

Stockwell Partnership

Portuguese Advice and Capacity Building Project Evaluation



January 2013

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Executive Summary

1. Stockwell Partnership is a high performing organisation that has exceeded targets across all outcomes of the project. In fact their performance has been so exceptional, even in some of the most challenging outcomes; that they have delivered over double (202%) of the projected outcomes when the bid was submitted.
2. The data collection, performance management and statistical analysis systems at Stockwell Partnership are over and above what is expected of an organisation of this size. Record keeping associated with this project was outstanding and also tracked beneficiaries after they had left the programme with follow-up calls made at three month intervals after they completed the programme and data entered into the databases. Stockwell Partnership was able to deal with any query from the evaluator speedily and furnish all the requested data within an hour. Record keeping systems at this organisation is one of the best seen in a small voluntary organisation and is a model of good practice.
3. Basing the project in the heart of the Portuguese community made a substantial difference to its success. In effect it became a hyper-local initiative, despite serving the community across the whole borough. Embedding the services in the local community increased its outreach potential and ability to identify those in need through word of mouth and community referral, it also ensured the project made and sustained strong links with local businesses who could offer employment to the beneficiaries. In reality this project is an example of Localism at its most successful enabling them to identify and reach out to people who would be traditionally very hard to engage.
4. The changes to the welfare system, housing benefit and tax credits will have a major impact on the people supported through this programme over the last three years. Many will be unable to afford to live on the packages of work and benefits put together and will need to review their situation and in some cases move to a cheaper part of London in order to make ends meet. There will therefore be a requirement for continued support particularly during 2013/14 to ensure these families do not end up in hardship again.

5. The economic situation in Portugal had led to increasing numbers migrating to London under the perception it offers jobs, housing and a better life for their families. However, few truly understand the expense associated with living in the capital. Once in Stockwell, clients explained how unscrupulous businessmen from their own community offer to help them secure benefits, jobs and housing for a fee, usually around £1,000. Or provide poor advice in establishing companies to be self employed. This exploitation reinforces the need for a locally based project offering support to people in their own language to counteract unscrupulous self appointed community leaders.
6. Stockwell is a changing neighbourhood on the edge of the biggest regeneration zone in England (Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Battersea), increasing the value of local properties dramatically and the rental values. As a direct result many of the previous beneficiaries may not be able to afford their current property with the introduction of the Housing Benefit cap and low paid jobs they secured. Stockwell Partnership has done some analysis and estimate that 80% of the clients from the last three years will be impacted by the Housing Benefit cap alone. Without tailored support there is a real risk that some families will slip into poverty, impacting the adults and the children.
7. In the longer term the need is to support clients to get better paid employment rather than the low skilled, low paid jobs characterised by the first three years of this programme. With changes to Housing Benefit and Working Tax Credits in 2013, many of the clients will again face hardship or have to move home in order to provide for their families. There will be a need to provide some support to develop skills and access higher paid jobs, further interventions are needed to address this issue in Stockwell.
8. The regeneration of Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Battersea (VNEB) will be offering 26,000 new jobs over the next ten years. Many of these will be in construction and service industries. The local Portuguese speaking community but they will need support and advocacy to identify and link into the employers and networks to have any chance of securing some of these new employment opportunities.
9. One of the issues that clients talked about a lot and the database of beneficiaries clearly shows is the number of people with mental health needs. There would be great advantage in exploring the development of a mental health support group for Portuguese speakers. This could be a peer support group or with the support of a professional.

