

Cities of Service

Communities leading the way



Contents

Introduction	4
Cities of Service	5
Plymouth Grow, Share, Cook - a case study	8
York Community Health Champions – a case study	12
Bristol Reading in Schools Consortium – a case study	14
Bristol Reading in Schools Consortium, Process Evaluation	15
Resources	19

Foreword by Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE

Leader of Stevenage Borough Council
Chair of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN)

The Cities of Service model creates an opportunity for citizens to be equal partners with councils to co-design solutions to address local needs. Cities of Service takes the leadership role of local government and combines it with the skills, knowledge and energy of citizens to address the most pressing challenges in a given geographical area. The model is based on four defining characteristics – leadership, clear objectives, purposeful action and impact. It has helped to elevate the significance and status of volunteering in many cities worldwide and prompts us to think about the role of social action in designing services and in complementing and enhancing core public service provision.

Cities of Service volunteering model brings public services and citizens together to address the issues that really matter to local people. It is a clear call for action to develop a new relationship between state and resident. It is a deliberate move away from the transactional model of public services and allows local authorities to make the most of the time, energy and skills of residents.

This Policy Lab aims to promote the Cities of Service model for social action to our colleagues and friends across the network and beyond. Cities of Service is effectively about people helping people. This model has created the opportunity to 'work with' rather than 'deliver to' communities, building bottom up approaches to tackling a range of social issues.

The Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network's values and principles are integral to this approach. Working with our citizens in true partnership is the only sustainable solution to public sector challenges. By sharing our resources, thinking and assets, we can make a difference to the very issues we have not been able to in the past. We hope that this publication led by Plymouth City Council with learning from Bristol, York and the US will encourage other cities to harness the power of volunteering and citizen collaboration.



Introduction

Cities of Service supports a coalition of nearly 300 cities, representing over 84 million people across the Americas and Europe of which Plymouth has been a member since 2014. The Cities of Service impact volunteering model provides a different approach to traditional volunteering models in that it harnesses the power of volunteers across organisational boundaries changing the way local government, the VCSE, businesses and citizens work together to focus on and address critical city issues.

Cities of Service has made a huge difference in Plymouth and cities across the US and UK. Plymouth has used citizen engagement and volunteerism programmes to address energy use, food security issues, children's literacy, and supporting people recently diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. On the 27th and 28th January 2020 Plymouth held a Cities of Service conference on behalf of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN) to showcase how this model of volunteering has worked in Plymouth, Bristol, York and the United States.

As part of this event a Cities of Service Policy Lab was held involving keynote speakers from the US and the UK who are all using the Cities of Service model to make a difference in the place they care about. This Policy Lab was a call to action to members across the CCIN to explore the Cities of Service model and how it can make a difference in other cities and local communities. This Cities of Service publication has been borne out of those discussions and experiences from member cities. It is hoped that this will open up opportunities for other cities to harness the power of volunteering and citizen collaboration as a force for good.



Cities of Service

What is Cities of Service?

The Cities of Service impact volunteering model builds on the work of former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who pioneered the approach, designating New York as a service city and creating opportunities for thousands of citizens to serve their community.

When Mr Bloomberg became Mayor in 2002, he said the following:

"When I became Mayor, I had a million volunteers in NYC doing a million different things. Imagine the difference they would make if they were directed to one or two things. Imagine the biggest problems you have in your city and what you could do about them if you had the numbers needed to make the difference."

When he ceased his office as Mayor in 2013, he had developed the idea of Cities of Service, a programme that harnesses the power of volunteers to address strategic city issues. It is a clear call to action for a new relationship between Councils and communities where problems are tackled together - residents find their own solutions to a place's biggest issues but are surrounded by support from the local authority.

Many other cities have replicated the approach. Today in the United States and the UK, the Cities of Service coalition includes nearly 300 cities, successfully mobilising thousands of volunteers to improve their communities one task at a time. Volunteers give their time on high impact initiatives in the service of others and their local areas, with cities sharing successful strategies to ensure the most effective initiatives are copied by others.



How does it work?

The Cities of Service Model contains four consistent characteristics:

1 Strong leadership within the city/local authority

Leadership buy-in exists at both an elected member and executive level with an elected member being the senior champion/ambassador and a senior employee coordinating the local programme.

