Bay Seniors have existed in one form or another since the Second World War. In the last 15 years their activities have changed to meet the increased level of interest in computers, new technology and social media. The NBS has a membership of 100+ and has rooms in a community centre provided by North Sydney Council who also pay for their electricity and the internet connection. The centre is located on a major bus route with a very frequent service. Independent income is generated from fund rising, sales of tea and coffee, computer lessons and is estimated to be approximately 30-40% of total income. The annual membership fee is only $10 per year. North Sydney Council also provides small community grants for specific items or activities. The Club is incorporated and is run by a committee of 7-10 volunteers who are elected on an annual basis. The sustainability issues facing the groups include; maintaining volunteer levels, providing for people from diverse backgrounds, maintaining technology and effective corporate governance.

Lower North Shore Community Transport

Lower North Shore Community Transport (LNSCT) was founded in 1993 and is the major provider of Community Transport in the area. It employs five people in the office to coordinate operations and a number of part time drivers. It is predominately funded by the Australian Federal Government under community aged care funding and also by North Sydney Council to who it is contracted to run some local Council bus services. Income amounts to over a million dollars per year of which about 15% is independently raised via fares and membership. The office is leased from the Crow's Nest Community Centre with whom they are co-located. LNSCT has become is a good source of employment for older workers as part time community transport drivers. All services are promoted in at least three community languages other than English. Major sustainability issues include: the future of funding to the organisation as individual payments are introduced, the abolishment of community transport districts and increased competition from other Community Transport operators.

Bath Ethnic Minority Seniors Citizens Association

Bath Ethnic Minority Seniors Citizens Association (BEMSCA) was the smallest of the three organisations in the Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES) area and has been in existence for over twenty years. It association's major purpose is to provide centre based activities, services to older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD). The main activities include cultural celebrations and community gardening for production of food for the centre. Staff from BEMSCA undertake home visits to support people unable to access the centre. The centre is also managed by a volunteer management committee. Based in the former home of HIM Haile Selassie the association operates as a culture centre and sacred site for the Ethiopian and Rastafarian communities.

Funding (£40,000) for the centre staff is provided by Bath and North East Somerset Council. The building is also owned and maintained by the Council. Independent income for the organisation is collected from membership fees, a fee for service (10 pounds a day) and donations. Recent budget cuts have seen a reduction in staffing to 8 mainly part time staff. The centre does have some volunteers and encourages the participation of schools and younger people to join in and run programs. Bath Community Transport provides vehicles for participants to get to the centre and for day trips away.

The major sustainability issues for the organisation are securing ongoing funding, ongoing building maintenance, and recruitment of volunteers. BEMSCA is developing a Social Enterprise community care model to allow a fee for services approach to people who are on individual payments and living at home. The Social Enterprise model will also allow for a visitors centre with café and meeting rooms for hire. BEMSCA is working with other groups to form a community trust to take control and ownership of the building from the local Council (BANES).

Age UK BANES day centres and activity programs

Age UK BANES provides a number of services across the BANES area. It is part of a national network of Age UK organisations that share training and some resources. Age UK BANES is an independent charity and funds its local services from council grants, fund raising and service fees. The National organisation also supports it activities by selling insurance and other products as part of its enterprise division and brand. The local council provides buildings for its day centre centres /lunch clubs. The organisation has 11 staff that are full or part time, and manages 160 volunteers to provide services spread across a range of centres.

The parent (BANES) organisation is run by a board of Trustees who are volunteers. It employs specialist senior management including a Chief Executive to coordinate key activities such as fund raising, information management and community development. Each community day centre has a paid manager or staff member to support volunteers and organise activities. The community centres and Age UK programs to make use of local community transport providers and enable residents to attend the day centres.

Age UK BANES has a very effective marketing strategy as it uses social media to inform people about services and fund raising. They provide a monthly newsletter for supporters and fund raisers. They provide training and support to volunteers who undertake work within the organisations. They also hold recognition events to highlight the work of volunteers.

Sustainability issues for the organisation include maintaining levels of financial support, the cost of service provision, the recruitment of volunteers and the engagement of older people in rural areas of BANES.

Bath Community Transport
Bath Community Transport provides services to people with disabilities and older people in the BANES area. It operates a 7 day service with seven buses. There are three members of staff but all the bus drivers are volunteers. Individual transport for people to attend appointments is not provided. The organisation is based in the local hospital grounds and the office is leased from the health authority at a peppercorn rent.

The organisation is owned by its members who are made up of 127 organisations and individuals from the organisation are invited to stand for election on the board of management that meets quarterly. BANES council provides grant that makes up 40% of income and 60% is raised by service fees and fares. The buses are serviced and maintained by BANES Council at cost. Some of the driver accreditation training is also provided by the Council.

Extensive research and consultation has taken place regarding the make, economy and performance of buses. Major sustainability issues for the organisation are the level of parking availability for the buses, the size and ongoing availability of premises, support and resourcing of volunteers.

Key Results
Contact and visits to the six case study organisations produced a number of key findings that provide some insight into sustainability, and a better understanding of the concept in small community organisations. In all six organisations there were three clear sustainability issues that were evident. The most significant issue was the ongoing recruitment and support of volunteers. In half of the organisations volunteers were supported with bus fares, food or expenses. Four of the organisations also held recognition events to celebrate the contribution of volunteers. There was general recognition that the ongoing recruitment and support of volunteers was essential to the survival of the organisation. This included the use of volunteers with financial and legal expertise on management committees. On four of the management committees services users were represented.

Local Authority support in respect of grants, donations and building use was evident in all the organisations. This was also recognised as an essential feature for the ongoing financial sustainability of the organisation. At the same time all organisations recognised the need for diverse sources of income and resources. All organisations had varying levels of independent income. Overall the UK organisations had higher levels of independent income. The independent income levels ranged from 60% to 15% as estimated by the organisations. Resource sharing with other organisations was also identified by four organisations.

In all the interviews with the organisations there was little interest or awareness of environmental sustainability issues such as renewable energy systems. However, this can be partly explained by the fact that in five of the organisations the energy bills were paid by a third party. Two organisations did provide for community gardening and some recycling activities. All the organisations were located near public transport and made use of local

community transport services. The organisations all reported positive relationships with other community based organisations and were prepared to resource share and enter into resource sharing arrangements. However, there was limited understanding of social procurement for the benefit of the local community. The only instance being the purchase of vehicle servicing from the local council to maintain and support local employment and services. While there was no specific employment opportunities for older people one organisation was in the process of developing a community care company as a social enterprise to increase income and provide a community care service to older people on individual payments who were living in the community.

Intergenerational activities were promoted in three organisations, often as a response to an unmet need in the organisation. The general response to promoting and hosting intergenerational activities was positive. All of the organisations were accessible to people with limited mobility. Information about the service was provided in languages other than English in four of the organisations. The other two organisations relied on allied organisations to promote their services in different languages. Attitudes to the use of social media as a marketing tool were positive and five organisations made use of a web site to provide information about their services and activities. Two of the organisations made use of *Facebook* and *Twitter* to promote their services. Information for people with vision impairment was limited to publications in large print and braille signage. In general there was a reliance on other organisations to provide this information.

Discussion

This research project into the sustainability of small community organisations providing services and activities for older people in Australia and the UK identified several issues and areas for further research. The use of indicators to measure sustainability in small community organisations is intended to provide a frame work to gain insight into what issues organisations face when providing services and activities to older people. Using a bigger sample would provide further information about the understanding of sustainability in the community sector and the issues that they face. In some instances the use of sustainability indicators could be verified by official reports such as audits, financial accounts, annual reports and membership lists. In this research these items were not requested as there was sufficient information provided during interviews and available on the websites. From discussions with small community organisations it is evident that indicators of sustainability need to be meaningful and relevant. There use as standalone tool of measurement when combined with informal and semi structured interviews provide a useful picture of the sustainability issues that small community organisation services for older people face.

The comparative study did not reveal many differences between Australia and the UK. Initially it was felt that there may be some important differences because of the widespread availability of individualised payments for services in the UK. All organisations had some access to government funding and support. Overall the community organisations from the UK had higher levels of independent income. One organisation was preparing to develop a community interest company so that it could provide 'fee for services' to people on individual payments living in the community. It is evident from the research that most community organisations place great importance on the role of volunteers to provide services

and activities to older people. With changes to the retirement age and levels of retirement income, more people in the active older age group who would have normally volunteered after retirement many now remain or re-join the workforce. Some organisations may need to reconsider consider how they can recruit and support volunteers in their organisation. In some instances this may involve becoming a social enterprise and paying part time wages to people who would have normally become volunteers. A comparison with organisations that were already operating as social enterprises would be an interesting topic for further research. This research clearly indicates that most small community organisations rely on Local Government and State Governments for grants and donations to remain financial sustainable. According to Smedley (2014) organisations that rely on volunteers and government grants need to be forming partnerships with other organisations and with the private sector to increase funding. Resource sharing with other small community organisations would be a more attractive option rather than a merger and loss of identity in a particular community or location.

