

(Green IM)PACT COMMUNITY REPORTER PROJECT EVALUATION



Introduction

The PACT news desk project was developed as part of the wider Communities Living Sustainable lottery (IVSCP) funded initiative across Irwell Riverside. The project was delivered in two parts:

Part one – General community reporter training delivered by Inspiring Communities Together. The course was delivered in half day sessions over 6 weeks between 22nd September and 27th October. The course was open to a maximum of 15 people. The total number of people who completed the 6 week course was 7. (3 women, 2 men and 2 BME). Those who attended the course were equipped with skills to produce their own newsletters and accredited as silver community reporters through the Institute of Community Reporters.

Part two - Inspiring Communities Together through their Salford Community Reporter programme delivered a six week pilot programme of activity on behalf of The Broughton Trust and the IVSCP to recruit and support 4 green volunteer reporters who had previously attended the community reporter training outlined in part one.

The programme of activity was to produce content for 12 PACT newsletters (each volunteer producing content for 3 newsletters each). If the first 6 weeks is deemed to be successful the programme was to be extended by another 6 weeks to increase the newsletter content produced. Across a 12 week programme the target was for 4 green volunteer community reporters to collectively produce content for 24 PACT newsletters. In total 5 Green Community Reporters were recruited and the project ran for 6 weeks producing 34 pieces of content. No newsletters were produced as part of this project as the IVSCP had decided to create their online newsletter through their community champion workers.

Aims of the project

The project's aims are linked to the following IVSCP outcomes:

Outcome 3:

Increase involvement of the community in collaborative growing and greening projects.
Number of residents involved as volunteers = 5

Outcome 4:

Increased opportunities of economic opportunities in the green economy, greater take up of training and jobs within it and creation of new job opportunities which contribute to sustainability. Number of unemployed residents in training = 5

The project also worked to achieve the following outcomes:



- To build skills of local people to tell green community stories
- To create a network of green community reporters
- To enable local residents to better understand about making green choices through sharing experiences individual and group stories

The project

Green community reporter recruitment - The green community reporters were recruited through an open recruitment process. 9 applications were received and 7 volunteers took part in the project. A flyer was produced and distributed online and through our networks in the community. We also went directly to community organisations and spoke to individuals who were interested. Once people expressed an interest we set up meetings with them before the project started to prepare them for what to expect on the course and what they could hope to gain from taking part in the wider green project.

The initial green community reporter training included :

- **An introductory session** outlining what exactly is a Community Reporter
- **What makes a good story:** In this session we look at examples of good stories from community reporters and identify what they have in common.
- **How to tell a story:** For this session we will look at how stories are formed, how to hook people into reading more and the overall structure of a piece. We also look at taking photographs and how to take a good picture.
- **Production of a newsletter;** Looking at how a newsletter fits together following a theme

At the end of the course participants were given the opportunity to continue their community reporting as part of the Salford Community Reporter network.

Lessons Learnt-

- **Recruitment** - The best results from our recruitment were when we spoke to people directly and took them through what the course was about.
- A few of the people on the course heard about it through people sharing the poster on social media.
- **What they learned from each other** – There was a variety of confidence and ability when it came to writing. However, the people who were most comfortable writing struggled more than the others because they wrote too much. Through peer reviews the group were able to identify areas of their own writing and advise each other on how to edit themselves.
- **People working together** - At the end of the project, we did a group visit to Abbott Lodge, a homeless facility to gather stories. One of our group was very nervous because they felt they would struggle with finding any stories to tell. So in pairs, they went away and helped discover stories together. At the end of the session they had found 2 stories each to write.

Part two – creation of content and volunteer expectations



Inspiring Communities Together through their Salford Community Reporter programme delivered a 6 week pilot programme of activity on behalf of The Broughton Trust to recruit and support 5 volunteers who have attended the community reporter training to help produce content for 12 PACT newsletters (each volunteer producing content for 3 newsletters each). 5 of the Community Reporters who completed part 1 of the project, stayed on to continue with part 2. This was done through a team meeting in the final session of part 1 where it was discussed that Part 2 of the project would be a good way of using the skills that they had just learned.

