

Community Development with Older People in Horfield & Lockleaze

Evaluation of Buzz Lockleaze CIC's Bristol Ageing Better project

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Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) funded a series of 10 projects focused on Community Development for Older People (CDOP). **This document contains the executive summary for the evaluation of the CDOP project in Horfield & Lockleaze, delivered by Buzz Lockleaze CIC.**

This evaluation was conducted by UWE Bristol and a team of Community Researchers. The full evaluation report will be available in Spring 2021 on the BAB website.

Background to the project

One aspect of the BAB programme was the commissioning of projects in strategic parts of the city with the aim of working with older people in order to make those communities engaging, vibrant and age-friendly places to grow old. The aim was to **empower older people to participate in the co-production of their own activities**, as well as to provide opportunities for those individuals to **engage in their communities** through volunteering or by organising and actively participating in groups within their local area.

Horfield and Lockleaze were **two such neighbouring localities**, situated in North Bristol. Buzz Lockleaze CIC submitted a tender to deliver the work, and were successfully awarded the Community Development for Older People (CDOP) in Horfield and Lockleaze contract in 2017, to be delivered over a three year period.

Executive Summary

Buzz Lockleaze CIC employed two experienced Community Engagement Workers (CEWs) to implement the project in each of the wards under the management of the Buzz Lockleaze CIC Business Manager. **Asset mapping exercises were the cornerstone of the first year** of the project, with each worker focusing on **building relationships and making contact** with key local agents in their designated areas. Year 1 also saw a number of **taster days and one-off events** being held locally, with the CEWs also **supporting existing groups to continue** their activities.

The project enjoyed many successes throughout the first year and beyond, such as the provision of **training activities for volunteers** and the establishment of popular **intergenerational groups** such as the animation workshops. By the second year a number of **ongoing, regular events** had been established, with a local taxi service offering free transport to those who could not easily access activities. There were also well intentioned endeavours such as the pledge to establish an over 50s steering group named the Older People's Forum, with a **view to engaging local older people in strategic decision making processes.**

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However, not everything went to plan and there are a number of important learning points to take away from this particular CDOP project. Firstly, there were **considerable staffing issues** throughout the funded period which **led to the slowing down of progress**, particularly in the Horfield area, and even the **cessation of activity in some areas**. Whilst this can be an unavoidable experience for any employer, there is much to learn from this evaluation in terms of **record-keeping and contingency planning**.

Secondly, the **geographical layout of each area covered by the project was markedly different**, with Lockleaze lending itself much more favourably to community activities with its central square focal point. Horfield on the other hand has community venues that are spread out across the ward, and **more work was required here to establish trust and build relationships**. Unfortunately, the result of this was that when the Horfield worker went on long term sick leave and wasn't able to be replaced for seven months, much of her initial work with these local venues was lost and her replacement was left with little time in which to make tangible impact towards the end of the project.

This evaluation also highlights the **importance of good record keeping** more generally, particularly with a view to providing documentary evidence of project outcomes. The lack of such information being made available to the evaluation team demonstrates the need for community development projects to **consider how success might ultimately be measured** – in other words **thinking ahead to any potential evaluation**. Likewise, the status of the project's activities at the end of the two years points towards the **importance of planning for the sustainability of any community endeavours beyond the funded period**.

There are also important lessons about **ensuring consortiums have adequate representation from a wide range of organisations across the area of interest**. Much of Buzz Lockleaze CIC's experience lies – as the name implies – in the Lockleaze area, and although they were contracted to deliver the project in neighbouring Horfield and had existing connections to organisations in the area, there was no representation from Horfield within the Buzz Consortium.

There are clearly a number of examples of good practice and innovation to be taken from the early stages of this project implemented by **skilled community development staff**, but this evaluation also contains advice for the future delivery of such projects. Whilst many of the barriers to success discussed in this report were beyond the control of the organisation, there were also a number of preventative, prudent measures that could have been taken to **minimise disruption to delivery**.

Further BAB learning resources including the full CDOP Horfield & Lockleaze evaluation report (available Spring 2021) can be found at:

<http://bristolageingbetter.org.uk/learning-and-evaluation-hub/>

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