



End of Project Report 2016 – 2021

Project Outcomes:

- | |
|---|
| <i>1. Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) men have improved health and well-being, confidence to be more active in society, and ability to deal with family issues.</i> |
| <i>2. BAME men have increased their employability skills through IT, language training, and accessing further education.</i> |
| <i>3. BAME men have increased their knowledge, awareness and resilience against radicalisation and extremism.</i> |

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1. PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Projects Highlights for 5 years



8 Health & Wellbeing events/workshops



Over 50 group/one-to-one sessions on ICT



4 tournaments



Over 50 sessions



Over 80 ILP café session



Over 50 one-to-one sessions on Pre ESOL session



4 annual recreational trip on culture, heritage and history



Over 150 one to one sessions on Driving Theory



6 major events and workshop on Hate Crime, Prevent strategy and Radicalisation

i) Health and well-being

Health & Wellbeing



In 5 years we supported over 240 men within the community



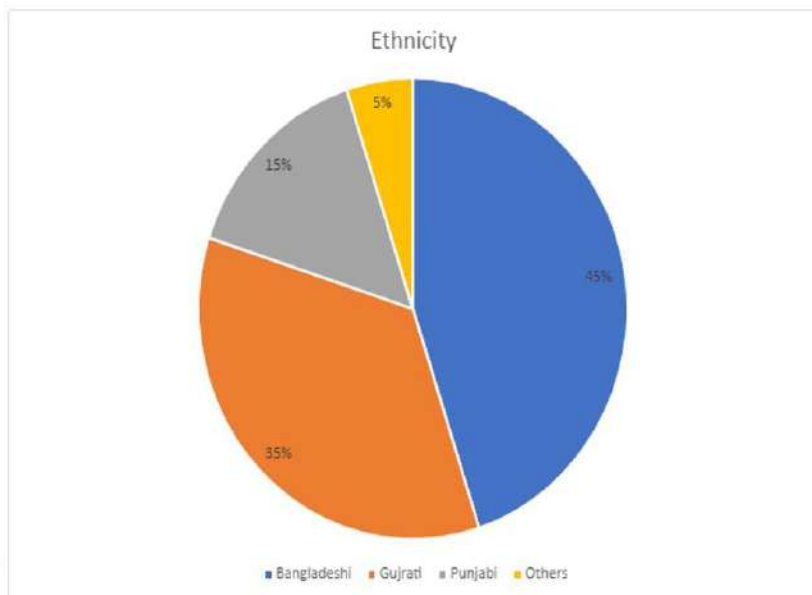
100% considered the sessions useful and informative



