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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Birmingham

Building Partnership with New Communities

The Living Well Consortium and George Dixon Academy
September 2022

Detail of the Activity.

This case study provides insight into how a new project lead (Coordinator) built on previous partner links to develop a new project in limited time bringing together the White British community with refugees who were occupying multiple hotels in the targeted area.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

Breaking Boundaries had, through its City Leadership Forum, got leaders thinking about how to facilitate conversations between young people from different backgrounds. It was also a chance to reflect on conversations that they had been involved in and how these could lead to more cohesion outcomes in the future.

The new Coordinator, was able to restart discussions with the Consortium to facilitate and organise activity between groups of people that they work with who enter temporary accommodation ie refugees in multiple hotels used as temporary accommodation in Edgbaston. The Coordinator was able to facilitate a link up with George Dixon Academy, a secondary school in Birmingham. They got involved because they were seeing more of the young refugees attending their school.

This led to an initial programme of eight sessions of multi-sports activities and cohesion discussions that linked the White British pupils at the school with Arab and European young people in the temporary accommodation provided by the Cobden Hotel.

The activities focussed on:

A previous Coordinator met a colleague from the Living Well Consortium at a jobs fair in 2021 and they expressed an interest in being involved in Breaking Boundaries. The Living Well Consortium worked with community organisations in the Edgbaston and Birmingham area and could see links with activities for young people combining multi-sport and creative arts activities to bring together residents and non-resident groups together.

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

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

Improved social connectedness and sense of belonging

Interviews highlight how these new partnership relationships have been established through the delivery Breaking Boundaries has organised:

“The ownership was a lot more on them, it was more getting to know each other, which is so important before the next steps” (Project Lead, Birmingham)

The relationship now forged between George Dixon Academy and Living Well Consortium are now in contact and connected with community organisations that had no idea each other existed before Breaking Boundaries took place. It has also given people the opportunity to engage with activities they wouldn't ever engage with, along with people they would not have ever participated with.

The link between George Dixon Academy and Living Well has developed so much that they are looking to connect for future summer projects as well.

Improved partnership working

The link between George Dixon Academy and Living Well has improved social connectedness. This has occurred and been supported by connecting the White British pupils and Arab/European young refugees through the multi-sport activities and cohesion work that has run alongside them. This has enabled the White British pupils to understand more about the lives of the young refugees.

The school has also been connected to refugee families and had discussions about them attending their school in future years. Young people in these families have been connected to others in their local area and have built a better understanding of each other's lives.

“I enjoyed listening to other people's stories. People talking about their own experiences, their backgrounds which was part of the activity.”
(Participant, Birmingham)

“I enjoyed the fact that the children enjoyed it and they were getting exercise at the same time and making new friends as well.”
(Project Lead, Living Well Consortium)

The Future.

The link up between George Dixon and Living Well continues to develop and both are hoping to put on further sessions in the future. Due to the success of this approach, Living Well have expressed an interest in being a part of any legacy conversations for the project and are particularly keen to explore any legacy projects linked to the Birmingham Commonwealth Games. The Edgbaston Foundation (Breaking Boundaries lead) is also planning to actively engage with Living Well after the project finishes to help their service users and groups they work to access the ongoing community work in Edgbaston.

Top Tips.

- ✓ Other community organisations can be useful conduits into communities, Direct contact with community groups need not always be initiated by the programme. Some community groups may be more responsive to consortium groups who bring a greater focus on the challenges faced by the voluntary and community sector. This enables engagement strategies to be made more relevant to the targeted groups.
- ✓ Clarity on the benefits for the community organisation of participation need to be clear up front. Community groups need to be told how projects and programmes can benefit their service users. Too much focus on starting delivery before taking adequate time to understand the link between a programme offer and the community needs it is seeking to address helps ensure full engagement by the potential partner.
- ✓ Working with participants to co-produce activity delivery helps engage them in a project whilst also building in longer term engagement.



