

Unlock Local Launch Partnerships

The Crew with the Long View



In the early days of new Unlock Local Launch Projects, securing a partnership, delivering training and getting the crew in place is often such a challenge that it seems like the be all and end all. After that you have two solid years of intensive consultancy and support from Unlock. Your aim is to become a strong Unlock Local Crew that will be **the future of Unlock** in your local community and church(es).

Often it is only when we approach the end of those two years, and start to focus more critically on what happens next, that we realise that we needed to have that 3rd stage at the forefront of our thinking all along.

It is always something I am asked about when we are negotiating new partnerships in new places 'What happens afterwards?' in other words, 'What are we left with when Unlock support ends?'; and given that we are asking local people to pay for Unlock's support, it's a perfectly fair question.

The answer is that all kinds of different things can happen and we have examples of several outcomes, some more tangible and promising than others. Each Crew will shape the outcome in their own place; but it's best if they can do that intentionally and consciously, rather than it just being an accidental outcome.

Good things to keep in mind, right from the start:-

- The Unlock Local Crew is the future of Unlock in the project location.
- The two years with Unlock support should be seen as a way to establish Unlock working as something you can do confidently and independently in the future, rather than an end in itself.
- You need to identify and nurture leadership potential in the groups you are working with, all the time, and mentor promising individuals to the point where they will be able and confident to develop and lead Unlock work for themselves.
- You need to challenge your local church(es) about how they will help people to step over the big gulf that usually remains between people who have grown in faith through an Unlock group and attendance at regular Sunday worship. (Does the church need to become more Unlocky? Does the Unlock group become a new way of being church? How is that to be supported, managed and monitored?)
- It is important that Unlock *Anywhere* becomes recognised in the Local Crew and the work, not just in one person. If it's all about one person then people will just feel bereft and betrayed when that person inevitably moves on.
- The Crew's role is to become something tangible and sustainable that can function without long term Unlock support. That future shaping needs to include the people (both leaders and punters) in the groups you work with.
- Nothing is forever. People will move on, for all sorts of reasons, many of them good ones. A strong local crew will always be on the lookout for, and ready to nurture, new recruits; in order to stay strong together when people have to leave.
- It is always good to mark endings positively, giving thanks for what has been good and wishing people well.
- Don't be afraid to put a bit of pressure on local Church and Christian leaders to support you in recruiting good people to your Unlock Local Crew. Generally speaking they are the ones who have in some sense signed up for an Unlock Partnership and they need to be encouraged to follow up by ensuring that it has some tangible and useful local support.
- And don't be afraid to invite and suggest people you know or come across who you think would fit the role and enjoy the challenge. Remember that the Crew can change, grow and evolve as the project develops. You are not stuck with it as it is. If it's not working; change it.

Be as creative as you need to be as you plan ahead and develop your valuable work; keep on thinking strategically about the end results and go for the activities that stand the best chance of delivering those.