Over 35% get involved in physical activities



Over 50% adopted healthy diet options

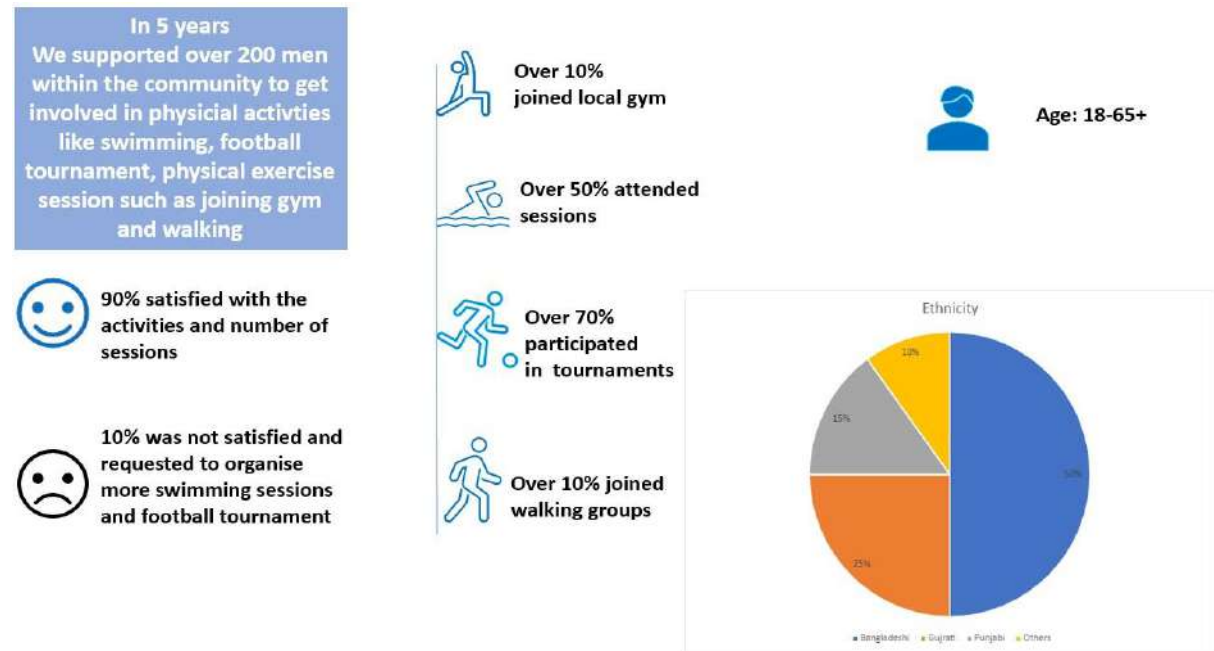


Over 90% stated sessions developed their awareness on various health issues

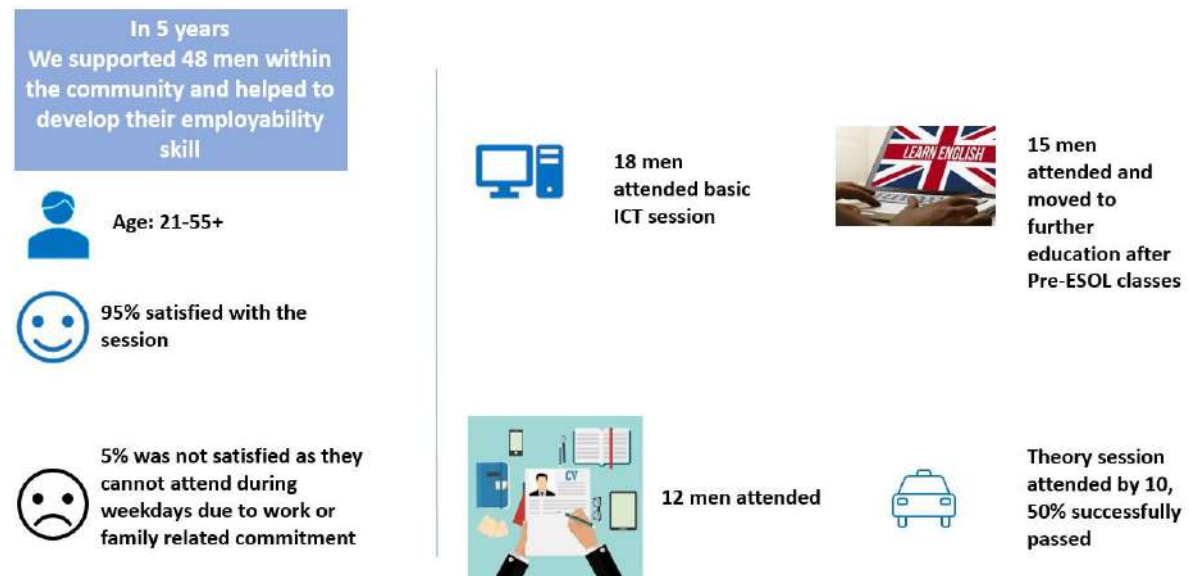


Age: 35-65+

ii) Other physical activities



iii) CV and interview skills



2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Following the successful securing of the grant, we did a press release in our local paper, social media sites and website informing people of the project. The project officers held a launch attended by over 80 people, including potential beneficiaries, as well as service providers, agencies and interested individuals including those from local communities, a representative from the Gurudwara, someone from the Bangladeshi community.

Project staff made regular contact with existing and new groups to ensure the project was well promoted, and attended networking meetings and group sessions to engage with people. They promoted it through word of mouth to people who came in for general advice who then in turn informed others. Some beneficiaries were signposted to the project by local partners.

During this five-year period, we worked very closely with local faith groups through Loughborough Council of Faiths who helped promote the project. We also worked closely with local voluntary and statutory agencies to ensure that we complemented and enhanced existing and new initiatives, as well as trying to link into local opportunities for the beneficiaries. We worked closely with our local newspaper which reported on the project's work from time to time.

We linked in with local health, employment, training, and volunteering services to ensure our beneficiaries could access their services where relevant. We set up a Steering Group for the project that had a few key people on it from relevant partners, 2 beneficiaries and project officers including the line manager. They helped us get information on any changing needs in the community and helped guide the project and monitor its progress, highlighting what worked and what didn't.

Since the beginning of this project, we built links with individual men in the local BAME communities. It had been a slow, hard process but slowly we gained the confidence of the men who started to attend sessions, workshops and activities regularly. These were men from across different cultures, faiths, ages and diverse backgrounds, they came originally from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan and therefore spoke different languages such as Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu, who came forward and got involved with project. New friendships have made, particularly for men who are retired and in the past did not have much interaction with others.

Due to Covid-19, year five was a difficult one for the project to run group sessions, workshops and various activities. Nonetheless, project officers kept in contact with beneficiaries to deal with their queries and had the opportunity to run a few sessions which complied with government Covid-19 guidelines.

We are pleased to see this project has played a key and active part in the community since 2016, by delivering numerous services that we prioritise for each year, which were supported by the partner organisations, guided by the line manager and steering group members, and delivered by the project officers. All our events, sessions and workshops have encouraged the local community to come together to build community cohesion.

We would like to pass our sincere gratitude to The National Lottery Community Fund, our line manager, members of the board of trustees, and above all the

beneficiaries of the Improving Lives Project. Without their support and engagement, we would not have been able to accomplish so much. They all contributed to the successes delivered in this project.

3. ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

i) Health and well-being workshops and events

In year one, a health event held in October 2016, with 50 men attending. Relevant health organisations came to share information and promote their services. The men received information on local health services and advice from health experts. This event helped to build awareness of healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and the importance of regular exercise.



Health event in Year 1

In year two, two awareness-raising workshops held in March, in partnership with Community Health and Learning (CHL) Foundation to raise men's understanding of Alzheimer's and Diabetes. Over 40 men attended.

Two health events held in May and July: "Healthy eating during Ramadan", in partnership with CHL Foundation and a local pharmacy, attended by more than 40 men; a Dementia Friendly event, in partnership with the Alzheimer's society, attended by 10 men.



"Healthy Eating during Ramadan" workshop



Dementia Friendly event

Two BAME men took up Mental Health First Aiders' training in April and May, to become champions in the community.

In year three, we held two health events, which were hosted in a local community centre that is within easy reach and a place people feel comfortable visiting. These were held in April 2018 and January 2019, and over 50 men attended both the events. We focussed on health issues that affect the BAME communities, including diabetes, dementia and obesity. Relevant health organisations attended, shared information and promoted their services. A local pharmacy attended and gave away free equipment to measure blood pressure and blood sugar levels, etc.