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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Birmingham

Using Local Cohesion Expertise

The Feast
July 2022

Detail of the Activity.

This case study highlights the learning identified from how they supported a City Leadership Forum and its partnership development work in Birmingham by training participant organisations in delivery approaches around cohesion drawn from their own expertise.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

The Feast began operating in Birmingham in 2000, and work to bring together teenagers from different faiths and cultures to build friendships, explore faith and change lives. They have developed expertise in promoting cohesion between young people of different faiths and cultures in their communities. Through a range of interactive approaches with small groups of young people (up to a maximum of 20) using good youth work practice focussed on young people's they seek to bring opportunities to those young people to review and identify ways in which local cohesion might be improved. The Feast also work in Bradford, Tower Hamlets, and Luton.

The Feast were engaged in the early years of the Breaking Boundaries programme in Birmingham as a delivery partner. Initial discussions were focussed on how they could help directly delivering some of the Breaking Boundaries sessions. In late 2021 as plans for the City Leadership Forums were formed, conversations between The Feast staff and the Community Coordinator at the time

highlighted how The Feast could contribute in a different way by providing expert input around approaching cohesion issues with young people to upskill other partners to help them include this in future activities run by the programme.

The activities focussed on:

The Feast staff had always felt that they could offer some training support but hadn't been sure how this could happen in the early project development work they were involved in. The slight change in focus around developing the City Leadership Forum in Birmingham to focus on ways of bringing and joining different delivery partners together opened up that opportunity. The Feast staff then discussed with the Coordinator at the time how this input could be delivered and an education session was agreed.

Having a different approach to the Forum where participant organisations were provided with training around cohesion and guidelines for dialogue to help facilitate conversations with young people throughout project delivery about cohesion meant the activity built in cohesion at the earliest stages of activity planning. The Coordinator Jill from Feast (cohesion expert) delivered the session. It provided insight in the way delivery staff could facilitate conversations between young people from different backgrounds and reflect on conversations that could lead to positive outcomes in the future. As the staff member from The Feast highlighted:

"It's about having the tools to do it. It's almost like hearsay for me...with limited input it could have had a real impact...[for the other delivery partners]. We [The Feast] never want to do something and leave, it's the legacy, it's how have we continued the work we do...by sharing our expertise like this."

Further support from The Feast was arranged so that delivery partners could be provided with resources that could help them facilitate and initiate these kinds of conversations in the future. They were keen to stress the importance of training on this issue, and that all staff involved must be equipped to be able to confidently support constructive dialogue during sessions.

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

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

Improved partnership working

The approach brought a different dimension to the Forum which enabled partnership connections to be made between different organisations because through the training they were able to identify organisations that were in a similar position to themselves making partnering easier. It also helped them to identify ways in which future activities could be run together so that they could support young people to take them on themselves.

Improved knowledge and skills to support community cohesion

This was key area of planned development sought from including this in the City Leadership Forum.

The Feast was able to provide the specialist advice within a sport and activity context, and how in practice to bridge the gap between sport as an activity to sport as a tool. The Feast staff member summarised this as:

"getting to know others as friends not just as opponents" (Project Lead, Birmingham).

The local Coordinator identified that they improved their understanding of the challenges in dealing with the community groups and had been given good insights in how to move forward on the local cohesion agenda. Participant organisations spoke in the session how it had given them more confidence to build the cohesion focus into their activities and welcomed this.

They also highlighted how through the session able to reflect on conversations that they had been involved in and how these could be improved in future. Being locally based, the Feast were able to give context and local specific insights, including recommendations on suitable venues, locations and activities. For example, they recommended that activities always be run in a way that can be replicated by young people afterwards without needing to buy specific equipment or hire a certain venue, and recommended local parks that were suitable for delivery in a public setting.

The Future.

The Feast are hoping to continue their work supporting other community organisations in their activities supporting the development of community cohesion in the areas where they work.

