East Brighton Gateway Partnership

Lottery Funded Project on Information Advice and Guidance

Final Evaluation Report

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Acknowledgements

This evaluation is a team effort and there are number of people to thank.

First and foremost we would like to thank the 15 Learners who shared their 'stories' with us as part of the 'most significant change' process that underpinned this evaluation.

The story collectors – two of whom were Learners at the centres themselves - did a fantastic job. We are very grateful for your hard work, sensitivity and diligence.

This part of the evaluation was expertly coordinated and supported by Kerry Dowding who helped story collectors to speak to their peers about the effect that coming to the adult learning centres had had on their lives. Our profound thanks go to Kerry for her excellent work on this.
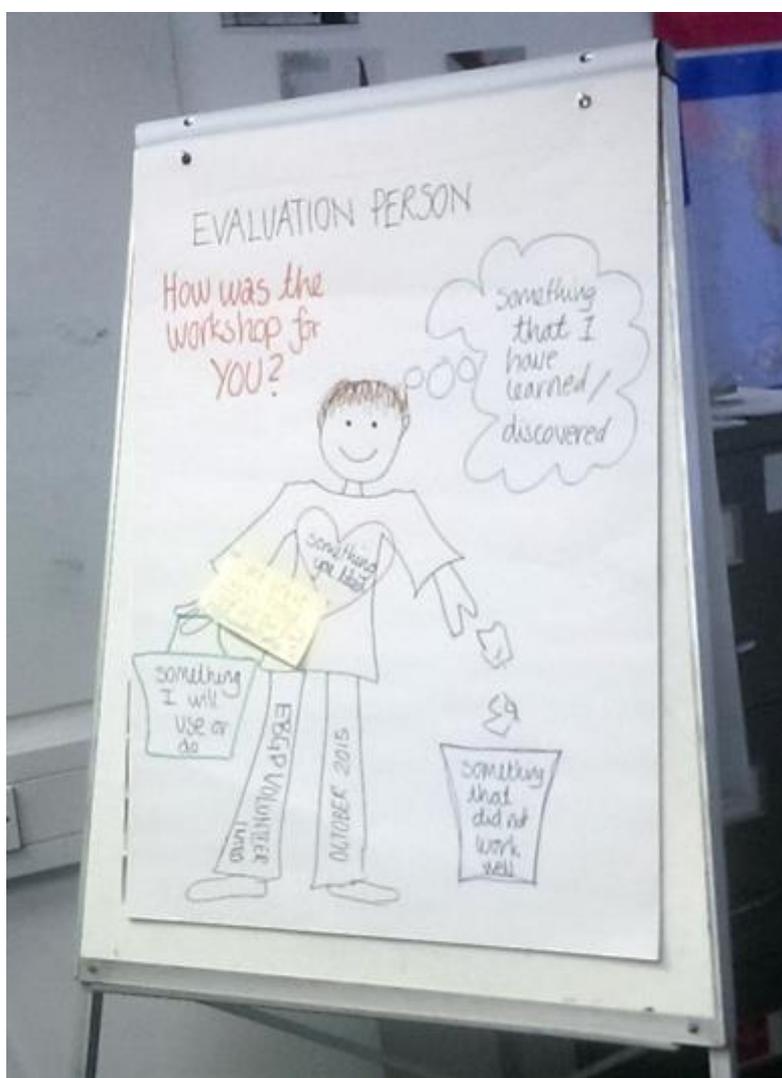
Executive Summary

1. The Big Lottery Funded programme of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) support offered by the East Brighton Gateway 2 (EBG2) partnership is a 3 year project which began in April 2015 and ended in March 2018. Funding for the project (£346,820) was acquired by the EBG partnership which consists of 3 adult learning organisations, two of which are located in East Brighton. These are: The Bridge, Whitehawk Inn (located in East Brighton) and Varndean College.

2. The University of Brighton was asked to provide an independent evaluation of the project. In support of this they proposed a mixed method evaluation design which focused on attainment in relation to the core outcome measures for the project. A process of qualitative, narrative-based data collection – or 'story collection' – using the 'most significant change' (MSC) method was undertaken as part of the evaluation. Data collection was undertaken by three volunteer Adult Learners who conducted peer interviews to collect 15 Learner stories at each of the centres. Story collectors and staff met to discuss and compare stories, alongside the academic evaluators, in order to draw out key learning from the project.

3. Findings from the MSC process were used to develop an analytical strategy for carrying out quantitative analysis of outcome data routinely collected over the course of the project. This strategy enabled 'patterns of change' described by Learners in the MSC stories to be searched for within the monitoring data to ascertain the extent to which those patterns applied across all [n=1863] Learners who benefitted from an IAG. Through confirmatory analysis this enabled the evaluation to give an indication of how many and to what extent people experienced the types of benefits identified in the Learner stories.

4. The main finding from this evaluation is that the EBG2 partnership have developed a highly effective approach to providing person-centred Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) that improves confidence, skills development, capacity for social inclusion and community engagement. The findings offer statistical and qualitative evidence that the IAG sessions improved confidence and significantly impacted a range of different areas of Learners' lives including: physical and mental health, development of vocational skills, opportunities to socialise and capacity to make plans for the future.

5. Those experiencing the most complex barriers to wellbeing experienced the most significant gains as a result of seeing an IAG Advisor. Gains in confidence and improvements in ability to make plans and understand options were significantly improved for this group as a direct result of IAG sessions. In addition, there was statistical evidence that benefits to Learners 'cascade' from the IAG session meaning that Learners were more likely to experience multiple, inter-related benefits from IAG sessions than they were single benefits.

6. This evaluation shows that the person-centred IAG practices which are at the centre of the project enabled: i.) attentiveness to the current and past situations relevant to a Learner's needs ii.) capacity to reshape Learners' sense of possibility and available support ii.) practical support that facilitated people to take up opportunities to learn and sustain their commitment iv.) effective signposting to specialist services and iv.) the building of an ongoing relationship of trust from which the Learners benefit on an ongoing basis.

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Whitehawk Inn

1. Introduction

This is an evaluation of the Big Lottery funded East Brighton Gateway 2 (EBG2) project through which 'Information Advice and Guidance' (IAG) sessions have been provided on a one-to-one basis to people living in the East Brighton area. The project was delivered by 3 partners: The Whitehawk Inn, The Bridge Community Education Centre, and Varndean College.

The three EBG2 partner organisations operate as adult learning centres or 'community learning hubs' as they refer to themselves, providing easily accessible, locally-based opportunities for learning that meet individual and community needs. All three partners work in East Brighton, and other parts of the City, to enable disadvantaged people with complex needs and multiple barriers to learning to develop their skills and participate fully in economic and social life.

The Whitehawk Inn (WHI) the lead organisation, is based in a converted pub that is now a learning centre, serving communities in Whitehawk, Manor Farm and the Bristol Estate.

The Bridge Community Education Centre is also a community learning hub with a café and training kitchen which meets community needs in Moulsecoomb, Bates Estate, Saunders Park and Coldean areas.

Varndean College is a training provider in Brighton and Hove which provides adult education at its main site to the North of Brighton but also delivers training and IAG at community venues in East and Central Brighton.

This evaluation focuses on the core activity of the EBG2 partnership through which one-to-one IAG sessions were offered to people exploring new possibilities for engaging in learning and community activity. In this report this group of people are referred to as 'Learners'. IAG sessions form part of a continuum of locally-based engagement, support and learning activities specifically designed to reach people with both straightforward and highly complex needs.

The EBG2 partnership operates a commendable monitoring and evaluation system and this dataset enabled self-reported data from 1863 service users who have engaged in IAG sessions to be included in this report. In addition, as part of the evaluation 15 peer-led interviews were carried out with Learners from the three centres and five qualitative surveys were conducted with IAG Advisors. Further details on the evaluation methods and datasets used are provided in section 2. Section 3 provides an overview of the project monitoring data to provide an overview of who the partnership reached. Section 4 focuses on an analysis of descriptions provided by 5 (100%) of the IAG Advisors who have advised Learners over the course of the project. In section 5 the 'Learner stories' that were collected for the evaluation are presented followed by an analysis of the qualitative data collected as part of the project monitoring process. In section 6 a quantitative analysis of the overall monitoring dataset is presented which builds upon the analysis of Learner stories. Section 7 concludes by summarising overall findings for the project and recommendations for the future.

2. Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Background and EBG2 project design

The communities served by EBG2 partnership are listed in the UK government's Indices of Deprivation as in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England (Indices of Deprivation 2015). Within that 10%, these communities fall within the top decile of LSOAs experiencing deprivation nationally. This means that of the seven domains of deprivation identified by the indices (income, employment, crime, education, employment, health, barriers to housing and living environment) these communities experience high levels deprivation with respect to 5 or more of these domains. Bloor et al. (2015) conducted a needs assessment of the Moulsecoomb and Bevendean wards in the East Brighton area in which they highlight how the isolation of the area, both geographically and as the result of poor transport links, adds to the difficulties facing residents especially those with complex needs.

> For the area of Moulsecoomb, 39.8% of households have no access to a car. This equals 1750 households and a much greater number of people. At least four in ten people in the area cannot easily get to and from the area, without using public transport, transport assistance from other members of the community, or without the expense of taxis.
>
> Moulsecoomb is a very isolated area, and there are poor transport links particularly with regards to the needs for sick or disabled people, and other vulnerable groups. The community transport scheme is targeted at disabled people, but it is not yet clear how well known or well used this service is in this particular area.
>
> This physical isolation would aggravate any existing problems that people within the community have, and provide the basis for lack of access to relevant services.
> Bloor et al. 2015

In addition they describe how "15.7% of usual residents (2,100 people), feel their day-to-day activities are 'limited a lot', or 'a little' by a long-term health problem or disability. 5.5% of residents (744 people) feel they have 'bad or very bad health'" (Bloor et al. 2015). In addition, in their commissioning strategy for 2015-2020 the local Clinical Commissioning Group and City Council identify two wards in East Brighton where children under 16 living in poverty is at 38% compared to 13.7% in the South East. Clearly, the communities of East Brighton face multiple, systemic barriers that influence residents' mental as well as physical health.

The EBG2 partner organisations work with residents, networks and other agencies to understand individual and community needs and wants. Taster days, coffee mornings, outreach community work and strong relationships with local agencies all ensure a high volume of new service users each year. Partners provide a highly varied, flexible and continually changing 'curriculum' of activities that is delivered seamlessly either by themselves (in the case of Varndean) or by a range of partner providers (largely through mainstream funding).