The men actively sought information, had health checks, and enjoyed finding out about the various support they can get. The health fairs seemed to motivate the men to change their lifestyles by increasing their physical exercise and eating healthier diets.



"I feel I am getting to understand more about health and the importance of healthy eating and doing more exercise. I don't want to have bad health as I get older and my family will have to look after me"

Health event in April

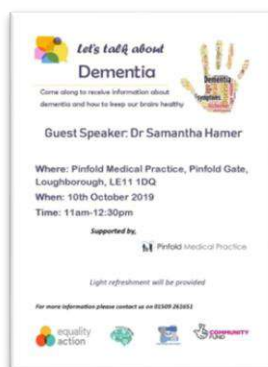


Rosebery Pharmacy staff carried out blood pressure checks.



CHL presentation on healthy lifestyle and diet during obesity awareness week, in January 2019

In year four, we organised a Dementia Awareness health event at Pinfold Gate surgery. This event focused on local services available, causes and symptoms, and support for carers. Local NHS and a doctor's surgery facilitated the event, which was attended by over 40 people.



One of the key things that came out of the year four session was that many of the attendees from BAME backgrounds struggled to everything that was being said. With that language issue in mind, we planned a follow up Dementia awareness event in partnership with the surgery for March 2020. *However, due to Covid-19 lockdown, this had to be cancelled.*

a) Swimming sessions

One of our most popular activities was the weekly men-only swimming sessions, which were booked at a local venue in block sessions of 10 weeks or six weeks.

In year one, we held 10 men-only swimming sessions, from July to September; 21 men participated, including some who were swimming for the first time; five went on to join the leisure centre.

In year two, we held 15 men-only swimming sessions at Charnwood College; 20 men attended regularly, six with their sons.

In year three, we held 10 men-only sessions, from March to May; 25 men participated.

Some of the participants were first-time swimmers, who had the opportunity to learn from a Level 2 instructor, which we provided. These men came along with their sons, which gave them and their sons quality time to enjoy a physical activity and spend time talking and listening to each other.

“My son and I don’t spend any time together at home as he is mostly in his room or at school but since we have started to attend the swimming sessions, we find that this helps us catch up and talk. My son tells me a bit more about what he does at school and who his friends are. I feel that this has helped us get closer as a family”.

We believe opportunities that bring generations together have helped open up the dialogue for other issues that may be faced by the younger people.

In year 4, we sustained our men-only swimming sessions at Charnwood College until 2019; 20 men, along with their young sons, attended regularly.



"I really look forward to going swimming with my dad and spending time with him".

We then continued the sessions at DeLisle College, where 10-15 men attended regularly. The 10 men who brought their sons shared their view that these sessions were great for intergenerational bonding and helped them understand their young sons, and the issues they were facing.

The swimming sessions were suspended in March 2020, due to Covid-19; we resumed from September until October 2020, when we had to stop again for the second lockdown. Considering the importance of the sessions, we had hoped to resume them but this was not possible because of lockdown restrictions, and our year five swimming sessions ended in October 2020.

b) Annual football tournament

In year one, our first seven-a-side football tournament took place in January, 2017. 12 teams from different cultures and backgrounds came together, and over 80 people attended. The tournament was highly successful and an opportunity for cross-cultural integration.



Year 1 Winning Team

In year two, our seven-a-side football tournament took place on in September 2017, with six teams from different ages, cultures and backgrounds. Many families came to support the players and the Mayor of Charnwood presented the trophies.



**Year 2
Winning
Team**

In year three, our third annual football tournament took place on in August 2018, at Loughborough College. , Six teams participated, from different ages, cultures and backgrounds for a friendly tournament, and over 40 people attended. The tournament was highly successful and an opportunity for cross-cultural integration. All the teams who participated have joined a WhatsApp group, which we created, to keep in touch, and organise their own football tournaments at the local leisure centres.



Year 3 winning team

In year four, the annual ILP football tournament was held in September 2019, with six teams, and the active engagement of 120 men from different background, cultures and ages. Following the success of these tournaments, teams in Leicester approached us, who wanted to join in and make this a bigger event.



Year 4 Winning Team

Our seven-a-side football tournament has become very popular within the community, and we had a plan to organise the year five competition on a bigger scale. We had our initial football tournament meeting in January 2020 with local mentors and referees, but had to postpone that plan for summer 2020. After the first lockdown, we were hoping to organise it in October 2020, or January 2021. Unfortunately, we could not move forward with our plan due to the pandemic.

We believe due to our football tournaments, many young men from the different faiths, cultures and backgrounds are interacting with each other and coming together for sporting activities. This is helping break down barriers and promote diversity. We are anticipating this to be an on-going event even after the project ends, reaching more young men and their families. This is helping break down barriers and promotes diversity and community cohesion.

c) Other physical activities

During this five-year period, beneficiaries were encouraged through health events and physical activity sessions, to join local gyms, walking groups, or participate in sports. Before the lockdown, 10 men joined the local leisure centre/gym and were involved in regular physical activities.

There were 15 men who regularly played badminton at two venues in Loughborough. We were also planning to organise a badminton tournament in the final year once the Leisure Centre and facilities were up and running.

ii) ICT sessions

In year one, 10 ICT sessions were held at the Library, from July to September, which were attended by 10 men. These helped to build their confidence in using a computer, developed their awareness of cybercrime, and improved their overall IT skills. Now they can search for jobs online, set up an email account and are developing the habit of using emails to communicate.



