

Evaluation of CANDL

Church and Neighbourhood Development in London

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Section 1: Introduction

CANDL (Church and Neighbourhood Development in London) is a community development project based in East London. CANDL was established by Barnardo's in 1988 with the aim of improving the quality of life for children, young people and families in the more disadvantaged parts of East and South London. The majority of CANDL's work is carried out in Hackney and Tower Hamlets with some work also being undertaken in South London (Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark). A smaller amount of work is being undertaken in the pan-London area. CANDL is one of Barnardo's smaller projects and it provides hands-on consultancy and training to local church groups in the community. Although the majority of CANDL's work is centred around providing community development services to local church groups, it has in recent years begun to provide some direct services to families through its parenting programme which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

1.1 Background

CANDL's work is important in providing support to local church groups. Research shows that churches play a significant part in trying to tackle social problems; and that they are often involved with providing activities for children and young people within their communities (Farnell et al, 2003). It has also been acknowledged that faith communities are important providers of local services especially in more deprived areas:

Faith communities often have unparalleled access to under-represented or hard-to-reach groups and have an important role to play in tackling social exclusion, working alongside each other, government and the rest of the voluntary and community sector to promote cohesive communities that provide opportunities for all (Wallis et al, 2003).

There has been a substantial rise in the involvement of faith groups in urban regeneration projects, and the work of faith groups in local communities have recently gained higher profile and support (Farnell et al, 2003 and Wallis, 2005). Recent government initiatives such as the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and its proposals for Local Strategic Partnerships specifically refer to the importance churches and other faith groups play in building and sustaining viable communities. The Home Office has also established a new unit to support greater collaboration between faith groups and the government (Wallis et al, 2005).

Faith groups have often been established within their community for a long time, so they enjoy an intimate knowledge of the needs specific to their local area. They are therefore seen as being able to provide a good quality and holistic service to their communities (Wallis, 2005:9). However, the survey 'building the capacity of London Faith Groups' (Ibid), which looked at community work carried out by faith groups, showed that there are limitations to the work they are able to deliver. These limitations are often a result of limited resources, limited staff and limited funding. Faith groups often have great facilities, but frequently lack funds to develop them into sustainable spaces for community work. Some faith groups have difficulties in securing funding as they find it too

complex and time consuming (Wallis, 2005:16). Similar issues were also identified in another piece of research (see Smith, 2000)

The survey also showed that the key areas of community work for faith groups include children, young people and families, elderly people, youth work, housing and homelessness and ethnic minorities. It illustrated that faith groups are not just service providers for their members, as 78 per cent of faith groups mentioned that people benefiting from their project are not members of their faith group.

The survey furthermore emphasised that it is important for faith groups to have external relationships and support particularly in regards to funding issues, local knowledge and mentoring (Wallis, 2005:29). The Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) was viewed as generally being weak at identifying specific needs of faith-based groups, and local authorities were equally seen as lacking a clear understanding of the needs of faith groups (Wallis, 2005:53). Faith-based infrastructure agencies, such as CANDL, tend to have a better understanding of the needs of faith groups and are therefore better positioned to provide adequate support because they relate to their values due to shared religious beliefs. Their understanding of the motivations and values underlying faith groups' community work enable them to provide valuable support in applying for funding and developing community projects (Wallis, 2005:62-63).

1.2 Outline of the evaluation

This evaluation of CANDL focuses on work carried out with local church groups. It looks at the outcomes for local church groups rather than at the outcomes for individual children and young people. This involved examining how well CANDL's services assist local church groups who work to meet the needs of children, young people and families in the communities in order to improve their quality of life.

The evaluation looks at the following:

- The work of CANDL
- The work of local church groups
- Benefits for children, young people and families
- Effectiveness of, and clients satisfaction with, CANDL's services
- CANDL in the community
- Measuring outcomes
- Suggestions for future improvements

1.3 Methodology

Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit carried out the evaluation of CANDL between January and March 2006.

The evaluation predominantly utilised qualitative methods to gather relevant data. These qualitative methods included:

- Six interviews with representatives of local faith groups (clients)
- Three interviews with members of CANDL's advisory group,
- Interview with the Executive Director for Faith-based Regeneration Network UK
- Interview with CANDL's service manager
- Focus group with CANDL's project workers
- Shadowing and observation of CANDL's work by attending meetings between CANDL and local church groups
- Review of annual reports and newsletters

Interviews were either done face-to-face or over the telephone. In addition to these qualitative methods, a more quantitative approach was used in the analysis of questionnaire and feedback forms completed by local church groups at a 6 month review. This allowed for an insight into the type of services provided by CANDL to a number of clients not interviewed individually. However, the information provided was limited so this data was predominantly used as background information.

