

## Hampton Fund Participatory Work – First Discussion Group



### Purpose and background to the session

This session was held to support the development of Hampton Fund's individual grants programme, with a focus on understanding whether current grants are meeting the most important needs in the community.

The aim was to gather the views of people who have previously received Hampton Fund grants, to better understand both the impact these grants have had and what support would be most beneficial going forward. The session also explored the key cost pressures facing people locally, and whether Hampton Fund is currently targeting its funding in the most effective way.

Due to increasing demand, changes have already been made to some areas of funding (e.g. a 10% cut in fuel grant levels). This created a need to reflect on whether the current offer remains appropriate, and whether there are other areas that should be prioritised.

The session brought together 13 participants who had previously received a Hampton Fund grant. It was discussion-based and used a series of structured activities to explore different aspects of the grants programme.

Participants were encouraged to be open and honest, and it was clearly communicated that their feedback would not impact any future grant applications. They were informed that their views would be shared with trustees, while also making it clear that any changes to the grants programme discussed would need to be carefully considered, and could not be guaranteed to be taken forward.

The session also forms part of Hampton Fund's wider participation work, which aims to increase direct input into decision-making from those with lived and professional experience.

This is an ongoing and iterative process, and future sessions will build on the learning generated through this first one.

## **Participant Demographics**

A total of 13 participants attended the session, with the group skewed towards older individuals (5 aged over 65) alongside a mix of working-age participants. Most participants were living alone, including those identified as single, widowed or single parents.

All participants had received fuel grants, reflecting the current focus of Hampton Fund's provision, with some also receiving additional support. Many had received support over multiple years, indicating sustained need rather than short-term financial pressure.

## **Activity 1: Impact of Hampton Fund Grants**

This activity explored what receiving a Hampton Fund grant meant to participants. Responses consistently highlighted both the emotional and practical impact of the support.

Participants described a strong sense of relief, reduced stress and improved stability. Many felt more able to manage financially, including paying bills and maintaining their homes, particularly in the context of rising living costs. There was also a clear emotional impact, with participants describing feeling "grateful", "lucky" and that receiving support made them feel "like a normal human being", with one participant noting that it made them feel that "someone cared".

- Relief and reduced stress were the most common responses
- Grants contributed to financial stability and ability to manage essential costs
- Strong emotional impact, including dignity and feeling supported
- Peer-to-peer discussion and support was a notable aspect of the activity

## **Activity 2: Costs Impacting Families**

This activity explored the types of costs participants are currently facing and how they prioritise these when managing limited resources.

Across all groups, there was strong consistency in the costs identified, with core household expenses such as rent, water bills, council tax and energy bills prioritised first. Participants also identified a wide range of additional essential costs, including food, travel, clothing, school-related costs, household items, and health-related expenses.

Participants highlighted that prioritising these costs is not straightforward, as many are essential and difficult to deprioritise. Decisions were shaped by individual circumstances, and there was recognition that people may not always be aware of or able to access the support

available to them. Overall, the discussion reflected the level of financial pressure participants are under and the limited flexibility in managing competing demands.

- Core household bills consistently prioritised (rent, utilities, council tax)
- Wide range of additional essential costs identified
- No clear hierarchy beyond core costs
- Decisions on priorities shaped by individual circumstances
- Awareness of, and access to, available local support varies

### **Activity 3: What Should Hampton Fund Support**

This activity explored what participants felt Hampton Fund should and should not fund, and the reasoning behind these decisions.

There was strong agreement that Hampton Fund should prioritise essential and high-impact items that support basic needs and wellbeing. Items most commonly identified included white goods, fuel/energy support, school-related costs, food support and mattresses. Items seen as less of a priority were typically those where alternative support may be available, such as furniture or clothing, although some concerns were raised about the quality and suitability of these alternatives. In other cases, the item or cost identified was seen as being too specific for general grants provision. However, these could perhaps be made available on a case-by-case basis, depending on need. These included travel costs, carpets and flooring, internet access and home repairs.

Participants approached this activity thoughtfully, considering not just their own needs but how funding decisions should be made more broadly. Decisions were guided by factors such as level of need, impact on wellbeing, and availability of other support. There was also recognition that awareness of available support varies, which influences how people approach these decisions. Overall, there was strong alignment with earlier discussions, with a clear focus on prioritising essential support.

- Strong support for funding essential, high-impact items
- Alternative support influenced what should not be prioritised
- Decisions on priorities were based on need, wellbeing and available support
- Again, awareness of other support varies and shapes decision-making
- Strong alignment with priorities identified in Activity 2

### **Wrap-up and Evaluation**

The final part of the session gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their experience and provide feedback.

Overall, feedback was very positive, with participants highlighting the value of discussion, shared experiences and learning from others. There was a strong emphasis on peer interaction, with participants appreciating the opportunity to hear different perspectives and gain new information about available support. The session was described as interesting, useful and a good opportunity for open discussion.

Participants also identified some areas for improvement, including allowing more time for open discussion, session length, and greater clarity on next steps and how the information will be used. There was also some interest in more opportunities for social or community-based connection.

- Strong value placed on discussion and shared experiences
- Peer interaction and learning were key benefits
- Session format worked well overall
- Suggestions for more open discussion and clarity on next steps

## **Overall reflection**

The session created a safe and open environment, where participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences. A key strength was the level of engagement and interaction between participants, which added depth to the discussions and supported a collaborative atmosphere.

The evaluation highlights that, in addition to gathering insights, the session itself provided value through connection, shared learning and access to information. This suggests that participation work of this kind can have a wider benefit, informing service development while also supporting participants in meaningful ways.