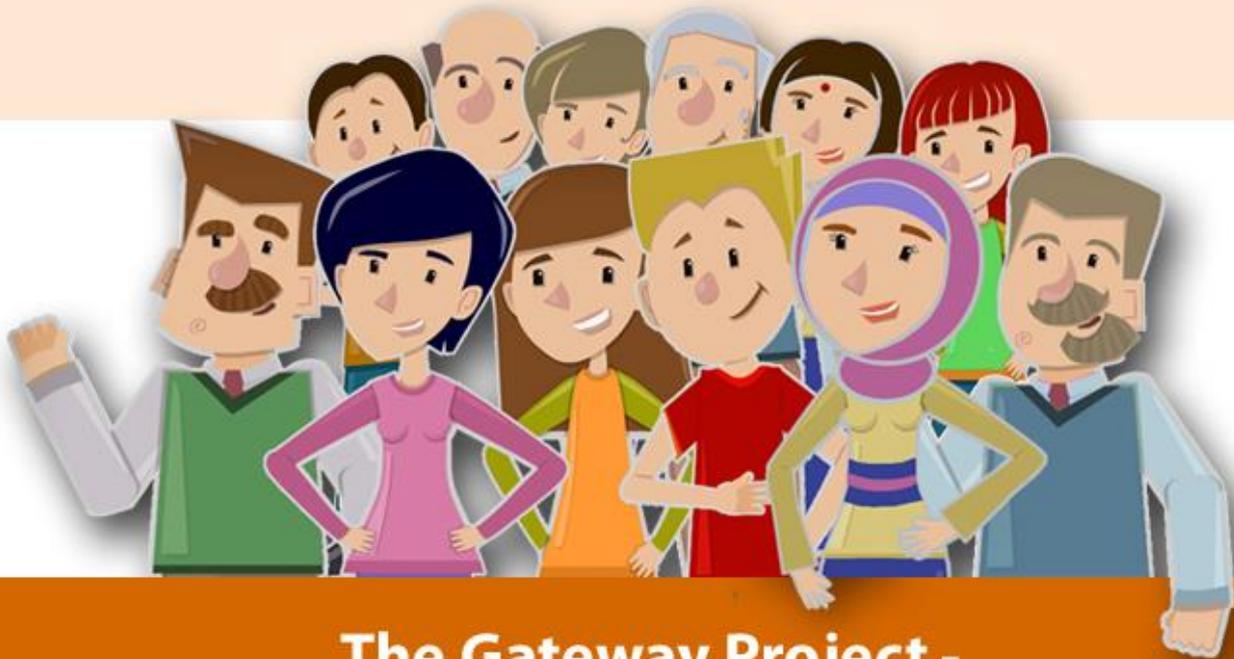




Steps Towards Co-production



The Gateway Project - Evaluation and Social Return on Investment Summary Report and Findings



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Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

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The Gateway Project: Summary report and findings



Introduction

Project Gateway, led by Portsmouth City Council is an innovative programme designed to aid the integration of new migrants from non-EU countries by engaging volunteers in co-producing elements of social capital. It has been funded through the European Integration Fund with the support of the UK Home Office. This summary report draws together findings from the Evaluation report by Graham Lister and the Learning Histories report by Sarah Cheverton.

Commencing in November 2012 over an 18-month period-integrated training and support programmes were designed and delivered to 102 new migrant volunteers in: generic advice and information giving, English for speakers of other languages (pre-ESOL) pre citizenship and support for others learning English, employability and health advice.

The project aimed to develop social capital for migrants and their families, which could be measured and valued to demonstrate the lessons learnt and value for money achieved. Specifically, Community Advisors:

- Support community events to engage the target communities.
- Provide general information and guidance to members of the community.
- Provide specialist advice and support in health and employability and assistance to people learning English.
- Attend volunteer Community Advisor network meetings.

The Gateway project was a learning experience, not only for the volunteers that took part in training and community support activities but also for the delivery team at Portsmouth City Council, the training providers and the research team. As the project proceeded we all learnt to trust one another. Formed and the staff they worked with and the project team gained confidence in the capabilities of the women volunteers.

At the outset of the project it was essential to establish a clear understanding of the number and nature of new migrants to Portsmouth. Census data provided a starting point but it was essential to adjust these data to account for students and other short term visitors. It was also helpful to examine trends in relation to the domains of integration. However, it was even more important to understand the perspectives and needs of migrant communities by talking to both a wide range of community leaders and the project participants.

The Gateway Project was a learning experience

Census data, integration trends, prospects and needs of migrant communities.



Delivery team: ...we look at statistics, GPs, all sorts of things, we tried to look, but [there are] very few data about exactly who are these local populations..... [when] we got together and looked at the demographics and the need in Portsmouth and what sort of priorities and outcomes we might want from this sort of initiative and it all seemed to fit...we could see that Portsmouth was becoming increasingly diverse, all the issues around...people accessing services, social isolation, working with communities: that agenda fitted Portsmouth very well...