It is in this context that the EBG2 partners have implemented this project, the primary aim of which is to offer Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions to Learners from East Brighton and the city more broadly. IAG Advisors offer support and advice to people at the point they first access one of the learning centres and are from that point available for follow-up appointments and ongoing support. The Advisors operate a person-centred, flexible casework model and specialise at engaging hard-to-reach, socially isolated people in their first steps towards taking part in learning and community activity. IAG sessions support the navigation of community activity, enabling barriers to be addressed and overcome, whilst simultaneously providing opportunities for feedback and innovation, or 'tinkering' as it is known (Mols et al. 2012), with the broader system. The project enabled 6 Advisor roles to be funded, providing 106 hours of IAG support per week across the 3 centres, delivered by 5 advisors

Table 1. Number of Advisors with weekly hours by centre

Centre	Number of Advisors	Hours per week
Whitehawk Inn	2 Advisors	31 hours per week
Varndean College	1 Advisor	23 hours per week
The Bridge	2 Advisors	52 hours per week
Total	6 Advisor roles (undertaken by 5 individuals)	106 hours per week

The practice of extended, person-centred, advice and guidance sessions with potential adult learners was recognised historically by EBG organisations as fundamentally important to engaging adult learners experiencing multiple, systemic barriers to wellbeing. It was this area of expertise and practice that lottery funding (2011-2015) enabled the partnership to formalise, develop and be able to offer to all Learners who visit the respective centres. The funding received in 2015-2018 enabled the EBG organisations to continue this practice and build upon their understanding of what it is that IAG sessions add to the Learner journey and ultimately to intervening in systems so that social and economic inclusion for people with a range of needs is made possible.

The principles and expertise underlying the design and delivery of IAG sessions remain historically similar. These principles and overall structure of an IAG session are deliberately broad, offering Learners and Advisors the flexibility to establish a conversation and generate a person-centred basis for advice and support. The value of this un-scripted dialogue that is focused around the individual and their situation, stands in direct contrast to the 'back-to-work training' and benefit-based dialogues individuals will have engaged in at Job Centres or similar statutory organisations, in which there is less scope for considering broader, systemic issues facing those with complex needs. In those dialogues, disclosing personal details and discussion of personal situations may hold significant consequences. In IAG sessions, Learners are not required to disclose anything but if sufficient trust is built, they may choose to and this aspect of their situation can then be taken into account when identifying opportunities and sources of support. Complex needs are drawn to the surface and IAG advisors can then begin the work of addressing these and equipping learners to navigate the systems relevant to them.

2.2 Evaluation aims and methods

The aim of this evaluation was to understand what it is the IAG sessions and ongoing relationship with an Advisor offers to Learners and what impact it has on their lives. Specifically, it sought to understand the role and place of Learner 'confidence' and 'confidence building' within these relationships. Improved confidence is a key outcome measure used within the monitoring frameworks of many community organisations and yet definitions and concepts relevant to confidence, and applicable in this case, are hard to identify from existing research. For the EBG2 project, four outcome measures were set which formed the basis of the project evaluation form (see Appendix 1).

Given the centrality of 'improvement in confidence' to the EBG2 outcome measurement framework, the evaluation aimed to answer three questions:

1. What are the skills and practices of the IAG Advisors?
2. How do these practices impact on the lives of Learners?
3. What does this tell us about if and how IAG sessions improve Learner confidence?

The mixed methods evaluation design adopted here was originally developed as part of a University funded pilot project that aimed to understand and inform voluntary and community organisation monitoring, evaluation and impact practice (Darking and Walker 2014). From that project, three areas of monitoring and evaluation were identified as significant. The first was that 'the IAG session' is a single meeting lasting up to 90 minutes that differs in emphasis according to learner needs. As such, establishing a basis for attributing changes in a person's life that come about as a result of that single meeting is complex. Secondly, it was noted within the pilot project that individual partnership organisations had found it historically challenging to engage Learners in 'service user involvement' activities and obtain their feedback on the services they provide. Thirdly, it was recognised that the EBG2 partnership organisations routinely collected a considerable amount of good quality data and had developed effective approaches to data analysis. This led partnership organisations to become interested in whether any statistically significant relationships could be identified through analysis of the routinely collected data they held. Academics involved in the pilot project were able to pursue this interest and identified a statistically significant pattern applicable to all Learners who benefitted from an IAG session in the first iteration of the project. This pattern was that typically, Learners experienced multiple positive outcomes from an IAG session, rather than a single positive outcome, or no positive outcomes.

In designing the evaluation methodology for this programme the three areas identified above were taken into account as follows:

1. The IAG was recognised as a 'complex intervention' that was being introduced into an equally complex context in which people frequently experience multiple, systemic barriers to (in this case) realising aspirations and learning. In such cases, qualitative methods were recognised as particularly relevant as they enable complexly causal relationships and inter-relationships to be identified and expressed.
2. The opportunity was taken to support the partnership organisations' service user involvement efforts through facilitation of a Most Significant Change (MSC) process which supported peer-based interviewing and the collection of 15 Learner stories.
3. The dataset produced from the evaluation forms that are used to capture the outcomes of the IAG was analysed quantitatively using statistical methods.

With respect to the complex needs Learners may experience the EBG partnership monitored participants according to the following potential barriers:

Table 2. Potential barriers to wellbeing and learning

Potential barriers to wellbeing and learning	
Claiming Means Tested Benefit L2 in English L2 in Maths Family with child under 18 Resident in deprived LSOA Lone parent Mental health Physical health Returning to work after accident or illness Learning difficulty Literacy or numeracy improver	First language not English NEET 16-25 Care responsibilities Ex-offender Homeless or insecurely housed History of Drug & Alcohol Use Refugee Asylum seeker In care as a young person Qualification Levels (Entry Level to Level 8)

On this basis, 4 datasets were used two of which were generated specifically for the purposes of this evaluation.

Dataset 1   routinely collected EBG2 monitoring data
Dataset 2   qualitative comments offered by Learners on evaluation forms
Dataset 3   responses to qualitative questionnaires set to IAG Advisors
Dataset 4   15 Learner stories collected using peer-based data collection

The choice to use peer-based data collection was taken by the EBG2 partners and was based on the recognition that taking a participative approach to evaluation might help to support service user engagement at the partner organisations more generally. The process was supported and informed by the use of the 'most significant change' approach (Davies and Dart 2005) on which further details are provided below.
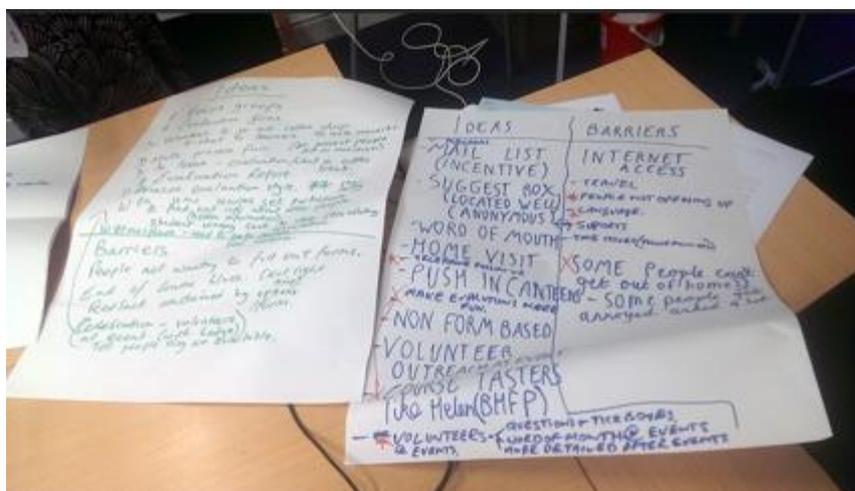
2.3 Most Significant Change, peer-based story collection

The Most Significant Change (MSC) process was supported by a workshop on this method provided by the academic evaluators. Based on a one-to-one interview format, the MSC process is focused around one core interview question that is formulated by the group who have initiated the process, according to a fixed form of words. In this case the question was:

Since attending your first IAG session in [date] what has been the most significant change for you in your day-to-day life?

A coordinator of the process at each of the three centres was put in place and 3 story collectors were recruited. The three story collectors were Learners themselves, based at each of the three centres. They were supported by a coordinator, experienced in peer-to-peer data collection, to collect and write-up the stories. Interestingly, as a peer-based interview process this method was harder to use at one centre than at the other two. Recruiting participants at Whitehawk Inn proved difficult even though the same process was followed. It was speculated that for Learners at this centre the unfamiliarity of the process and the idea of speaking openly to a peer and person they had just met were off-putting. On reflection, this centre felt that interviews would be better conducted with the IAG Advisor. Appendix 1 offers an overview of the experience of the volunteer recruitment over the course of the EBG2 project.

There are limitations to the MSC approach and the data it produces. Given the historic difficulties the partnership had experienced in engaging Learners in service user involvement activities, recruiting participants was challenging and therefore the Learners' who took part were people who had largely positive sentiments to express about their experiences. However, the detail of the stories has value beyond this and reads very authentically.


Whitehawk Inn

Analysis of the MSC stories was conducted at an MSC 'story selection' meeting which included story collectors, the MSC process coordinator, members of the evaluation steering group and the academic evaluator. Two key themes were taken from this meeting which were: capturing 'what the IAG is and does' according to learners; and developing insight into what it is that Learners understand 'confidence' to be. A qualitative analysis of the stories was carried out by the evaluation team on this basis and findings from that analysis are presented in section 4. In addition, the qualitative analysis sought to identify patterns of relationships across the stories which could be understood in terms of the 4 key outcomes measured on the evaluation form. This enabled us to understand if and how the IAG formed part of a change or continuum of change for Learners, as previous statistical analysis had suggested, and what the impact of this was on their lives.

The role of the IAG and its relationship to confidence, gaining skills, health improvements and benefits from interacting socially were taken as core 'pattern relationships' that could be attributed to the initial IAG session. This pattern was articulated in the stories but was also present in the pattern of items that Learners ticked on the evaluation form. This enabled us to give an indication of how many and to what extent people experienced the types of benefits identified in the Learner stories. Using the main outcome measures and the items that sit below these on the evaluation form, 6 patterns were identified that mirrored the relationships described in the stories. These patterns were then explored across the large quantitative dataset generated from the course evaluation data. In light of the frequency data available, a series of chi square analyses were developed in order to explore whether the pattern relationships that emerged during the MSC analyses held across the evaluation data as a whole.

