



SHARING BREAD+

End of Project Report

An overview of a unique community bread project in Leicester

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'I can now see a way to really bring the people I work with to talk without fear of judgement, and together learn, share and have fun!' (Participant)



With thanks to Peter White (project resources) and Anita Barrand (session co-delivery)

Report photo credits: Planet Leicester Bakers; Leicester Aging Together

BACKGROUND: partners; project conception; development

Sharing Bread+ was a community bread project created and delivered by charity consortium Reaching People and community bread business Planet Leicester Bakers.

The two organisations had been keen to work in partnership for some time. Planet Leicester Bakers has a successful track record of community bread projects in and around Leicester while Reaching People, with its membership of over 30 organisations, possesses strong community relations and a track record of effective working partnerships.

Funding:

Funding from the UK government's Home Office 'Building a Stronger Britain Together' fund provided the opportunity to develop a project aimed at helping communities to build resilience against hate crime, misunderstanding and discord.

Project delivery partners/personnel:

Originally the project was planned through initial conversations with a third partner organisation with specialist hate crime remit and experience. However, changes within that potential third partner meant this approach was not possible.

In order to ensure that the project could go ahead and bring benefit to the communities, an independent freelancer with experience of community project work and engagement was contracted to work alongside the bread baker/trainer from Planet Leicester Bakers.

Initial workshop materials were drawn up by a freelance writer with the aim that workshop groups would adapt them to their context and communities and then use them with the groups they invited to participate in follow-on workshops. The materials would be available for organisations to keep for future use in their work with communities. The project's admin and booking coordination was managed centrally by Reaching People personnel in consultation with the bread trainer and workshop coordinator.

Project promotion:

The project was promoted via a media release which secured coverage on BBC Radio Leicester and across social media. Reaching People and Planet Leicester Bakers were also invited to deliver a presentation at the Patient Information Forum in London.

'I feel happy - I've learned something new and with expert guidance from the trainers can see how I can make a difference to my community.' (Member of Thurnby Lodge Residents' Association)

PROJECT AIMS:

'Sharing Bread+ will provide community leaders from different organisations in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland with the skills and knowledge to share and value beliefs and challenge prejudice through making and sharing bread.'

Sharing Bread+ funding application

Sharing Bread+ aimed to utilise a much-loved, basic foodstuff (bread) to:

- Create safe, relaxed spaces for people to come together
- Train volunteers and staff from a wide range of organisations in making basic bread and managing conversations on potentially challenging topics
- Give people an opportunity to spend time learning from each other about the challenges they are facing and to start the process of finding solutions
- Create resources and develop skills that community leaders and volunteers could use beyond the short life of the project in further engagement within and between communities



Some groups took the opportunity to try different breads as a springboard for discussion about difference and the unfamiliar as well as sharing their own experiences of baking and cooking.

Rationale:

- Bread has an ability to trigger warm and positive feelings for many people
- Bread is a staple foodstuff which, in many cultures and communities, holds much symbolism, but it also differs from culture to culture
- Gathering around food generally is a recognised activity that enables people to make connections and engage in conversation in a positive and unthreatening way

- Bread making is a lost skill and therefore offers a common starting point for people to come together around, providing a level playing field
- Bread making is a process with space to allow for other activities alongside it. Therefore, it leans itself perfectly to sessions needing time for focussed conversation, with relaxing breaks offered by the bread making activities.
- Communities in our city (and county) may be fragmented or closed to each other. Problems and concerns are not necessarily seen as shared and divisions can easily start to emerge without better communication and understanding.

THE DELIVERY:

Groups and venues:

The project was able to deliver initial core training sessions with eleven organisations despite the shortened timeframe and the changes in delivery personnel. From these came ten follow-on 'mentored' sessions for the trained community staff and volunteer workshop leaders to use their bread making and conversation management skills with local community members. Support, particularly from the



Use of local community kitchen space encouraged participation.

baker, was crucial to enable leaders to feel able to carry out the sessions.

In total 102 community members engaged with the project. The project reached a wide range of ages, from 18 years old to 72. The vast majority of participants were women.

The project used community kitchen and meeting spaces in the heart of the local communities. This ensured that little or no excess travel was required by

participants which in turn contributed to reliable attendance. The offer of bread making further contributed to the willingness of participants to attend on the day.