2 A clear set of objectives linked to priorities within the city/local authority

Cities identify the most pressing priority areas of need/s where volunteering might make an impact, and confirm this through stakeholder engagement.

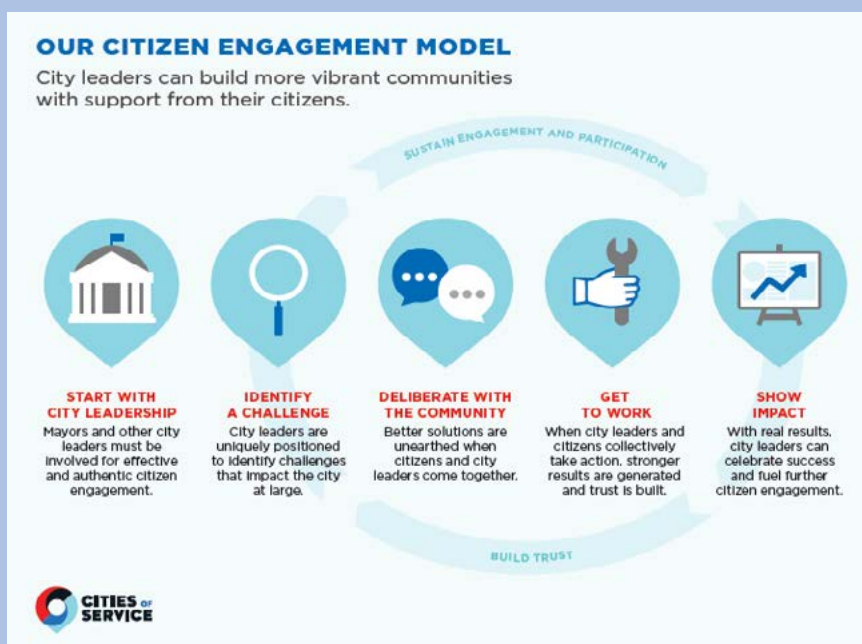
3 A feasible set of actions that can be practically carried out by volunteers that responded to the identified priority

Cities of Service develops plans to address identified priority areas working with the people who will deliver

the programme i.e. the communities and volunteers themselves.

4 A focus on impact relating to the objective rather than just volunteer numbers

Cities have a clear focus on impact metrics (e.g. meaningful difference made to beneficiaries) over and above outputs (e.g. number of volunteers recruited). SMART targets are reported quarterly and informs progress of initiatives.



So, what can councils actually do?

The Cities of Service model has proved useful and impactful. Others councils are welcome to join the movement, adapting the model to fit the UK context or simply make the most of the lessons of the programme in their local approach. Cities of Service leads involved from both the UK and US recommend the following advice for others keen to replicate the model:

1 Have a central convening role to champion volunteering

This role is fundamental to the success of the model, giving extra capacity to consider volunteer led approaches internally, acting as a visible communication channel for external stakeholders and raising the profile of volunteering across the council and the place. The post needs to be senior enough to influence decisions and allocate resources.

2 Develop initiatives that meet both local authority needs and residents' preferences

Initiatives must be both a strategic priority for the local authority whilst at the same time, resonating with residents. An alignment of the initiative with councils' priorities will increase opportunities to tap into time and resources within a council, while buy-in from volunteers and beneficiaries is necessary to achieve impact.

3 Choose partners well

Cities of Service has helped shaped councils' thinking about effective partnerships. Leveraging the skills, resource and networks of wider partners has proved invaluable. Identifying how best to engage partners, and ensuring the expectations are well known and articulated to all is incredibly important. Work with the people who know what is needed, irrelevant if they are in the council or not.

4 Build in opportunities for review, feedback and adaptation

Bringing in partners early, focusing on and collecting impact data at routine intervals, and having a wider network to feel part of, helped teams take on, and adapt to feedback. The tools and disciplines used also prompted councils to consider the relationship between activities and outcomes, and helped teams feel better able to set aside plans that had early promise, but on further investigation were better shelved.

