

Justice Together Initiative (JTI): Reflections on the first year

Learning Partner Report Executive Summary

*Miranda Lewis, Director, m2
6 February 2023*

Executive Summary: Context and background (1)

The Justice Together Initiative (JTI) was launched in 2020. Its decade-long vision aims to ensure that people who use the UK immigration system can access justice fairly and equally, enabling them to get on with their lives. It is a unique and ambitious collaboration of 19 funders.

JTI grew out of conversations, research and workshops led by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to explore a strategic response to increasing demand in immigration advice needs. This increased demand is being driven by a mix of causalities, including: Brexit and the fact that a large new group of people is subject to immigration control as a result; a 'hostile environment' policy directed towards people who do not have, or cannot prove, their immigration status; spending cuts in public services including legal aid and funding for advice and support services; and legal issues in the wake of the Windrush scandal.

Since the Initiative was set up, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis have further exacerbated the pressure on providers. JTI aims to strengthen the immigration sector and to influence wider changes to support a fair functioning of immigration, nationality and asylum processes. It has three goals to enable this to happen:

- **Goal 1:** A more just and equitable immigration system.
- **Goal 2:** Immigration organisations are more sustainable, better networked and more representative of the communities they serve.
- **Goal 3:** More people are able to secure justice.

The pathway towards each goal, including activities and short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes, are mapped in a Theory of Change (ToC). To date, JTI has supported 40 Grant Partners with funding totaling £9million. Grants are available under two themes.

1. Influencing

These grants support organisations to build influencing capacity, such as through hiring community organising and influencing staff (with a focus on those with lived experience of the immigration system) and developing campaigns around specific issues.

Executive Summary: Context and background (2)

2. Advice and representation

These grants-support organisations to develop more capacity to deliver more, and better quality, advice services. This can be through hiring new advice staff (with a particular focus on those with lived experience), upskilling existing staff, and entering into partnerships with networks of local organisations to develop advice strategies.

Alongside this funding, JTI also supports Grant Partners through its Community of Impact: workshops and training designed to build capacity and networks.

There is an explicit anti-racist element to JTI's work, along with an aim to increase the numbers of people with lived experience working in the sector.



Executive Summary: Key findings (1)

There are many successes for JTI to be proud of since its inception. The thoughtful, expert and relational way in which the staff team work with - and support - the Grant Partners is greatly appreciated. This has enabled Grant Partners to develop a sense of partnership and build trust with JTI, and to raise any issues with staff openly.

There has also been demonstrable and concrete progress towards the Initiative's goals:

Goal 1: A more just and equitable immigration system

The main progress towards Goal 1 has been around building additional influencing capacity through increased staff posts. There is also evidence that organisational understanding of strategic litigation and strategic communications and messaging has increased as a result of JTI's support.

There has been less progress to date with mobilising and building support around key influencing goals, largely due to an external environment in which undertaking influencing activity is very challenging. Over this period, recruitment and retention of staff has become more difficult.

There is an appetite from both funders and Grant Partners for JTI to further clarify its own role in relation to influencing.

Goal 2: Immigration organisations are more sustainable, better networked and more representative of the communities they serve

Grant Partners have strengthened and developed their capacity through JTI's funding and support. They have more paid staff, attracted further funding (beyond JTI funding), and staff have gained new skills and qualifications.

Grant Partners have developed stronger, wider networks as a result of being part of the Initiative. These include stronger networks between Grant Partners; wider formal partnerships with other local migration sector organisations; stronger local and grassroots partnerships; and an increased ability to refer between organisations. Grant Partners have found that building strong partnerships takes significant time and resource, often more than organisations have budgeted for.

Moving towards a more professionalised approach with better qualified staff and greater capacity has enabled Grant Partners to be more strategic in their approach to tackling local and national issues.

There is less overall progress towards improved referral routes, as so much time is required to streamline case management systems, whilst demand for services continues to increase.

Executive Summary: Key findings (2)

Across both Goals 1 & 2, greater numbers of people with lived experience are being employed: 32 roles in total have been created for staff with lived experience: 18 into advice roles and 14 into influencing roles. In total, 46 new roles have been funded. In the longer-term, it is hoped that these roles will positively influence their organisations and wider immigration sector. As these posts remain fairly new, outcomes are yet to be seen.

Staff with lived experience can be re-traumatised through their immigration advice and influencing work – supporting them in their roles, therefore, requires care and thought.

Goal 3: More people are able to secure justice

Progress towards Goal 3 is reliant on progress being made towards outcomes in Goals 1 & 2. In particular, improved referral routes, increased numbers of staff, and enhanced access to supervision, training and well-being support for staff are intended in the medium-term to increase people's access to good quality, timely legal advice and support. The evidence in this report of progress towards these outcomes, therefore, suggests that headway is also being made towards Goal 3.

There is also further evidence of progress towards this goal: the number of people Grant Partners anecdotally report as being able to access support has increased, and the quality of the advice and support they are able to offer has improved. However, it is difficult to robustly quantify this increase, as Grant Partners collect the data in different ways.

It is clear that Grant Partners are operating in an exceptionally challenging context, and questions about the sustainability of the work are very pressing – they would like JTI to hold open conversations about the plans for future funding and sustainability.

JTI has done a significant amount of thinking, reflecting and strategising about its work and practice – communicating and discussing this further with Grant Partners and funders would be welcomed.

Executive summary: Recommendations

Overall, JTI can offer proof of concept around its ability to convene and fund effectively; in the next stage the focus can shift towards the longer-term vision. These recommendations offer some ways in which JTI can make further progress towards the outcomes:

Process and values

- Develop further opportunities for funders to engage and constructively challenge at a strategic level, for example by dedicating one quarterly meeting entirely to strategy.
- Include information about JTI's structure and decision-making processes in impact reporting to Grant Partners.
- Hold a session with Grant Partners and funders to explain the ToC;
- Revise communications about available support (such as childcare) to Grant Partners to ensure messages are clear and accessible.
- Clarify the purpose and expectation of Community of Impact sessions, particularly those that are about sharing experience.

Goal 1: A more just and equitable immigration system

- Develop JTI's influencing strategy, particularly in relation to JTI's role in working with statutory and other funders.
- Explain JTI's own role in influencing funders and Grant Partners.
- Establish if the influencing strategy requires additional internal capacity to implement it.
- Work with Grant Partners to establish what increased strategic collaboration and coordination around Grant Partner influencing activity would look like - and therefore what could be put in place to support this.

Goal 2: Immigration organisations are more sustainable, better networked and more representative of the communities they serve

- Establish what would be the best mechanism for enabling frontline advice staff, particularly those with lived experience, to access clinical supervision.

- Re-visit and re-shape the Community of Impact session on anti-racism.
- Develop Community of Impact sessions designed to support Grant Partners to apply for legal aid contracts and other statutory funding for immigration advice.
- Explore how to support budgeting for partnership building in grant applications.
- Hold a discussion with Grant Partners about the sustainability of their funding after the grant period.

Goal 3: More people are able to secure justice

- Consider how to best support organisations to understand and capture data on the number of people they support in a systematic way.