**ICT session at
Loughborough
Library**

In year two, we delivered one-to-one ICT sessions to eight men, from April to November 2017; two have since secured employment; all now have better computer skills and understand how to use the internet safely.

iii) One-to-one driving theory sessions

Of the eight men who attended the one-to-one ICT sessions in year 2, seven of them moved on to one-to-one our driving theory sessions; two of these successfully passed their test; five could not continue due to their work commitments, or because they moved out of the town.

At the end of year four, three men joined one-to-one driving theory sessions from January 2020. During lockdown, project staff regularly communicated with them to help with their theory preparation, updated them on recent changes in the theory test questionnaire, and shared useful web links to practice at home. By following government Covid_19 guidance, we were able to resume driving theory one-to-one sessions from August, and all three men passed their theory test in December 2020.



Driving theory one-to-one session

iv) Pre-ESOL basic English

In year two, we have provided basic pre-ESOL support to six individuals, who had no or little English. They are now able to converse more easily and we will continue working with them to improve their language skills and encourage them to move to mainstream ESOL classes, once they build their skills and confidence.

In year four, we have provided Pre-ESOL Basic English to four individuals, who moved to further education.

In year five, we also have provided basic pre-ESOL support to five individuals who had no or little English. *However due to lockdown, they were unable to continue their sessions.*



Pre-ESOL one-to-one session

v) CV and interview skills

In year two, seven men attended our CV and Interview Skills workshop in July, and also had further support from the local Jobcentre Plus.



Interview and CV writing workshop

In final year of the project, five BAME men took CV and interview skills sessions through virtual means, and had further assistance from our local Jobcentre Plus, to ensure they meet their Universal Credit Claimant Commitment. They now feel more empowered and confident to apply for jobs, particularly using online methods.

vi) Annual trip

In year one, : our trip to the Houses of Parliament took place in November 2016, to raise awareness of politics and current affairs. 50 men participated and had the opportunity to meet their local MP, and build friendships with other men from different backgrounds.



In year two, we organised a trip for 150 men and their families in August to Buckingham Palace. Most had never been sightseeing in London, and it helped them understand our heritage and was a good intercultural, intergenerational event.

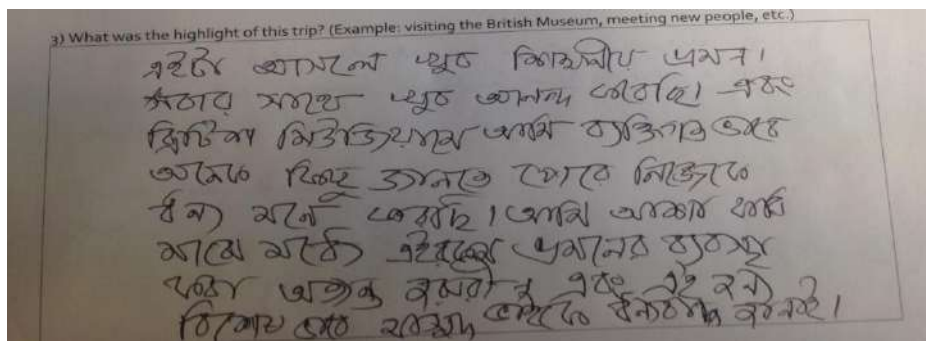
In year three, 32 men from BAME backgrounds visited the British Museum in October 2018. It was an educational experience, and gave them the opportunity to meet and socialise with other men from different faiths, cultures and background.



At the British Museum

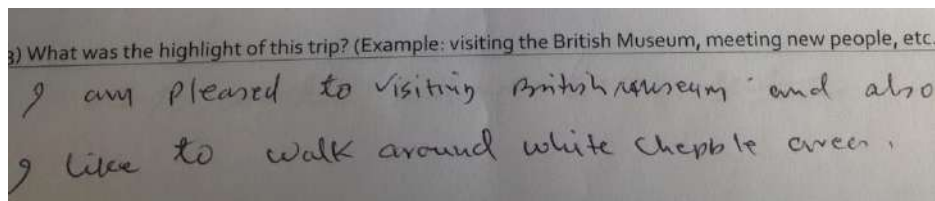
These are some of the comments from our feedback forms:

Mr. U: written in Bengali

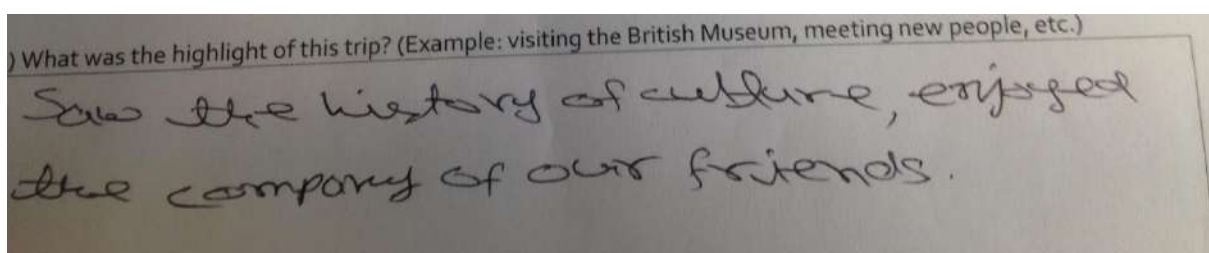


Translation: *It was a very good educational trip; I had a good time with everyone. I have gained knowledge on many things from this British Museum trip, which I did not know before, which has pleased me the most. I believe this sort of trip should be planned quite often and for this I would like to thank the project staffs.*