Recommendations

- i. Stockwell Partnership needs to ensure their ICT hardware is regularly updated and ensure that replacement costs are built into future funding bids. The computer associated with this project was woefully out of date and slow, making simple tasks relating to the record keeping of this project far more time consuming than it should have been.
- ii. Demand for support through the changes to the welfare system and addressing the increasing housing rental prices that are above the new Housing Benefit cap mean demand for the welfare benefit support and advice service is increasing and needs to be covered for the next two years at least. Without this intervention Portuguese speaking communities are at risk of falling into poverty or being displaced to cheaper neighbourhoods. Having the capacity to meet demand in light of funding constraints could mean offering more group sessions, telephone advice or email based support. Loss of the support locally is going to be particularly challenging over the next two years for the Portuguese Community at a time of significant social change.
- iii. The project needs to be refined and developed in the future to address the issue of the beneficiaries being stuck in low skilled and low paid jobs. With top-up benefits being cut, many families are going to need to earn more to survive and stay based within the communities and social networks they know and value. This issue is of broader strategic importance than the Stockwell Partnership and is equally pertinent to the Council and social housing providers too.
- iv. Representatives of the Portuguese speaking community or their advocates need to link into VNEB employers groups and training networks.
- v. There would be great merit in exploring the development of a mental health support group for Portuguese speakers. This could be a peer support group or with the support of a professional.

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Introduction

The Stockwell Portuguese Advice and Capacity Building Project contained two distinct elements, the highly popular advice service and a community capacity building to stimulate more self help, support and integration.

The clients were the local Portuguese community, many of which had issues with literacy and many either do not speak English or speak only rudimentary English.

Stockwell is one of the most deprived wards in Lambeth, with the highest proportion of severely deprived households and the highest number of people with poor health who do not have a long-term illness but the area is going through massive change being on the edge of the largest regeneration zone in Britain.

The project met a clearly defined gap in provision, as no other provider in the statutory or voluntary sector provide specialist advice service targeted specifically for Portuguese speakers. The evaluation demonstrated that this is still the case three years after the programme was funded by The Big Lottery Fund.

The project had three clear outcomes all of which have been met and exceeded by Stockwell Partnership: -

- ✓ 250 Portuguese people to be living in less hardship as a result of the interventions
- ✓ 50 Portuguese people feeling less isolated and more empowered
- ✓ 25 People gaining employment

The evaluation demonstrates that one of the key strengths of this project was the way it was embedded in the local community with links to local business. In reality it was hyper local based in the heart of 'Little Portugal' which provided huge added value and ensured it was able to reach and engage those clients other providers would find it hard to identify.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the Stockwell Portuguese Advice and Capacity Building Project was conducted during December 2012 and completed January 2013. This meant that the assessment took place in the last quarter of the three year programme and was able to seriously examine the outputs, outcomes and impact of the project during its lifetime. The recommendations of the report are also pertinent to the forward plan of the services in light of funding ceasing in March 2013.

Desk Based Review

Stockwell Partnership supplied a significant amount of documentation for review as part of the evaluation. This enabled the scrutiny and validation of the outputs and outcomes submitted as part of the on-going progress reports to the Big Lottery Fund over the lifetime of the project.

The databases for all elements of the programme were also supplied which meant they could be interrogated and scrutinised. The organisation kept excellent electronic based data records on all interventions, their outcomes and subsequent impact assessments.

Interviews

As part of the evaluation process the Programme Manager and Project Worker took part in a semi-structured interview. This was focused on the monitoring reports submitted and the inputs, outputs and outcomes claimed.

The interviews also explored the changing environment in which the beneficiaries find themselves, current challenges and future needs. This was critical to supporting Stockwell Partnership plan for the future of the services funded through this initiative.

Beneficiaries and volunteers of the Portuguese Advice and Capacity Building Project were also engaged in the evaluation. This was achieved by two methods; firstly as part of their regular performance management systems, Stockwell Partnership have a range of evaluation systems in place. These returns were supplied to the evaluator to analyse, plus some were interviewed as part of the evaluation.

Case Studies

Stockwell Partnership supplied a number of case studies that could be used for the valuation report. The case studies correlated with the beneficiary database and it was left to the discretion of the evaluator which case studies were used.

Performance against Output Targets

In the BLF application, Stockwell Partnership outlined a series of outputs that would be achieved through the investment. There was complete data for year one and two of the project and the data for year three was up to the six month stage.

The table of outcomes below demonstrates that Stockwell Partnership over-performed in all areas. In fact their performance has been so exceptional, even in some of the most challenging areas; that they have delivered over double (202%) of the projected outcomes in the awarded bid.

Output	Target	Achieved (30 months)	Variance %	Met
250 Portuguese people living in less hardship (people accessing benefits support)	250	597	+138%	✓ Exceeded
Portuguese people less isolated and more empowered	50	122	+144%	✓ Exceeded
Participation in wider community initiatives and forums	40	50	+25%	✓ Exceeded
People gaining employment	25	33	+32%	✓ Exceeded
People accessing ESOL training	60	87	+45%	✓ Exceeded
People accessing vocationally based training	45	62	+37%	✓ Exceeded

The outputs for year three of project were all above the required milestone even at the six month stage, so by March 2013, this project can expect to increase this over performance substantially.

In light of the current economic climate, one would expect the targets for securing employment to have been exceptionally challenging. Stockwell Partnership supported 8 more people than projected into employment over the three years. This is due to embedding the project within the local community it served and forging strong links with local businesses and employers.

Stockwell Partnership recognises that supporting people into training courses has become more challenging in the last year of the project. The supply of free courses in the borough has diminished greatly as a result of cuts in public sector funding. Despite this, they have still been able to source courses provided by local recruitment agencies as part of transition to employment. This approach ensures that the agencies cover the cost of the courses as part of the employment process, adding value to this project by pro bono support.

Evaluation

The evaluation was structured around the outcomes as presented in the bid and then explored the systems and procedures utilised by Stockwell Partnership to manage the programme.

Outcome 1

250 Portuguese people living in less hardship and feeling better able to cope due to accessing welfare advice, benefits, ESOL and other training and development opportunities.

This outcome has four tangible interventions that were aimed to address hardship: -

- (i) Benefits advice and support
- (ii) ESOL Training
- (iii) Support into employment
- (iv) Support to access training to increase skills and employability

Stockwell Partnership exceeded their targets across all of this output measurements as demonstrated in previous chapter. Even in areas where in the current climate securing people employment would prove challenging, the project did exceedingly well due to their approach of embedding the project in the community it serves.

Clients were identified through the social networks of the Portuguese community in Stockwell, especially the cafes and other social centres. Upon referral to Stockwell Partnership, the Project Coordinator would conduct an assessment of need against the interventions being offered. The outcome of this assessment was recorded in a beneficiary database that was then used to track progress, outcomes and the impact of the interventions. Record keeping associated with this project was outstanding, although the computer used to keep the information was old, slow and in dire need of replacement.

If needs were identified through the assessment that this project was unable to address, the clients were referred to other providers and offered support with the associated language support. This rarely occurred as the project was so efficient and effective it most cases it could manage the intervention across all identified needs.

The welfare benefits advice service has helped client secure over £163,888 worth of benefits during the lifetime of the projects. This only counts those people who reported the outcome of their claim to Stockwell Partnership and does not include Working Tax Credits.

The interviews with beneficiaries identified how vulnerable members of this community can be when they move the London. The economic situation in Portugal had led to increasing numbers migrating to London under the perception it offers jobs, housing and a better life for their families. However, few truly understand the expense associated with living in the capital. Once

in Stockwell, clients explained how unscrupulous businessmen from their own community offer to help them secure benefits, jobs and housing for a fee, usually around £1,000. Or provide poor advice in establishing companies to be self employed. This exploitation reinforces the need for a locally based project offering support to people in their own language to counteract unscrupulous self appointed community leaders.

Literacy was the major barrier for all clients benefitting from this project. The interviews with clients as part of the evaluation identified that most of the beneficiaries had problems with literacy in Portuguese, never mind English. As a result, the barrier to employment and further training were compounded by these needs. It also accounted for the transition into mostly manual and low skilled employment.

ESOL training and support offered through the programme helped clients communicate and gave them basic skills to survive in London. Some progressed onto formal ESOL courses at Lambeth College when they could secure free places or had the funds to pay the fees that had been introduced during the lifetime of this project.

Some clients needed substantial support due to the diverse nature of their needs as well as the language and literacy problems. Many had mental health problems identified as a result of the assessment and were supported to address these with their GP.

Case Study 1

Abilio arrived from Portugal in May 2012, he had lived and worked in the UK previously for 12 years before returning to Portugal to be closer to his family. After 2 years there the recession hit and, on losing his job he found it impossible to find employment so returned to the UK to start another new life.

He heard about SP services, booked an appointment and came to see the project worker in June 2012. At the interview he explained that he wasn't interested in benefits, just work.

An interview was booked for him with an employment agency and he was helped to make his own CV. He also received support in his job search and attended a few activities of the HUG group, but by the end of June, Stockwell Partnership found him a job at Biocollectors cleaning bins and loading trucks.

In September he returned looking for another job having lost that one. Again Stockwell Partnership found him work as a stone mason through the same agency. 2 weeks later he returned looking for work having been sacked.

3 weeks later after searching a job on his own without success he came back. Once again he was supported to get an interview with an employment agency, to no avail. Stockwell

Partnership made another contact with a possible employer and managed to book him an interview to work as a handyman. He got the job and lasted 5 days in total. He remained unemployed for the whole of December.

Again at the beginning of January he returned to SP office, once again they managed to book him a fresh interview with the employment agency and he is currently employed as a operative on a building construction site, where he has completed 2 weeks of work.

Stockwell Partnership had amazing success in securing their clients employment; this was achieved through developing strong links with a local Portuguese owned employment agency. This enabled the beneficiaries to be interviewed in Portuguese and make a simple transition to low skilled, mostly manual grade jobs such as cleaners, builders, drivers, market traders etc. One person developed their own business as a result of the training and support from the project but the nature of the jobs secured was noticeably low skilled and low paid.

As a result of the employment outcomes, many of the beneficiaries still required support to live, despite working full time. Therefore the benefits advice and support was largely linked to securing working tax credits, housing and council tax benefit and other associated top ups. The reform of the welfare system which will be fully implemented from April 2013 will have a massive impact on the clients supported through this programme over the last three years, as many of the tax credits and top up benefits will be cut or reduced. This will potentially lead to many having to review their current employment, housing and benefit situation and develop a future plan of action in order to support their families.

There are some employment outcomes that have broken the mould and supported people to start their own business, utilising their skills and talents and linked to the market associated with a large local Portuguese speaking community.

Case Study 2.

Luiz is a divorced man who has lived in UK for 5 years. During this time he has held various jobs as driver, he was recently working for the BIG TOUR as a bus driver. One year ago his father passed away and Luiz fell into chronic depression forcing him to stop work.

Luiz heard about Stockwell Partnership through a friend who was already a regular user of the services. When he came in for welfare benefits advice, I spoke about the other activities offered and he expressed an interest in the IT classes. He said that his dream was to open a small cafe where he could sell his home made cakes and bread.

Stockwell Partnership supported him, helped him to make contacts and assisted him with the details. Luiz is now running a small cafe in the local area, he feels more empowered, is happy, less isolated with renewed self-confidence.

The fact this project exceeded its targets so dramatically is a demonstration of the sustained need over three years. The Project Worker in her interview also highlighted how old clients are already coming back in for support following receipt of letters about their benefits. Many are apprehensive about the future, especially resulting from the changes to Working Tax Credits and Housing Benefit.

Stockwell is a changing neighbourhood on the edge of the biggest regeneration zone in England (Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Battersea). Three embassies are moving to the neighbourhood along with the building of 16,000 new homes most of which are luxury apartments. These changes are increasing the value of local properties dramatically and the rental values. As a direct result many of the previous beneficiaries may not be able to afford their current property with the introduction of the Housing Benefit cap and low paid jobs they secured. Stockwell Partnership has done some analysis and estimate that 80% of the clients from the last three years will be impacted by the Housing Benefit cap alone. Without tailored support there is a real risk that some families will slip into poverty, impacting the adults and the children.