5 Make use of the movement's networks

The UK Cities of Service Councils found the opportunity to hear from US partners very beneficial. Councils were also able to access support and resources like initiative blueprints from the US Cities of Service Organisation. The mix of inspiration, practical advice and access to the international movement's resources proved very useful in developing initiatives and building a local narrative. These sort of peer networks have become scarce in local government in recent years. However, the Cities of Service network continue to meet and support one another and offer an open invitation for other councils wishing to adopt the model to join their network.

6 Plan and resource your impact measurement

Understanding the value of volunteering initiatives can only be assessed if good measurement data is designed and collected. External support is often needed in designing data collection that would capture both output and impact information, to understand whether volunteers are being mobilised in the most meaningful ways possible. The resourcing needs to be carefully considered to avoid any potential bias in data collection and ensure that adequate time, support and direction is provided to do this.

7 Leverage the Cities of Service and local brands

Local branding helped volunteers respond more readily to something they could identify with. A local brand provides a common, and neutral banner for local authority, voluntary and business partners to get behind. For volunteers and residents, the brand creates a sense of momentum and team. Making use of both the Cities of Service and local brands can help mobilise residents and create an enthusiasm that might otherwise be lacking.

8 Ensure the volunteering infrastructure is purposeful and easy to use

Cities of Service provides a new model for volunteering within a council and for a city. This change meant a rethink for some councils of their infrastructure, culture and communications to be well placed to support social action. For example, all councils worked with partners to use or set up reliable, easy to use and maintain volunteering platforms. The promotion of initiatives also required thought, with the best initiatives tapping into local and hyperlocal means of promotion, whether that be local newspapers or having a physical presence in locations where volunteers or beneficiaries were.

Plymouth Grow, Share, Cook - a case study



The background

Plymouth was one of seven UK local authority areas that gained Cities of Service status in 2014 in a competitive process. Since then it has delivered three separate Cities of Service projects; Energy Champions; Right to Read; and Grow, Share, Cook.

Plymouth Energy Champions, concentrated on tackling fuel poverty providing advice on aspects of energy saving and bill reduction supported by a network of volunteers undertaking free home energy advice visits to households in Plymouth at risk of fuel poverty. The volunteers empowered vulnerable consumers to make informed decisions about tariffs, switching and energy efficiency. By 2020 this project had been mainstreamed into the work of the Plymouth Energy Community a members' co-operative set up to transform all things energy related for the benefit of the community. Plymouth Energy Community has since won several prestigious awards including Community Energy England; Community Energy Champion; and Local Authority Partner of the Year 2016 and Regen South West Green Energy Award for South West Sustainable Energy Champion 2017 to name a few.



The **'Right to Read'** project involved people volunteering time in local primary schools to help children learn to read. This started out as a small Council Project, however by using the Cities of Service model this has been expanded and now includes representatives from the Royal Navy.

Grow, Share, Cook which concentrated on healthy eating continues to be run as a Cities of Service project. This volunteer led project where volunteers grow food in and around the city on council land and on private land was expanded to people on the cusp of, or who have just developed Type 2 Diabetes. Since 2014 this project has gone from strength to strength and was shortlisted for the MJ Awards 2020 in the Transforming Lives category.

To date, the Cities of Service programme has provided over 500 volunteers to the three projects and supported over 10,000 beneficiaries in helping them to either afford their fuel bills, improve their reading ability or eat healthily. This spirit of volunteering in the city has been reflected in the reaction from people when Plymouth asked them to help with the Plymouth Good Neighbours Scheme - the city's response to Covid-19 - which was recognised by the LGA as good Council practice. Over 700 people are now enrolled on this scheme which shows us that Plymouth truly is a city of volunteering.

A focus on: Grow, Share, Cook

Why did Plymouth do it?

The Plymouth Fairness Commission report published in 2014 spent a year of listening to Plymouth citizens to find out what they thought was unfair about the city. Listening told us that citizens were tired of so-called consultations which were anything but. Many said that decisions affecting their communities were imposed from outside, while their concerns about important aspects of their communities were ignored. The Fairness

Commission agreed that it was time to try a new way of putting communities back in the driving seat. Access to healthy affordable food was one of the things highlighted by the Fairness Commission that citizens said they were concerned about. The Commission found that “many people are not accessing a balanced diet with the majority of convenience food being high in fat and salt” and “there is a need to broaden people’s understanding of food, where it comes from and how to cook it”. Access to affordable healthy food was becoming a growing challenge for sections of Plymouth’s community. Plymouth Foodbank had seen over 8,000 users in a year for the first time and almost 25,000 meals had been given out by the city’s soup run with more women and children using the service than ever before. Things were desperate.