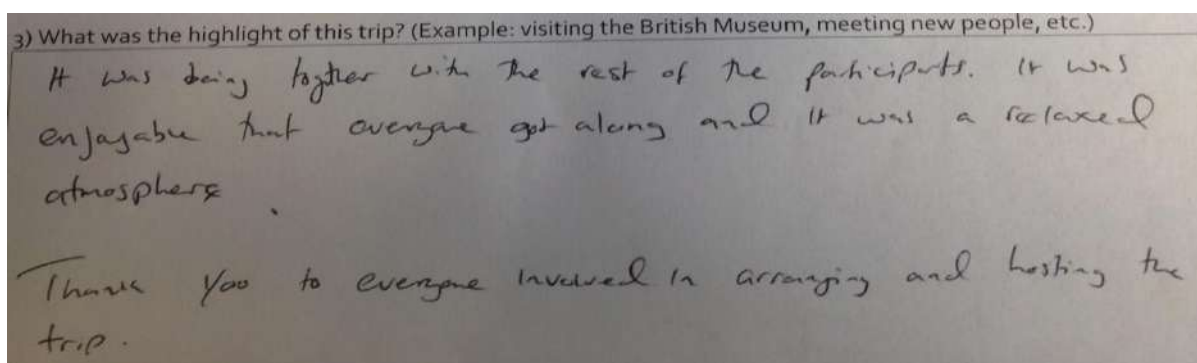
Mr. V:



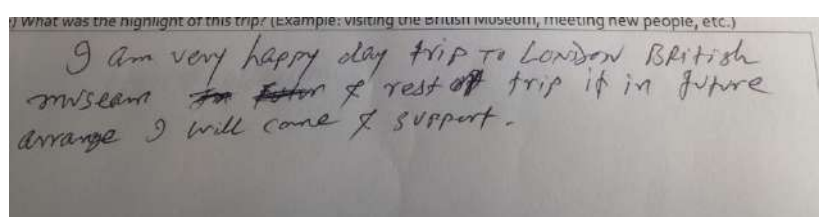
Mr. U



Mr. M



Mr. G



In year four, our annual trip took place in August, to Stratford Upon Avon, William Shakespeare's birth place; 35 men enjoyed learning about the history of the town, sightseeing, and spending quality time with others.

vii). Improving Lives Project cafe

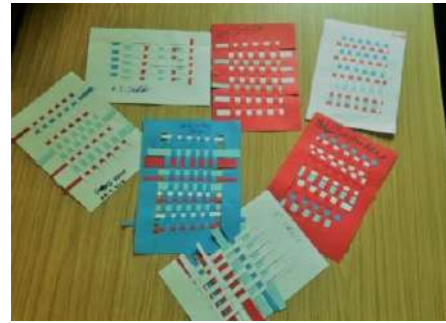
In year 3, from April 2018, we started ILP café sessions, held every Monday from 11am to 1pm at Fearon Hall. The main objective was to bring men from various ethnic backgrounds together to address issues relevant to health and well-being, skills development, and community cohesion. There were 15-18 men from different background, who met to learn and share their experiences through various activities.

At the café, we regularly organised many non-traditional sporting activities, such as carom, chess, and Ludo. There were 20 men, who have directly benefitted from these activities, and by socialising with others in the group.

Project staff introduced topics of interest at the sessions and brought in professionals to talk to the men about health and other matters. An example is we had staff from the local fire and rescue service who talked about fire safety in the home. Some beneficiaries had no smoke alarms and booked visits from the fire service to come and check their homes and install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Video link:

<https://www.facebook.com/improvinglivesproject/videos/1967385959989406/>



ILP café members making greeting cards and table mats for Diwali and Eid



Discussion on Universal Credit system



Members are playing chess and Ludo



Paintings by the café members

it is great to meet others and talk about politics, current affairs and issues that concern us all. I feel I have something to look forward to each week.

I look forward to Monday mornings when I can go to the café and meet my friends. Every week we do new things and I am really happy to be involved".

Session on fire safety: Leicestershire fire and rescue service



Our Improving Lives Cafe ran weekly until March 2020, when lockdown was declared, and resumed in September 2020, in accordance with government guidance. During this time, activities at the cafe helped beneficiaries with their physical health and well-being, encouraged them to socialise with their local community, made them aware of local issues, provided a safe platform to share their thoughts and experience, and built community cohesion and resilience.



ILP café sessions continuing after the first lockdown in a covid-19 safe manner with social distancing at Fearon Hall.

ix) Hate crime awareness

In year one, a hate crime awareness event was held in October 2016 at a local community centre. Over 30 local community members, mostly taxi drivers attended. This event provided a safe platform for them to share their views and experiences on hate crime. The police and council officers attended and talked about the support they could give and encouraged people to report hate crime incidents.



In year three, a hate crime awareness event was held in December 2018 at a local community centre attended by over 30 local people from different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. This event provided a safe platform for the attendees to share their opinions and experiences of hate crime. Officers from the local police and council explained how to report incidents and the support people can receive.

The event was a great opportunity for members of the community to meet and speak to the local authority about other concerns, including robberies. Following the discussions people attending helped identify potential areas for local agency collaboration and participation. The session was very interactive, with the project officers acting as interpreters to meet the language needs.



Attendees sharing their concerns with police and local councillors

In year four, we held two events during Hate Crime Awareness Week in October, on Community Safety and Hate Crime awareness, with support from Charnwood Borough Council's Community Safety team and local police. The first was held at Fearon Hall, Loughborough, and was attended by 20 men to find out more about reporting hate crime. The second event was a stall in Loughborough Market Place, where passing members of the public were given information on reporting and support available.