'As a team we will definitely use these skills to offer something new to our service users. As a member of staff it's been a treat, thanks.' (Staff member)

Participating organisations: (stars indicate number of mentored follow-on sessions achieved)

Organisation	Nature of community/communities they work with
Emerald Centre**	Local neighbourhood centre users, Northfields Leicester
Leicester Aging Together***	Thurnby Lodge community social group and Belgrave social group meeting at a sheltered housing/community setting
The Bridge	Those accessing services due to homelessness
The Centre Project**	People experiencing homelessness and additional challenges, for example poor health and unemployment
City of Sanctuary	Refugees and asylum seekers in Leicester
Beaumont Leys Neighbourhood Centre	Beaumont Leys local community centre users
Action Homeless*	Supporting people experiencing homelessness
Star Farm Support*	Families needing support and accommodation
Hero Project	Empowering local communities to find solutions
Outspoken*	Community engagement in the Highfields area of Leicester
Sisters 4 Islam	Supporting women in the Muslim community of Leicester



'This has been one of the best training days I have ever attended! Useful, practical, engaging. Brilliant and can we have some more please?!'

Sisters 4 Islam, Wesleyan Hall, Highfields

BREAD KIT RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION:

In addition to the conversation resources, a portion of the funding was used to purchase five 'bread kits' that were presented to organisations who it was felt would be able to get most use out of the equipment. The organisations would also have the kitchen space and capacity to continue to use bread making in their communities and agree to loan the kits out to other community groups locally.

From these five organisations the project team also identified three organisations to approach to develop follow on activities and projects for which further funding would be sought.

BENEFITS OF THE SESSIONS – GROUP FEEDBACK:

Feedback from the sessions included a wide range of observations and reflections, many repeated. Many of the groups saw the potential for using the format (bread making and discussion) to inform future organisational planning and service development. Participants identified many benefits, some more than once:



'At first I was nervous, but everyone welcomed me and I enjoyed talking about my culture and my new life.' (Participant, refugee)

LEARNING FROM THE PROJECT:

Bread as a vehicle to engage: the project demonstrated that the offer of learning to make bread is a skill that is attractive and engaging for many people across many different communities in Leicester. It is therefore an effective tool in drawing people in, providing a starting point for other conversation and activities. Several participants shared that it was the offer of bread making that ensured they got out to the venue to take part!



Bread making is a beautiful vehicle for engaging people and creating positive safe space in which to come together.

Use of community kitchen space in the heart of communities:

There are community kitchen spaces in community centres, churches, charity buildings and other settings, that are well-placed and suitable for group bread-making. Often kitchens are underused, and centre managers are keen to invite bread making in. The venues' geographical locations make them easy to access and familiar to many in the community.

Community development of conversation resources: Although Reaching People provided conversation resources to initiate first conversations, the issues and concerns of participants varied from community to community. Co-production and development of the resources used for the conversation aspect of the sessions was therefore crucial to making them relevant and useable.

Securing time to make the sessions worthwhile is a challenge: Not unusually, some organisations when approached would ask if the sessions could be much shorter. On reflection this could have been achieved by making a simple 'fougasse' bread. However, it would not have been as rewarding maybe and certainly there are benefits to encouraging people to put aside 3.5 hours to focus on a positive activity and beneficial, though sometimes challenging, conversations. It was notable however that once a session was concluded there was an appreciation of the need for the time and the value of putting it aside. This in itself initiated conversation around giving time for food and consequent wellbeing benefits.

Experienced and confident staff are needed to support/mentor less experienced volunteers and staff: Managing the sessions and in particular the conversation aspect was not something that novice volunteers and staff could be expected to take on. The bread aspect of the project was designed to provide

mentoring sessions to support leaders in growing confidence in bread making and doing it with others. This is an approach that is also of value in managing the conversations.

Follow on sessions need to be planned for as soon as possible: In order to maintain momentum and to ensure confidence is developed in both the bread making and conversation activity it is important to ensure follow on activities and sessions are planned and delivered swiftly after the first session.

FUTURE PLANS:

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic conversations were already underway between Reaching People and Planet Leicester Bakers as to how to build on what was essentially a pilot project.

It was hoped that 2-3 core organisations would be approached to develop a next-stage project. These plans have been placed on hold but not forgotten and, depending on many external factors, it is hoped that the project will be returned to in 2021/22.

'Delicious!' I have never made bread like this because in our culture we mainly eat chupatti's. But it's good to try new things.'

(Participant, Leicester Aging Together)