What did Plymouth do?

Cities of Service is true democracy in action. It enables local authorities to ask its residents for assistance and it enables those residents to be part of the solution. It promotes the idea that everyone has something to offer no matter how small and creates a team around a problem therefore sharing the load between the public sector and residents. As a result of the community engagement undertaken by the Fairness Commission Plymouth City Council worked with volunteers to co-design

Grow, Share, Cook handing the power to local people to find the best solutions to addressing the challenge of the provision of accessible, affordable food.

This volunteer led project has seen volunteers grow food in and around the city on council land and on private land owned by farmers in and around the Plymouth area. This produce is then shared with beneficiaries via volunteer drivers and volunteer cooks who then assist the beneficiaries to use the produce via community cooking sessions. Essentially, disadvantaged households receive a free vegetable bag delivered to their doorstep once a fortnight for a year as a kick start to a healthier diet.

Due to the success of the project and at the request of a group of GPs in the city who heard about it, Plymouth City Council worked with them to develop Diabeaters which is Grow Share Cook for people on the cusp of, or who have just developed Type 2 Diabetes. This is against the background of almost 14,000 people in Plymouth having Diabetes with the number expected to grow by six per cent each year. Finally, Plymouth Community Homes, the city’s largest social housing provider has adapted the project to deliver New Home, New You which provides free fruit and vegetables to new social housing tenants.

Who was involved?

Plymouth City Council Integrated Commissioning Team and Nesta currently joint fund Grow Share Cook. They work with Tamar Grow Local/Food is Fun (two local Community Interest Companies) to manage the project, enable a new yearly cohort of 50 families to receive free fruit and vegetables for a year, deliver support and advice to the existing 250 families who have completed the scheme and the 50 families who are the current cohort. They also manage and support the 158 volunteers who work on the scheme. Plymouth City Council also provides a project manager to oversee the scheme and to fundraise as needed. The project was overseen by

two steering groups; the Executive Group made up of the Council's Cabinet who made recommendations to the Delivery Group consisting of volunteers and delivery partners. This enabled shared thinking and action by the people who know their place the best. The Delivery Group was independently chaired and made the final decisions on the project with all members having an equal say in how they want to address the issue and achieve the ultimate goal.



What about the numbers?

At the start of the programme, Plymouth wanted people to eat a healthier diet as a way of kick-starting a healthier lifestyle. They have now worked with 450 Plymouth households and have delivered over 55,000 meals to almost 3,000 individuals which is no mean feat and held well over 300 community cooking sessions over the last five years. The first cohort of 50 Diabeaters started in September 2019 and are showing early promise in terms of improvement to their health and wellbeing (i.e. their diet is improving and they are reducing the number of times they feel they need to visit a health professional).

As part of the Grow Share Cook condition for receiving the free fortnightly food bag, participants are asked to complete a quarterly "interview" with a volunteer asking them a set

of questions linked to a number of metrics that measure the impact of the project. To date 274 households have completed a full year's worth of interviews and we have established that as a result of Grow Share Cook:

- ◆ 99 per cent of the people stayed with the project for the full 12 months
- ◆ 85 per cent of households now have a healthier diet
- ◆ 86 per cent of the people now regularly use fresh fruit and vegetables when they didn't before
- ◆ 90 per cent of people stated they have visited a health professional less in the last 12 months as a result of the project.

Do people like it?

The reason why Grow Share Cook has been successful is because the people taking part (both beneficiaries and volunteers) have been the key developers of the project and Plymouth City Council have been the facilitators. The cohort has decided what vegetables should be grown, what recipes would be demonstrated at the community cooking sessions and what other extras are needed for the ongoing success of the project e.g. volunteers advised that a lack of pots and pans were a real issue for some of the households taking part. So Plymouth City Council held its first pots and pans amnesty where the citizens of Plymouth provided over 200 pots and pans to distribute to people on the project. This level of trust where power is handed over and the project takes the course as decided by those people either directly delivering it or directly receiving it has been a key change of mind-set and a key reason why the project is agile and continues to be impactful.

