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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Barking

Community Champion Recruitment

Aidan Elmore
April 2019

Detail of the Activity.

This case study highlights the early programme experience of recruitment of Community Champions highlighting some of the early lessons learnt. It is useful because the Community Champion in question has continued to work with Breaking Boundaries to the conclusion of the programme completing additional training and qualifications because of their experience on the programme.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

Aidan was introduced to Breaking Boundaries through Havering Mind (local Mental Health charity who were providing support to Aidan) who had got in touch with Sporting Equals and Sam the local activator said that they were doing a project in Barking and Dagenham.

The activities focussed on:

Aidan loves sport, wanted to do more to help in the community, and went to a Breaking Boundaries welcome event, and then volunteered to help at a school running cricket. This started in December 2018 and ran weekly every Tuesday 5-7pm, till April 2019. Aidan was 20 years old when he joined the programme and wanted to be a sports coach. Trying to get an apprenticeship had proved challenging as many organisations say they could not support his additional learning needs at the time. Aidan had felt that opportunities for him to move forward in his career had been unnecessarily restricted until Breaking Boundaries offered him the opportunity to take on the Community Champion role.

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

The ongoing project work demonstrates outcomes against social cohesion in these areas:

Improved social connectedness and attitudes to diversity

For Aidan, the key impacts from being involved in the programme are that he has met new people from a range of different backgrounds. This has built his confidence from learning the rules of cricket and engaging with lots of different people he hasn't met before. His engagement at the school wouldn't have happened without Breaking Boundaries and he has become involved in cricket through the programme as well. He hadn't really played cricket before and he likes cricket now.

Improved knowledge and skills to support community cohesion

For those he's worked with at the school where delivery took place Aidan identifies how the 12 year old participants were part of a mixed race group. He saw over the course of the project how they were getting on better as the course went on. They worked well together and bonded together. Aidan believes that Breaking Boundaries has played a part in this, although the participants were doing other sporting activities together outside of the cricket he was involved in. He has undertaken a range of training and since completing his work with the programme he has gained further coaching qualifications and continues to support cricket activities in the area.

"My favourite parts have been that I have enjoyed meeting the young people and helping them to play cricket. Being involved in this way brings a smile to my face, I've realised there are lots of kind people and enjoy helping people out and getting people active."

The Future.

Aidan went to training course to be a Coach Support Worker as part of Breaking Boundaries and is always keen to do more training to improve his skills as a coach. Breaking Boundaries helped make this happen, when Aidan didn't think it could happen after his previous struggles to get involved in coaching with several organisations in the area. He now has connections with the Essex Cricket Board which wouldn't have happened without the programme.

Aidan has also said that he could make some suggestions about more cricket delivery in the areas where the programme is seeking to work that would help his learning be implemented in the area.

Top Tips.

- ✓ Having a local connector – the Activator – is a useful mechanism to help in the recruitment of Community Champions particularly for those whose opportunities have been restricted in the past. The pro-active attitude of the Activator ensured that Aiden was connected to the range of opportunities that have created a new career pathway for him.



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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Barking

Community Coordinator Recruitment

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
April 2019

Detail of the Activity.

This case study highlights the learning from the initial recruitment of the Community Coordinator in Barking. Sam Bickmore filled this role until August 2022 and the recruitment experience highlights some important lessons for those looking to recruit for similar roles in the future.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

Barking and Dagenham (B&D) appointed Sam Bickmore as their Community Coordinator for Breaking Boundaries in September 2018. Sam's performance in the role has been positive and this case study seeks to highlight how B&D's approach could be learnt from for future recruitment for Breaking Boundaries roles including Coordinators and Champions.

The activities focussed on:

The recruitment approach for the Community Coordinator role has highlighted the importance of assessing the personal and social traits of any prospective Breaking Boundaries role. This should identify their suitability as someone who, with support, can work and drive things forward on their

own initiative that is sensitive to the local politics, context, and processes they might encounter. This aligns with the values-based recruitment approach adopted by the local authority and corresponds to the values implicit within the Breaking Boundaries programme itself.