Top Tips.

- ✓ Partnership meetings can focus on skill development as well as activity planning, cohesion work can be challenging for many and short training and development inputs can be really valued. The offer of training on top of networking opportunities could also help persuade some more reticent organisations to attend.
- ✓ Using local community experts as training deliverers at local partnership events grounds delivery development around local issues. This enables training to be tailored to help partners deal with local context and issues in a better way meaning their cohesion approach can be better focussed.
- ✓ Delivery should focus on identifying activities and ways of working that can easily be replicated in other settings by the community group staff that will be leading the future delivery, especially young people. This helps to create activities that are less reliant upon venue availability or need very specific kit and equipment.



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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Birmingham and Manchester

Facilitating Partnership Development

Breaking Boundaries City Teams
July 2022

Detail of the Activity.

This case study provides useful insight into how by actively facilitating community organisations to come together can create opportunities for new delivery partnerships to be formed . It illustrates how through facilitation work, Breaking Boundaries City teams can enable other organisations to work together, often with new organisations, to identify joint working opportunities and shared agendas on common cohesion issues to support deliver through the programme..

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

The link up of organisations has been facilitated through Breaking Boundaries staging the forums with the best examples involving the active facilitation and outreach work by Breaking Boundaries Community Coordinators to inform potential participants about the events but also to address any concerns/challenges organisations might have in attending or understanding of/working on local cohesion issues.

These organisations often do not have the time to arrange such events themselves and the Co-ordinators through proactive outreach can, with support of local cohesion teams and other local contacts find organisations to attend that might not have otherwise been involved. Once signed up, regular one to one contact with the organisations helps to secure their attendance:

"I gained ideas from them...[other attending organisations]. It also gives you a little push and motivation as to why you do what you do and relights your fire as you realise there are others interested in what you do and what to draw on your expertise. Plus it helped with my own CPD." (Delivery Partner, Birmingham)

Notes from each city show that those leaders of organisations attending the forums seemed keen to talk to each other, recognised their work had a lot in common, and were eager to all share contact details at the end.

The activities focussed on:

City leadership forums were undertaken in all of Breaking Boundaries cities to support the restart of the programme. Events held in Birmingham and Manchester were particularly well attended and were highlighted in partner interviews as the catalyst for activity by the programme being driven forward. They also highlighted examples of where new partnerships were built because of the events that had led to specific activities being added to implementation plans.

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

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

Improved partnership working

The activities that resulted from the forums would not have happened without the organisations being brought together without Breaking Boundaries action:

"It comes from experimenting; every city is different...it helped us focus on hitting requirements to ensure it has cohesion impact because we started talking about the local issues that were being faced." (Project Lead, Birmingham)

It was also notable the initial establishment of contact to start the partnership building process was particularly facilitated by the face-to-face contact that was possible in the forums and that it needs to be actively facilitated and encouraged by Breaking Boundaries – some communities remain nervous around in-person meetings. This backs up findings from a case study on the Youth Sport Bar in Barking and Dagenham with a Manchester lead noting:

"Meeting people face to face helps build the trust and focus on ways to work together to deliver, especially when we haven't worked together before. That being facilitated by BB (Breaking Boundaries) helps that happen. We're not always good at doing that ourselves." (Project Lead, Manchester)

Attendees at both sessions also highlighted how it helped them avoid duplicating existing provision so additional cohesion focussed activities were added rather than a whole new activity being created

that offered a similar opportunity to something another partner was already offering. The sessions built connectedness between attending organisations.

Improved knowledge and skills to support community cohesion

This was noted occurring for both the delivery partner leads and the Coordinators. This was particularly identified as occurring around the opportunities the partnership working provided to share skill and expertise and seemed to work best where partners had a specific expertise for instance sports delivery v. community engagement or involvement specialisms:

“[At the forum]...I got to share what I did but listen to other people. When you get to share. The conversations that were going on before we even started was really valuable. It’s always difficult to bring people together because people have different timetables” (Project Lead, Birmingham)

Coordinators identified that they improved their understanding of the challenges in dealing with the community groups that their delivery partners had built up over time.

In Birmingham, delivery by a local partners supported a targeted training session at the Forum around cohesion and guidelines for dialogue to help facilitate conversations throughout project delivery. By using a cohesion expert the session got leaders thinking about how to facilitate conversations between young people from different backgrounds. It was also a chance to reflect on conversations that they had been involved in and how these could be improved in future to lead to positive outcomes in the future.

The Future.

Both Birmingham and Manchester have highlighted how the forums have helped cement their partnership development work that has then helped the development of activities they have highlighted on their implementation plans.

Top Tips.

- ✓ Engage local partners based on their expertise and how they can develop other local partners, developing a mixed partner profile with some expert in physical activity and some in cohesion related work is especially important in cohesion work. This allows activity delivery to be enhanced such that sport delivery can include more cohesion impacts, whilst existing cohesion work can incorporate more physical activity. Partnerships made in this way can then refine existing delivery rather than duplicating or creating new activities with the resource requirements that might be needed.
- ✓ Proactive and ongoing engagement on a one-to-one basis helps ensure attendance at forums and other partnership events. This helps to build trust in the value of Breaking Boundaries whilst also creating a forum where initial concerns about linking up with new organisations can be addressed. City teams can also collect insight into how partnership events can be best structured to facilitate the best quality partnership development work through them.



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Case Study: Breaking Boundaries in Birmingham

Facilitating Social Mixing and Connectedness

Bolly Bhangra

September – December 2021

Detail of the Activity.

This case study outlines learning from approaches to facilitate social mixing between women from different South Asian ethnic groups. It sought to tackle underlying tensions between different groups of South Asian women from Bangladeshi, Gujarati, and Pakistani backgrounds.

How Breaking Boundaries Helped.

The leader of this activity had been involved in delivering Bhangra sessions and youth cricket programmes in the area, through which she met a Breaking Boundaries ambassador who linked them up with the co-ordinator in Birmingham. The activity leader highlighted that there was a strong link between their philosophy towards getting women active and the focus of Breaking Boundaries on using sport to improve cohesion. This led to them working with the programme to develop a specially designed activity using elements of Bhangra fitness activities, and All Stars cricket sessions..

The activities focussed on:

Originally scheduled for 6 weeks of delivery, the activity was extended to 12 weeks at the request of the participants (17) because they were so well engaged. There had been no hesitation around a return to face to face after lockdown and plenty of space was available at the chosen venue. It

was intended as an activity that could act as a 'gateway' for South Asian women, mainly stay-at-home mothers, to emerge from Covid lockdown and engage in activities out of the household.

Recruitment happened through word of mouth with participants inviting other contacts as the weeks progressed. Organisers Bhangra Blaze publicised the activity via their Facebook group. As the activity developed the women also began to bring their daughters to sessions, which built inter-generational connections.

The activity was aiming to facilitate mixing between women from different South Asian ethnic groups, specifically Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani and evidence suggests this has been achieved. The leader felt these participants had been easy to bring together because the use of dance provided something that was familiar as a gateway into cricket which was less familiar to them.

"I think getting the ladies in with the bhangra, and then introducing them to the cricket slowly. They've enjoyed it, they don't realise their talents, when they think of cricket they think it's a man's sport or they've never had an opportunity to play. Then [working together]...we'd incorporate bhangra moves and cricket moves together, and they really loved it." (Project Lead)

What's Happened – Impacts on Cohesion.

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

Improved social connectedness

As different groups were brought together on their own terms connections between them soon developed:

"For all of them after lockdown just any social connectedness was good, they're all mothers and have big extended families, so it gave them the opportunity to connect with others as just themselves on their own terms, not as a mother or a daughter or a caregiver" (Project Lead)

Participants did not identify a significant impact on their attitudes to diversity as they were positive at the outset of the activity, it was more important for the group connections to be made.