The local church groups who were interviewed for the purposes of this evaluation had all worked with CANDL during the last two or three years. Some interviewees had worked with CANDL extensively and had a long history of using CANDL services. Other groups had worked with CANDL only briefly, but their experiences were equally important to consider in this evaluation. The interviewees were all contacted via written correspondence (email and letters). The response rate was very high and immediate. All the interviewees seemed keen to participate and share their experiences of CANDL.

All face-to-face interviewees gave their permission to tape record the interviews. Work by Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit is underpinned by an ethical framework that stresses the importance of participants' confidentiality within research and evaluations. To ensure this, only the research team has access to identifying information and no such information is shared within or outside Barnardo's.

The interviews with local church groups and members of advisory groups lasted between 30-90 minutes and the majority of them were conducted at their workplace, with a few carried out in their own home, and one conducted in a local coffee shop. The telephone interviews tended to be shorter and varied between 15 and 30 minutes.

Different semi-structured interview schedules were designed for local church groups, advisory group members and staff. All interviews were conversational in style, which is common in qualitative research. For small-scale studies qualitative interviews are suitable as they provide rich and in-depth information (May, 2001:124).

Section 2: Evaluation findings

2.1 CANDL's work

CANDL works with a variety of local church groups across East and South London. They provide a range of services, such as hands-on consultancy, mentoring, help with resources and fundraising strategies, help with background research and community profiles. CANDL furthermore offers training in relevant knowledge, skills and awareness, team building work, and evaluation and assessment work. The local church groups who agreed to take part in this evaluation had all used at least one of these services. Some of the projects that had worked with CANDL for a longer period of time mentioned that it was an on-off working relationship, as they worked with CANDL when it was needed but otherwise keep in contact via newsletter and more informal catch-ups. Other projects worked extensively with CANDL for a long period of time through non-managerial supervision and mentoring.

CANDL is a versatile organisation which is reflected in the variety of groups they work with and the nature of the work these groups carry out. However, CANDL have a set of criteria that groups need to fulfil in order for CANDL to offer their services. This set of criteria acts as a guideline and CANDL is flexible in choosing which groups to work with. The criteria are as follows:

- A. The outcomes of the project or initiative benefit children, young people or families
- B. The client is a church or is church-orientated
- C. The client is a group, rather than an individual
- D. The client provides or develops a community project or initiative that addresses the needs and interests of the local community, rather than just church attendee and members
- E. The services requested or needed are among those CANDL offers
- F. The group is able to respect and work with Barnardo's 'basis and values', and CANDL's policies and statement, such as equal opportunities, child protection and data protection.

Although CANDL is not managed by its advisory group, CANDL seeks the group's advice and organises quarterly meetings. The advisory group members bring a variety of skills and knowledge. The majority are linked to local church groups and in addition some also have direct experience of working with children, young people and families. Some members have been part of the advisory group over a long period, whereas others have recently joined by invitation from CANDL. Although CANDL does not invite existing service-users onto this group, some of the members include ex-clients to help represent service-users' interests. The meetings are informal and reflexive in style and are used to discuss CANDL's work and future directions. Two of the advisory group members interviewed in this evaluation seemed to appreciate these meetings and mentioned that they gained from being on CANDL's advisory group:

My relationship to CANDL is as a member of the advisory group but it is very much a mutual relationship because CANDL is there as a resource for me as well so it is kind of a fair exchange – I am not a community development specialist and sometimes there is a subject that I do want to understand better so

I tend to go to [CANDL's manager]. I certainly get as much from the meetings as I hope I contribute. I think they are extraordinary meetings (Member of the advisory group)

I think it is a spin-off in the sense that we all gain from CANDL as well as contributing – and we all admit to that. From my point of view I have learnt a lot from CANDL's enthusiasm and the fact that they always seek to improve as a service. I have also learnt from the methods they use; they are particularly good at evaluating what is going on and working together and in my own work I have found that useful (Member of the advisory group)

However, one advisory group member, who was interviewed for the evaluation, showed less enthusiasm for these meetings. This past member mentioned that he had only gone to a few meetings because he thought they were 'awful'. He did, however, stress that he felt that advisory groups in general were of little value because *'you are there to offer advice but it implies that people want to take it which is not always the case. It is a bit odd to give people advice when you are not their manager'*. Despite this criticism of the advisory group he did stress that CANDL has a good reputation, work with groups who need support, and that CANDL seems to deliver this support in a sensitive manner.