The benefits advice, training and support into employment have made a huge difference over the last three years but with a changing economic and physical environment, the demand for this specialist service is greater than ever and needs to be sustained at least for another two years.

Outcome 2

50 Portuguese people will feel less isolated and more empowered by gaining the skills and confidence to create and participate in their own new social/support groups, with 40 participating in wider community forums and networks

Like in all areas of this programme Stockwell Partnership exceeded targets by a huge amount for this outcome. 122 people were supported in 30 months to become less isolated, way above the target of 50.

One of key successes has been engaging 50 people in local forums and networks, encouraging integration and supporting the Portuguese speaking community to embed themselves in mainstream social networks in Stockwell. Again well above the target of 40 people.

The isolated members of the community were identified through the assessment process of beneficiaries and were mainly carers, those with mental health needs and those with high ESOL needs who in many cases never left home. There were also referrals through word of mouth,

GPs, friends and another local community centre (Stockwell Community Resource Centre). The drop-in and social support group also helped identify those isolated members of the community known to other beneficiaries. Again by embedding the project in the local community enabled it to identify and reach out to people who would be traditionally very hard to engage.

Over the three years of the programme they developed three social and support groups run by the Portuguese speaking community: -

- (i) HUG and social support group
- (ii) Stockwell Portuguese Speakers Association
- (iii) Music Group

By the end of the project only HUG was sustained as the people who were key leaders and organisers of the other groups have moved on. Despite this, HUG is growing and building its membership monthly. They run the group from the basement of a local Portuguese shop that provides the premises free and it is run for and by the beneficiaries of this programme.

HUG has been active in supporting Portuguese speakers to volunteer in other local organisations, develop hospital and care home visiting schemes and volunteer in the local library, Tate South Lambeth. This approach is a demonstration of real social inclusion resulting from a capacity building intervention and compared to the employment outcomes has measurable outcomes in relation to integrating the beneficiaries into the wider local community.

Great care has been taken to support the clients to also engage in a cross section of local civil society. Examples of where they have participated in local forums and networks are: -

- Library reconfiguration consultations
- Planning consultations and place shaping events
- South Lambeth Market
- Stockwell Community Forum
- Stockwell Festival (as volunteers, stall holders and attendees)

These demonstrate that the Stockwell Partnership have supported and encouraged participation in a broad range of local activities and local democracy. The outcome of which has been a more visible Portuguese community and a gradual integration into local activities and networks. This appears to have been received well by other local communities.

Case Study 3

Maria is a Portuguese lone parent who has raised two children in the UK.

While the children were younger she received Income Support. When the younger child reached 8 she was moved to Jobseekers Allowance. While on Jobseekers Allowance, Maria spent her days sat at home watching television and playing 'Farmville' on her computer.

When in April 2011 the Stockwell Portuguese Speakers Association was established with Big Lottery support Maria joined bringing both of her daughters (now 16 and 22 years old) and started an ESOL course.

Maria now speaks better English and, for the first time, feels confident enough to attend job interviews at the Job Centre without an interpreter. An active member of the SPSA, Maria leads on the recycling project and continues to be an inspiration for all the others.

Outcome 3

25 Portuguese people gaining employment

The project has secured jobs for 33 people over the thirty months measured during the evaluation. This is 32% above target and of real credit to the programme in light of the current economic environment.

The main reasons for the success in this area relate to the projects links to local Portuguese businesses and employment agencies. Without these links it is unlikely the beneficiaries would have secured jobs in businesses that were not run by Portuguese speakers.

There is a clear 7 point process to the project securing employment for those who are seeking work:-

1. Assessment and identification of employability needs
2. Identify reason for being in UK and status
3. Phone employment agency to and try and do match with current vacancies
4. Client visits employment agency for interview
5. Stockwell Partnership support the client to develop their CV in English
6. Agency books client job interviews with newly produced CV
7. 3 month follow-up with client over the phone to ensure they sustained their job and identify if they have any further support needs

Accessing training for clients is getting increasingly hard and at present only the Blackfriars Settlement will continue to deliver courses accessible to the beneficiaries of this programme. This is a real challenge for the future.

In the longer term the need is to support clients to get better paid employment rather than the low skilled, low paid jobs characterised by the first three years. With changes to Housing Benefit and Working Tax Credits in 2013, many of the clients will again face hardship or have to move home in order to provide for their families. There will be a need to provide some support to develop skills and access higher paid jobs.

The regeneration of Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Battersea will be offering 26,000 new jobs over the next ten years. Many of these will be in construction and service industries. A partnership has been established across two boroughs to try and ensure local people secure many of these jobs and training opportunities. This offers a huge opportunity for the local Portuguese speaking community but they will need support and advocacy to identify and link into the employers and networks to have any chance of securing some of these new employment opportunities.

The Future

The future for the clients of this programme is challenging and there is need for continuation of the programme, especially in light of the continued migration from Portugal because of the economic situation.

A new Portuguese Community Centre is being established by The Council but this taking time and is not projected to functional until at least 2014. Even then it may not be able to deliver the range of activities covered by this programme and other happening in the neighbourhood. It could however be a hub for some of the activities developed by this project to be based. Stockwell Partnership needs to keep abreast of the developments at the new community centre and work in collaboration to ensure there is shared effort to meet the need of the Portuguese speaking community.

One of the issues that clients talked about a lot and the database of beneficiaries clearly shows is the number of people with mental health needs. There would be great advantage in exploring the development of a mental health support group for Portuguese speakers. This could be a peer support group or with the support of a professional.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Stockwell Partnership have developed and delivered a very successful project supporting the Portuguese speaking community in Stockwell and surrounding areas. They have exceeded output targets dramatically, supported by outstanding record keeping and performance management systems.

Demand for the services is still increasing as a result of the economic downturn and the worsening situation in Portugal, leading to more economic migrants presenting for support locally with little if any English. The evaluation highlighted that those people are vulnerable to exploitation to unscrupulous members of their own community, who charge exorbitant fees for services provided free by this project.

The changes in the welfare system and increasing private and social rent charges in Stockwell partly caused by the regeneration of the Vauxhall are all adding to the hardship of the community that will increase over the next two years. There is a real need to provide support local support to ensure the community does not experience poverty levels higher than when the project started.

Recommendations

1. Stockwell Partnership needs to ensure their ICT hardware is regularly updated and ensure that replacement costs are built into future funding bids. The computer associated with this project was woefully out of date and slow, making simple tasks relating to the record keeping of this project far more time consuming than it should have been.
2. Demand for support through the changes to the welfare system and addressing the increasing housing rental prices that are above the new Housing Benefit cap mean demand for the welfare benefit support and advice service is increasing and needs to be covered for the next two years at least. Without this intervention Portuguese speaking communities are at risk of falling into poverty or being displaced to cheaper neighbourhoods. Having the capacity to meet demand in light of funding constraints could mean offering more group sessions, telephone advice or email based support. Loss of the support locally if going to be particularly challenging over the next two years for the Portuguese Community at a time of significant social change.
3. The project needs to be refined and developed in the future to address the issue of the beneficiaries being stuck in low skilled and low paid jobs. With top-up benefits being cut, many families are going to need to earn more to survive and stay based within the

communities and social networks they know and value. This issue is of broader strategic issue than the Stockwell Partnership and is equally pertinent to the Council and social housing providers too.

4. Representatives of the Portuguese speaking community or their advocates need to link into VNEM employers groups and training networks.
5. There would be great merit in exploring the development of a mental health support group for Portuguese speakers. This could be a peer support group or with the support of a professional.