The project gives people the kick start they need to improve their diet and subsequently, their health and wellbeing. When Plymouth completed the evaluation of the project, they asked people what they most liked about the

project and the overwhelming response was that it was delivered by “people like them”. It didn’t judge or stigmatise or label. It simply addressed an issue working with people and not working at people.

The local findings were also backed up by a very positive independent evaluation completed by Plymouth University that called Grow Share Cook “an exemplary and inspirational project that magnifies the power of people”. It found that of the 25 random sample households they asked who completed the full year, 21 were now buying fresh fruit and vegetables as part of their weekly shop where they hadn’t before, and 23 of them were cooking from scratch at least five times a week where they hadn’t before. In addition, 18 of the regular Grow Share Cook volunteers have been on the scheme themselves as a beneficiary and two residential cooking groups have started from families/households that have completed the scheme who live together in the same blocks of flats.

What about the volunteers?

Grow Share Cook currently has 158 regular volunteers (defined as volunteering at least one day a month). 134 are growers growing fresh produce on sites in Plymouth and the Tamar Valley, eight are sharers driving around the city delivering the produce and 16 are cooks working with people in communities on gaining skills around cooking, food knowledge and food preparation although many of the volunteers do more than one volunteering activity. There are slightly more men than women volunteering, and eight per cent of the volunteers are over 50 years old.

Isn’t it just another growing project?

Grow Share Cook is unique in that it delivers the three linked elements of the project to a consistent cohort of people. There are other volunteer led growing schemes in the

country and other volunteer led cooking schemes in the country (and indeed, many of the volunteers do this type of volunteering as well), but Grow Share Cook is the only project that delivers to an end goal – a volunteer growing a potato, which is then delivered by a volunteer to the plate of a beneficiary who has been shown how to cook that potato by a volunteer. As far as Diabeaters is concerned, it is, we believe unique in that it is a healthy eating programme that addresses the social reasons why a healthy diet is difficult for some families. This in turn then looks at the positive effect a project like this that addresses disadvantage can have on a specific medical condition i.e. Type 2 Diabetes. It is also the flagship healthy eating project for Plymouth City Council and has enormous support from both the executive team and elected members across all parties.

So what next?

Grow Share Cook has a waiting list of 62 people who would like to get involved as volunteers who are waiting to be trained and 42 households who would benefit from being beneficiaries. This is with very little advertising. There are also two GP’s consortia representing 15 individual GP’s who want to link into the Diabeaters project. In addition, Tamar Grow Local (who look after the volunteer growers and sharers) operate an on-line service for people who want to buy the fruit and vegetable bags direct. When they do this, an on-line customer has the opportunity to buy a suspended bag for a Grow Share Cook beneficiary. Plymouth is looking at expanding this even further to include opportunities for businesses to contribute through their corporate social responsibility commitments. To date, 55 suspended bags have been bought which has enabled the project to include a further two families for the year.

Continued →

To sum up, this is Pat's story

Patricia (Pat) is 75 and lives alone in a low rise block of flats in Plymouth's City Centre. She has family, but none of them live in Plymouth. Pat's day consists of walking to the city market to buy what she needs for the day. This takes her around 30 minutes each way as Pat has arthritis and cannot walk quickly. Also, Pat makes this journey every day because she cannot carry much in one visit due to her condition. Apart from this journey, Pat does not leave her flat and spends the vast majority of the day on her own. Pat was approached by a member of staff from Plymouth Community Homes to take part in Grow, Share, Cook as she knew that Pat had a passion for cooking. Pat attended the first cooking session with 10 others from the block of flats. This was the first time she had attended anything

based at where she lives. She signed up for the food bags and agreed to attend the cooking sessions. 18 months later, Pat is eating more fresh fruit and veg because they are delivered to her door. Pat still walks daily, but this is to visit others in the block of flats where she lives and she still walks to the market when she has to, but she does this with her friends and not on her own anymore. Pat is also a member of a newly formed cooking group based in the block of flats sharing recipes, cooking for each other and swapping contents of the food bags. She also is on the rota to tend to the rooftop garden that residents have developed. She has formed real lasting friendships and she tells us that her arthritis is not "playing her up" as much as it used to. She no longer feels lonely.

