Spirit of 2012’s
Theory of Change
People should be equally empowered to get out, be involved and feel better. We tackle isolation and disadvantage by supporting those providing opportunities in sports, the arts and volunteering. We’re working to ensure the spirit that radiated from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is felt throughout the whole of the UK.
What is a theory of change?

Theory of change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens – and what that means for Spirit of 2012 (Spirit) as an organisation, both in terms of the projects and our organisational values:

It draws on learning about change.

It allows us to explore the ultimate impact we want our endowment to have over the life of the charity.

It helps us understand how the projects we support take us further towards achieving that change and our ultimate impact.

It also challenges us to explore change further and test our understanding of the impact we can seek to make.

It acknowledges that achieving real and sustainable change is complex and is influenced by many factors outside the charity's control.

Why develop a theory of change?

To develop a shared understanding of the projects and programmes that the Spirit of 2012 will fund and why.

To act as the basis for the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework against which data will be collected and existing research reviewed to prove or disprove the theory of change.

To aid communication with external and internal stakeholders, particularly potential grantees, giving clarity on where their projects might fit.

Spirit of 2012’s commitment to best practice is demonstrated by the priority we have placed on developing a theory of change at the start of our life.

For ongoing learning and improving by inviting projects to challenge the assumptions behind the theory of change.
How was the Spirit of 2012 Theory of Change developed?

inFocus

Spirit of 2012 worked closely with the team at inFocus (www.impactinfocus.com) to develop the theory of change through a participatory approach involving a range of stakeholders, including:

- A series of interviews with board members and key stakeholders to get input about the role of the organisation and long-term outcomes and impact. Interviews were held with stakeholders and staff to explore key concepts (what was the ‘Spirit of 2012’, what situation is the organisation addressing and what type of funder should Spirit be).

- Two workshops with staff and stakeholders at which Spirit developed the theory of change. These initially explored the context in which the theory of change was being developed i.e. the challenges and opportunities in relation to the outcomes that Spirit is working to achieve, before developing the first draft of the theory of change.

- Our challenge, as a funder, was to create a meaningful theory of change, across a variety of thematic areas and sectors and that could be relevant to a range of diverse projects.

- Our opportunity was to really understand the ‘Spirit’ of 2012, the value it still has in people’s memories and lives, and how our funding could have sustained impact on people’s and communities wellbeing across the UK.

Since its initial creation the theory of change has undergone changes in response to feedback from programmes, partners and grantees and continues to adapt as a living document.
Theory of Change

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Outcomes Pathway

A diagram showing the chain of cause and effect that leads to the impact that the trust is looking to achieve.

Assumptions

List of the key assumptions, the beliefs underlying how change happens in the outcomes pathway.
Our Impact?

We believe that enabling people to participate in a wide range of activities and engaging in their communities will:

- improve wellbeing of individuals, communities and society as a whole
- improve perceptions towards disability and impairment
- lead to greater social cohesion and understanding

We ‘Invest in Happiness’ because individual and collective happiness are emotional manifestations of the wellbeing we hope to generate through our outcomes.

Our investment should enhance the quality of people’s lives by creating engaging opportunities for them to get involved in and enjoy sport & physical activity, arts & culture, volunteering & social action.

Spirit’s detailed outcomes pathway shows the progression from an event leading to a spark of inspiration to our ultimate impact.

There is a particular focus in the theory of change on looking at:

- Preconditions: what outcomes need to be in place for a change to occur?
- External factors: what factors outside of the organisation’s control/remit need to be taking into account/covered by the work of partners?
What type of organisation should we be?

Stakeholders, members of the Board and the management team at Spirit of 2012 were asked what type of funder they felt Spirit of 2012 should be, in relation to communications, general ethos and principles, and our approach to funding and non-funding activities.

Communication

An independent trust with a vibrant and recognisable identity.

Eager to share theory of change and corresponding learning with the wider sector.

Committed to high quality communications, through a variety of channels, to reach the right audience.

General Ethos

Be prepared to listen and act on feedback/criticism.

Engage key audiences in decision making, for example, by forming advisory panels of young people and disabled people.

Take some risks, be prepared to see some things fail and learn when things have not worked.

Our values are to be:
Frank, Forthright, Fair, Focussed & Friendly.

Approach to Funding/Working with Projects

Develop a clear funding strategy that allows for both targeted funding and open opportunities.

Support innovation and pilot approaches.

Work through expert or respected partners, not working directly on the ground.

Engage with communities through credible partnerships that provide relevant expertise.

Create light and robust application and monitoring processes with minimal barriers and clear expectations.

Non-Funding Activities

Foster relationships and provide networking opportunities amongst projects.

Support innovation and learning and the development of good practice amongst projects.

Commission, conduct and support research into areas we believe contribute to our impacts.

Continuous learning through regular review of our theory of change and challenging of assumptions.

Signpost opportunities and potential partnerships.
Target Audiences

Partners and Grantees

Organisations that fund or deliver national or regional events.

Organisations that create opportunities for people to participate in sport, arts and culture and volunteering.

Organisations that provide opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people and different generations to participate together.
Target Audiences

Local Communities and Community Connectors

- Individuals who volunteer and who are active in the community, for example community leaders.
- Individuals and organisations in communities that organise activities or can make connections between isolated/disconnected individuals and the community.
- There is a focus on empowering young people as connectors and agents of change.
Target Audiences

Individuals

There is a particular focus on young people and disabled people, but all individuals or groups that may be isolated or disengaged from society will be potential beneficiaries.

Isolation and disengagement in this context relates to individuals/groups that are isolated/disconnected from the world around them. By isolation we mean a feeling of isolation, physical barriers to participation or isolation through perceived or actual prejudice.

There will also be a focus on connecting different generations in communities together.
Events provide ‘spark’ to connect groups, engage the media, show that involvement can be fun, and provide role models.

Inspiring Events
- People are informed, inspired and empowered to get more involved in their communities.

Empowering Young People
- Young people feel ownership of the ability to change their circumstance and environment, feel involved and have a voice in their community inspiring them to get involved in running activities and connecting people together.

Connecting Generations
- People from different generations recognise that they are part of the same community and feel more connected. As their contribution to the community is valued and understood, they are motivated to take part in more community activities together.

Social Connectedness
- People have appropriate support to take part engage in inclusive community activity (particularly isolated and/or lonely people).

Empowering Disabled People
- Disabled people feel more integrated in society and are better able to participate in activities and the community.

More Positive portrayal of some disabled people in the media (ie athletes)

Events provide ‘spark’ to connect groups, engage the media, show that involvement can be fun, and provide role models.

Empowering Disabled People
- People recognise and value the potential in each other, overcome self-limiting beliefs and increase confidence.

Challenging Perceptions of Disability
- Increased awareness of the issues [barriers] affecting disabled people leading to a more positive attitude towards disabled people.

Building Partnerships
- Increased collaboration between organisations leads to greater cohesion and alignment resulting in them doing better and more.

Outcomes Pathway Overview
- We believe that enabling people to participate in a wide range of activities and engaging in their communities will:
  - improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and society as a whole
  - improve perceptions towards disability and impairment
  - lead to greater social cohesion and understanding

Research and Evidence
- A compelling and rigorously analysed body of evidence is collated and made accessible through effective communication and promotion.

Increased Opportunities for employment
- Positive change in perception of disabled people in communities (by both disabled and non-disabled people)

Increased resources are invested in evidence-based participation programmes/projects

Public and policy makers better understand key topics relating to events, participation and wellbeing
Assumptions

Assumptions are the core beliefs behind the chains of outcomes/preconditions in the theory of change. Assumptions are used as the basis for learning from the theory of change by collecting and analysing data and/or using existing research to challenge or validate the assumptions. The assumptions are used in the development of ‘evaluation questions’, which we use to test and make changes to our theory of change.

Inspiring Events

- Events generate national and local interest and can be a catalyst to bring people together in public spaces and connect with each other
- People inspired by events are more likely to get involved in activities
- The theme of ‘Inspiring a Generation’ is still central to leaving a lasting legacy from the London 2012 Games
- Events inspire civic and national pride

Empowering Young People

- Engaging children in social action early can lead to a greater predisposition to continue into adulthood (more pro-social behaviour)
- Participation in sport, and the arts, can be used to develop leadership skills in young people by providing volunteering opportunities and skills development (for example in coaching and mentoring other young people)
- Volunteering is increasingly becoming an expected and formative part of the young people’s experience

Building Partnerships

- In order to address the barriers to participation in a community that people face it’s important to work in partnership and collaborate with organisations that bring people together and understand the communities they’re working in and with

Volunteering

- Participating in large scale event volunteering can make more people want to engage in volunteering and social action outside the arena of large events
- Perceived ‘glamour’ of event volunteering inspires others to volunteer
- Greater cohesion and consistency to the volunteering landscape can inspire more people to have a go and/or continue volunteering
- Creating an attractive volunteering identity can make volunteers feel more positive and proud
Empowering Disabled People & Changing Perceptions

- Perceptions towards disability and impairment can be made more positive by seeing disabled people achieve excellence in sport, the arts and social action.
- People are more likely to take part and sustain participation by seeing people like themselves take part.
- Sport, arts and volunteering infrastructure is available and removing the barriers to participation can enable those who get inspired to get involved in activities.
- People (and organisations) have a more positive view towards disability and impairment when disabled and non-disabled people are able to take part in activities together, as equals.

Social Connectedness

- There are people in most communities (‘connectors’) and identifying and supporting these ‘connectors’ can energise communities.
- People’s first engagement in an activity is a critical step to sustaining participation and needs to be adequately supported.
- Participating in activities leads to greater happiness and wellbeing.
- Positive interaction between people and groups can lead to an increase in tolerance and understanding between them.
- Taking part in community life and activities can increase people’s pride in their community.
- Participation can lead to increased trust, belonging and ambition for the community and lead to more sustained and intensive participation.
- People in communities can direct and take ownership of change.

Connecting Generations

- Connecting people from different generations can lead to greater understanding and empathy.