2.2 Local church groups' work

The local church groups who were interviewed for this evaluation were all very different. They were all Christian projects, but their denominations varied. The groups furthermore varied in terms of their size, focus and resources available. Some worked exclusively with black and ethnic minorities, while others worked with whole communities. Some of the groups had already established projects whereas others were at the planning stage. All groups were either already working or working towards improving the lives of children, young people and families, and provided the following services:

- A shelter for homeless people
- A project that works with young people to help them acquire social skills through mentoring, and aims to narrow the emerging generation gap in their community
- Development of church halls for community use
- Parenting programmes
- Nursery provision for children under five
- Child contact centre
- Drop-in centres
- Family support
- Breakfast club

The majority of these local church groups felt that CANDL provided valuable support and was able to fill gaps in terms of skills required to carry out their work. It seemed that advice around funding and setting up projects were particularly vital for these local church groups. Some also believed that support when projects were established enhanced their work with children, young people and families due to CANDL's expertise and knowledge in this field.

2.3 Benefits for children, young people and families

The majority of CANDL's work is to provide support to local church groups to enable them to carry out work with children, young people and families in the local community. As a result it is not straightforward to measure how CANDL's work impact on children, young people and families. Nevertheless, all the respondents mentioned that CANDL's work indirectly benefits children, young people and families, as they enable local church groups to develop projects in the community that are beneficial to these groups of people. Advisory group members also felt confident that CANDL's work benefits children, young people and families:

I do believe children, young people and families benefit from CANDL as I have watched some of the progress of some of these projects [...] I think that it's brilliant and it can be measured [...] I really think CANDL does build up people (Member of the advisory group)

Although this evaluation primarily looked at the work CANDL does with local church groups and therefore mainly focuses on the indirect benefits for children, young people and families, some of the advisory group members also referred to the direct work CANDL does with children, young people and families:

The parenting courses which is having an extraordinary effect on families – I can feel that from where I am sitting because I hear the stories and so forth (Member of the advisory group)

2.4 CANDL's services

2.4.1 Funding

A significant part of CANDL's work involves assisting groups locating potential funders and with funding applications. As a result CANDL has helped several local church groups obtain funding to develop new projects. One local church group received funding to help recruit a part-time community development worker. This new position means that they will be able to develop new projects which will be beneficial for children, young people and families. They are currently looking at using their church hall for mother and toddler's groups and providing a resource centre for young unemployed people. They believed that CANDL played an important part in achieving this:

Well, the main part has been focused on getting us ready to employ a worker and [name of project worker] has been our consultant on this. I am not overdoing it, but if it was not for his support and encouragement we would not have our new worker here. It was a long process and they helped us get funding and get the application ready (Church group client)

CANDL also helped another local group successfully apply for funding to develop a project for young people. This project aims to address the widening communication generation gap in a minority ethnic community to prevent social problems from developing further.

2.4.2 The use of church halls as community facilities

Some local church groups have premises which are currently being used by community projects, while others are looking to refurbish them to become more suitable for community use.

On two occasions we were approached by people wanting the halls for child care and because no one within our church has expertise in this area they would not know the quality of what was being offered, [CANDL project worker] went with us when we interviewed these people and with her expertise we felt more secure as she knew what questions to ask and in both cases she advised us not to proceed with it, which turned out in particularly one case to be very good advice as it was a scam to try and get money out of the local authority and run away with it. What she picked up on was their lack of knowledge and skills and that they did not really know what they were doing. The other group were not trying to scam anyone but did not have the knowledge and skills required to carry out groups for children so in both cases it was valuable negative help (Church group client)

Another local church group developed their church halls and CANDL advised them in terms of how these halls could best be developed to provide services to the community. As a result, this local church group now runs mother and toddler's groups. In addition, they also have facilities for young men predominantly from a minority ethnic background to make music. This project is very popular and it has provided young men with an opportunity to develop their musical skills. The local church group furthermore works with young people, particularly young men to prevent teenage parenthood. This is done in their health clinic and seems to be well attended.

2.4.3 Community Profiles

CANDL has conducted community profiles for a number of local church groups. This involves working alongside the local church group to identify what needs within the community should be addressed. One church group, who was assisted by CANDL gained a better understanding of the activities taking place within their community and were able to network with other agencies. The community profile highlighted a need to work with young people, and as a result of this, the local church group is now beginning to work with young people in their community. Before initiating this work, CANDL provided some training on keeping children safe, which will benefit workers who will eventually work directly with children and young people.