York Community Health Champions – a case study



What did York do?

Community Health Champions are people who, with training and support, voluntarily offer their skills and passion and make use of their community links to transform Health and Wellbeing in their neighbourhood.



The Community Health Champions model is proving to be an effective way of reaching people and is making a real difference within communities. Champions are also influencing and shaping local services, increasing public participation, initiating community development opportunities whilst gaining new skills and knowledge.

Within their families, communities and workplaces Community Health Champions empower and motivate people to get involved in healthy social activities; create new activities to meet local needs; and signpost people to relevant community activities, and support.

What about the numbers?

The model targeted individuals in communities whose health and wellbeing outcomes fall short of those enjoyed by others. So far:

- ◆ 76 Community Health Champions across the city
- ◆ 40 health promotion initiatives taking place
- ◆ 1,339 beneficiaries to date (and counting)



To sum up, this is the story of Gav

Gavin's story is a fantastic example of an empowered citizen who has overcome life's challenges and is now in control. After being introduced to a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), he has become one of York's 70 Community Health Champions, another one of the city's 'impact volunteer programmes'. In his own words:

"A few years ago I was finding things very difficult. I was very inactive, overweight and not washing. There were times where I couldn't get out of bed. Ultimately I was admitted to hospital with severe depression. Following my release, I started making a slow recovery but medication was not working for me. I came to the realisation that I needed to look at things differently. I came into contact with Jennie, the Local Area Coordinator for my area who I met at a 'pay as you feel community café' which helped me to connect with others in my local area.

With time, exercise and positive social interactions I slowly and surely became mentally and physically strong. I feel fortunate to have my life back and to have turned things around. Because I know how important it's been to exercise, feel good and be healthy again, I want to inspire other people that it can be done.



In September 2018 I enrolled as a Community Health Champion after Jennie made me aware of the initiative. Following Champion training, I met our GoodGym Run Leader and Move the Masses Founder and have led on new opportunities to support people who are going through difficult times to help improve their health and connect with others. I'm also a volunteer with 'Invisible York' leading tourist walks through the city.

I look at my turnaround as a minor miracle. Being part of a programme like Community Health Champions allows me to grow as a person whilst having a positive impact on other peoples' lives and I am constantly seeking out other opportunities to get involved!"

Bristol Reading in Schools Consortium – a case study



Bristol applied to broaden and scale its Volunteering in Primary Schools Initiative Boosting Reading @Primary. The aim was to scale a tested intervention to keep children 'up to speed' with reading by the end of Key Stage Two. The proposal identified that Bristol Reading in Schools Consortium (BRISC) would also expand the less formal volunteering opportunities through the Reading Buddies programme, which does not require intensive training. To support this, Bristol City Council launched the Social Action Plan, which includes a Mayoral call to action and supports the project. The project aims to mobilise 300 volunteers (75% new volunteers) and reach 1,000 primary school children.

Nesta and the Cities of Service Leads commissioned the independent evaluation by Hannah Woods Consultancy in January 2020 towards the end of the two-year grant funding period. The full evaluation report aims to help BRISC consider next steps for delivery and evaluation. It provides recommendations to help BRISC move forward with decision-making and planning for the future.

Evaluation 2020

Bristol Reading in Schools Consortium

Process evaluation summary



Introduction

Bristol City Council received two-years funding (2018 – 2020) from Nesta's Connected Communities Innovation Fund to deliver the Cities of Service – The Next Generation project in collaboration with Plymouth Council, Barnsley Borough Council and City of York Council. The purpose of the funding was to use the Cities of Service initiative to scale a consistent and coherent volunteering model across different local authorities. The Cities of Service model is based on four defining characteristics – leadership, clear objectives, purposeful action, and impact.