The commitment of volunteers in part 2 was to attend a 2 hour session each week at the Social Media Centre on an agreed time and day to plan and review content for the newsletters. During the week, the community reporters were expected to create 2 stories including 2 photos. These stories were sent over to The Broughton Trust so they could be distributed online. Volunteers who lived in the IVSCP catchment area would be given a tablet computer at the end of the project if they had met their targets for creating stories. This is partly to reward their work, but to also engage them to carry on creating stories after the project finished.

The final meeting of the group included a session with Broughton Trust IVSCP to discuss how the project could continue once the pilot project finished. Broughton Trust agreed to continue support for the community reporters to enable them to create content on for the IVSCP newsletter through regular editorial meetings.

The work carried out by the community reporters included:

- **Plan** – session one involved the group agreeing what they would be doing and timescales for carrying out the work. The group came up with the themes for their articles including: Recycling the Salfordian Way, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Transportation, Food, Public Spaces and Community Cohesion. The group also agreed that they would aim to create at least 2 stories a week.
- **Research** – Once volunteers had identified themes, the sessions were split into 2 halves. The first half was spent peer reviewing the stories they had created, and the next half was spent planning story ideas coming up. For example, in one session we were able to plan our stories around what groups and events were going on with IVSCP. The group went along to each of their assigned sessions during the next 7 days and came back with 6 stories based on what they had experienced.
- **Collection of Content** - All the content was collected by Inspiring Communities Together and emailed to Broughton Trust at the end of the project.
- **Production** – Each week the group peer reviewed each others work and gave advice on how it can be improved.

Lessons Learnt-

- Peer reviewing the content was a crucial part of the learning for participants.
- Giving out tablets rather than money was a big incentive and helped participants



make sure they could meet their deadlines and had the tools to carry on with their community reporting.

- Creating themes at the start helped volunteers when they weren't sure if a story was relevant or not.
- The original plan had changed so now instead of a designated newsletter, content distributed through The Broughton Trusts IVSCP.
- Start with small aims of creating stories for networks that already exist and then as the next stage, introduce the idea of creating a brand new newsletter.

The budget – A budget of £3,260 was identified to start the project. Funding of £2260 was secured from the Energy Task Group of the Irwell Valley Communities Living Sustainable project and the remaining £1,000 was cover by Inspiring Communities Together as part of their community reporter delivery model.

Added value

The project engaged 5 volunteers who produced work over a 6 week period giving 4 hours volunteer time each week to the project. Based on the Volunteer England value of £11.91 per hour the total added value equals **£1429.20**

Community Reporter training course	1,000
PACT Reporters -Project Management. 6 week pilot	500
PACT Reporters - Project Management. Phase 2	500
PACT Reporters - 4 x volunteer allowance, £20 a week, 12 weeks	960
PACT Reporters -Other project expenses - food, celebration	300
TOTAL	3260

Project development

Getting to know each other – Apart from 2 people who came together, everyone on the project did not know each other. The project started with a session where in pairs, the participants interviewed and then introduced each other to the main group. This helped get the group relaxed and comfortable with each other before the main part of the session started

Trying to understand what the project was about – The very first session was entirely dedicated to understanding what the course was about. Firstly, we explored what Community Reporting was and everyone completed an activity sheet for their folders. This was useful as a constant reminder throughout the project. With a Timeline sheet, we also were able to explore exactly what this project was about and what they could expect from the project every single week.

Sharing ideas of possible ways of delivery – Originally, the plan was for the participants to create stories for the Broughton Trust about the IVSCP activity. These stories would be used to create a newsletter which would be distributed online. during the development of the

project the focus became on creating green community story content and less on articles for the newsletter as this was already being produced through the IVSCP community champions.

The group explored what the Green Theme meant and were able to create community stories about things they were passionate about in their local community. One participant was able to create stories entirely about where he is currently living, including the benefits of having a community garden. 5 volunteers stayed committed to the project and agreed a collective way forward based on the themes outlined below:

Themes	Stories developed by the green community reporters
Recycling the Salfordian Way	An article was created all about a local organisation that make new clothes out of old ones.
Mental Health and Wellbeing	The best example of this was an article listing the benefits one person had of his experience of having a plant in his sheltered accommodation.
Transportation	Cycling in Salford - http://communityreporter.net/story/cycling-salford
Food	A great article comparing how we use food in Salford compared to in Nigeria, really interesting information about 'Best Before' and 'Use By' dates too.
Public Spaces	Peel park was the focus of one story about what plans are going on to make it key part of the community.
Community Cohesion	An article was created all about how the community are coming together to look at the potential problem of flooding and what the community can do about it.

