

Case Study

Bringing big businesses together



In 2011 Macquarie Group, a global investment bank and financial services institution with more than 13,500 employees globally, moved its European headquarters across the border from the City of London into Islington.

Following a chance meeting at a conference, Macquarie began work with the Cripplegate Foundation on a programme to build the capacity of the voluntary sector through skilled business volunteer placements. Cripplegate then invited Macquarie to be a partner in the development of Islington Giving.

Macquarie became the founding member and principal funder of the BIG Alliance (Businesses for Islington Giving) which facilitates employee volunteering and business engagement to support the social and economic regeneration of Islington. It has 14 member companies including Expedia, Slaughter and May, and MUFG. The programme is run by ELBA (the East London Business Alliance) and is delivered by a team of six staff.

The BIG Alliance put the skills of its member businesses to work in two areas; education and community. Its community programme provides capacity building support to charities by matching trustees, providing executive coaching for charity directors and placing skilled professionals in charities to carry out much needed tasks such as writing business plans

and developing communications and IT strategies.

The education programme has grown from a mentoring programme in one school in 2013 to working with eight secondary schools and two colleges across the borough. Year 10 and Year 12 students apply to be matched with an employee from a member business, with whom they meet regularly over the course of nine months. The programme aims to introduce young people to the world of work, raise aspiration, enable students to identify career goals, and develop students' employability. Mentors are trained and given resources to develop key employability competencies such as resilience, adaptability, and confidence.

The businesses benefit from their staff developing skills outside their day-to-day role and investing in the next generation of local talent. Because the programme lasts for a whole academic year the volunteers see the difference they are making.

Rachel Engel is Head of the Macquarie Group Foundation, EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) the principal funder and founder of the BIG Alliance and also a member of the Barnet Giving Steering Group. She tells us why Macquarie got involved with Islington Giving:

"Our role in the development of the BIG Alliance was about making a long-term investment in our local area. We took the same approach as we do with our grants programme, to be innovative and build capacity."

"My advice to businesses thinking about supporting a PBGS such as Islington Giving is to be

collaborative, and by doing so you will get the greatest impact. The BIG Alliance has enabled us to innovate and invest over the long-term, directing funds and resources to a need within our local borough. In practical terms, we fund The BIG Alliance and their Project Managers in Islington to connect the dots, find the opportunities, complete the due diligence and to ensure the needs our volunteers are addressing, have an impact and are sustainable.

We are a relatively young investment bank which is collaborating with funders who are 500+ years old – on paper this should be highly complex. In reality we have similar mind sets around investing locally and for the long-term, being creative and strategic and going where the need is. Working with local experts means we are not 'parachuting in'; they have the knowledge and we have the skills. Collaboration is key to the success of this partnership – not just with funders but other businesses as well."

► www.islingtongiving.org.uk/website_/the-big-alliance/