The continuation funding provided support to expand volunteering initiatives to target volunteers aged 50 plus. Bristol applied to broaden and scale its Volunteering in Primary Schools Initiative Boosting Reading @Primary. The aim was to scale a tested intervention to keep children 'up to speed' with reading by the end of Key Stage Two. The proposal identified that BRISC would also expand the less formal volunteering opportunities through the Reading Buddies programme, which does not require intensive training. To support this, Bristol City Council launched the Social Action Plan, which includes a Mayoral call to action and supports the project. The project aims to mobilise 300 volunteers (75% new volunteers) and reach 1,000 primary school children.

Nesta and the Cities of Service Leads commissioned the evaluation in January 2020 towards the end of the two-year grant funding period. The full evaluation report aims to help BRISC consider next steps for delivery and evaluation. It provides recommendations to help BRISC move forward with decision-making and planning for the future.



Key findings

BRISC brings together partners, including:

- ◆ Bristol City Council Neighbourhoods and Community (consortium lead)
- ◆ Boosting Reading @Primary (BRP) training programme delivered by Bristol City Council
- ◆ Retired and Senior Volunteering Programme (RSVP) West to support over 50s volunteer for their support of reading and numeracy in schools.
- ◆ Action Business Learning Zone for Education (Ablaze) Reading Buddies programme for business employee volunteers

There has been progress to bring together reading volunteer programmes across the City and improve the roll-out of the BRP training programme. To date, BRISC has supported 846 volunteers in providing reading support to 1,054 children across 87 schools in Bristol¹. BRISC has helped to increase the number of reading volunteers by 30 per cent (225 volunteers). Over a quarter (27 per cent) of volunteers engaged through BRISC over 50 years. BRISC helps to map volunteer reading programmes across the City, share best practice and build an understanding of different reading programmes.

BRISC isn't just about trying to reach the most disadvantaged schools; it's about helping schools understand the variety of reading volunteer programmes available, and then selecting the right one for their school. BRISC brings together a wide range of expertise and skills to support volunteer reading programmes in schools. Including volunteering with specific target groups (older and business volunteers), education expertise on reading progression support, and local council neighbourhood and community initiatives.

Through engagement in BRISC, partners have been able to share practice and improve resources to deliver reading programmes. Volunteer reading programmes provide a range of impacts for children, including improved reading progression; improved enjoyment of reading; improved soft skills (self-esteem, confidence, verbal fluency); and improved behaviour. Each partner has their own way of measuring impact in line with their priority outcomes. Partners are also interested in understanding the impact for their volunteers.

In spring 2020 Bristol City Council recognised that a one-day BRP training programme was too ambitious for many volunteers. It developed and trialled a shorter BRP training programme with volunteers in the City. The pilot has been successful, and there are plans to roll out the 3 hours training with delivery partner volunteers once schools re-open. To embed BRP's 10-week structured programme effectively, it is important that volunteers have some prior experience of reading in schools. Through BRISC the BRP training programme could be used to provide a progression route for existing reading volunteers (from any volunteer programme in BRISC). This training allows volunteers to progress their reading support, and help to promote a city-wide approach to improve reading levels for the most disadvantaged children.

It is essential to have a range of volunteering reading programmes in schools across the City that provide ongoing support to improve attitudes, motivations and uptake to make reading a core part of children's lives. These volunteer reading programmes allow schools to access different methods of support depending on children's needs, location, and budget. They also provide diverse volunteering opportunities to meet a range of volunteering needs.

¹ Figures reported to Nesta in March 2020

BRISC should continue to promote a diverse range programmes but strengthen its role to recognise and promote best practice reading support and volunteer management.

Although each volunteer reading programme has a different delivery model essential component for high-quality reading support include:

- ◆ A designated staff member in each school to oversee children's engagement in reading programme. Their role includes managing volunteers, identifying children to receive reading support; timetabling reading help, and acting as a point of contact with volunteers to deal with arising issues, including safeguarding.
- ◆ Introductory training for volunteers and brokering a suitable school placement.
- ◆ Ongoing support, training and recognition for volunteers.

There have been challenges in bringing reading initiatives together and recognise the strengths of varying volunteering models.