The grand vision in a nutshell...was around empowering the community to help itself, so skilling up people from the community that would set them on that journey to integration and bettering themselves and the lives of their families...[It was] also about finding out what some of the barriers and issues are [to migrant communities accessing services]...and then looking at how we can be better at...targeting our services to community need.

Participant: I was worried, to tell you the truth [when we first came to England], because of the children in terms of safety, in terms of the neighbourhood. I wasn't sure how I would be able to mix with people, especially English people because you know what the media, the movies. You know. So when you travel to a country where the media and the movies give you a different perspective from the reality...you're carrying in your mind the picture you saw on the television or the cinema. When I came here, for one week we didn't go out because...we were worried. And I was always telling my kids, don't raise your voice, keep low, don't go out, you can't go out alone.

Participant: For 2 years, I never went without my husband anywhere. All the time I want to live in home because I have no confidence, always I was scared. I never went to the market, I never go anywhere, all the time I was scared.

Bonding

Migrants from different countries had different needs and at first formed bonds within their ethnic groups. We also found that there were many common practical and emotional issues faced by migrant women from all countries such as childcare responsibilities, health and fears for safety. Once basic language barriers were addressed, it quickly became apparent that these factors helped to form bridges across groups as a "community of new migrant women".

Delivery team: I think the biggest surprise was the range of responses. So some people said...their community members really struggle in getting employment and ...they were being discriminated against and they couldn't get their foot into the job market. Whereas others said...most people who came here who wanted jobs got them really easy, made new friends. Just the range of responses was interesting, even within similar communities, like different African communities where you might think they would face similar barriers, you get really different responses. So a good learning point: you shouldn't assume people will have similar problems even if they're from similar communities, but really go into detail, ask people what the barriers are, and if there are any barriers even, you know.

Participant: I think this networking thing is brilliant...Being able to speak to Bangladeshis...Egyptians, Moroccans, Cambodia...different people and you get to exchange information and...you feel like your world is big where before you felt like your world is a very tiny room with maybe little windows. But now you feel like the entire world is yours. That's how I feel, the entire world, I can move, I can travel, I have no fear now to explore things.

While ESOL was an important specialist course it was also apparent that all courses needed to consider language issues as these also represent barriers in fields such as health and employability. It was essential to adjust courses to the need of participants, which posed problems both due to the diversity of the participants and because women joined courses throughout the project.



Delivery team: there's one lady [who] had no English whatsoever and the other day she was laughing and joking with me and she's so excited about the training...and I said to her 'Your English is amazing, do you realise how much you've improved?' and she said 'Yes, I can do things now!' And when you see that, and you know that those individuals will make it work.

Participant: My mind is open [to] receive more information, more knowledge about the world. I can see other cultures...I can understand English from people with other accents.

Linking

As engagement with Gateway proceeded participants gained more confidence in their knowledge of rights and links to services, they increasingly identified themselves as "Community Advisors". This was reinforced by the recognition of learning achievements with diplomas.

Role as Community Advisor

Participation in providing advice, information and support to other community members in ESOL, health, rights and services and employability not only extended the ability of the project to create links with other members of migrant communities it also gave a sense of purpose and achievement to the participants. Recording and providing small rewards for this engagement was a further way of recognising their contribution and reinforcing self-worth. It was notable that many participants stayed with the Gateway project from the point at which they joined until the end of the current programme.

Incentives

Emergence of leaders

This can be regarded as an important demonstration of the value that the volunteers derived from their engagement. Over time their growing confidence and the emergence of leaders within the groups of women enabled them to lead community and group events. At the same time the project team gained confidence in the participants.

Participant: I really liked...the entire structure of this course...It gives you the basics, from communication skills to when you're in the community, how to approach people...then the specialisation will motivate you by getting you to specialise on a strand.

Delivery team: it's a partnership...we still had to get things in place...what was their role... the advisor role is something to be led by the programme but it's an emerging role as well...It is the individual themselves learning about their role and taking responsibility and taking a stand in that. We as a programme have to put the framework in place that supports them.



The analysis of Social Return on Investment

The analysis of the Social Return on Investment shows that even under the least favourable assumptions the project provides a very good social return on investment. Moreover if the project were continued through co production the return would be outstandingly good value. While such a socio economic assessment may seem cold-blooded, it is important to recognise that in reality the impact of the project transforms lives and builds community, not only addressing short-term needs but also providing lifetime benefits.

Participant: [Gateway] was fantastic. Confidence, high! From worrying to proactivity...From fear to I think, 'I can do it!' so positive. And now if I cannot do it, I can say I cannot do it BUT, I think somebody else can help. It's called signposting and I can do that now...In addition to the little courses and workshops, these Thursday meetings where we have visitors coming in and talking about different subjects, opening up our minds to things we never thought...

Participant: ...the opportunities I've been given, I literally never thought I would have had ever...the fact that I'm able to work on the Voice of Diversity blog, I've always loved writing but I've never really had an outlet...to really bring my skills and do it.