Charnwood Borough Council
neighbourhood
Safety Officer and
Improving Lives
Project officer at
Loughborough
Market place sharing
information on
reporting hate crime



ix) Prevent conference (building community resilience against radicalisation and extremism)

In September 2017, 60 men attended a Prevent Conference we organised with local partners, which provided a safe platform for all attendees to discuss this sensitive and controversial topic.

x) Radicalisation awareness

We organised a Radicalisation Awareness for Parents event in March 2019 at the Salvation Army Church in Loughborough. The event was organised with support from Leicestershire Constabulary, Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council; 120 people attended, including 25 men from BAME backgrounds who engage with our project.



Our guest speaker was Nicola Benyahia whose 16-year-old son went to Syria and never returned. She shared her tragic story and highlighted that she had never suspected that he was being radicalised online. This was followed by a presentation by Parent Zone on internet safety and helped raise awareness of how parents can protect their children.

We had three workshops after the presentations, one of which was delivered in Bengali for our 20-plus beneficiaries who did not speak English.

xi) Cookery sessions

With support from Loughborough University's Partition Project, three cookery sessions were organised to acknowledge the heritage, history and memories of partition in 1947 for men of South Asian origin.

15 of our beneficiaries participated in the cookery sessions, which took place at Fearon Hall and Salvation Army Church. Participants were interviewed by the academics from Loughborough University about their memories of partition and the food was a good tool to get the men talking.



Some of the men did the cooking, and the food they made brought back memories of life in India at the time of the partition and generated some difficult and sensitive discussion.

ILP beneficiaries at the workshop of Charnwood museum

In order to acknowledge the ancestral route and to encourage diversity and wider engagement with Leicestershire Museum Services, two workshops were organised by Charnwood Museum. 20 of our beneficiaries participated in those workshops, which were facilitated by the Leicestershire County Council's Communities and Wellbeing Services.



Charnwood Museum's Do You See What I See? Workshop

4. CAPTURING IMPACT

To capture the difference the project is making to the beneficiaries, we used a wheel of confidence; we designed evaluation/feedback/progress forms; and did impact assessment through case studies. When people joined the project, one of the officers mapped their levels of confidence, skills, social engagement, physical and mental wellbeing. As they progressed and engaged with the project, we reviewed this on an annual basis.

All the feedback we received was shared with the steering group and this helped us to map the progress and also helped to identify where development was required, or things needed to be done in a different way.

One of the achievements of the project is the level of engagement in wider society that most of the men engaging with our project have achieved. At one time, none of them would get involved in things like the Loughborough Mela, initiatives with Charnwood Museum, Loughborough University, etc; now they are keen to get involved and thoroughly enjoy themselves.

Wheel of confidence

Community Star
The outcomes star for Improving Lives Project

Physical activities

Healthy lifestyle

English language skill

Learning new activities

Further education/skills/volunteering

Awareness on local issues

Knowledge of other cultures

Setting to know people

Attending events

ICT skills

ILP

Name:
Date:
Review Date:
Any other comment:

Evaluation form

ICT EVALUATION & PROGRESS FORM

Personal Details

Title: First Name: Last Name:

Course Evaluation

1) Did the course meet your expectations? ☐ Fully ☐ Partly ☐ Hardly ☐ Not at all

2) Please rate the quality of:

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Tutor(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
course Content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
course Materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3) Which content of the course was most useful to you?

4) In what ways this course has benefited you?

5) Would you recommend this course to other? Please give your reasons (help in job search, build confidence)

6) What courses would you consider to join in future?

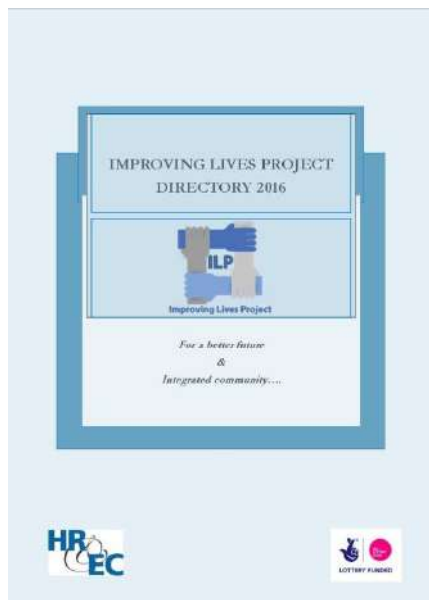
Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation

i) Volunteering

- Five men who attended the café sessions, took a lead on facilitating and delivering activities on healthy exercise, board games, and helped to find out from the others what topics they wish to discuss at future sessions. When one of our project officers was unable to attend, they took a lead in setting up and running the session.
- Three men took a lead on helping with the swimming sessions, including picking up other men who do not have cars and driving them back from the sessions. They also helped as swimming motivators, and encouraged those who were not so confident to keep trying.
- Two beneficiaries helped to keep the register every week at the café session, and for the men-only swimming at the leisure centre.
- Five men regularly attended our steering group meetings, gave input on local issues that project addressed, and guided the project activities with their local knowledge and experience. They took a lead role in encouraging men from their communities to be involved in the activities and events through the project.
- Two beneficiaries of the project wanted to train up as exercise leaders (walking, chair-based exercise, etc). Where possible, we encouraged the men to take a lead in planning sessions, delivering an activity, or organising things.
- One beneficiary took on a role of carrying out a consultation, including visiting families in their homes to see whether there were other needs among the men that the project could help meet.
- We saw more men volunteering at local events, such as Loughborough Mela. In 2018, five men volunteered for the event through the project; in 2019, 15 men took on volunteering roles on the day as marshalls, as well as helping distribute posters and flyers, helping with stall booking forms, etc. Two beneficiaries had stalls at the event, and also encouraged their families to come and help.