2.4.4 Non-managerial supervision

CANDL provides non-managerial support to a number of local church groups. Three of the local church groups who were interviewed had received or receive non-managerial support around childcare and parenting issues. One of these local church groups has been running a breakfast club since 2002 that offers children aged between four and eleven a healthy breakfast. According to this group, children now concentrate better in school. Other non-managerial supervision includes general community development and work with black and ethnic minority youth in South London.

I am a lone worker so it can be lonely sometimes – it is non-managerial and it is good to have someone to talk things through with and get ideas and inspiration from. These supervisions have provided me with a place for reflection and review. It is giving me direction, which has been quite useful. CANDL has been a contributing factor in allowing and enabling me to carry out my work – without their support it would have been much harder to do my work. The managing committee has no experience of hands-on so CANDL has been able to fill that gap. CANDL has helped me in my work around developing parenting skills with these families – it has helped to improve and enable parents to understand their children and provide them with an awareness of their needs (Church group client)

It is this quiet presence they have and [their] local knowledge we have used CANDL for – they seem to know about employing people and technical things – all the gaps we have and [CANDL project worker] became the line-manager to our support worker and he was also extremely helpful in getting us her (Church group client)

2.4.5 Resources

CANDL's quarterly newsletter 'CANDL Light' is circulated to around 350 church-based contacts and contains information around funding opportunities, as well as discussion on policy and practice issues, such as parenting skills, neighbourhood renewal, gun crime, managing staff, and keeping children safe. In addition, CANDL's website also offers free downloadable good practice resources, and the service hosts an email group consisting of approximately 30 recipients, who receive monthly updates about funding, training and opportunities.

Local church groups mentioned that CANDL was a good and useful resource and that they had obtained important information from CANDL, either through their newsletters, emails or from their library. This information had helped them develop their work with children, young people and families either directly through practical advice or indirectly through awareness raising and funding advice:

CANDL has a good and resourceful library which we used when developing our own parenting packs for our groups (Church group client)

2.5 Effectiveness and satisfaction of CANDL's work

All of the local church groups who took part in this evaluation were satisfied with the services they had received from CANDL. In fact a number of them viewed CANDL's work as unique and invaluable. They seemed to appreciate the support and encouragement they received from CANDL.

CANDL has taken time to know our heart, and to get to know us. We have been made to look at the work ourselves, and not just had it done for us and it has been very positive. I have never worked with a company like this before (Church group client)

I think it has been good and we would have been quite lost without them. They are good and although I am sure we would have found support elsewhere I doubt we would have got quite as much support – I guess what I am saying is that we would not necessarily have got any support from other organisations, but the support we got from CANDL has been outstanding (Church group client)

CANDL is seen as resource and provider of important information to local church groups which then allow local church groups to network and build on their projects.

They are an important resource in an area like this (Church group client))

CANDL is also good at keeping us informed about what is going on and they are very informal and easy to talk to. Their support has been superb and my only disappointment has been that they have not been able to provide professional supervision (Church group client)

They always bring good ideas to the advisory group and good ideas about childcare and general things. They seem to have good experience with working in the community and around childcare (Member of the advisory group)

They gave me an honest opinion from a more hands-on perspective and made me more clear about what I can do and what I cannot do, so I could not have done it without [CANDL project worker] because somehow I trusted [her] – maybe it is her faith and religious background as well (Church group client)

Local church groups repeatedly mentioned that CANDL is unique in their commitment to working alongside them to develop projects that will benefit children, young people and families. Their style seems informal, committed and encouraging.

[Names of CANDL project workers] are unique – not all organisations are available and ready to help you but CANDL is different – they give you advice and they are always there. If you give them a ring you will always be attended to and you can arrange one-to-one meetings and they will always come. I like to work with CANDL more than any other organisation – even the local ones. Genuine interest and genuine help. On top of that every time I contact them they get back to me quickly – even if they are not there they will get back to me. They are very friendly and have great ideas (Church group client)

‘CANDL is a resource – I think that is what I would call them. I would call [CANDL project worker] up at a drop of a hat; I’m not sure if it is a personal thing or a CANDL thing. He does not interfere with our decisions but gives informal advice. He has made it better for our organisation (Church group client)

2.6 CANDL in the community

CANDL is a community development project and the majority of its work is carried out in East and South London. From interviews with local church groups, members of the advisory group and CANDL staff, CANDL seems to be a well established service and recognized for its work particularly in Hackney and to a lesser extent in Tower Hamlets. One of the interviewees

described CANDL as being 'part of the furniture' in Hackney and that 'I think everyone that is involved in social areas in Hackney knows about CANDL'.