Lessons Learnt-

- The programme set out to create newsletter but did not accomplish this in the time. The group are however carrying on through The Broughton Trust IVSCP and will be able to create content for the newsletter.
- Taking time to really think through the project and understand what was expected of the volunteers and project support was a really good way of starting the course, it meant some who were unsure before, felt like they knew what they had signed up for.
- At first when it came to the 'Green' theme, some in the group were keen to write articles purely about their own interests, such as writing about fracking. But through the community reporter programme, we were able to engage people in the model of

community reporting which has a focus more on thinking about community stories which are based in the 'Green' theme, rather than thinking just about personal issues and campaigns.

- The excursion to Abbott Lodge, though slightly under organised was a great success and a good chance for the group to practice sourcing a story before then going out and doing it on their own. It was under organised due to a last minute cancellation of our first destination. Always have a back up plan!
- Despite a target of 2 articles per week all the group managed to create at least one piece of content a week. this was mainly due to their personal lives and time available. Working as a group the project did over achieve on the number of articles produced.
- Along side providing the content to the IVSCP volunteers were Introducing to the idea of uploading content to the Community Reporter site earlier on in the process, enabled the reporters feel like their work was being shared with a wider audience.

Did we achieve our aims and outcomes

Outcome 3: Increase involvement of the community in collaborative growing and greening projects. Number of residents involved as volunteers = 5

5 volunteer community reporters produced articles about growing and greening activity within the neighbourhood as well as producing content on key food messages such as the use by sell by article.

Outcome 4: Increased opportunities of economic opportunities in the green economy, greater take up of training and jobs within it and creation of new job opportunities which contribute to sustainability. Number of unemployed residents in training = 5

5 community reporters took part in learning a new skill which enabled them to take up a volunteer opportunity. This work created a number of green articles which will be used by the IVSCP to share with the community.

- **To build skills of local people to tell green community stories** – All 5 participants completed a 12 week course where they successfully qualified as Silver Community Reporters and received certificates for their work. As a Silver Community Reporter, they have gained accreditation from the Institute of Community Reporters
- **To create a network of green community reporters** - 4 of the 5 people who finished the course are interested in carrying on and create stories for the IVSCP. Broughton Trust is setting up the first 'Editorial Meeting' with the group.
- **To enable local residents to better understand about making green choices though sharing experiences individual and group stories** – All 5 participants posted 2 stories on the Community Reporter site about green issues in the local area.

Case Study

D is a male in his early forties who became involved with the project through his social worker at Abbott Lodge Salvation Army homeless Hostel. He was asked to come along but was not sure what the project was about and was a bit wary about getting involved. After the first session D understood what the course was about and began to enjoy it. He started to come out of his shell and opened up about the struggle he had with his writing and other personal problems which affected his self-esteem and confidence in himself. He did not feel he was capable of doing a good job or completing the project. After he handed in his first article and received positive praise for it, his confidence grew and he became one of the most regular attending members. He also created some of the most inventive articles, such as his piece about how important it is to have plantlife in your house to raise your esteem.

“I wasn’t expecting this course to be like this. It’s great.”

“So you really think my writing is good?”

“I was buzzing after last weeks session”

D finished the course, receiving a Silver Community Reporter certificate and was able to carry on his Community Reporting at Abbott Lodge. This involved making a short film about their recent Christmas Event. He has also decided to carry on as a Green Community Reporter with the IVSCP. By engaging with people from outside the Lodge He was able to mix with people he would not usually mix with, and though he was nervous at first, he was able to become part group after the first few weeks and feel he was able to contribute positively to the project.

Things we could have done differently

- Not all of the original commitments for the project were met. Being flexible can still produce the desired results. the project supported local people to create green content which they were able to share with others.
- Arrange regular meetings with Partners to make sure if the project outline changes, how we adjust to make sure it is still achieving its aims.
- Be clear with partners what is expected of them and that the commitment to the project and the individuals is important.
- Establish a definite end date for the session and make sure the group are clear when the project will definitely end and be ‘handed over’ to the partner.
- Be clear about the additional benefits we can offer to participants.