5. PUBLICITY, NETWORK AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Improving Lives Project produced a directory in its first year with updated local services, activities and groups that were relevant to the project, which was widely shared among voluntary, community and statutory agencies, as well as individuals.



Over the last five years, we worked closely with the local and regional organisations in Leicestershire, including community, voluntary and statutory bodies.

We worked with local surgeries and medical centres on health topics, and brought in their expertise and knowledge to deliver sessions to raise awareness.

We worked with local schools and community venues, with our swimming or football tournaments. This helped to build our beneficiaries' confidence to go to colleges and schools now for other reasons, including their children's parents evening.

We have established a good working relationship with many local community groups in Loughborough over the years, such as Saathi Group, Bangladesh Social Association, Geeta Bhavan, Fearon Hall Community Centre, Anand Mangal Group, John Storer Charnwood, Shree Ram Krishna Centre, etc. During the period of this project, we had regular meetings with them and ensured we publicised our project and its activities through them to reach wider audiences.

Our links with Active Charnwood, Local NHS Providers, GP surgeries, Loughborough University, Charnwood Museum, Life Long Learning, various educational institutes and local community centres have gone from strength to strength. All the partners told us that they valued our input in helping them reach men from BAME backgrounds in events, activities and initiatives that they would not otherwise have engaged in.

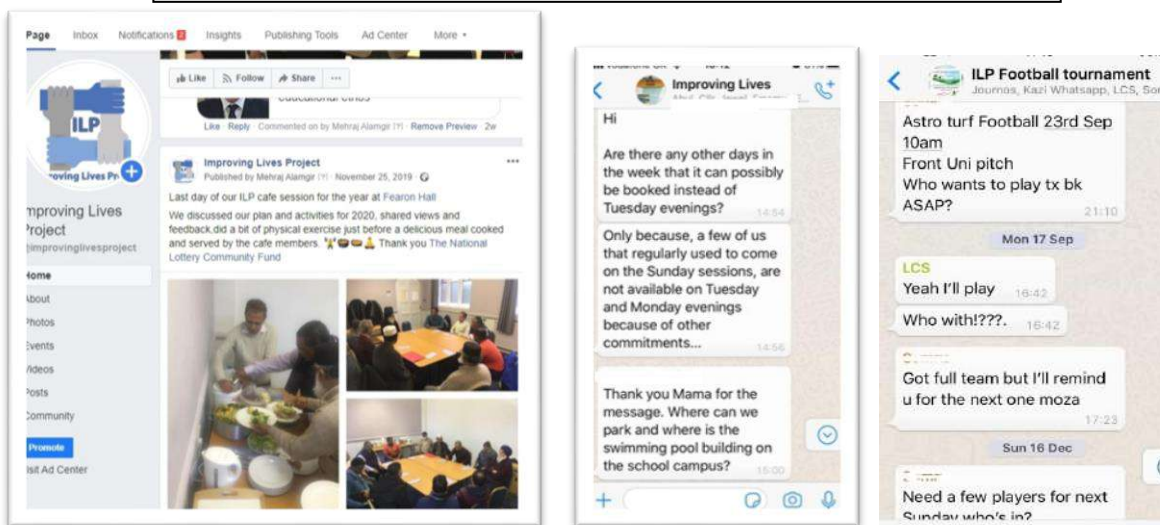
We worked closely with our local newspaper who reported on the project's work from time to time.



Beside word of mouth, newsletters, local newspapers and flyers, all these events were also been promoted via social media sites, to reach our beneficiaries who are using social media platforms. Those who were not very familiar with the technology were given one-to-one support. During the project, beneficiaries joined our Facebook page, and men with smart phones have signed up to our WhatsApp groups for the swimming, café sessions, football tournaments. We used these groups to remind them about the session date, time and relevant information, and beneficiaries were also using them for socialising.

Our staff had training sessions on social media to build better awareness and develop skills to promote the project on those platforms. Our organisation is also active on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram; and our website was used to promote the project as well as other work of the organisation. We linked to partners through appropriate tags on our social media feeds.

Screenshot of our FB page and WhatsApp Groups



i) **Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/improvinglivesproject/>

All the teams who participated in our football tournaments are part of a WhatsApp group, which we created four years ago. This group keeps in touch, regularly communicates, and organises their own football tournaments at the local leisure centres, independent of our project. We also regularly shared government guidance for Covid-19 and supported group members with necessary information.