It was not surprising that organisations did not consider the cost of energy to be an important issue in discussions on sustainability, as most community organisations do not pay for electricity as their energy costs are normally included in the overall rent. If these arrangements changed small community organisations could be faced with major cost increases. Power saving and energy audits would be a worthwhile further investigation for small organisations. In most instances sustainable transport options were accepted as the preferred means of transport to activities and programs.

The research did not gain much insight in to how small community organisations comply with corporate governance and reporting requirements. This was surprising as such activities can be demanding on the time of staff and volunteer management committees (Age Concern 2011). Resourcing for service information and marketing was also an area where small community organisations were able to commit resources. All but one of the organisations had a website and four provided information in language's other than English. While this issue was not considered as important as other sustainability issues it was recognised that engagement with the local community using all forms of media could be vital to secure future resources and volunteers.

Towards a Best Practice Model

The final aspect of the research was to highlight a best practice model that encompassed many of the indicators of sustainability highlighted in the research. With regard to the case studies the model being developed by the BEMSCA as a social enterprise is worth further consideration. Briefly summarised the concept was to develop a social enterprise community care company alongside the traditional seniors club. This would allow the BEMSCA to maintain contact with their members when they were no longer able to attend the day centre. It would also allow for appropriate cultural support and inclusion to continue. Financial sustainability would also be maintained as the services would target people who were on individualised payments so that a fee for domestic and person care could be applied.

The "Village" model is an American concept based in clearly defined local communities providing activities and programs for people to age in place. The organisation is run and partly funded by the membership. There are over 50 village models that remain active in the

USA (Scharlach, Graham and Lehnning, 2011). Membership fees varied between $40 and $900 American dollars depending on the level of activity, programs on offer and willingness of the membership. The Village model also utilises donations and Government funding. An interesting feature of the model was the use of the exchange system where bartering of different skills was encouraged. The research by Scharlach, Graham and Lehnning (2011) does raise some questions about the long term sustainability of the Villages with regard to their inclusion of people with limited income, the level of cultural diversity and the ability to maintain membership levels over the long term.

Age UK provides a good example of a top down approach to sustaining small community organisations. As a national secular network of local organisations providing programs and activities to older people, it promotes its name as 'brand' and has a successful record in rising money via charitable donations and enterprise activities such as the on selling of discount Insurance to older people. This model promotes resource sharing and small activities as part of the organisation such as luncheon clubs are provided with training and resources to assist with their long term sustainability.

Sustainable Resource Organisations to support small community organisations in a given area have been developed in both Australia and the United Kingdom. In Sydney the Social Enterprise Resource Organisation (Sydney Social Enterprise) assists people in Western Sydney to set up and develop social enterprise organisations. It major role is to provide training sessions in business development, applying for funding and the running of a small enterprise. In the United Kingdom organisations such as the Manchester based Creating Sustainable Organisations (CSO) Community Interest Company has a focus on assisting community organisations in the Greater Manchester area to remain sustainable. Its role includes looking at the environmental financial and organisational sustainability of organisations. For small organisations with limited funds they assist with funding submissions, income diversification plans and volunteer recruitment. They are support by donations and some grants from Local Authorities.

Conclusion

Sustainability has developed as a concept not just in terms of how it is defined but also where it can be applied. Due to increasing competition and demand for limited resources its application as a tool for assessing small community organisations and providing services to older people is important to secure on going funding and support from governments. More importantly a sustainability assessment plan can also be used to assess the degree of independence and self-sufficiency of an organisation and help organisations to plan for service continuity if circumstances change. Measuring the sustainability of an organisation can be done in several ways but the use of an indicator framework provides a useful method for initial assessment.

The limited results indicate that small community organisations do have a number of issues that could impact on their long term sustainability. Recruiting and retaining volunteers seems to be important issues for organisations who rely on their contributions to provide services, activities or participation in the management committee. The future resourcing and support of volunteers will be crucial for ongoing sustainability. A good working relationship with local government seems to be crucial for most small community organisation for grants

donations and the subsidized use of premises. I t was not surprising that most organisations seemed to have little interest in renewable energy programs when power bills were included in the rent or paid for by local governments. If organisations were faced with power tariffs at market rates this would impact upon the long sustainability of the organisation

 Most community organisations were open to being involved in intergenerational activities and in some situations this was actively encouraged.   Overall, engagement and communication via the internet was largely taken for granted as something that every organisation undertook. The effectiveness of communication and marketing via the internet could be worth further research.

