

New Beginnings Project

Core Service Grant Impact Report 2017 to 2018

Who we are

Voluntary Action Sheffield supports *voluntary and community action* so that it is sustainable and brings about positive social change.

VAS set up the New Beginnings Project in 2004 and has secured a number of funding streams to support the project. The Big Lottery fund 85% of the project with Sheffield City Council contributing £17,400 towards the Volunteer Co-ordinator post.

This report sets out the key achievements of the team, the impact our work has on the refugees and asylum seekers we support and the progress we have made towards our outcomes from April 2017 to March 2018.

About the New Beginnings project:

The New Beginnings project welcomes refugees and asylum seekers to Sheffield, supports them to integrate and empowers them to access opportunities that will improve their well-being and increase their independence.

Our staff and volunteer team do this through providing a range of connected services at VAS and through supporting people to access other support with partners in Sheffield.

Our primary work is to support refugees and asylum seekers to access:

- Education and training opportunities, (including ESOL)
- Volunteering opportunities
- Employment opportunities.
- Mentoring and social activities

We do this by developing relationships of trust with our clients, where we trust them first which builds trust in us. This is an intentional approach to combat the impact of the disbelief and suspicion that often comes as a result of living in a 'hostile environment' created through the asylum process.

Our 1-1 support coaches people through the personal barriers (language, confidence,) and the structural barriers (unfamiliar systems, processes) to enable them to access opportunities and help them to develop.

We work closely with organisations involving volunteers, employers and training providers to help them to understand the needs and barriers that refugees have and support them to involve refugees in a way that is mutually beneficial.

Core to everything we do is our approach to cohesion. This happens through our project because people who would never normally meet, find themselves collaborating side by side to achieve a common goal. This enables different people to view one another as colleagues, collaborators and fellow humans rather than other, different and threatening.

What we set out to achieve?

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4
Vulnerable migrants have improved language and communication skills through volunteering and training.	Vulnerable migrants have improved confidence and wellbeing through volunteering, training and work.	Vulnerable migrants are less isolated and more integrated through volunteering, training and work.	Vulnerable migrants are more employable, have increased skills and are more successful in the labour market through volunteering and training.

Highlights from the Year

<p>Exceeding all targets for supporting people to access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, • Volunteering and • Employment opportunities 	<p>Running a summer activity programme based on suggestions from our clients</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • walks to the Peak District, • a day trip out of Sheffield • Social evenings 	<p>Developing partnerships that have increased quality of opportunity to refugees including:</p> <p>WEA courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for volunteers • Healthy for life <p>City of Sanctuary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint work at the Sanctuary hub
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Highlights in numbers

- 498 - Refugees and asylum seekers supported
- 268 - New clients to the service
- 49 - Nationalities accessing our service
- 101 - People starting training courses (98 people completed courses)
- 96 - People starting volunteering opportunities
- 40 - People in to paid work.
- 192 - Buddy appointments (joint visits to an appointment where a volunteer or staff member attends with a refugee)

The Difference We've Made

'I was out of work for 7 years and have my children. Nabil helped me do a new CV, showed me how to apply for jobs and a COSHH course. I now have a cleaning job.

*Refugee supported in to employment

'Students visibly grew in confidence to express their thoughts and feelings and ... began to make significant changes in their lives.

Andy Stockton, WE Tutor

'Without New Beginnings people like us can't volunteer. We need someone to open the door for us.

*Volunteer at a focus group

*both people requested their names were not published

Volunteering

We are here to bridge gap between the client and organisation, to support, motivate, inspire, reassure, give hope and empower our clients through the time, empathy, care, compassion and opportunities we offer. We have gone through the same experience our clients are going through which cements that trusted relationship. Moses Lutakome, Volunteer Co-ordinator

Impact on a client

"It has also given me a sense of purpose and visibility as to what direction to take in my future career. Most important of them all I find joy in seeing satisfaction on the face of clients after a meeting with them."

In March 2017, Charles came to the New Beginnings project feeling lost, isolated, and low in confidence with no hope but surrounded with a life of uncertainty. He had tried to approach different organisations on his own with no success of being taken on as a volunteer.

We supported Charles to volunteer with SACMAH, ASSIST Sheffield, WEA and NHS Sexual Health Community. He also volunteers for us and has supported various activities including volunteer fairs, trips and walks to the peak district. Since we started supporting Charles, his confidence and morale has been boosted.



Impact on an organisation:

Kelham Island Museum

The museum were running a project that explored the experiences of Belgian refugees during the First World War as well as the plight of refugees today. They approached us to see how they could involve refugees in the delivery of the project.

We delivered a training session on involving refugee volunteers to staff and identified clients that were interested in volunteering including a lead volunteer to act as a peer mentor to other less confident refugees.



“Mohamed is a well-respected and popular member of our volunteer team. He has brought new perspectives and insights...shown an enthusiasm to learn new things and get involved and ... shared his culture with both staff and volunteers.”

Helen Featherstone, Director, Sheffield Industrial Museums Trust

Education:

We connect people and help them to access existing provision across the city but often there are gaps and the needs of our clients are not met. We work with partners to raise awareness of the need and develop new provision

Education Partnership work

“I’d like to thank the students themselves for inspiring me to innovate and educate me about their cultures and worldview.”

WEA Healthy for Life

The Healthy for Life course has been developed in partnership with the WEA after learning from clients they would like to access a course around health and wellbeing. The course was designed by Andy Stockton a tutor for the WEA and includes sessions on healthy diet, managing stress and sleeping all of which affect our client group.