The leader also noted that despite the women starting the sessions as strangers, by the end they became a bit of 'family'. This positive group dynamic was attributed in part to the women having the space to have open conversation – being out of their usual social circle or extended family. The local Coordinator also identified that good links were made to celebrate festivals relevant to participants increasing understanding of each other.

Increased empowerment and community voice

From some participants there was a sense that they had been empowered to be open with others in the group about their challenges and issues, to women from other South Asian groups they had not met before:

"I enjoy it, even though I have a busy schedule looking after kids etc. it gives me the chance to get out the house to meet new people and do exercise." (Female, Pakistani)

Whilst others felt comfortable to bring other family members along:

"It has been amazing, it's given me that adrenalin rush to go and do that one hour just for me, with Covid and lockdown, personal circumstances meant it was good for my daughters to give it a go with me, it was good to have a chit chat and a work out." (Female, Bangladeshi)

Therefore, in these ways the participants were given a stronger voice in the community of the group though there were no specific examples of this voice being extended to their communities outside of the activity.

Increased community participation and sense of belonging

The leader was surprised that the choice of Edgbaston for delivery was not a deterrent to participants because of the travel distance involved finding that the venue seemed to act as a spur for their sense of belonging to something 'special':

"At first I was a bit worried people wouldn't want to come to Edgbaston because it was quite far for them. To be able to have the lovely space and the lovely views, we started off quite early in the evening...so we got the daylight and could see the views. It just made them feel important that they got to use the space and...they kept coming back, there were a lot of people who came to all 12 sessions" (Project Lead)

"It was such an amazing platform for women to come together to a place where we could talk and comfort each other, it was a relief, it was our time, it was for us...many women, they didn't have that opportunity before" (Female, Pakistani)

Improved wellbeing

there was evidence not only of improved confidence in the women, but the wellbeing benefits that come with it. The leader reported the activity supporting the mental health of participants that had worsened during Covid-19 lockdowns.

"They were so confident by the end. They came and they spoke about their own personal lives, they became a bit of a family, experiences. It's easy to share things with people who aren't you family, even though it's strangers it's great. It's not easy to make friends out of your circle." (Activity Lead)

The Future.

Participants and the activity leader are very positive about their experiences through Breaking Boundaries and are keen to identify ways that further activities could happen:

"It's good, it'll be good if it carries on, to bring people together, because of Covid it gives people the chance to come and do something together in a safe environment, especially for ladies." (Female, Indian)

There is a need to identify ways in which such activities can be built further using volunteers so they are less dependent on additional funding and more self-supporting. It was noted that having provision that was free at the point of access was key to making the activity open to all and including women for whom cost may be a barrier to joining in group sport or fitness sessions.

Top Tips.

- ✓ There is a need to identify ways in which such activities can be built further using volunteers so they are less dependent on additional funding and more self-supporting. It was noted that having provision that was free at the point of access was key to making the activity open to all and including women for whom cost may be a barrier to joining in group sport or fitness sessions.
- ✓ Considering the location of the provision is key to encouraging participants to attend; this may persuade participants to travel further to the 'right' venue beyond their local area, especially if they feel empowered to shape and contribute to delivery and move outside their usual day to day lives. In this case, the use of Edgbaston Cricket ground, a place none of the women may have accessed before, was a key pull factor.
- ✓ Supporting active social mixing in an informal group setting may enable other cohesion outcomes to be attained, particularly a sense of belonging and confidence. This should be relatively unstructured in its approach though can be facilitated by the project resource packs produced by YST.
- ✓ Targeted interventions, as exemplified in the above case study, are important for accessing harder to reach groups who may have additional support needs or need persuasion to go outside their usual space and routine. In this instance, it was noted that the women didn't think that the sport activities were for they were specifically targeted.