Community and public transport was well utilised by all the community organisations. The two Community Transport providers in the study reported high demand for their services. One of the issues for both community transport providers was being able to secure future parking for their buses. In terms of models of best practice one organisation was in the process of developing a social enterprise model to provide independent income and employment opportunities. In the UK Community Interest Companies (CICs) seemed to be well developed in the community sector. There were also CICs to assist with the resourcing and sustainability planning for small organisations proving services to older people.   Age UK provides a useful example of the support provided to smaller organisations via training and resourcing with a national structure and brand name.

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http://www. willoughby.nsw.gov.au//constant companion 2008

www.wavertonhub.com.au

www.handyhelp.org.uk

www.bathnes.gov.uk

www.bemsca.com

www.ageukbanes.co.uk

www.sydneysocialenterprise.com

http;//cso-cic.org.uk/

Appendix

Table 2: Examples of small organisations that provide services for older people in North Sydney/Lower North Shore.

Organisation/Activity	Funded and resourced by	Numbers of employees/volunteers
Waverton Hub: Founded 2011 Information , activity and Exercise group For healthy ageing (www.wavertonhub.com.au)	Membership Fees Small grants Fund rising	10 Volunteers
Constant Companion Alarm and assistance service Lower North Shore (www willoughby.nsw.gov.au 2008)	Service fees State government Local government funding	2 employees
Lower North Shore Home Modification and Maintenance service Founded Pre 1998 (www.lanecovenorthside.com.au/homemaintenance	State government funding Fees and Donations Co located	5 employees
Men's Sheds x 4 Founded 2005 www.northsydney council/community services/ mens shed.	Council grant Volunteers Membership fees	6 Volunteers (Average 2005 Each council area has a Men's shed
U3A Education Founded pre 1998	Fees Grants	Volunteers
Neutral Bay Seniors Community Centre Seniors computers and activities Founded 1945 www.northsydney council/community services/	Membership Council grants Fees Donations	10 Volunteers
Lower North Shore Community Transport http://lnsct.org.au/content/home	North Sydney Council grant State Government grants Fares Sponsorship	5 full time staff Part time paid and volunteeed drivers and assistants
Greenway Tenants Group 1998 Founded 1998 in the latest form (Greenway Booklet *Celebrating our home* GTG and Crows Nest Centre 2012)	Fund rising Small grants Refreshment sales	12 Volunteers This housing estate is made up of 75%of people who are aged

		60+

Table 3: Examples of small community organisations providing services to older people in Bath and North East Somerset.

Organisation/Activity	Funded/resourced by	Number of employees/volunteers
The handy help Company www.handyhelp.org.uk	Fees Donations	Long term unemployed Handyman service Social enterprise
Bath Mind for older people www.bathmind.org.uk/volunteering	Fund rising Part of a larger organisation	Paid workers and volunteers
Community alarm Scheme www.bathnes.gov.uk	Fees Grants	Council and private providers
Home share West Homesharewest.org	Fees Donations Grants	Paid staff
Age UK Luncheon clubs (several) Carers centre Advocacy	Fund rising Fees Memberships	Paid staff Volunteers
Retired Seniors Volunteers www.csv.org.uk	Donations Grants	Volunteers
Bath Community Transport www.bathnes.gov.uk/services Bathford link 07870 666582	Council Fund rising Fares Donations	3 Paid staff Volunteer drivers.
Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizen Association. www.bemscsa.com	Membership Grants Donations	Some paid staff/ volunteers Developing a Social enterprise model

Questions for organisations

(1) Does the organisation support/promote the use of sustainable transport?

Examples:

- Pay bus fares for volunteers
- Located near public transport
- Utilise community transport
- Other activity

(2) Does the organisation promote sustainable energy use?

Example use of Solar Panels

(3) Does the organisation promote recycling?

(4) Does the organisation attract adequate levels of Volunteers?

(5) How does the organisation support its Volunteers?

(6) Does the organisation have accessible premises for people with limited mobility?

(7) Does the organisation promote its activities in other community languages?

(8) Does the organisation ensure that membership is affordable for everyone?

(9) Does the board have the qualifications and experience to govern/manage the organisation?

(10) What is the level/percentage of independent income generated by fundraising/ service fees/membership sponsorship?

(11) Does the organisation provide any employment opportunities for older people?

(12) Does the organisation resource share with other organisations?

(13) Does the organisation allow for members to participate in the management/running of the organisation Example Social Enterprise?

(14) In the last five years has the organisation increased or decreased its membership.