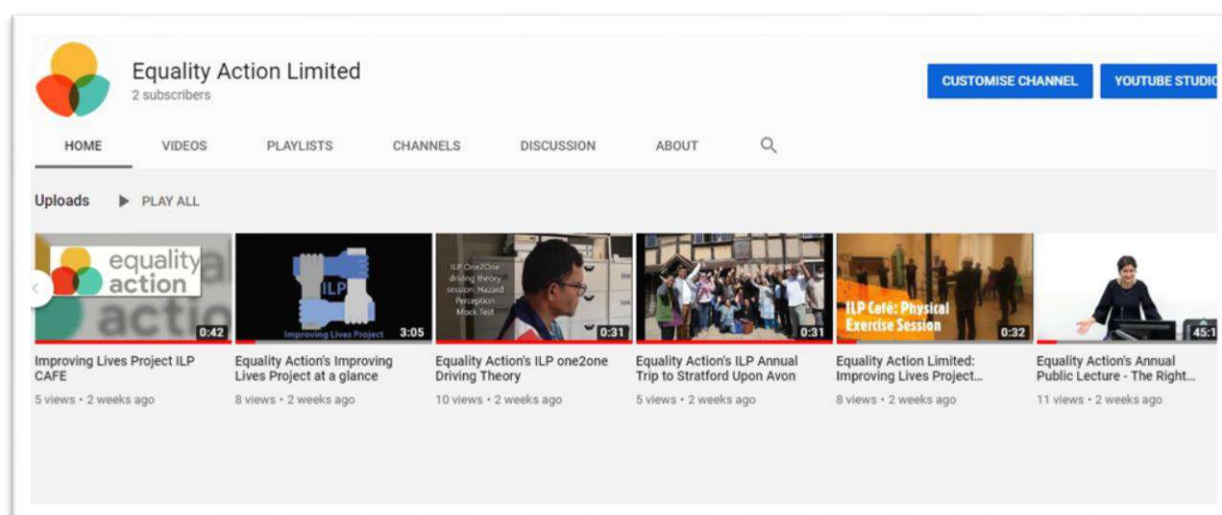
ii) EA YouTube channel

Equality Action has a YouTube Channel.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCICQSSu9hYcWngmVdD8LOgg?view_as=subscriber

We uploaded videos of our project activities on this to share and inform about our work to various organisations, groups and individuals. We shared those videos with our service users and motivated them to share with others to encourage wider engagement.

EA YouTube channel



Due to the pandemic in year five, we mostly promoted our project via electronic and social media platforms.

Session work during pandemic:

<https://www.facebook.com/improvinglivesproject/videos/674366973199782>

Project officers made regular contact with existing groups to ensure the project was well promoted; attended relevant networking meetings and group sessions via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, to engage with the local community. By maintaining social distancing, project staff talked to individuals that came to us for general advice work and informed them about the project activities during the lockdown.

6. CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS

Challenges	Difficulties we faced	What we achieved
Social and culture barriers	Due to cultural sensitivity and stigma, it is often difficult to raise discussions around domestic violence, online gambling, alcohol, etc. In many cases, these are considered as an acceptable lifestyle and people ignore the negative impact they can have on their families and individuals.	During the years of the project, we have developed a relationship with the men in our community. It was an ongoing process and took time to build up their trust, confidence and commitment into signing up for what the project offered. Whenever possible, we raised awareness of these issues by sharing information on the negative impacts and support available.
Language barrier	One of the key things that came out of the sessions was that many of the attendees from BAME backgrounds struggle to understand everything that was being said in sessions.	Having identified that most of our men often do not understand sessions delivered in English, we were able to get the health professionals to find other experts who speak community languages and started to deliver sessions in both English and a common community language, like Hindi.
Limitations of local facilities	Local facilities could not always cater for the needs of the project. Sometimes they did not have a slot for a time when our beneficiaries are usually available, or had to close down the facility. As a result, sometimes we had to keep the sessions off for a while, for example, when Charnwood College swimming pool closed.	With the help from Charnwood Active, we managed to start our sessions at De Lisle College; although the days and time were not convenient for the men who used to come to Charnwood College pool. Most preferred Sunday afternoon when the new pool was not available.
Engagement with the project	It was more difficult than we anticipated getting the men to engage with the project, due to their family or work related commitments.	Over the last five years, we have seen a steady increase in the number of men who engaged with us. We were delighted that our project has helped many to gain the confidence to get involved in wider society.

Covid-19 lockdown	Due to the lockdown since 23 rd March 2020, Improving Lives Project faced challenges in continuation of face-to-face and group activities. See the text in italics in the above report that shows this in context to the relevant work.	Project officers continued supporting the beneficiaries through virtual means. The support we provided through online social media platforms and telephone conversation were focused on awareness-building of government guidance during the pandemic, knowing the progress of individual one-to-one lessons at home, updating them on any new changes that may apply to their tests, assisting them to claim welfare benefits, discussing the support they need, and what help other groups are offering within the community, etc.
Lack of technological skill and support	From our experience through this project, we realised that many of our beneficiaries would face difficulties with issues like using computers, internet and virtual means, such as Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom. In many cases, they struggled to submit their online application on local council websites.	<p>We worked closely with the BAME men to ensure they get enough support to access the technology platforms and can overcome such difficulties during lockdown.</p> <p>A lot more men are now more technology savvy and use emails, social media, etc.</p>
Wider Engagement	Beneficiaries who engaged with our project are from BAME backgrounds. From our observation and experience, we realised that they are reluctant to get involved in local multicultural events; such as Picnic in the Park, Fete on the Green (local partnership community events).	<p>We made sure to do inter-cultural activities and be as inclusive as possible. In 2019, we partnered with the local church (All Saints with Holy Trinity) and Fearon Hall to do a “Fete on Green” event, and our men volunteered alongside people from all different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. It was very positive to see people working together to bring communities together.</p> <p>With all our project activities, we saw an increase in the involvement of most of our beneficiaries in terms of the willingness to take part in</p>

		<p>initiatives by other bodies, including the Loughborough University, Charnwood Museum, Church, Charnwood Active, etc.</p> <p>The external partners were all delighted that they were now able to involve, what they considered hard to reach communities in the wider society. This helped them give a more balanced view of research and other projects that were previously carried out with predominantly people of a White background.</p>
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