# Implementation guide

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| Provider name/consortia members  | **Adult Education in Gloucestershire** |
| Project title | Befriending works |
| Project summary | This project, piloted a model of befriending and mentoring networks within specific communities where, currently, individuals are removed from the mainstream. Increasing leadership skills within these communities will also embed social cohesion, tolerance and understanding. A collaborative approach with partner agencies will ensure that needs are met within a local context, in addition to addressing the multiplicity of issues across both rural and urban environments. Skills acquired during a short training course will equip local people to raise aspirations, combat discrimination, increase community cohesion and widen participation across their communities through the befriending and mentoring process. This is a model that can be transferred to other communities seeking self-supporting mechanisms relating to local need, in preference to relying on ‘outside experts’. |
| What were the aims of the project? | Our key **aims** through this pilot project were to:* Develop local *befrienders* in 4 different community groups and/or in different geographical locations
* Develop and capacity build the community base for such individuals by providing the appropriate mechanism sustainability
* Train, and then mentor, volunteers through pilot activities – befriending individuals in their community, organising informal learning activities, acting as a learning mentor to the most unconfident and reflecting on the impact of those actions and drawing up plans for future volunteering actions.
* Develop the ethos of Community Leadership (not individual leaders) that will embed leadership skills into the locality and communities.
* Encourage, empower and support communities to start community enterprise groups where achievement success and diversity can be widely celebrated
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| What did you do? | **What is involved? (list actions as bullets points)**Identified 4 community partner organisations- willing to train befriendersSupply training outline and tutors who were responsive to detailed needs and different starting points of the groups. The training we designed allowed the tutor to pick up at a point suitable for the groups members existing skills and development. Mentor befrienders in their first steps with practical advice and personal support working towards them taking ownership and leadership in their communities. *After the initial training in all projects there was a period of “work” in the community followed by further training and development input.* Investigated and negotiated with the 4 partners their mechanisms for supporting volunteers and sustaining actions*. It emerged* |
| What did the project cost, including LSIS funding? | £30,000 in total£25,000 LSIS grant£5,000 costs for management, ICT support and dissemination activitiesIncludingUse of VLEVLE training sessions and supportUse of office and admin processes.Link to Lifelong Learning Network across county. |
| Impact: what difference did the project make/changes of behaviour in beneficiaries | Working with the four partner community organisations produced remarkably different impacts and perhaps highlights the variables that come into play when working with communities and community organisations. The partner community organisations in the Cheltenham and Churchdown areas faded and became defunct during the life of the project due to cuts to their core funding. However, two strong volunteers emerged from these groups who are eager to take the befriending work forward and are currently looking for opportunities to do so.In the Gloucester area, the project worked with tenants from Gloucester City Homes and this group flourished. The self leading group of 8 people fomalised their group, by adopting a constitution and naming themselves the ‘United Nations’! These key people who are embedded in the community provide initial information and encouragement that empowered individuals to make informed choices. To date, they have signposted approximately 30 people, who previously had not been involved in learning, to formalised provision.Whilst forming their group, the Cinderford volunteers considered different management and leadership styles, and adapted a collaborative leadership approach to group decision making. This resulted in 6 consistent volunteers befriending between30 to 40 people within their communities and developing their IT skills through the My Guide site. <http://www.myguide.gov.uk/myguide/MyguideHome.do> This group became known as the ‘digital volunteers’. The majority of learners were older people and people who were less able and less likely to engage with formalised learning. The learners were taken through two IT modules and each success triggered a payment of £45 per person, which has created a sustainable model of delivery. Finally, the project used some funding to revisit a children’s centre that had been a partner in a previous befriending programme. This enabled further support to be offered in leadership and management skills for potential befrienders and resulted in two ‘learning coffee mornings’ taking place whereby parents learned how to make their own baby food to encourage healthy eating, and received a ‘makeover’ to build self esteem. These activities don’t fit into formal learning, but are an important hook at demystifying learning for people who have not been in formal learning for some time.Of the partner organisations involved in the project, 2 have created sustainable models for enable them to continue their befriending work and befriending at the children’s centre is continuing, but it is recognised that this involves continual recruiting a new befrienders to ensure sustainability. It is likely that two volunteers from the partner organisations that folded will carry on their befriending work as needed within their communities.  |
| What were the lessons learned?What tips do you have for other providers? | Although some of the centres have some mechanisms in place for support and management of volunteers they did not appreciate the extent of effort needed to run new cohorts who were very active. Two centres were already training up volunteer managers who took on these groups and it was an identified need in the other centres fairly quickly. It takes a long time to win community trust for the mentors to feel their work was getting response, especially where the area had a history of past failed initiatives and projects. Communication is key in the emerging teams – we trained and encouraged the four centre groups to use discussion forum on AdEd VLE at this first stage. We wanted to join it with other contacts so that their was a visible “talking about learning” across the county by people in the community.This will be held open for their use for some time – or until they decide that independent web sites at their centres or Facebook would be a better way to contact local people and each other.Provide for time to initially assess the existing skills of the befrienders at the start of the project and then have time to develop the organisation taking the befrienders forward positively and “exploiting” their skills and abilities. Allow time and support for the befrienders to become a team and establish roles. There are already a lot of skills within the community – two volunteers had already received befriending training from Age Concern. The open bank of training materials allowed expert tutors to dip in and out and make the sessions very relevant to the group needs and the way the individual areas needed. |
| Further information and key resources | We dipped into the Community Learning Champions web site and training materials to access ideas and training leads. [www.communitlearningchampions.org.uk](http://www.communitlearningchampions.org.uk) At least two groups found useful information in the Self Organised Learning Website/toolkit.The Cinderford group used <http://www.myguide.gov.uk/myguide/MyguideHome.do> to create a sustainable model of delivery. |
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