In order to construct an overview of the project and who the IAG reached the next section provides a brief summary of the monitoring data collected by the partnership organisations.
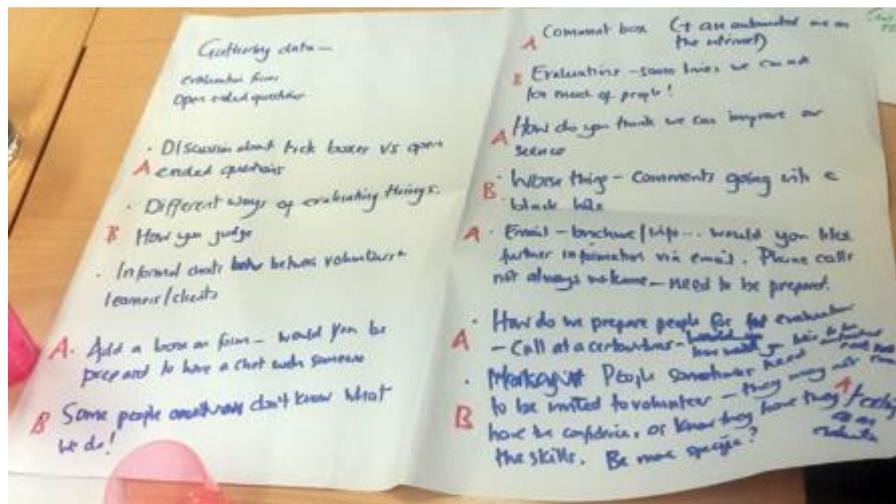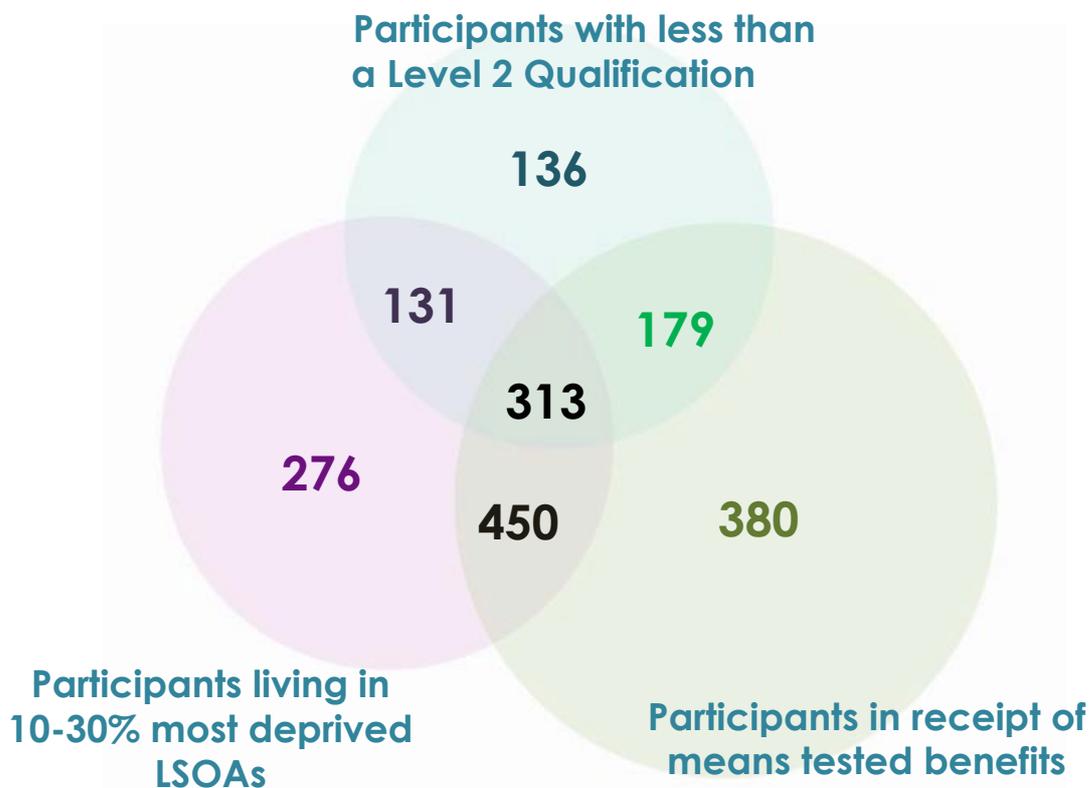
3. Overview of Project Monitoring Data

A total of 2226 individuals have engaged with the project between April 2015 and March 2018

0.36% Trans or Other

1.03% Prefer Not to Say

32.26% Male

66.22% Female

2226 People Engaged

=
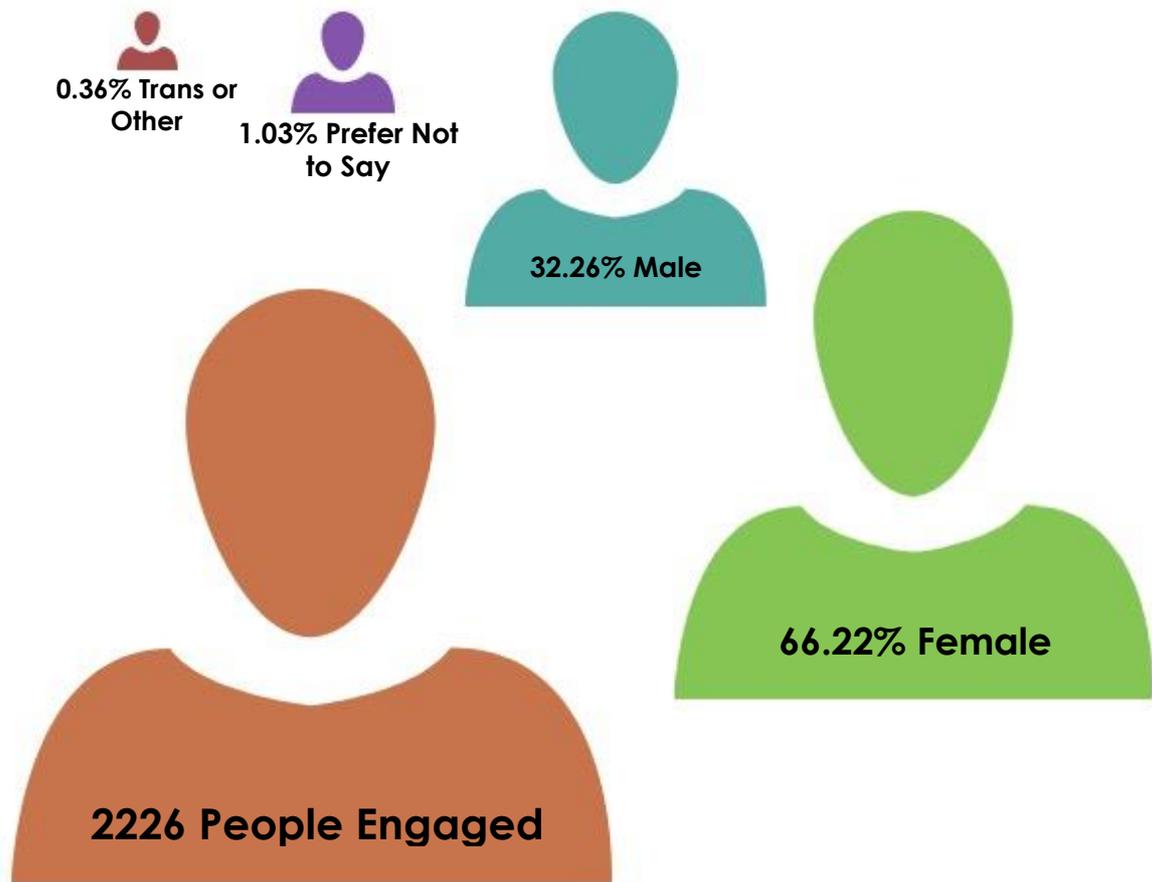
The project has seen participants from all of the Wider Brighton area but has specifically aimed to offer services in localities with the highest level of deprivation. For this purpose we collect data on the number of participants living in the 10-30% most deprived LSOAs. Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. The level of deprivation in a LSOA's is measured through the Indices of Deprivation. The Indices of Deprivation is a multi-indicator measure using seven domains to place all LSOAs in a hierarchy of relative deprivation. The domains are income, employment education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/464431/English_Index_of_Multiple_Deprivation_2015_-_Infographic.pdf

Participants with less than a Level 2 Qualification

136

131   179

313

276   380

450

Participants living in 10-30% most deprived LSOAs

Participants in receipt of means tested benefits

Participants have also self-reported on a range issues that they face which they feel are preventing them from engaging with the world of learning and work. 96% reported facing multiple barriers. Commonly reported barriers include mental and physical health issues.

Barriers

4%

96%

■ With 1 or more barriers
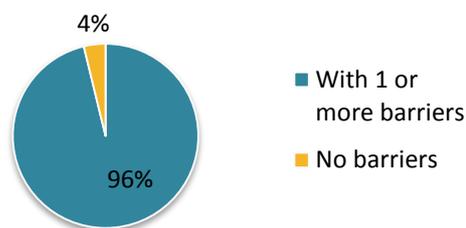
■ No barriers

People with Mental Health Needs	600	26.95%	
People with a Physical Disability	359	16.13%	
People with a Learning Difficulty	145	6.51%	

Despite the barriers faced by many participants, the project has helped 200+ people to find paid employment and has brought vocational skills, qualifications and volunteering activity to many whilst maintaining a real emphasis too on non-accredited community learning

Gained Skills

Legend: Number of People, Percentage %
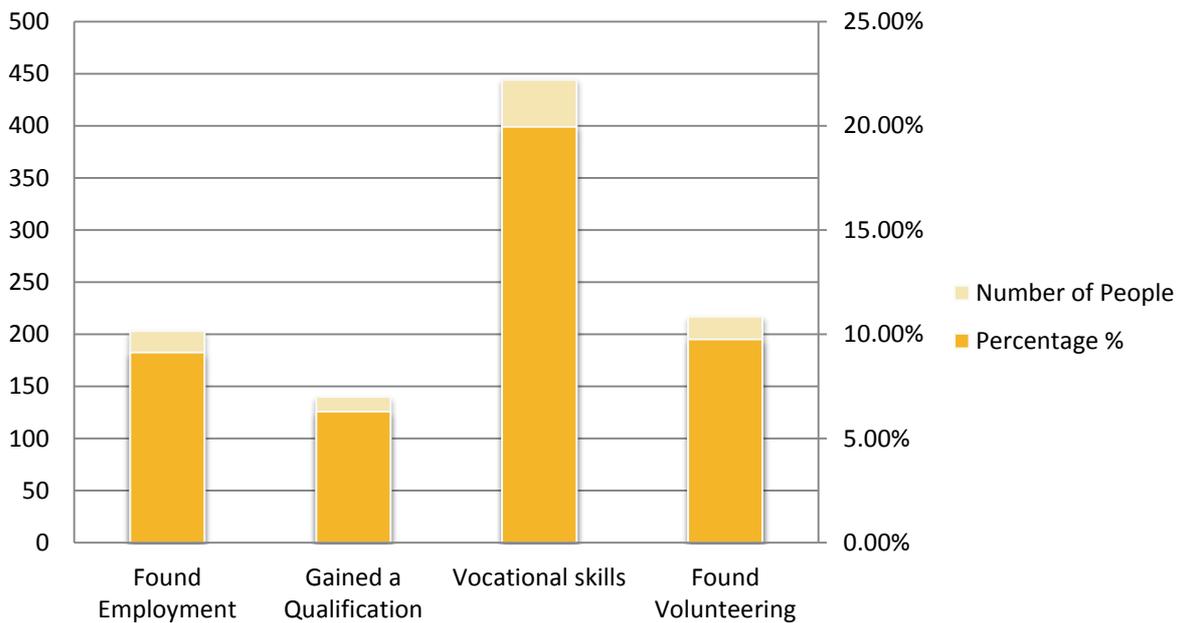
The project's ethnicity profile fits that of the wider city

Ethnicity

|		
Any Other Background	50	2.25%
Arabic	41	1.84%
Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi	11	0.49%
Asian or Asian British-Chinese	2	0.09%
Asian or Asian British-Indian	26	1.17%
Asian or Asian British-Pakistani	8	0.36%
Asian or Asian British-Other	27	1.21%
Black or Black British-African	44	1.98%
Black or Black British-Caribbean	15	0.67%
Black or Black British-Other	5	0.22%
Mixed-White & Asian	15	0.67%
Mixed-White & Black African	14	0.63%
Mixed-White & Black Caribbean	16	0.72%
Any other background	50	2.25%
Chinese	7	0.31%
White British	1634	73.41%
White-Eastern European	21	0.94%
White-Gypsy or Traveller	2	0.09%
White-Irish	26	1.17%
White-Other	172	7.73%
Prefer not to say	68	3.05%

The project has particularly attracted participants between the ages of 26 and 65 and has also seen significant participation form individuals aged 65+

Age

Legend:
- 16 - 18
- 19 - 25
- 26 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 51 - 65
- Over 65
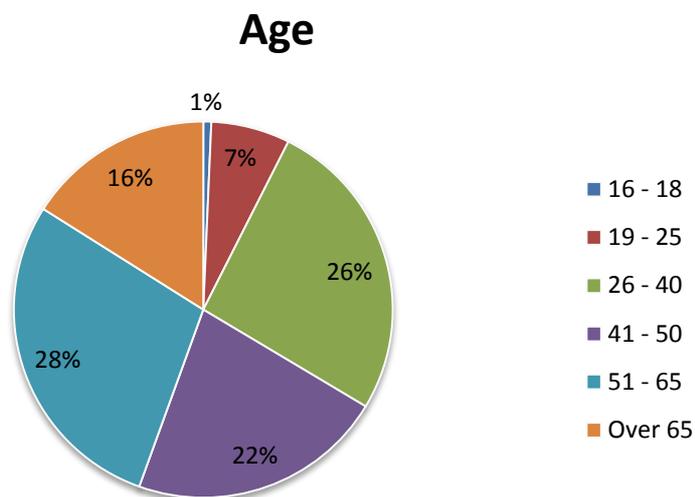
4. Information, Advice and Guidance practice

All 5 of the IAG Advisors were asked to complete a qualitative survey which asked them to describe the IAG session, its aims and purpose and the different forms of practice they brought to bear in the sessions. These responses provide insight into how the IAG is conducted and the expertise entailed. Later, in section 5, Learners who have experienced an IAG session explain how they experience the support provided by Advisors which offers a useful basis for comparison.

4.1 What happens in an IAG session?

Advisors described IAG sessions as typically following a familiar structure within which a range of different approaches, techniques, practices and guidelines might be drawn upon. Each session is allocated 90 minutes of time although exact timings are negotiated on the basis of need and Learner availability. The following is a brief overview of an IAG session as described by an Advisor.

> *IAG 3: A client is greeted and we go to a confidential area. We agree on the time available for the interview and sometimes an information form is filled in (if the client is new). The client is then encouraged to say what they want from the session. This is then discussed. Sometimes the internet is used for searches or C.V. updating. An action plan is then completed and agreed on. Usually some client actions have been agreed. The client will probably come back for further follow-up appointments.*

In terms of the role or meaning of the IAG sessions Advisors described this as follows:

> *IAG 5: A structured, therapeutic and holistic space where a client can explore options*

> *IAG 1: The underlying principle of the IAG is to build people's confidence and to help develop a 'can-do' approach. IAG is not only about providing information but also about making a space to look at what is possible and how it might be achieved given the persons individual circumstances.*

Within this basic structure Advisors described themselves as applying a range of approaches, professional guidelines and techniques. These are listed in Figure 1. below:

Table 3. Techniques and approaches employed by IAG Advisors

• The Career Development Institute's professional guidelines, • The GROW model (Goal, Reality, Options, Way forward) • The FIRST model (Focus, Information, Realism, Scope, Tactics) • Roger's core values • Egan's Skilled Helper model • Active listening • Neuro Linguistic Programing exercises • Unconditional positive regard	• Coaching techniques • Motivational interviewing • Mirroring • Challenging • Solution-focused interviewing, • Cognitive behavioural therapy-informed approaches • Visual approaches to planning (based on Skilled Helper Model) • Blob tree • Johari window • Mark 10 Scale

Beyond structure and technique, four further areas of practice present themselves as fundamentally important to the success of the IAG sessions. Each of these areas is underpinned by the over-arching notion of 'person-centred practice', and include:

  i.) set-up and framing of the meeting
  ii.) values and the Advisor role, addressing barriers and signposting
  iii.) practical support and follow-up

These aspects of person-centred practice in the IAG session are addressed below.

i.) Set-up and framing of the IAG session

On many fundamental levels IAG sessions stand in direct contrast to experiences of using statutory employment services. Although the topic areas covered in an IAG session such as job searching, benefit claims and discussion of personal circumstances may overlap, in the community context there is no obligation for the Learner to engage and no sanctions attached to non-engagement or disengagement. It could be speculated that this removes much of the frustration and experience of power relations that can occur in statutory service encounters (Bishop et al. 2005). Interestingly, therefore, in contrast with research literature that describes service user and frontline professionals' experience of statutory employment services in the UK, Advisors did not refer to conflicts, tensions or the need to manage 'difficult clients'.

Designing and offering a session on the grounds that the Learner has decided this is something that they may experience as potentially valuable, sets up a very different basis for engagement. This is particularly relevant to the communities that the EBG2 project serves whose barriers to wellbeing are considerable, by national standards, and whose engagement with statutory services is also likely to have been lengthy and considerable.

The starting point that the IAG creates is built upon through the continued use of person-centred practices that encompass both micro and macro levels of detail. These practices reconfigure the experience of seeking support, opening up new possibilities. On this basis, the beginning of the encounter is attended to with particular care and attention.

> **IAG1:** *Normally I will have had some kind of telephone contact with the client first so I would have an idea of why they are coming to see me. This enables me to prepare and get information ready that might be useful. When I meet the client face-to-face, I sit down with them and take it from there. I will make sure they are as relaxed and comfortable as possible, e.g. offering a glass of water and ensuring the space is private enough. I will then introduce myself properly, outlining what I do and the services we provide. I will also let them know how much time we have and also talk about confidentiality. Additionally I will let them know I am taking notes.*

> **IAG4:** *If the client is new to me/the centre then I build a rapport with them and put them at ease. I ascertain how they heard/know about the centre and check with them their understanding for what the centre offers. If the client is happy to then we complete the registration form, discuss the confidentiality policy and how their information is stored/data protection […]. I set the timeframe for the interview and check whether the client needs to leave by a certain time.*

Setting, space, privacy, 'putting at ease' and rapport-building are all important practices that mark the IAG session out as person, rather than process-centred. The 90 minute timeframe available to IAG Advisors allows time for the Advisor-Learner conversation to develop, although even here, the length of time spent together is not set but negotiated.

Whitehawk Inn

ii.) Values and the Advisor role, addressing barriers and signposting

Although the underlying structure and approach to IAG sessions was common across Advisors, each drew on slightly different methods and expressed their values in similar, but different ways. These values manifested in how Advisors understood their role and purpose.

> *IAG1: … the most important parts of being an IAG worker is to have empathy, to be non-judgemental, to be encouraging, welcoming and friendly and to put people at ease.*

> *IAG2: It's not about the Advisor telling [the client] what to do (which can be the case in the provision of information and advice). Sometimes people don't know what they want to do and have little sense of direction and the Advisor may help them come to a decision about their sense of direction.*

> *IAG5: I see my role as providing a holistic and professional guidance service which encompasses the whole person: their mood, mobility, mental health & emotional wellbeing, faith/spirituality, any protected characteristics that may present as barriers/assets, children and other dependents, bereavement issues and so on.*

Recognising the 'boundaries' of the IAG session was also a key aspect of Advisor's professional practice and was described as crucial to identifying how and where appropriate specialist support could be sourced.

> *IAG4: This depends on the client and how they present in the session. If a client is very upset and presents with multiple issues then my role is to put the client at ease, listen to them, build rapport and ensure that they are accessing the right level of support from different agencies. I also have a responsibility to ensure that the client is aware of the boundaries of each session and of my role.*

The person-centred practice of allowing Learners time and space to explore whatever it is important to explore means that multiple support needs could come up as part of the meeting. Through empathetic yet clear boundary-setting, appropriate referrals and signposting are put in place.

> *IAG3: Often, clients come in with a variety of issues. I therefore help clients to understand the key priorities, boundaries of the IAG session and complete referrals to other agencies with the client's permission as required, i.e. Money Advice Plus for debt advice.*

Specialist support was only needed in specific cases. For the main part IAG Advisors were trained in offering support in a number practical and specialist ways as the next section describes.

iii.) Practical support and follow-up

The practical support offered to Learners was an essential aspect of enabling them to reshape their sense of what is possible and translate possibility into a realisable opportunity. As one Advisor described, "The idea of 'career' cannot be explored until the priorities of support, money, food and shelter are tackled (IAG 5)". The range of practical support offered by IAG Advisors was extensive and included the activities listed in Table 3. below.

Table 4. Practical support offered by Advisors

• Support completing paper and online applications forms • Support following redundancy • Support finding work experience • Identifying volunteering opportunities • Employment related advocacy to ensure interview panels are diversity aware • CV and covering letter support • Support with developing interview technique • Job searching • Support with identifying progression routes • Support with coping with health and mental health challenges	• Supporting claims for benefits (Job Seekers Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment • Support with coping with homelessness • Support in finding housing • Support in identifying and claiming travel bursaries • Setting up additional support for Learners • Helping people access funding for and access to childcare

Examples of support included: providing detailed travel instructions and a visual image to support an adult Learner with learning disabilities to access the learning centre; supporting Learners for whom English is not their first language to identify and access nursery care; and identifying a volunteering opportunity at an animal charity for someone struggling with anxiety that led to a job opportunity.

Cutting across all these forms of practical support was the challenge of helping Learners access services that have now been put online. Advisors reported that Job Centre Advisors have been telling clients to go to a learning centre in order to access support with making an online claim.

Interestingly, in addition to practical support, 'showing kindness', particularly in the face of bereavement or loss, was listed as a form of practical support that IAG Advisors offered Learners.

IAG 5: One client benefitted from the kindness offered in a session. They had been suffering from acute bereavement issues and had not been able to get out of the house since their partner had died the winter before. I supported them to talk about what would help them; made enquiries to CRUSE Bereavement Counselling, contacted the Director and asked if they could speak directly to my Client to reassure her that there was support (free) available. Some weeks later, the

same Client came back looking much more at ease and said that they would not know what to do without the [centre] as it was the only place they felt safe enough to come to outside of their home.

In the journey from understanding 'what is and could be possible' differently, to identifying a realisable opportunity and acting on that opportunity, practical support enabled Learners to think about their needs and how they could be met. Having support needs met in order to enable learning activity generated a range of positive experiences that could be built upon. Positive experiences of realising aspiration were at the core of Learner development and 'confidence to..' which we turn to in the next section.

4.2 Building confidence through the IAG Session

Advisors were asked in the qualitative survey if and how they understood what they did as 'building confidence'. In their responses, it can be seen how person-centred practices again feature very clearly.

IAG 2: *'Building someone's confidence' depends on the person as to what this means for them. I.e. for some people it is a realisation that they do have skills which are relevant to the workplace. This means that they feel more resilient and feel able to apply for jobs, and can consider writing a CV.*

There is a strong emphasis with developing skills relevant for applying for employment opportunities in IAG sessions which is also clear from the quantitative analysis presented in the next section. It is clear from the Advisor's accounts how expertise with supporting CV writing is used to gather together experiences and reshape Learners' sense of possibility.

IAG 4: *Building confidence to me is a by-product of IAG because IAG focuses on the positives, what people can do, for example it looks at peoples' skills and their transferable skills, qualifications and work experience, creating a CV, Interview techniques. Inspire growth and change. A good example is when a parent comes in and wants a CV and says I have nothing to put on my CV because I have just been looking after the kids. If you look at the skills needed in raising a family it quite considerable and confidence boosting.*

However, in addition to skills relevant to employment, Advisors understood the value of the IAG session as a space which is deliberately constructed as a counterpoint to the spaces and interactions typical of statutory services.

IAG Advisor 4: *IAG sessions build people's confidence in their ability to cope with meeting with a professional after having anxiety and /or depression. This then leads to them engaging with the centre and attending adult education courses. For others, having a stable relationship with an IAG Advisor in the form of ongoing sessions helps to*

> *build a sense of self-worth and connectedness with the local community for people who may be otherwise quite isolated.*

This particular aspect of the IAG is very relevant to people experiencing multiple barriers to wellbeing who may have spent considerable time engaging with statutory services and therefore not experiencing the person-centred support typically practiced in community settings. This type of support is of particular relevance to people with complex needs. In the section that follows the significance of the IAG to people experiencing multiple barriers to wellbeing is explored further through quantitative analysis of the EBG2 monitoring data.

The Bridge - outing

5. Learner Stories and qualitative feedback from monitoring forms

In this section two sets of qualitative data are presented and analysed. The first comes from a process of data collection introduced for the purposes of this evaluation which was a peer-led, process of story collection using the 'Most Significant Chance' (MSC) methodology. The second comes from qualitative data that Learners provided when they completed evaluation forms as part of the monitoring process for IAGs. This data is important because it was unsolicited (Learners did not have to provide it). It was entered by Learners at the end of the evaluation form given out on completion of an IAG session or course. Therefore, it stands in contrast to the MSC data which as a process Learners were asked to engage in as part of a face-to-face interaction.

5.1 Learner Stories

The Most Significant Change (MSC) process described in the evaluation methods section produced 15 Learner stories. The stories were an important source of data for this evaluation but were also valuable to the EBG partnership organisations who will continue to use them in their service design and strategic planning work. For the story collectors, they provided valuable experience of collecting data especially as the stories gave testimony to experiences they recognised and to some extent had shared.

From an evaluation point of view the stories provide insight into the patterns of change people experience or can experience following an IAG session. They also provide invaluable insight into what we do not see from the evaluation forms. In the section that follows Learner stories are analysed firstly, in terms of the support Learners received during IAG sessions. Secondly, they are analysed in terms of what it is meant when they answer monitoring questions that ask if their 'confidence' has improved.

5.1.1 The IAG Session

The first outcome measure captured on the form refers to the IAG session itself. However, what comes through in the stories is how much people 'bring to the door' on arrival.

> *I came to England four years ago from Sudan, and struggled quite a lot with my English. I spoke to my sister-in-law, and she told me about Varndean College and the courses that they do. I came to the college and spoke to the Advisor, who explained all the courses to me, and then asked me to do a written exam to see what level my English was at. [Story 4]*

> *I had hit bad times after was signed off work due to depression and severe anxiety. I was working locally at the time and was referred by my employers to an Occupational Therapist. I was unable to cope with life in general. This demise in my mental and physical health impacted all areas of my life. I found it hard to cope with simple tasks. This resulted in my financial situation spiralling out of control and I was referred for help with benefits and help with budgeting and opening letters which were forming an increasing pile. It was through this that I was referred to The Bridge. [Story 9]*

Not only did Learners describe a range of different recovery experiences and challenges associated with life changes, there is also a clear sense of how much was being overcome for people to 'make it to the door'.

> *When I first used the service I was in a bad place and on a slow road to recovery from alcohol abuse. My first impression of the building bought back uncomfortable memories of a local school I had attended. I soon overcame my initial feelings about the building and location when I began to attend regular meetings with the Learning and Participation Advisor. [Story 5]*
>
> *At first I found it difficult to come to The Bridge as the location bought back memories of childhood. I had experienced bullying at my previous school which was nearby to the location. I overcame these feelings as I attended the site more regularly for further educational and training purposes. Attending The Bridge became an exercise in overcoming past fears and issues. [Story 6]*

These stories demonstrate the challenges people overcome in attending these centres and the potential difficulties associated with forming a connection with a person (an Advisor) and a space (the community learning hub). Understanding people's backgrounds and apprehensions forms the basis of the Advisors' 'person-centred practice'. This practice manifests in both simple and complex ways. Learners frequently referred to the significance of Advisors being, kind and helpful, making them feel welcome and comfortable.

> *The staff here have always been very helpful and non-judgemental. [Story 9]*
>
> *I was nervous at first but coming here I realised that the people made me feel welcome and comfortable. [Story 5]*
>
> *My initial contact with the Learning & Participation Advisor was on the phone. I felt very comfortable talking to him. He helped me to look at the options at that point. [Story 7]*

Beyond the Advisors, Learners made repeated reference to centres themselves being welcoming places to come to and as we see later, being able to connect to a space and feel a sense of belonging is a vital step on the path to other changes that include volunteering and working at the centres.

> *I found the staff at The Bridge very welcoming and everyone has a non-judgemental approach which helps immensely. [Story 8]*
>
> *I find working at The Whitehawk Inn pleasant and it is a nicer environment and more personal than the Jobcentre. It is a more pleasant place to job search and has made me aware of various services available such as The Bridge and similar places. [Story 15]*

IAG Advisors form an anchor point within this process of familiarisation. The initial meeting they have with Learners can be up to 90 minutes long. The length of this meeting means that the pace of the interaction can be adapted and time can be given to getting to know someone's background and current situation; both crucial elements of Advisors' person-centred practice. The time and confidential space in which the IAG session takes place affords privacy and dignity in terms of recounting past

experience and deciding how much personal information to disclose at this initial meeting. Both these practices enable trust to build. Advisors are then in a position to bring people's often challenging backgrounds and complex situations into account as they offer support and suggest possibilities, steering them through the systems they can access to meet their needs. They can identify support to help people stabilise their current situations, opening up time for them to achieve more balance in their lives, or they can begin a process of imagining, and taking steps toward, acting on future possibilities and opportunities.

When I first came to The Whitehawk Inn I had an 'information, advice and guidance' meeting with a worker, where we talked about what I would like to do. This was very useful for me, and led me on to a variety of courses and options that I did not know about before. [Story 14]

…since then volunteer trainer and the Learning & Participation Advisor have given me a great deal of practical and useful careers advice. [Story 10]

The support given me by the team has been very solid and helped me a lot. [Story 12]

Advisors carefully curate the information they offer, attuning what they say to the person in front of them, timing and conveying advice skilfully in order to ensure that opportunity and possibility remain credible and are co-constructed with the Learner. This is a benefit of the EBG2 partnership, which enables knowledge of opportunities and support to be shared across the centres. This increases the potential for this first experience to be a positive one. Learners refer to this combination of informed, empathetic and 'person-centred' attention as 'support' and identify it as crucial.

The support I received gave me confidence to go forth. I learnt to deal with my anxiety by tapping into support. I went from a place of feeling unemployable and fearful to being employed and happy. I realised that I was bringing valued skills to local employers. The learning & participation Advisor shared his story, which really helped me in my progression. [Story 7]

The worker really helped me to get all the information I needed. There is a lot of overwhelming information online or on paper, but it's better for me to speak to someone, and be able to ask questions and get direct answers. Without this support I would not have been able to do the course. [Story 3]

Finding out that support is available and being helped to access that support were described as significant steps by Learners. In this last example we see that information is not always about availability of resources but about the support that accompanies access to information.

Support also involved thinking through the detail of what is involved in creating an opportunity and taking those steps with someone (such as completing a form, making a phone call, looking at details on line, organising travel) were all a significant part of the IAG for Learners. Support to act on an opportunity, such as putting in place care arrangements, and negotiating flexibility with providers was another key contribution of the IAG that enabled opportunities to be realised.

> *We talked and arranged for me to do an 'ESOL 1' course, and a 'Working with Children Level 1' course as well. Alongside this, I was advised to talk to the Learning & Participation Worker about getting additional funding to pay for the extra nursery time that my daughter would need while I was attending my courses. The worker went on to arrange this for me, allowing me to attend. The college was also willing to be flexible with the course times, I could start and finish 15 minutes earlier or later to help with nursery times. This was something which I was very grateful for. [Story 1]*

In the stories Learners frequently look back on life events, such as significant changes in their health or employment status and the carer roles they have or have had. They often speak of wanting to regain something that had been part of their life previously. Beginning to understand this as possible, coupled with the Advisor identifying and acting on opportunities, establishes an important pattern whereby people begin to experience themselves as valued and as involved or 'part of something' again. In this respect, forming a relationship with the Advisor and the centre has a value in and of itself regardless of whether this leads to skills and qualifications because of what that contact and relationship stand for and what this counters.

Over the 15 Learner stories, we see that what happens after the IAG follows two patterns. In some cases a positive outcome is a small change that produces more balance and stability in someone's life.

> *I feel that the world is a fast-paced place which increases my sense of isolation. The Bridge is a like a lifeline enabling me to access information and support. Through suffering from depression I have always been hard on myself. The support from The Bridge is enabling me to roll along taking small steps to help me cope. I cope with this period of sadness by doing what I am doing. [Story 8]*

In other cases, Learners experience a gathering sense of possibility and opportunity through which a Learner begins to locate and act on opportunities themselves.

> *The effect of this increase in confidence impacted other areas of my life. I found that in less than a year I went from feeling I had nothing to feeling totally enabled in all areas of my life. I began to get back into health and fitness. I lost six stone through my recovery process. I also achieved a certificate in First Aid [Story 5].*

In the stories, people typically move from talking about the IAG sessions and talking about the courses they took subsequently. Those courses reflected on in the stories were deeply appreciated as opportunities to learn but equally as opportunities to 'get out', socialise and potentially exercise (even just walking to the course). Learners identify health benefits in taking part in courses that are sometimes physical but which are most often related to improved emotional wellbeing and mental health associated with socialising. The link between taking courses and socialising with others on the course together with the relationships built with course tutors were described as very significant in supporting people to see new possibilities.

For both patterns, the effect of more stability or multiple positive changes is that people describe feeling better both physically and 'in themselves' (i.e. emotional and mental wellbeing). They describe their relationships as improving too.

> *Additionally, the courses have given me extra confidence in my personal relationships, making me more assertive and less inclined to be a "doormat" with my partner. [Story 9]*

Thinking through the detail of what is involved in creating an opportunity and taking those steps with someone (such as completing a form, making a phone call, looking at details on line, organising travel) were all a significant part of the IAG for Learners. Support to act on an opportunity, putting in place support such as care arrangements, negotiating and negotiating flexibility with providers was another key contribution of the IAG that enabled opportunities to be realised.

> *I was advised to talk to the Learning & Participation Worker about getting additional funding to pay for the extra nursery time that my daughter would need while I was attending my courses. The worker went on to arrange this for me, allowing me to attend. The college was also willing to be flexible with the course times, I could start and finish 15 minutes earlier or later to help with nursery times. This was something which I was very grateful for. If I did not have help with nursery for my daughter I would not have been able to do the courses at all. I was given information about which courses I could go on next, and I also got help with bus tickets so that I could attend college and then go to the nursery, which has really helped as well. [Story 1]*

For an initial contact with an IAG Advisor to build into a relationship and for this to form part of a sustained pattern of relationship-building, the IAG session has to perform multiple functions. Seeing social relationships as valuable and possible is an important outcome that often changes people's sense of who they are and what they can contribute. Experiencing the centre as 'a place to go' supports people to feel a sense of belonging that sometimes extends into volunteering at the centre (and sometimes beyond). 'Meeting people' is the most common outcome that people cite as valuable in the stories. What is unclear is how this corresponds with the evaluation form outcomes and whether by 'meeting people' Learners would identify themselves as 'joining a social group' or feeling 'part of community' (as the evaluation form expresses it).

5.1.2 Confidence

Confidence has historically been understood to be a key outcome of IAG sessions and the activities that follow. However, as a descriptive term and Learner experience, Advisors and Learner centre staff commented that they saw confidence as paradoxically both 'clear to see' and 'hard to define'. Looking at the Learner stories it can be seen why this is the case. Confidence is not described as a single, static state or behaviour that Learners either possessed, gained or lost. It was a 'gathering together' of experiences (which could be subtle or not-so-subtle) that enabled a 'confidence to' which collectively contributed to conversations and engagement with 'what is and could be possible'. From the Learner stories it can be seen how IAG sessions enabled a 'confidence to', through which confidence becomes a collection of experiences lived out differently, for different people, in different contexts.

Learners articulated confidence both explicitly and implicitly as a process of finding, gaining, developing. When it is explicit (i.e. this is the word they themselves have chosen) confidence expresses a substantive change in understanding and experience of what is possible. This could be a completely new understanding of possibility. Or else, people quite often referred to a loss, or change, that 'took away their confidence', leaving them with the experience that what was once possible, was no longer. Often, but not always, this was linked to a life event, health situation or carer role that has materially changed what it is people are able to do.

> *[IAG session following an English as a second language course] I have not felt that I have had a social life in recent years because of my children. I currently volunteer for a local Nursery for two and a half hours a week, and this alongside my courses allow me to socialise as well as study. When my youngest leaves nursery I hope that this time will be increased. The courses have also given me more confidence, helped me make friends, and laugh. This makes such a big difference, it is so nice to just be myself and have some time to myself. [Story 1]*

People begin to experience possibility as 'absent' from their current situation and any future situation. Altering this by offering a substantive example of how 'what is possible' can be reappraised, combined with creating the material means of achieving, creating and acting on an aspiration, reshapes possibility.

> *The Learning & Participation Advisor helped me with accessing further information and guidance on the Equalities Act. He helped me face my fears in declaring my [recent] disability ['severe depression and anxiety'] to my employers and gave me benefits advice. This was all a part of the job application process. The support I received gave me confidence to go forth. I learnt to deal with my anxiety by tapping into support. I went from a place of feeling unemployable and fearful to being employed and happy. I realised that I was bringing valued skills to local employers. [Story 7]*

Confidence was also expressed in terms of overcoming feelings experienced on entering new spaces and meeting new people. The process of coming to the centre and meeting an Advisor offered a way of understanding these activities as possible and potentially rewarding.

> *Once I started the course I was quite nervous, but once I had the first lesson under my belt I felt better and finished the course. I am now doing level two course. I feel that it has helped me not only with my confidence, but also with using different communication and listening skills. [Story 2]*
>
> *Although I was nervous at first, using the services here at The Bridge has enabled me to confront past issues and move on. [Story 6]*

'Just speaking' to someone or perhaps a new group of people was described as significant and potentially part of a continuum of change.

Since doing the courses I feel more confident in myself, and feel more able to mix with people. I am more able to talk to doctors, speak with people on the phone, and to generally feel like I am a part of the community. [4]

I am now better able to approach people at job fairs and related activities when job searching. I have far less anxiety, and tend to think in a far more positive manner about chasing jobs and making work applications. [9]

Going to a new place, making an initial contact and this developing into a way of being part of a group is an important pattern that creates other possibilities. Each step along the way is described as confidence-building which in this context is very much related to trust that social contact with others can be enjoyable and in particular, trust that contact with people (like Advisors and course tutors) can form part of a rewarding experience. For some (but not all), gaining formal qualifications was a marker that signified a change in Learners' understanding of what was possible, not just in that single experience, but in the future too.

During this period with help and advice from the Learning and Participation Advisor I got my SIA Licences, which gave me further employment options and that sense of achievement gave me a huge boost of confidence. I then got a job as a cook at the pub, [Story 5]

Once the move from possibility to opportunity is achieved people described beginning to recreate this process for themselves, developing their own narratives of possibility, envisaging support and foreseeing positive experiences along the way. IAG sessions provide an example of 'how' to do this which generates a 'confidence to' do the same. This is achieved through the Advisors' person-centred practice and through EBG2 partnership working which ensures local opportunities for support and learning are at hand in the advice session, making it possible to model and provide access to realisable aspiration. This creates a relationship within which people are able to locate themselves in a present and a future where both simple and more elaborate plans for their life become realisable in ways that are potentially very different to that previously imagined. In these cases, Learners reimagine themselves as actively creating a continuum of 'change for the better' that is ongoing. Sometimes this involves seeing themselves as a source of support for others and acting on this through volunteering and other activities.

I am hoping that by doing the courses I have done (and intend to do!) I will become a Counsellor for our local mental health trust, and help people who are going through what I have been through. [Story 2]

The experience of declaring my disability has been a good experience as my story has become a source of inspiration for myself and others. [Story 7]

Taking the step or forming the aspiration to help other people is a common theme within the stories but for others simply achieving some balance in their lives is equally important.

I feel proud volunteering and how my confidence has grown. The course that I am doing is not just for getting qualifications and increasing my confidence, but also gives me some me time so I can just focus on me and be to myself. [Story 3]

5.1.3 Qualitative comments from monitoring forms

The Learner stories produced through using the MSC method are an important source of data for this evaluation. However, the MSC approach depends on participants responding to requests to share their stories in a one-to-one interaction. By contrast, the qualitative responses Learners provided on the key monitoring and evaluation form provided a space for Learners to express responses to questions within a free-text 'Please tell us more'… heading. A sample of these qualitative responses taken from each partner were considered and analysed for the same 3 month period. The sample includes 36 Learners from WHI, 91 from Varndean College and 116 responses from The Bridge Community Centre. At the time the evaluation forms were completed, Learners were taking courses – from singing, to pottery, to mosaics or IT Skills. Before taking a course, Learners see an Advisor and so these comments are either given at a point where a,) Learners are still in the early stages of getting to know the centre, or b.) at a point where taking courses or attending a course regularly has become part of an ongoing routine. Below is a brief overview and analysis of the responses.

Engaging with a group and a course tutor for the first time is another challenging, formative step that Learners take. As with attending the centre for the first time, the welcome extended and the way centre staff and course tutors interact with Learners have a significant effect on relationship and trust-building.

> QF22: I have told my sisters all about WHI you have been so kind & welcoming esp the first time I came

> QF113: I feel much more relaxed. I was nervous of talking to people. I felt unsure of my way

The courses people attend are frequently referred to as a basis for being together with other people and sharing some social time.

> QF12: Singing course helped me to meet other people and to be part of a group which hopefully will help me socially.

> QF:74 Have met new people and I feel able to mix with others.

> QF: 81 Being with different people other than family is a good thing. I have met a mixture of characters and you learn to adapt to different types of people.

The possibility of socialising and the role this plays in helping people to gain confidence is frequently linked to challenging personal circumstances. These circumstances can be ongoing but often they are linked to a recent change that the Learner is coming to terms with.

> QF42: As I don't have many friends in the area, due to retirement and my husband recently dying, I find the course is my life-line to meeting with people and feeling part of a community which in old age is very important. Loneliness is not very good for health or wellbeing.