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

The ongoing project work demonstrates outcomes against social cohesion in these areas:

Improved knowledge and skills to support community cohesion

Breaking Boundaries created a new role for B&D which had wider benefits for the local authority. Sam also participated in wider healthy lifestyles work. It also increased the resources available to the authority and other local partners. It is unlikely that such a role would have been identified by B&D without the programme. Furthermore, the programme has brokered a new relationship between two local cricket clubs leading to a joint cricket festival.

B&D staff had been worried at the beginning about Sam's relatively young age, and inexperience but were reassured as his overall maturity came across strongly in the interview, and his work since starting has further supported this view.

Emma (Sam's Line Manager and Project Lead) comments

"Sam came in as such a young person but came without any previous misconceptions of what the issues and challenges were for Breaking Boundaries. What's impressed me most is how he has used others to learn shortcuts to make contacts with people and organisations, to identify the key relationships, and who he needs to speak to. He has an all-round approach to the role that is well organised staying on top of his work even with the 3 days training at Loughborough and taking on anything that is asked of him – that even includes dressing up in a Giraffe costume to hand out leaflets to publicise activities. We've always tried to make sure Sam can shape what he is doing with guidance from us on how things can be done and been flexible about how Sam is supported by B&D, the local Activator, and Essex Cricket".

Sam made positive strides in his confidence and ability to communicate with others not known to him. He chaired meetings, led discussions on local issues with partners and other community organisations, and has taken a more lead role during Coordinator training at Loughborough University. Sam himself identified that without the Breaking Boundaries funded role he wouldn't be doing the community work he has been doing or building the contacts that have been created by it. He felt he became a lot more confident in approaching strangers to ask for their help in taking things forward.

The Future.

A key focus of recruitment will be upon the understanding of community cohesion and how improvements might be generated to identify whether there is a need for specific training input to help reinforce or extend knowledge to support staff in improving cohesion in the areas in which they are working and bringing participants together to do achieve these aims.

Top Tips.

- ✓ Ensure your recruitment approach really highlights the potential of candidates to be moulded into the role and don't assume that a cricket background is an essential criterion. The Coordinator role is much more about relationship development and the best candidates will be those that illustrate capabilities in reaching out to individuals and organisations, showing initiative or self-starting capabilities, and a willingness to actively seek help from a range of sources.
- ✓ Wide ranging support setup is key utilising a range of organisation expertise to support the Coordinator build local relationships and contacts, receive ongoing pastoral and HR support, and improve understanding of local circumstance, challenges, and social and political challenges.
- ✓ Early successes in establishing new contacts or new activities brokered by the Coordinator can help build Coordinator confidence and encourage them to 'reach out' further to other organisations.



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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Barking

Using Partners to Access Community Groups

Al Madina Mosque
November 2019

Detail of the Activity.

The Al Madina Mosque is based in the Abbey ward in Barking and Dagenham. It is a large mosque with capacity for 4,500 people with 2 prayer halls, a faith school and community centre offering a range of sporting activities. The mosque has received awards for its community sport delivery, and the way it is run and engages with its local community, whether worshippers or other local residents.

They were interested to hear about the project and saw that it linked directly with their own ethos around the value and power of sport to engage members of the local community, especially young people in their activities.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

The mosque had not previously worked directly with the local authority and the link up with the Breaking Boundaries project was brokered by the local Activator at Sporting Equals. They were very interested in the offer of the cricket activities as they could see how it could enhance their existing sport offer (Karate, Boxing, and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)). Without Breaking Boundaries it is unlikely that they would have looked at cricket as a specific opportunity at the Mosque, and

the training of the Community Champions in cricket and cohesion issues has also been very useful which wouldn't have happened without the programme.

The activities focussed on:

Initial discussions were a bit challenging as Al Madina didn't feel that Breaking Boundaries staff fully understood how to approach their community, or how delivery might best be arranged for them. They were unsure about how things could go forward. However, this is where the local Activator made a real difference by going back to the local authority (host of the Breaking Boundaries project) to explain some of the challenges and agreeing that they would come and observe some their activities and have more discussions about how Breaking Boundaries could work there. The lead for the project at the Mosque believes that without this intervention from the Activator that the project delivery wouldn't have happened or helped to get some many young people involved.

This was particularly important because the proposal was to offer weekly cricket sessions for Muslim girls and parents of these girls did not see that this was an activity that could bring benefits to their daughters. This was especially the case as it was proposed that the sessions would become part of the regular supplementary school activities the Mosque provides to its community. They also intended that these sessions would be mixed sessions for girls involving local residents from other communities as well.