Similarly, CANDL staff also feel that they are a well-established and recognised service:

It helps we have been around for quite a long time. In fact most groups come to us because they either get CANDL Light or because someone else has said to them that they should go to CANDL for that. We are known out there [...] our work is respected because people will recommend us and it is usually through that word of mouth that we get new groups (Project manager)

Communities in London are multi-ethnic and multi-cultural and have a large number of needs which are addressed by voluntary organisations like CANDL. CANDL is a small service which subsequently limits the amount of work that can be done with local church groups. However, the work they do carry out with local church groups seems to address local needs in a flexible manner.

Some of the local church groups referred to CANDL's link to Christian values as being an important factor in their ability to work so closely together. They believed that CANDL being faith-based provided them with a mutual understanding and respect that they might not have received if they had worked with a non-religious community development project.

CANDL mainly works with faith communities – and my organisation is also linked to faith. They have a lot of understanding and experience of especially faith committees – it is a Christian organisation – and secondly, they have a lot of experience working with children because they are Barnardo's – understanding their problems and campaigning for their rights, which is what we need. It is really important that they are faith-based because if you look at BME problems like my group the majority are faith-based, so any approach outside the faith ethos is not going to work – say for example in a [minority ethnic] community if I was trying to do something outside the Christian ethos I would find it very hard to sell because faith is very important to us (Church group client)

In recent years, CANDL has been exploring an inter-faith approach. In January 2004, CANDL launched the *Feasibility Study into Capacity Building Muslim Groups in Tower Hamlets and Hackney*. This study was carried out on behalf of CANDL by a Muslim-led organisation, Faith in the Future. CANDL supported Faith in the Future in exploring funding opportunities to develop a sister organisation to CANDL, but this has yet to be established. However, CANDL is continuing their inter-faith work; one of their project workers has been involved in setting up a 'Hackney Faith in the Community' forum, which aims to get faith organisations to work together on community issues. CANDL seems positive about this work and recognises that inter-faith work is important, but not always straightforward:

I think it is important to be more real about the differences there are between religions and not pretend we are all about the same thing, but we need to see the commonalities and work together on important issues (project worker)

One former member of the advisory group did, however, perceive the interfaith approach as a distraction to CANDL's core services:

'They seem to be trying to tackle the interfaith stuff, but I am not convinced by that as I do not think it should be an issue for them and they should not feel pressured into tackling it (Member of advisory group)

2.7 Measuring outcomes

CANDL staff expressed a concern for the continuing and perhaps growing pressure to make their service more measurable in terms of the work they carry out. Their approach to community development work was described as 'organic' on several occasions. An interpretation of this organic approach is that CANDL does not work with a local church group with a specific set of outcomes in mind. Instead they work with local church groups in a flexible manner, which allows local church groups to develop their own ideas and projects. This does not imply that the ultimate benefits for children and young people are insignificant, as the interviews strongly suggest that CANDL's work helps local church groups generate positive outcomes for children, young people and their families. But CANDL's approach is unique and may not necessarily fit in with the outcomes framework so often prioritised. This seems to be a concern for CANDL, and its staff seemed worried that they will be required to change their way of working to fit into more recognised models. In recent years CANDL has introduced more direct work with children, young people and families and although staff seem enthusiastic about this work, they do not want to reduce the work with local church groups, as this is viewed as equally important. Mainly as the project fears that local church groups will not be able to deliver vital services to the community:

I am afraid that a lot of churches will suffer if we do not provide them with our services – I am not saying that they cannot do the work without us, but I think in particular for smaller churches we can smooth the path a little and allow them to learn from other people's experiences and networks. We help them with networking and good practice so maybe it will make a difference as to whether they actually run a project for children, young people or families because if they meet too many obstacles on their way they might not be able to start the project. They may not be able to get their ideas into practice because they will not have the resources and advice we provide them with (Project manager)

A member from the advisory group expressed admiration for CANDL's approach to community development work:

I suppose it would be possible for CANDL to be a more straightforward and convenient linear organisation that transmitted knowledge which then somehow resulted in the delivery of services, but the services would be greatly impoverished compared to what CANDL does actually do which is to provide thinking space and clear expertise and things like library resources, so if you want hard factual information CANDL is the place to go and that is absolutely vital. CANDL is more than an agency that improves the lives of children, young people and families – it has a true community development approach (Member of advisory group)

CANDL staff also expressed their community development approach:

I think the flexibility and the way we do not channel people into this linear process is one of the key things and that we try to be responsive to what the group we work with wants and needs (Project worker)

Although CANDL is flexible and allows local church groups to develop their own ideas, they are not willing to work with groups that jeopardise the safety and well-being of children, young people or families.

