

The River

It was as if we were struggling along through a bog. There were several little springs bubbling up, but their water was just disappearing into the general morass and was lost. ChangeUp managed to unblock the flow and channel all the little streams into a single river with the energy to flow onwards, out of the bog. At last we could build a boat and set sail!



No sooner had we set off than we were sucked into a whirlpool of deciphering acronyms, involving different organisations, applying for funds, attending meetings... but somehow we managed to stay afloat and emerge, sailing down a river that grew ever wider and stronger.

We've reached the point where we're a bit worried about where it's taking us – will it sweep us all over the edge of a weir: the boat will splinter and we will drown?

Or will we get bogged down again and all this wonderful water drain away into the earth? We need river banks that guide our journey ahead, but that won't stop us "going with the flow," otherwise the surrounding ecosystem will collapse through lack of water to sustain it.

If someone's drained the river or blocked its course, you won't get anywhere and the surrounding ecosystem will collapse through lack of water.

KEY MESSAGES

- In some areas, the ChangeUp programme was a great catalyst that brought people together and helped them accomplish projects that otherwise would not have happened (although it has felt a bit of a roller coaster ride at times!).
- Volunteering has an emotional base – people volunteer because they want to help and because they value other people. It's good to have a structure that channels that energy, but we must make sure that what we do through ChangeUp doesn't stifle or drain the fundamental source of life in the voluntary sector: the volunteers.