WEA Skills for volunteering

We have been working with the WEA since 2016 to provide clients with a course that will help them access volunteering. Originally, just for New Beginnings clients it is now open to everyone and promoted across Sheffield. Clients build friendships and learn about different peoples’ experiences of volunteering and opportunities available in the city.



Employment

Our clients are very unique and most of them have rich experience from abroad they want to utilise here, however, due to the work culture and regulation in the UK they need to acquire either more qualifications or skills/local experience. Nabil Al Soufi, Work Coach

Impact on a client

“I was out of work for seven years raising my 2 children. After those years, I felt high pressure from the Jobcentre to find work but despite experience in cleaning was not sure what to do, where to start from and felt left alone with no support”.

After several appointments, this client had an updated CV and covering letter, she was empowered to apply for jobs from her mobile phone and look up the most recent job opportunities. A few months later, she went for the interview and was offered a job with working hours that work around her kids' school. We helped with a Better off Calculation to make sure she's not worse off whilst in work. This experience gave her the knowledge and confidence to move to an agency offering a higher wage and better working hours.

Employment partnership work

We work with supportive employers within the construction, retail, care and logistic sectors to place our clients into work and have also developed strong links with other employment providers to where we have a two-way referral process.

For example, the Jobcentre Plus refer refugees to us who need the support that their work coaches are unable to provide. They have helped us to access employment opportunities through their business links and a JCP Manager met some highly skilled clients to link them up with more opportunities.

We work with clients at our office and also at the Sanctuary to improve access to our service.

Social activities and Wellbeing

Empowering beneficiaries to direct the project

The New Beginnings team work hard to involve clients to shape the project, and enable clients to develop friendships to combat isolation. As we work on a 1-1 basis, we bring them together to hear from them about what their priorities were. We held 2 focus groups in March and November 2017, inviting 30 clients to each so that we could ask them the following questions:

- What do you like about the project?
- What could we do differently?
- Is there anything you would like to do that you don't do now?

The clients said that they would like to access social activities and the opportunity to build on knowledge of places in and around Sheffield. They also said they would like to be able to meet new people and build friendships. We asked people to tell us what things they would like to do, where they would like to go, and what sort of activities they would like to see. The most important opportunities to people were:

- Walks to the Peak District,
- a day trip out of Sheffield,
- social evenings

What we did

We planned in all of the activities that clients requested and involved some of the more confident clients in the organisation and delivery of some of the events. We also organised additional activities for smaller groups that were important event though they didn't have such a large vote e.g. a sewing group for women.

Walks:

“I made new friends, practised my English during all day and my stressful daily routine has been reduced since then. Thank you, New Beginnings Team.”

In total 25 people participated in 6 different organised walks to the Peak district including visiting the Longshaw Estate and Grindleford. We used public transport to show clients how easy it was to get out and empower them to organise their own trips.



Trip to another city

“I have never been to Liverpool, although I have heard so many fantastic stories about the famous English rock band The Beatles”

The trip to Liverpool involved 33 people visiting numerous museums in and around Liverpool - including the Maritime museum and world museum. For many, this was the first time that they had visited another city in the UK for a social reason, and no-one had been on a trip like this before.



Social Evenings: Bring and share International food evening

“Thank you, thank you thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our food, music and dance”

We arranged a social evening where clients wanted to share their national foods and music with each other. We invited partners from other organisations to attend and over 60 people were there, many brought food from countries including Sudan, Syria, and Morocco and music to share with everyone empowered to contribute and give to one another. We had pancakes and traditional foods from the UK for clients to taste. 2 clients were in charge of the music and played songs from different countries while we learned traditional dances.



The impact

By holding the trip, walks and social evening we have enabled our clients to taste traditional foods from the UK, we have helped them to build relationships with each other and people from outside the New Beginnings Team. We helped them to feel welcome and have the opportunity to feel part of something and enabled them to take time out from often stressful personal situations.

One mother told us that the walk was the only time she had left the house with her children over the summer holidays. It meant her daughter could write about a summer activity when she returned to school.

The impact of these events has been huge on the softer, interpersonal issues that are hard to quantify but have a significant impact on quality of life as the testimonies show.

Assessing Wellbeing

To assess the impact of our activities on the wellbeing of our clients in an unbiased, objective way we trained volunteers who are not directly involved in the service delivery to clients.

Volunteers run the wellbeing assessments every Thursday allowing time for people to talk, recognising that discussing emotional wellbeing needs time and sensitivity. This enables them to identify wider needs or barriers which impact on their wellbeing, talk to staff to ensure that these needs are addressed. They also do all the administration, inviting clients to assessments and ensuring that follow up sessions are completed every three months.

This has also been very fulfilling for the mentors, recognising they are making a real difference to people's lives by performing these tasks.

Conclusion

The ethos of the project is to empower beneficiaries and for the service to be directed by them and for them. This year we have done that more than ever and this report gives an insight to the impact that the project has on the 498 people we support to access education, volunteering and employment opportunities.

The stories and quotes included here reflect the regular feedback the team receive highlighting both the quality of work delivered, but also the barriers to integration and accessing services that refugees and asylum seekers face. One woman spoke up at a focus group saying 'without New Beginnings we can't volunteer, organisations only take us if Moses calls for us' highlighting the ongoing need for support.

Sheffield is one of the few cities in the UK with a project like this and alongside organisations like City of Sanctuary and ASSIST mean that people in Sheffield have a good understanding of the benefits and needs of asylum seekers and refugees. However, quotes like this remind us that despite our collective work to empower refugees and raise awareness, for people to gain the benefits of integration, specialist support remains essential.

Thank you to our funders:

