

Stepping Up in Sustainability 2011-12

Enfield community Learning Service Case Study



Title of project	Sustaining Circles	
Lead partner organisation name and address	London Borough of Enfield Enfield Community learning Service Marsh House First Floor 500 Montagu Road Edmonton London N9 0UR	
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1. Aims of the project	<p>The overarching aim for the project was to seed a culture in which the aspiration to conspicuous consumption is replaced with the aspiration to preserve the existing planet resource asset base. This is concomitant with the regulation of usage on a replaceable model.</p> <p>It was proposed to set up, facilitate, support and promote 3 Learning Circles in partnership with two Local Registered Social (RSL) Landlords, to target local disadvantaged families.</p> <p>This target audience are statistically the least likely to have previously adopted sustainable practices because of the cost premium frequently, and equally as frequently, erroneously, associated with sustainable lifestyles. The project mantra was that it does not cost the earth to be sustainable.</p>	
2. Situation: Identify the situation or issue that faced you	<p>The London Borough of Enfield has adopted policies designed to actively drive improvements in sustainable lifestyles for the population of the borough. However, significant sectors were not being reached through the usual channels.</p> <p>The project provided an innovative possible route to really engage with an underprivileged cohort in a meaningful way.</p> <p>The initial focus for learning revolved around the themes of food and water consumption in the wider context of consumerism linked to some of the underlying expressions of discontent that had resulted in recent extensive rioting. This added relevance, helped attract</p>	

	<p>individuals and families who would otherwise not respond to the usual mainstream advertising or promotion, and surmount the barriers that project activities such as these can encounter when pursued outside a mainstream supporting environment or sponsor organisation.</p>
<p>Task: Define the outcomes you needed to achieve</p>	<p>The project had a number of primary outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The setting up, promotion, facilitation and support of three Learning Circles; (2) Establish working partnerships with Registered Social Landlords to facilitate the engagement of residents in sustainable practices for the duration of the project; (3) Recruit individuals and families from deprived neighbourhoods who have not previously engaged with sustainable practices; (4) Create sustainability learning materials for use by learners and facilitators; (5) Design some evaluative tools to measure the impact of learning and the wider social effect of those using Learning Circles on sustainability practices in the community; (6) Through coordination with other initiatives of the London Borough of Enfield provide a legacy of focus on sustainability as a key driver of improvement in service delivery and the efficient use of resources. <p>This was a pilot project which was seeking to explore whether and to what extent the Learning Circle could be used as an effective means of intervention with a disadvantaged cohort of the population to produce real change in lifestyle practices.</p> <p>It was hoped that we would achieve two primary aims: the actual engagement of individuals who otherwise were simply not being reached, and then, in turn, to encourage those individuals to become agents for sustainable change.</p>
<p>3. Actions that you took in order to achieve your plan, and your approach</p>	<p>A timeline summary of the principle activities for the project follows:</p> <p>November 2011. Made initial contact with RSL partners, and stakeholders; identified and contacted administrators and key</p>

	<p>personnel such as Learning Circle facilitators; carried out a preliminary risk and suitability study; initiated contact with sustainability officers in delivery centres where Learning Circles will take place. Examined whether interpretative services will be required to ensure effective functioning of Learning Circle groups.</p> <p>December 2011. Designed evaluation questionnaires; advertised Learning Centre activities through a variety of media, leaflets, learning services, women's centres, ethnic/cultural associations; RSL supported promotion at selected deprived estates to include hard-to-reach participants; designed facilitator training; engaged facilitators and provided facilitator training.</p> <p>January 2012. Designed course materials for meetings; rolled out Learning Circle programme; registered participants and commenced facilitation of first Learning Circle meetings; appointed minute takers for Learning Circle meetings; supported and facilitated subsequent Learning Circle meetings.</p> <p>February 2012. Continued series of Learning Circle meetings and sub-group workshops; supported and promoted Learning Circles; commenced evaluation and audit. Issued evaluation questionnaires.</p> <p>March 2012. Completed meetings and programme; utilised the evaluative tools; collated data and results and completed the evaluation exercise. Produced dissemination pack to LSIS, stakeholders, RSL partners, London Borough of Enfield sustainable team & interested parties. Conducted a dissemination seminar with stakeholders, participants, local cultural and community organisations and international attendees. Prepared impact assessment report and case study for LSIS publication.</p>
4. Results that you obtained	<p>The project wanted to establish:</p> <p>(a) Whether the learning experience had been a positive one from the members' perspective;</p> <p>(b) To what extent participants felt empowered to aspire to set up their own Learning Circles;</p> <p>(c) To what extent participation in the Learning Circle had produced, and perhaps separately had the potential to produce, actual change in life style activity;</p> <p>(d) To what extent the promotion of sustainability principles had</p>

been achieved through the operation of the Learning Circles.

PRACTICAL

The project has produced a core pack of reusable materials and resources. These include:

- Planning and organisation sheet
- Change chart to measure impact
- Sustainable Development Questionnaire
- Case Studies (Mrs Blowitt & Mr McGregor)
- Sustainable fact sheets
- Learning Circle Evaluation Sheet
- Results grid

QUANTITATIVE

- 3 Learning Circles were set up and successfully operated;
- 23 participants were recruited from low income and disadvantaged cohorts of the population not previously reached;
- The project actively engaged with 3 RSL partners.

QUALITATIVE

There were four areas in which specific responses from participants were captured.

(1) Sustainable living:

A significant proportion (96%) of participants expressed a firm intention to adopt identified changed sustainable lifestyle practices.

(2) The Learning Circle as a learning medium:

There was positive feedback from 91% of participants who expressed a willingness to attend Learning Circle activities in the future. One group were inspired to set up their own Learning Circle to continue the learning experience.

(3) Personal development:

Two thirds of the target cohort was disadvantaged and exhibited low academic ability with poor language skills. This group particularly benefited as a direct result of the Learning Circle experience from improved self-esteem. Of this group and as a direct result of being part of a Learning Circle:

- 100% expressed an increased confidence taking part in group discussion;
- 100% felt increased confidence meeting new people;
- 87% were more willing to speak up and express their views;
- 80% felt less isolated;

93% experienced an improved sense of personal independence.

(4) Promotion of sustainability within the community

52% of the entire cohort expressed a willingness to actively promote sustainable practices within the family and local community. It is this action as change agents that has the potential for sustained and real change in lifestyles, the more particularly as participants in many cases were inspired to ensure that their children adopted simple steps such as minimising water use and waste.

The facilitator feedback particularly highlighted that participants generally demonstrated an increased ability to communicate, an improved ability to engage in group discussion and an increased assertiveness as a direct result of the learning circle experience.

WHAT HAS THE ORGANISATION LEARNED?

The most valuable feedback from the project revealed a surprisingly widespread lack of knowledge concerning the current recycling and reusable initiatives across the borough. It was thought that the use of recycling bins, for example, was now commonplace. The target cohort for this project has now been identified as a priority group for promotion and marketing of the recycling and reusable programmes within the borough.

One of the organisations engaged with project delivery is exploring the use of Learning Circles as a part of their on-going training programme.

The other aspect of project experience has revealed the need for a financial scorecard. The sustainable message needs to be underpinned with direct measurable benefits and one of the most obvious and clearly expressible measures are the financial savings that can be achieved. For the project cohort this seemed to be the most readily appreciated means of both attracting participants' attention and retaining their engagement with the promise of real financial benefits.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR LEARNERS?

The project has had a positive impact on participants and their families with focussed discussion within the Learning Circles on waste, excessive and wasteful use of resources and the support that is already in place for recycling and reuse of products and materials. The financial benefits that can accrue from sustainable lifestyles have been highlighted.

	<p>Participants were challenged in their assumptions and began to appreciate that success is not simply measured in terms of consumption.</p> <p>There was a general sense that participants had learnt a great deal about resources and their use where previously they had simply made assumptions. They were being encouraged to re-examine what, for many, had been unconscious assumptions and use patterns of behaviour, which were quite unnecessarily wasteful.</p>
<p>5. What made the project a success? What were the key ingredients?</p>	<p>The project was underpinned by the creation of a pack of quality resources and a robust evaluation tool set. The project required a short but intense period of preparation which focussed on the creation of these resources.</p> <p>In addition particular attention was paid to matching those resources, so far as was possible, with the predicted limitation on skills sets that were anticipated from the target cohort. This was a project specifically conceived to reach sectors of the community that were both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Not reached by other initiatives, and, (b) Were likely to exhibit engrained habits of consumption not easily susceptible to change, and, (c) Were most unlikely to adopt changes in lifestyle unless they were encouraged through a readily accessible medium with the promise of some tangible and measurable benefit that they could see occurring within a short time span. <p>The enthusiasm of individual facilitators was an important factor. Particularly with the target cohort the participants tend to rely upon other less specific factors such as the perceived enthusiasm of presenters as opposed to a more academic assessment of the quality of resource materials.</p> <p>One of the evaluation tools explored with participants whether and to what extent they had acquired greater knowledge of sustainable practices. This added to a tangible sense of achievement on the part of participants who attended and enabled the measurement of the distance travelled by these learners.</p>

6. Any resources or tools produced by the project	<p>The project has produced a pack of reusable materials and resources. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Case Studies (Mrs Blowitt & Mr McGregor) ▪ Learning Circle Evaluation Sheet ▪ Que cards 		
7. Total costs of the project	LSIS funding	Match funding	Total funding
	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£10,000.00

<p>I</p> 	<p>Funded by LSIS through the Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund</p>	
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