However, such a flexible approach can also be a downside in terms of understanding what CANDL provides. CANDL is not a straightforward and conventional service and some of the interviewees mentioned that it is difficult to grasp what CANDL actually does:

It is quite hard to define what they actually do. Well, yes they are a good service but a strange one. It is difficult to grasp CANDL which makes them difficult to describe (Member of advisory group)

The difficulty in defining CANDL's work also led some of the interviewees to mention that they believe CANDL is under-used as a service:

I think we under-use CANDL because we do not really [know] what kind of services they can provide and I suspect others are also under-using then because they do not know what they can do for them. I know of the newsletter, but I imagine they [other church groups] go through Church of England and word of mouth. I have a feeling that CANDL is a hidden treasure (Church group client)

2.8 Suggestions for future improvements

Overall local church groups seemed satisfied with the services provided by CANDL. Only a few made suggestions for how CANDL could improve as a service:

I think it would be good if we knew more about what CANDL offered. At the moment, their commitment to us is that they are there. They do what the user wants. They seem to work in a flexible way – they are not fixed but it makes it a bit confusing and I suspect that is why they are not used enough. I would like more guidance about what they can do – but maybe the fault is on our side (Church group client)

I think it could be useful if CANDL organised more forums for practitioners. I did attend one forum and that was helpful. I am not sure if they are doing forums but it could be good to have some forums where people get together and share issues (Church group client)

The unfortunate thing is that they are so far away from us in [South London] and also Barnardo's would do so much more work than CANDL so I would like to see CANDL make Barnardo's activities more visible. I know Barnardo's has its own website but CANDL could advertise more about what Barnardo's does as an

organisation. I would like to see more about Barnardo's through CANDL because sometimes people ask me for help and then I could refer them to Barnardo's and help them (church group client).

Members of the advisory group mentioned that CANDL addresses challenging issues and are keen to develop and improve as a service. They also emphasised that if they do have suggestions for future developments, these are raised during their quarterly meetings. The advisory group meetings were viewed by one member as a *'reflective space in which issues are addressed and conceptualised. CANDL has a unique way of developing themselves and reflecting on their services along the way which shows their commitment to improvement (Member of advisory group).*

Similarly, CANDL staff was confident that CANDL addresses issues that are challenging and improve their service gradually:

I think we are aware if we need to make improvements [...] Two years ago I saw that it was not working with the BME work and we looked at what could work, assessed it and changed what was not working. We are always free to say if we think things are not working (Project worker)

Section 3: Conclusion

CANDL is a well-established community development project that works with local church groups to improve the lives of children, young people and families. Local church groups play an important part in trying to tackle social exclusion and evidence shows that they are important providers of local services especially in more deprived areas. Local church groups that work with CANDL predominantly work with children, young people and families and their projects include breakfast clubs, mother and toddler groups, youth work and parenting work. All local church groups, interviewed for this evaluation, reported that CANDL's services were beneficial to them and they believe that CANDL contributes to improving the lives of children, young people and families.

CANDL provides a high quality and holistic service to local church groups. Their services range from assistance with funding, community profile, providing advice regarding refurbishment of church halls to non-managerial supervision. Overall, local church groups were very satisfied with CANDL's services and they seemed to appreciate its informal approach and generally felt empowered by this way of working. In addition, CANDL's Christian values were viewed as important as it provided them with a shared understanding.

CANDL is not a straightforward and linear organisation, which makes it difficult to describe and evaluate their work. Although local church groups and members of the advisory group all seemed to appreciate CANDL's informal approach, some did mention that they were unsure about the range of services that CANDL offered and believed CANDL was under-used as a service. Project staff also mentioned that the work could be a bit 'woolly' at times and were concerned that its style of working does not fit easily with Barnardo's outcomes framework. As a result project staff were concerned that they would be pressured into developing more direct work with children, young people and families; and consequently reduce the work they carry out with local church groups because this work is less measurable. This was also a concern shared by the advisory group who stressed that CANDL provides a good and valuable service to local church groups that allow these groups to develop high quality and innovative community projects that fulfil community needs.

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