> *QF32: The social aspect of singing is very important to me as I have just become a widow and it is improving my confidence.*

The link to confidence is often made explicitly and is linked to socialising with peers and staff

> *QF:87 Just meeting new people for a day lifts my confidence*

> *QF:93 Very good teacher that gives me a lot of belief. I am not a confident person.*

Feeling part of something and a sense of belonging are also important aspects of the feedback.

> *QF33: I feel part of the group and community here, otherwise I feel isolated at home*

> *QF52: I have started to volunteer in a nursery every Friday. I would like to find a job in a primary school as a teacher assistant.*

What comes out of the qualitative data that is interesting is an alternative view on the IAG sessions and the importance of their remaining optional and person-centred. Negative comments about the IAG sessions were rare, but where they occurred, the theme of 'having to' see an Advisor is present.

> *QF4: I was relieved not to have to see an Advisor yet again in order to do this day. It has not helped in anyway & was a waste of time. It should not be forced upon us to meet with an Advisor if we do not require it*

> *QF22: I do not want to be pressured into having work related interviews as I cannot work due to health reasons.*

These responses could be associated with previous experience of statutory services and the compulsory character of meetings with for example Job Centre Advisors as it was not the practice of learning centres to insist on IAG sessions.

In the following section, the IAG session and its role is considered from the point of view of the IAG Advisors.

The Bridge - pottery class

6. Looking at patterns across the dataset

From the Learner stories we see confidence described as a 'confidence to' that was closely linked to Learners' changing sense of 'what is and could be possible'.   It was a 'gathering together' of experiences, both subtle and not-so-subtle, which accumulated over time. The stories describe how in some cases gaining confidence is experienced from making a relatively small change that produces more balance and stability in the story-tellers life. In other cases, Learners experience a gathering sense of possibility and opportunity that gains momentum such that Learners begin to locate and act on opportunities themselves.

In both cases, the effect of either more stability or multiple positive changes, is that people describe feeling better both physically and 'in themselves'. They describe their relationships and capacity to socialise as improving too. It becomes possible to speculate that 'feeling more confident' equates to a change in someone's mental health and their willingness and capacity to relate to others. With respect to skills, the Learner stories rarely refer explicitly to 'gaining life and work skills'. Learners place considerable emphasis on the course they took but not necessarily whether this 'gave them' a set of skills. What is more common is for them to say '…and then I went on to' or 'and that meant I could…'. This sense of movement or momentum was common and it is possible to speculate that for some people at certain moments, gains in confidence reshape possibility in a mutually reinforcing way that means that confidence and sense of possibility reinforce one another and increase correspondingly.

The approach taken to analysing the quantitative data was to take these speculative findings from the qualitative data and test whether or not these patterns held true over a larger dataset. The specific patterns that were tested are listed below:

Pattern 1: Gaining confidence and its relationship to skills development
Through testing for evidence of this pattern the quantitative analysis sought to explore whether, on the evaluation form, Learners had associated gaining confidence with specific skills or subsets of skills. This corresponds with Learner stories where they routinely referred to gaining confidence as something they 'did; as gaining 'confidence to…' Typically Learners went on from the IAG Session to take a course and this contributed to their sense of confidence and possibility.

Pattern 2: Confidence and socialising
The association between confidence and socialising was very clear in the Learner stories and also in the qualitative feedback offered on the evaluation forms. Through testing for evidence of this pattern the quantitative analysis sought to explore if 'increased confidence' was associated with increased capacity and opportunity to socialise across the larger dataset.

Pattern 3: Barriers to wellbeing and gains in confidence
From the Learner stories it was clear that those people who came to the centres experiencing multiple barriers to wellbeing were those who spoke of feeling the greatest sense of transformation in their confidence to take part in activities and move on with their lives. Through testing for evidence of this pattern the quantitative analysis sought to explore if complex barriers to wellbeing were associated with greater gains in confidence experienced as a result of attending an IAG Session.

Pattern 4: Barriers to wellbeing and possibility

Similarly to pattern three above, from the Learner stories it was clear that those people who came to the centres experiencing multiple barriers to wellbeing were those who spoke of feeling the greatest sense of transformation in their ability to think about what is and could be possible. By testing for evidence of this pattern the quantitative analysis sought to explore if complex barriers to wellbeing were associated with experiencing a changing sense of possibility as a result of attending an IAG session.

Pattern 5: Positive experience of IAG session and possibility

It was speculated that for those Learners who explicitly stated that they had experienced the IAG session positively (by ticking this box on the evaluation form) the main benefit they would have experienced would be in their approach to planning and sense of possibility. This emerged as a finding in both qualitative and quantitative datasets.

Pattern 6: Positive experience of IAG session, possibility and links to further positive outcomes

In the stories there is a clear link between a growing sense of optimism and possibility and how in some cases this creates a momentum whereby further positive benefits are experienced. This emerged as a finding in both qualitative and quantitative datasets.

Findings from the analysis of quantitative data are provided below.

6.1 Findings from the quantitative analysis

Across the 3 separate sites, the project amassed evaluation data from 1,863 service users. Drawing on a confirmatory approach to the dataset developed from the qualitative MSC analysis, a series of analyses were undertaken in order to assess whether 'confidence to' related both to the IAG assessment experience and to the range of social, health and skills outcomes. That is, to understand whether the positive experiences of the small sub-sample who took part in the MSC analysis resonated with the sample as a whole. Moreover the quantitative analysis sought to understand whether the concept of confidence as it emerged from the qualitative analysis - as a purposeful gathering together of experiences that inspire 'confidence to' - was in evidence across the larger dataset.

    I.   Gains in confidence, developing skills and improving health

Findings suggest that the notion of 'confidence to' held across the dataset as a whole. Indeed service users reported confidence as related to a range of different skills, lifestyle change and health improvements.

Those who experienced the greatest gains in confidence were more likely to develop vocational skills. This relationship was statistically significant ($\chi 2 = 44.65$, $p < .000$). The impact of gains in understanding of confidence was also significantly associated with IT skills ($\chi 2 = 20.54$, $p < .000$), Maths/English skills ($\chi 2 = 35.23$, $p < .000$), communication skills ($\chi 2 = 57.64$, $p < .000$), problem solving skills ($\chi 2 = 40.51$, $p < .000$), relationship skills ($\chi 2 = 61.71$, $p < .000$), personal development ($\chi 2 = 69.03$, $p < .000$) and physical ($\chi 2 = 35.31$, $p < .000$) and mental health improvements ($\chi 2 = 61.25$, $p < .000$)

Figure 1. Gains in confidence, developing skills and improving health
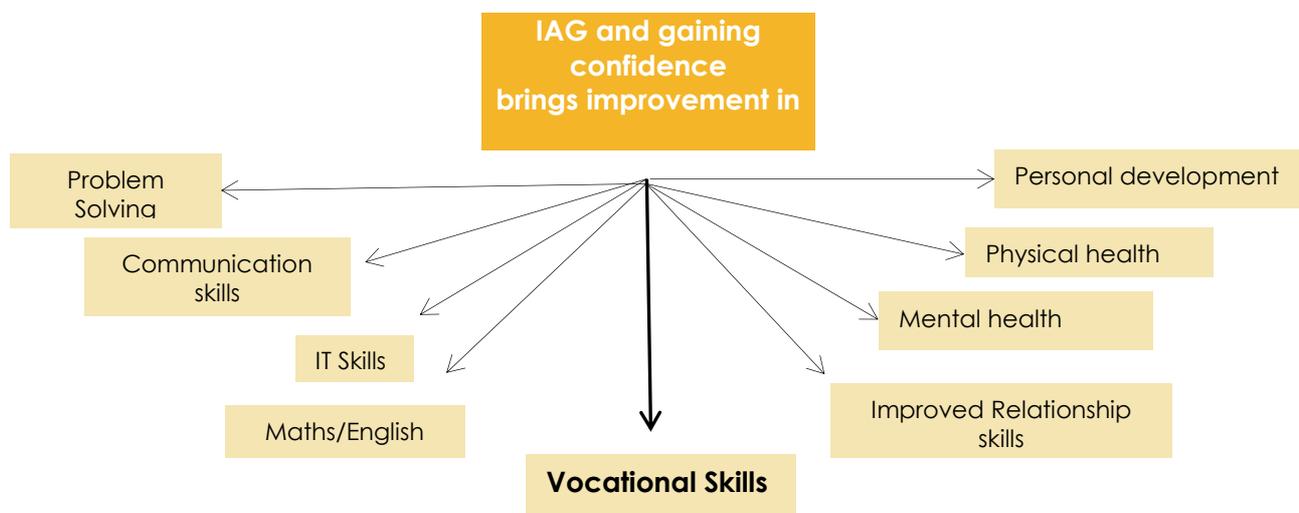
II.   Gains in confidence, increased social contact and lifestyle change
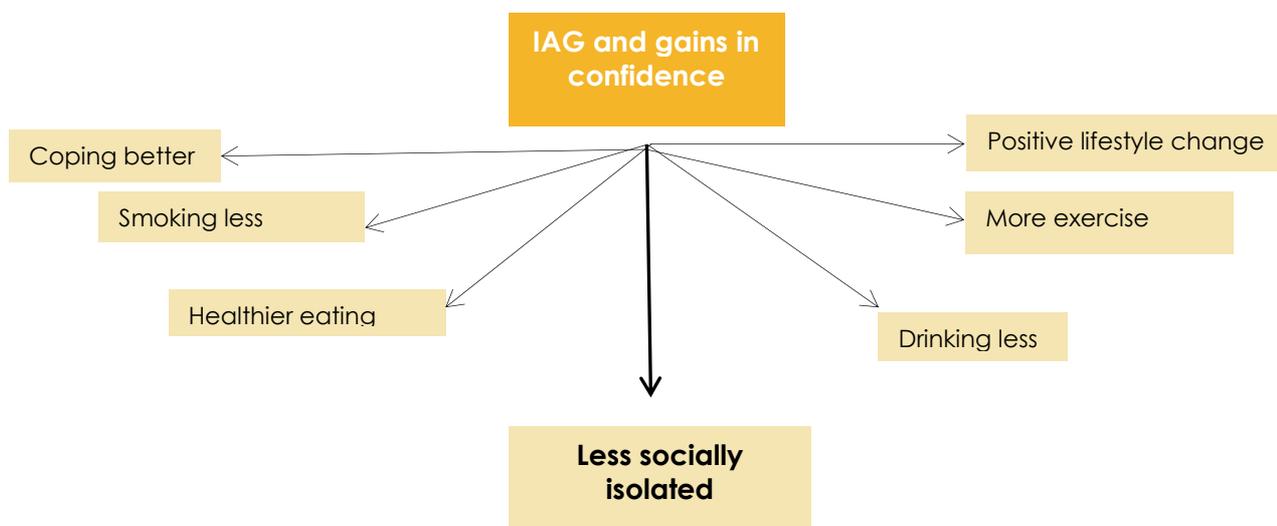
Findings suggest that those who experienced the greatest gains in confidence were less likely to be isolated. This relationship was statistically significant ($\chi2=99.78$, $p<.000$). The impact of confidence was also significantly associated with coping better ($\chi2=72.07$, $p<.000$), a positive lifestyle change ($\chi2=42.83$, $p<.000$), more exercise ($\chi2=41.99$, $p<.000$), smoking less ($\chi2=11.58$, $p<.000$), healthier eating ($\chi2=32.26$, $p<.000$) and drinking less ($\chi2=11.58$, $p<.005$).