Participant: I have done the health and the employment strands...I've also done DigESOL and that's how I learned to create a blog and run a blog...I'm just finishing my mental health training with the mental health first aiders...[I'm] also doing dementia training and I've been able to connect with The Red Cross and I'm doing their Youth Educator training and then their First Aid training...It's helped me realise skills I haven't really tapped into before.

Participant: many of the things that I'm learning...are transferable to my family...my personality has changed in terms of the way I look at things. My awareness of certain issues have changed so now I'm more receptive, more patient. I look at the way my kids will do things differently and therefore the way I talk to them or I comment on the things they are doing are saying is different...Especially my 12 year old daughter who finds it easy now to express her opinion. In the past, probably she wouldn't – on things that maybe she wouldn't have done in the past, or to come and talk to me about things, maybe in the past it wouldn't have been easy for her to come to me and talk about.

Participant: I got information from this course which in the past was like a taboo...to talk about, [FGM] and in my community people will not talk about that. But because of attending this training, 2 days back, I was in hot debate about [FGM] with my own people, in the Arabic community, where some people supported the practice. So because I attended this course, I managed to show them how bad the practice could go...I didn't know there were 4 types of [FGM] but this presentation showed us that information. We were shown statistics, pictures...That information was the weapon or the tool I had to...give the people I was talking to about...I had all the pictures and just showed them to them and once they saw that, they said, 'Really? This is what happens?'

Steps towards co-production

The potential of a co-production model

The evolution of the project can be seen as taking steps towards co production. The next important step is to continue the project in partnership with the participants. This will involve developing a representative structure amongst the participants, engaging other organisations representing women migrants.

A joint board should be established between Portsmouth City Council and these representatives and responsibility for ongoing delivery should be delegated to the participants, with monitoring and oversight provided by PCC. Gateway demonstrated the potential of a radical model of co-production. This requires a surrendering of traditional ways of working (i.e. delivering to, as opposed to delivering with) and changes of status and power (as 'experts' and professionals). Put simply, it challenges the local authority to position itself alongside communities, recognising their knowledge, skills and

Strong commitment

expertise as a core asset, equally important to but in many ways different from the skills base of the local authority itself.

Sharing lessons openly

All partners in the project developed a strong commitment to this principle at the heart of Gateway. This commitment to deliver with the participants, responding flexibly to their needs and skills, required innovation and risk taking by all partners sharing lessons openly from their experience of working together. It also tested the participants themselves to balance the project alongside other commitments

Principals of co-production

The principles of co-production have the potential to be applied more broadly, to challenge established models of service delivery with the potential to raise social, civic and political engagement among all groups including those disenfranchised or marginalised. Truly empowered communities must share the knowledge and skills by which to challenge existing power structures and help their communities to develop. This model cannot be imposed it must be allowed to emerge and given time to grow.

Importance of the contribution

Some of the success of this project may be attributed to its approach, but it is also important to stress the importance of the contribution and commitment shown by the Gateway team, Portsmouth City Council, the Gateway Delivery Partners: Employment, Health, Education/ESOL and Research, the Gateway supporters and stakeholders, the staff of the Victory Business Centre, home of the Gateway Enterprise Hub and most of all the extraordinary participants who contributed so much to Gateway Portsmouth.



Our key recommendations are therefore:

- Local Authorities must understand the characteristics and needs of new migrants, by looking beyond simple census data, to engage through ongoing conversations with migrant communities.
- Early interventions to support integration for new migrants, perhaps as a welcome pack offering both training and participation opportunities, is life changing for participants and communities.
- Support for new women migrants is particularly valuable in community building, as they often face cultural, practical and emotional barriers.
- Training in ESOL, citizenship, advice and information, health and employability should be offered to aid personal and social development.
- All courses need to be tailored to the needs of participants and in particular the specific language skill required in each field.
- It is also essential to help overcome the barriers new migrant women face by providing transport and child minding where necessary.
- Courses not only equip participants with life skills and confidence but also enable friendships, within and across cultural groups to form a community of new migrant women.
- The value of training can be greatly enhanced by engaging participants as volunteers to support others. This both extends the reach of social integration and gives purpose and self-confidence to volunteers.
- It is important to reinforce self-confidence by giving recognition to the contribution of individuals, in the form of diploma's for training and as rewards for voluntary work.

- The process of researching and listening to new migrants needs, providing training and engaging participants in community support roles are important steps towards co production of an integrated community.
- The final step is to empower the community of women formed by this process to take shared responsibility as programme partners.
- Analysis of the Social Return on Investment of this programme shows that the existing programme represents a sound investment in terms of current and future benefits to society.
- Moreover a continuation of the project in partnership with participants offers outstandingly good value for money in these terms.
- National policy should support Local Authorities to work with current and new migrant communities to co-produce social capital as a basis for community wellbeing, personal, economic and social development.

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