Al Madina has had success with its activities over the years because it has always tried to understand the nuances of different communities so that it can ensure its delivery offer is relevant and attractive to the people it is targeting. It sees this as something that Breaking Boundaries could spend more time focussing on and Al Madina staff would be happy to help in this work.

Two young people from Al Madina were trained as Community Champions and have led the delivery of the cricket sessions. The sessions were run twice weekly and have attracted around 40 regular participants all girls, mostly from the Muslim faith with some from other local communities.

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

The ongoing project work demonstrates outcomes against social cohesion in these areas:

Improved social connectedness and attitudes to diversity

For the participants, it has also brought them into contact with a wider range of young people and to see Al Madina as a key part of their community that they can visit easily and without any trepidation. However, most were already visiting the Mosque for worship, but it has changed their perception of the Mosque to one of a venue for fun activities rather than just worship!

Increased community participation and sense of belonging

Those participating have really boosted their confidence and are now more active participants in the cricket activities, and are asking about how they can get involved in other activities at the Mosque. The girls now take a more active part in persuading their parents of the value of the cricket activities to them, and their parents have been slowly persuaded of these benefits as they see their children's activity level growing. This has demonstrated that the project activities have given these young people a 'voice' with their parents, but it has not yet extended to be used beyond their immediate family groups.

Improved knowledge and skills to support community cohesion

The Champions coaching and engagement skills have been improved and they have seen benefits from this in their other activities because the Champions also work as coaches on these. Therefore, Breaking Boundaries has brought benefits in skills of coaches to reach new participants, though specific examples of cohesion benefits around this are more limited.

Cohesion benefits led to the improved skills of the Champions in bringing different groups together, and they have been actively encouraging groups to do this when working with them. The coaches have also boosted their own confidence, and social skills becoming much more skilled in delivering engaging physical activity sessions for young people.

For Al Madina, it has confirmed the importance to them of using sport to encourage local young people in the local community to come to the mosque and use the facilities it has there. However, this was something they were already doing, and had won awards for that activity, but it has reinforced their resolve to continue with this important work.

The Future.

Al Madina are very keen to continue their cricket activities, want to continue to be involved with Breaking Boundaries style projects and would love to have more Community Champions like those created by the programme. They are keen to see how more benefits around cohesion might come from that future working as well.

They have also been able to establish further relationships with the local authority to work together to access the Muslim and non-Muslim population visiting the mosque.

Top Tips.

- ✓ Understanding a local community can take time, just turning up once won't mean that those from the targeted community will then engage with your activity.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to revisit ideas for projects and revise them to better fit the needs of the communities you will be working with. Understanding 'nuances' is critical and sometimes you may need help to do this from others in the community.
- ✓ Organisations rather than individuals who present themselves as 'community leaders', may often be the best way to engage communities as they have premises that your target community see as 'safe' environments in which activities could take place, whilst also brokering further relationships.
- ✓ It is important to align offers of support with the ethos of the organisation, and, especially for grassroots organisations, it is worth emphasising the additional 'free' resources that might be able to access be engaging with your activity.



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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Barking

New Partnership Creation

Youth Spot Bar
January 2022

Detail of the Activity.

This case study provides some useful insights on how Breaking Boundaries can bring different community organisations together to be able to work together to deliver activities that support the achievement of the programme's aims around cohesion. It illustrates how through facilitation work Breaking Boundaries City teams can enable other organisations to deliver through the programme.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

The link up of these organisations has been established through Breaking Boundaries and the activity gives both organisations a more permanent base for their activities, as one project lead commented that being involved with Breaking Boundaries has:

"Spread our name a bit wider so more people know what we can do and the opportunities we can provide young people. We can link them up to our sports activities and the food and hospitality and working behind the bar and being part of the social hub which is run by the young people and supported and they are buddied to an adult creative." (Project Lead, Barking)

The activities focussed on:

The Youth Spot Bar is a youth led activity that seeks to engage with young people around issues that concern them in their local community, particularly related to the links between different community groups and identifying ways to address hate and street crime amongst young people. Youth Spot Bar was first involved in Breaking Boundaries in 2018/19 around a community festival. They were involved more with the programme through local Activator and a new project has been developed to run at Relish in the town centre from February 2022. This activity aims to bring groups together, get them engaged with each other to create connections between the young people, particularly White British and Black African/Caribbean groups.

The activity involves social activities around food, drinks, and music alongside sporting activities supported by a local group established by a Barking resident to bring young people into physical activity, a Community Tennis and multi-sports group.

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

The ongoing project work demonstrates outcomes against social cohesion in these areas:

Improved partnership working

These organisations wouldn't be working together without Breaking Boundaries and the Activator getting them involved with the project. Working through these kinds of organisations – although often small in terms of their own staff – are the best way to reach into communities because local people often trust these organisations more:

“Breaking Boundaries can support grassroots project to deliver...[and]...when you do that the relationship will be a lasting one. BB needs to be better linked into the grassroots work through us and give us the resources to deliver.” (Project Lead)

This works because, as the Community Tennis Group lead highlighted, it enables delivery to be more consistent and regular. Where activities appear and disappear that makes local residents suspicious and resistant to getting involved because they are not sure that if they invest the time the project/activity will still be there in a few weeks/months. The lead highlighted that by building that trust means that the project/activity is more likely to become known through word of mouth because those participating in it 'trust' it more as something useful or relevant to their community.

What both leads also highlighted was that the initial establishment of contact to start the partnership building process should if possible happen face to face and that it needs to be managed effectively by Breaking Boundaries:

“I like to meet people face to face to help build the trust and help me pass on positive promises but this needs to be followed through otherwise you are letting lots of people...[in the community]...down. It's not smooth so it means my contacts look at me with suspicion this needs to be managed better.” (Project Lead)

Improved knowledge and skills to support community cohesion

For both projects engagement with Breaking Boundaries has improved aspects of their delivery through support provided around management and key processes through the team at the local authority access:

"I've no funding...[outside of Breaking Boundaries]...I'd like to get the parents involved more. It was the networking that was important to me and through that I got involved in Breaking Boundaries...did my first aid and DBS and I'm starting my coaching course [It's important because...] if you don't link your services with others it's hard to do these kinds of work"
(Project Lead)

Through this, interviews with the project leads identified that this means the projects are better able to link with local people and support them in dealing with local issues they have worried about before (like littering or anti-social behaviour) yet have been unsure about how to deal with it. By bringing these groups together through the community projects dialogue can be established, this enables those individuals to discuss solutions and identify ways things could be taken forward. Supporting the projects in this way means they can run better activities that are more likely to be referred to other through word of mouth.

Increased community involvement.

The Future.

They are looking forward to how this activity can make lots of contacts with young people in the area. However, both organisations emphasised that facilitation and logistics support was really important for them as they have limited resources to do this and deliver their activities

Top Tips.

- ✓ Let the activities be driven by young people, they know best and perhaps 'you don't'.
- ✓ Community organisations often need specific help in setting up processes and practices so they can easily demonstrate to others that their activities are safe and well-managed. This can be a good way to engage community organisations because they are often already struggling with these things.
- ✓ Reaching out through community organisations is often the best way to reach the most disengaged, though the activities that run with them need to reassure local people that there is going to be long term options around them. Many are suspicious of projects that 'drop in' and then 'drop out' of areas because community links haven't properly been established. This puts the community organisation under pressure because they are the ones that face 'flak' from the communities they are working with, not Breaking Boundaries. It is then difficult to rebuild that trust for future activities.



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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Barking

Re-establishing Community Links

Al Madina Mosque

September 2021 - January 2022

Detail of the Activity.

This case study provides some useful insights on how a key partner in Barking and Dagenham, has helped the Breaking Boundaries project rebuild links and activities in the local community following Covid lockdown. It also highlights how linking project activities, particularly sporting activities, to other services available at the Mosque enables connections with young people who are participants in the programme to be made that are more focused around their needs including mental health. A key message is to make sure that enough time is given for relationships with participants to be built.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

Breaking Boundaries has supported the project lead to make representations to other senior leaders in the Mosque about the importance of providing a greater range of sports activities but particularly emphasised of opening their premises to non-Muslims and engaging with other faith centres.