Table 5. Gains in confidence, increased social contact and lifestyle change

	Did not increase confidence	Increased confidence
No less isolated	518 81.3%	181 51.1%
Became less isolated	119 18.7%	173 48.9%

Figure 2. Gains in confidence and increased social contact

1. Number of barriers, gains in confidence and increased social contact. Findings suggest that those with the greatest number of barriers experienced the greatest gains in confidence. This relationship was statistically significant ($\chi2=7.66$, $p<.01$).

Table 6. Number of barriers, gains in confidence and increased social contact

	Did not increase confidence	Increased confidence
Number of barriers		
Low	487	242
	66.8%	33.2%
High	150	112
	57.3%	42.7%

Potential barriers to wellbeing included long term health or mental health challenges, disability, housing issues, low income, previous criminal conviction and caring responsibilities.

Figure 3. Number of barriers and gaining confidence as a result of IAG session

I. Number of barriers experienced and possibilities

Findings suggest that those with the greatest number of barriers experienced the greatest gains in understanding their options and being able to make plans. This relationship was statistically significant ($\chi2=22.60$, $p<.000$).

Table 7. Number of barriers experienced and possibilities

	Ability to make plans and understand options (possibilities)		
	None	Make plans or understand options	Make plans and understand options
Number of barriers			
Low	452 62.0%	184 25.2%	93 12.8%
High	130 49.6%	67 25.6%	65 24.8%

Figure 4. Number of barriers and increasing sense of possibility as a result of IAG session
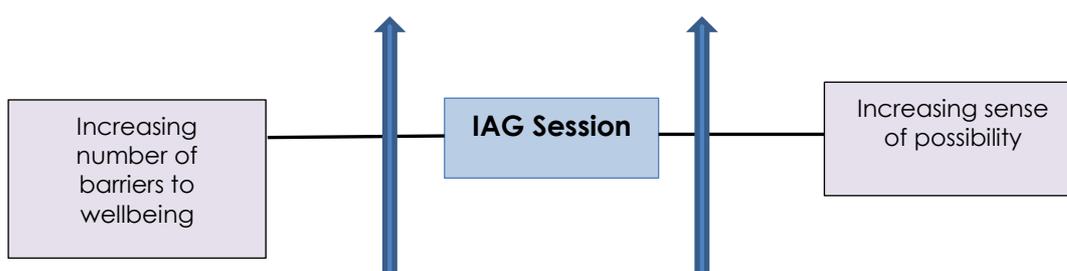
II. Access to an Advisor and possibilities

Findings suggest that positively experiencing access to an Advisor was particularly important for those whose possibilities were most expanded. This relationship was statistically significant ($\chi2=101.96$, p<.000). This might be interpreted as saying that the influence of an Advisor was particularly important for those who experienced the greatest gains in understanding their options and being able to make plans.

Table 8. Access to an Advisor and possibilities

	Ability to make plans and understand options (possibilities)		
	None	Make plans or understand options	Make plans and understand options
Did seeing an Advisor make a positive difference			
No	401 69.6%	136 23.6%	39 6.8%
Yes	181 43.6%	115 27.7%	119 28.7%

III. Possibilities and skills development and health improvements

Findings suggest that those who experienced the greatest gains in understanding their options and being able to make plans were more likely to develop vocational skills. This relationship was statistically significant ($\chi2=32.7$, p<.000). The impact of gains in understanding of options and ability to make plans were also significantly associated with IT skills ($\chi2=13.78$, p<.000), Maths/English skills ($\chi2=49.96$, p<.000), communication skills ($\chi2=62.30$, p<.000), problem solving skills ($\chi2=98.59$, p<.000), relationship skills ($\chi2=$, p<.000),

personal development (χ2=96.13, p<.000) and physical (χ2=30.10, p<.000) and mental health improvements (χ2=64.68, p<.000)

Table 8 Possibilities, skills development and health improvements

	Ability to make plans and understand options (possibilities)		
	None	Make plans or understand options	Make plans and understand options
Developed vocational skills			
No	406 69.8%	147 58.6%	73 46.2%
Yes	176 30.2%	104 41.4%	85 53.8%

To conclude, the quantitative analysis suggests that the confidence gains developed through using the service significantly impacted a range of different areas of Learners' lives. These were varied and included skills, physical and mental health and social/lifestyle gains. Moreover, the service appears to be particularly effective for Learners who experience the greatest number of barriers to wellbeing. The project also appeared to significantly impact Learner's ability to make plans and understand their options, that is - to develop real possibilities for change. This was particularly the case for those who experienced the greatest numbers of barriers. This development of real possibilities for change related to the development of skills and health improvements. Finally, experiencing access to the Advisor positively impacted significantly the ability to make plans and understand options.

The Bridge

7. Conclusion and Summary

This evaluation shows that the IAG practices developed by the EBG2 partners are highly effective in supporting Learners to gain confidence and in so doing transform their sense of what is and could be possible. IAG sessions were shown to bring about significant improvements to Learner confidence which brought about a statistically significant improvement in their capacity to develop vocational skills and improve their openness towards and willingness to socialise.

Importantly, given the communities this project serves, it is important to note that these positive outcomes were even more pronounced for those Learners experiencing multiple barriers to wellbeing. In addition, there was statistical evidence to show that where Learners experience a single benefit from engaging with IAG activities they are likely to experience multiple benefits. In this way, improved confidence is shown to create a new sense of possibility, which in turn impacts positively on mental and physical health.

The practices and expertise that IAG Advisors have created longitudinally since project funding was first applied for in 2011 are appreciated by Learners who describe themselves as benefitting from the person-centred practices, kindness and professionalism they encounter. The effectiveness of IAG Sessions is clearly located in their being situated within the community hub environment, enabling Learners to move seamlessly from IAG Session to taking courses, maintaining an ongoing relationship with the IAG Advisor if they choose to. The range of practical support IAG Advisors offer helps Learners with complex needs achieve stability within their day-to-day lives before supporting them to move on to exploring new possibilities. It enables carefully curated opportunities to be realised and acted on. For some Learners this has the effect of producing more balance and stability in their lives. For others it is the catalyst for a cascade of positive changes that are mutually reinforcing.

It would seem that for the communities served by this project IAG sessions offer an important means of supporting people to make positive changes in their lives. Maintaining and extending the reach of these activities so that those living with high levels of complex need and multiple barriers to wellbeing in East Brighton benefit from them further would seem to offer a tangible means of affecting change for these communities.

Appendix 1: Challenges to EBG2 Volunteer Recruitment

In the EBG2 application for funding it was stated that 6 volunteer Learners would sit on the project Steering Group along with other volunteers running activities such as celebration events. Over the length of the project there have been 2-3 volunteer Learners sitting on the Steering Group and 28 directly involved in Lottery Project (3 evaluation volunteers, 12 volunteers at WHI supporting project activities.

At the beginning of the project 2 specific roles were envisaged for volunteers:

- Community Involvement Volunteers (CIVs) to sit on Steering group
- Community Activity Volunteers (CAVs) to work with staff and help run events

As the project evolved, a third role was identified to support evaluation activities and this was:
- Evaluation volunteer

A process to engaging, recruiting and supporting volunteers was designed which included:

- Putting together role descriptions
- Advertising the positions using flyers, social media, emails and website
- Running information session(s) and invited potential volunteers to attend

Two CI volunteers were recruited onto the steering group using this approach.

Challenges of recruitment:
During year 1 the steering group considered why they had not managed to attract as many volunteers as they had hoped. The following reasons were listed in the steering group minutes:

- EBGP2 encompasses a range of activities (Learning and Information, Advice and Guidance) and this has made explaining the remit of the CIV role quite difficult. Volunteers need a considerable amount of support to understand and undertake this role
- Project partners were conscious that the words 'Steering group' and 'evaluation' could be off-putting to some people
- Many volunteers have a range of commitments which mean they may not feel able to give the time required to attending steering group meetings.

As a result the partnership explored ways that to overcome these 'barriers' to getting involved. These included:

- Talking to participants/Learners already involved in existing activities to see if becoming a CIV is something they would be interested in.
- Undertaking a mini evaluation of an existing activity as a way of showing what the role of CIVs and CAVs is.
- Inviting potential volunteers to attend a Steering Group meeting to 'see what it is like'.

- Contacting groups such as UA3 to let them know about volunteering opportunities

In addition it was noted that during 2015-2017 there were changes in the welfare benefits system and this had (and continues to have) an impact on the beneficiaries. As a result of the welfare reform partners found that clients were experiencing increasing mental health problems. People with multiple and complex issues are less likely to have the spare capacity to participate outside their immediate circle of activities.

Meetings:
Initially, CIVs met each other at the start of the Steering Group meeting to discuss monitoring - it was felt that this would be a less off-putting way of encouraging volunteers to get involved. In year 2, the CIVs were familiar with the structure of the Steering Group meetings as well as each other and as a result the structure of the meeting evolved.

Evaluation volunteers:

Adopting a participative design for the evaluation was very much welcomed by partners who saw the benefits of having volunteers involved as being their capacity to question and challenge assumptions and their 'expert by experience' status.

It was easier to attract volunteers to this role and the reasons for this may include:
- The role was specific
- Time bound
- Involved undertaking training
- Involved working with the university

The experience of volunteers involved in the evaluation has not been evaluated but there is an intention to do this and responses can then inform future evaluation efforts.

Doing things differently next time:
The lead EBG2 project partner had a meeting with the Volunteer Co-ordinator at Community Works and as a result will do the following differently
- Involve staff more in the steering group so that there is buy-in from them and so that they can recruit volunteers (it's worked with other projects)
- Make the steering groups less formal and run the meetings differently
- Find different ways for volunteers to contribute
- Clarify what is required in terms of commitment – in terms of the length of time, roles etc.
- Design a clear pathway which builds up the volunteer involvement in small steps ending up with being on the steering group.

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