- ◆ There are not clear aims and objectives for BRISC and what it wants to achieve by working together.
- ◆ There are differing views on the collective impact of bringing reading programmes together and priority outcomes for the consortium to deliver.
- ◆ Consortium partners were not involved in the design of the BRISC initiative.
- ◆ The BRISC set up failed to consider the practicalities of partnership working including funding allocation, bringing together different business models, and clear partnership agreements.
- ◆ There have been personnel changes for almost all consortium members. Including senior level endorsement within the City Council to help position, influence, and support the roll out of BRISC.



Bristol Reading in Schools

We are looking for volunteers to read with 6-8 year olds and are providing FREE training to anyone interested.

Training Mon 9th March 9:30-12:30 St Paul's Learning Centre

Please email volunteer@bristol.gov.uk to find out more or register on www.candobristol.co.uk to apply.

 **CITIES OF SERVICE**

BRISTOL



As the Nesta funding draws to a close, there are opportunities to apply learning to improve partnership working, define the consortium's role, and deepen the impact of BRISC. The evaluation recommends developing a two-stage theory of change that supports BRISC to articulate how it can work together to:

- 1 Grow a diverse volunteer base to improve the frequency and enjoyment of reading for children in primary schools across the City;
- 2 Provide volunteer referrals and progression routes to reading volunteers (from any volunteer programme) to offer additional training through BRP to improve reading levels for disadvantaged children. BRISC should work together to build a reciprocal referral process between reading programmes across the city so any volunteer with an interest in reading is matched to the volunteering programme that best suits their requirements.

BRISC can provide a unique role to oversee volunteer reading programmes across the City that are capable of reaching a wide range of schools and matching volunteer programmes to the specific needs of each school. An improved BRISC model would allow reading programmes, that promote a love of reading in Bristol to scale, while also providing targeted interventions with experienced volunteers for those schools who require specific support to progress children's reading levels. The role of the consortium could be strengthened to strategically support reading programmes across the City to align around impact. By providing a supportive structure to collaborate, tools to promote quality delivery, and cross sector endorsement.

The benefits of supporting a revised consortium approach to volunteering reading programmes are:

- ◆ Track reach of programmes in schools across the City
- ◆ Provide referrals to the right volunteering programme depending on the needs of the school
- ◆ Quality assure key components of volunteer programmes including training and delivery
- ◆ Provide pathways for volunteers to skill up their reading support and increase their impact on children's reading levels
- ◆ Evaluate the collective impact of shared outcomes
- ◆ Map volunteer demographics and diversity
- ◆ Adopt a city-wide approach volunteering programme in schools to improve the reading skills of primary school children.

BRISC must be more specific on its remit, activities and outputs to deliver impact. It must work together to agree and establish the model before scaling to include new partners.

It is important to now consider the leadership needed to maintain the momentum of BRISC. Both on an operational level, to manage and support consortium working. And at a strategic level to keep BRISC linked to emerging city-wide council initiatives. Bristol City Council provides a vital role to bring together and support a city-wide approach. BRISC has been linked closely to the City's Social Action Plan. Moving forward, it is interesting to consider whether signing up new volunteers, or accessing schools, is the more significant strategic challenge. This will define where BRISC should seek senior stakeholder influence and support at a council level, in addition to the Mayoral endorsement.

Resources

For details of Cities of Service including lots of examples and toolkits, please visit <https://citiesofservice.org/>

For details of Grow, Share, Cook, please see
<https://vimeo.com/478518083>
<https://vimeo.com/209392755>

For details of Plymouth Energy Community, please visit Plymouth Energy Community

Plymouth Good Neighbours Scheme two months on, please see
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzaghGhyjB8>

For information on Plymouth Good Neighbours Scheme, please visit
<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/newsroomtags/goodneighboursscheme>

For information on Our Plymouth, please visit <https://ourplymouth.co.uk/>

For information on York Community Health Champions including how to become a champion please contact
healthchampions@york.gov.uk or visit Livewellyork

For information on Bristol Reading in Schools, please visit
<https://candobristol.co.uk/activity/bristol-reading-in-schools>



Led by Plymouth City Council on behalf of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network.

For more information please contact coop@plymouth.gov.uk

To find out more about joining the CCIN contact hello@councilscoop or visit council.coop

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