The activities focussed on:

Breaking Boundaries has funded several activities at the Mosque that use the coaches there (many non-Muslims themselves) to deliver activities. Activities fuse sporting activity with socialising to bring different groups of young people across religious and ethnic group to take part together. BB has facilitated the resumption of this activity after the pandemic. Breaking Boundaries resumption has also come at the right time providing activities that enable people to get together again:

"We're getting regular numbers taking part in exercise and we tag on social interaction. So after the session they go into a room for chats and refreshments. We make sure our mentors are there and through that it has highlighted a need for a focus on mental health amongst young people. We've then linked them up with other mentors who are specialised in counselling young people. We can support so much because of the other services and the wraparound services. We offer from cradle to grave support and we cater for mental health, physical and nutritional health." (Project Lead, Al Madina).

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

The ongoing project work demonstrates outcomes against social cohesion in these areas:

Improved attitudes to diversity

Delivery of activities at the Mosque has encouraged a wide range of non-Muslim groups to visit it and the mixed groups in delivery also mean they can encourage participants to understand each other but also appreciate that challenges don't differ too much between each other. The lead also highlighted how this meant that participants seemed to better understand the lives of others who are different to them. The lead also believes that the fact that many of the coaches come from a non-Muslim background helps improve attitudes to diversity because many of the young people who attend Mosque are being coached by them.

Increased community participation

Breaking Boundaries has also encouraged them to have a wider focus in their sports activities around other issues that might be affecting participant's lives. Conversations with Activators and taking part in some of the previous sessions has highlighted that their focus on needs of young people needs to be wider and that the activities they run need to make specific efforts to identify these:

Through this the services at the Mosque have wider community involvement and encourage them to share their own experiences with others in their lives, encouraging others to attend activities at the Mosque.

"I don't think we've had any difficulties in getting things going again it was just the stop start nature of the lockdowns...we just had to do posters again. Getting the numbers wasn't at all difficult because people wanted to get out of the house and have someone else to talk." (Project Lead, Al Madina)

Improved partnership working

The project lead highlighted how during the pandemic many faith centres had been involved in a wide range of welfare support (food parcels, check ins with local residents) which often involved them working with other faith centres. Breaking Boundaries work had offered the chance to build on this and Al Madina were reaching out to some Christian centres to see how they could support them through their provision of physical activity so that those individuals could come to the Mosque to take part in the activities on offer.

This has led to members of the Nigerian community using the Mosque facilities and there are plans to see how this could link further with the physical activity sessions on offer. This is aimed to help tackle Black African groups separation from other communities in the borough, and they are looking at similar work with East European groups.

"[The Mosque]...can spread the word as well, we are a sounding board for other organisations." (Project Lead, Al Madina).

In these cases other places of worship will 'check in' with them about the programme and whether they should be involved. The organisations are important advocates and brokers for the programme with a wide range of other community organisations as a result. Again this emphasises that such partnership development work doesn't always need to be done by City staff they can instead facilitate other community organisations in their targeted areas to do it on their behalf.

The Future.

Al Madina aims to be central to delivery of Breaking Boundaries in Barking and has further plans to offer activities for the programme through its facilities at the Mosque. It will be hosting the next city leadership forum to connect further with other community organisations. They reiterated the need to keep local messaging with community groups going so that understanding of the purpose and aims of Breaking Boundaries keeps being heard, as the lead highlighted that sometimes people don't always pick up or listen properly to your message, they often need to hear it several times.

Top Tips.

- ✓ The pandemic changed some attitudes to working together to be much more open to this. A lot of faith centres were delivering lots of welfare activities during lockdowns with other faith centres, many they hadn't worked with much, or at all, before. There's an opportunity to build on this further working across faith centre networks in areas targeted by Breaking Boundaries.
- ✓ Designated socialising time really helps understand the challenges participants are facing in their lives. Participants will often reveal much more about these issues and having staff/volunteers on hand can help identify some of the issues people might want support around – perhaps mental health or financial issues – where they can be encouraged to work with specialist support staff but also make links with others around those experiences building better social connections between them.

- ✓ Reaching out through interfaith community organisations is a good way to reach into communities, consistency of delivery is key here to ensure that trust is built overtime and build confidence of participants to attend regularly. Though you need to be prepared to tackle silo working and make a specific effort to bring different organisations together.