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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The USE-IT! Project Journal N°2

Project led by the City of Birmingham



**Unlocking Social and Economic
Innovation Together!**

**URBAN
POVERTY**



The USE-IT! project

Social deprived neighbourhoods – urban regeneration – poverty alleviation:

Linking large capital investments with community skills and assets to combat urban poverty

Although Birmingham is a key economic hub, the reality of poverty and underemployment amongst indigenous and migrant populations is leading to increasing social, economic and environmental isolation. Therefore, the USE-IT! project seeks to identify and connect social, cultural and economic assets already existing in poor and migrants communities to major capital and infrastructure investments, in order to reduce displacement and maximise the economic and social benefits of urban development for marginalised residents. The building of a new hospital, local social enterprise structures and universities rich in cultural and creative capital will be relied on to enable the population to self-empower in a sustainable way.

The model proposed will rely on Community Researchers, recruited among local community and trained in research methods to identify local assets. Mechanisms will be tested in order to unlock the potential of poor communities and facilitate the creation of a matching skills service to enhance employment and encourage the spin-off of social enterprises that are socially innovative and resilient. The project will provide peer-to-peer support for communities, and act as change and innovation drivers to bring out bold and sustainable solutions.

As a result of the project, people in the communities will be supported to raise their aspirations and to access affordable educational and training opportunities. They will access jobs opportunities linked to the large investment projects planned for the area (macro-assets), and new businesses will be created and developed in the area by local people.

For further information

USE-IT! UIA website: www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/birmingham

USE IT! Facebook page: www.facebook.com/USEITUIA/; @USEITUIA

USE-IT! Social entrepreneurs programme: <http://sohosen.org.uk/>
www.i-se.co.uk/news/use-it-social-entrepreneurs-programme/
<http://www.i-se.co.uk/news/use-it-catalysing-social-change-in-birmingham/>

USE-IT! 1st journal: [www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2017-12/FINAL%20VERSION Birmingham.pdf](http://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2017-12/FINAL%20VERSION%20Birmingham.pdf)

USE IT! Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UseltUIA>; @UseltUIA;

USE IT! Instagram: www.instagram.com/useituia; useituia

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1 Executive Summary

USE-IT! is a £3.13m (3,56 Mio. €) project by Birmingham City Council and one of the “Innovative Urban Actions” from the European Commission initiative. It tests **new solutions combating urban poverty by linking larger capital investment projects (macro-assets) in deprived neighbourhoods with local community skills, talents and ideas (micro-assets)**. It does all that with the intention to unlock social and economic innovation and to improve the socio-economic situation of the deprived residents. The project strives to increase the employment prospects of the residents and migrants by generating jobs and stimulating local economy.

For an overview about the USE-IT! project, the background and reason, its innovative approach, mechanism and partnership, take a look at the [1st journal](#) of the USE-IT! project.

The 2nd journal outlines the project’s progress from Sept. 2017 - Feb. 2018. It reflects on the recent activities and looks at what has been achieved so far. A focus is to look at challenges faced by the project and analyse how they have been dealt with. The learning from this project period is summarised in chapter 3.

The key activities have been so far:

- Co-implementation of a complex, multi-partnership project (cf. 2.1),
- Communicating a multi-faceted project to local communities (cf. 2.2),
- Creation of a community of social enterprises (cf. 2.3),
- Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities (cf. 2.4),
- Identification of local skills and assets through community researchers (cf. 2.5).

Relevant challenges for the project have been so far the management and co-implementation of the USE-IT! project and to improve the links and communication flow between the Work Packages (cf. 2.1).

Also communicating comprehensibly the complex USE-IT! project approach to the different communities and target groups is a challenge (cf. 2.2).

Although the creation of a community of social enterprises is advancing well a major challenge here is establishing the trust in the local communities to become social entrepreneurs and recruit mentors for the social enterprise start-ups (cf. 2.3).

The recruitment of community researchers and maintaining their commitment is another challenge the USE-IT! project deals with (cf. 2.4).

2 Key activities & key challenges

- Co-implementation of a complex, multi-partnership project
- Communicating a multi-facetted project to local communities
- Creation of a community of social enterprises
- Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities
- Identification of local skills and assets through community researchers

2.1 Co-implementation of a complex, multi-partnership project



- Project Board, Steering Group, Work Package meetings to coordinate the work and project partners
- Ad-Hoc Groups on macro-assets and co-working day to bring partners across Work Packages together

- Weekly round-up emails and online platform Asana to keep the information flow between partners

- Integrated funding granted by the UIA initiative to push cross-thematic & sectoral cooperation

USE-IT! is about to combat urban poverty by linking larger capital investment projects in deprived neighbourhoods with local community skills and assets, unlocking local based social and economic innovation. Key to that is the collaboration and coordination of key players in the area. These range from public, private and civic sector organisations, joining their different skills and resources to tackle the issue of urban poverty in Greater Icknield in a people and place-based approach.

Key activities

To bring such a partnership of public, private and civic stakeholders together, it needed an **integrated fund** that allows to fund the single, coordinated activities from one fund, avoiding to have separate projects funded through divided, sectoral funds. The UIA initiative allows this.

To coordinate the project partners and their activities in the partnership a **Project Board** and a **Steering Group** were set up. The project board meets once every month, the steering group twice a year. **Work Package Leads** have been appointed that coordinate the work of the Work Package partners within their Work Package and feedback to the Project Board.

To keep the information flow between all partners and provide updates on the USE-IT! progress the project manager sends out **weekly round-up emails**.

Further information about these activities is provided in the [USE-IT! journal Nr. 1](#).

In the last half a year the Project Board and Steering Group meetings have continued as well as the regular weekly round-up emails. In particular the Project Board and Steering Group meetings have benefited the project's collective understanding of the USE-IT! mission and to appreciate the benefits and opportunities that emerge from the diversity represented in the partnership.

“What makes me proud of USE-IT!”

Partners' answers during 'Away day'

“The strong partnership and its cooperation – instead of competing.”

“The contagious passion of the partners.”

“The inspiring meetings within the partnership.”

Key challenges & Solutions

The partners are proud of the strong partnership and the cooperation. Nevertheless the **management and co-implementation of the USE-IT! project** – in particular making use of potential and spotted synergies between the Work Packages and broad partnership – remains one of the most challenging tasks. It requires **strong coordination, cooperation and communication capacities**, which is time consuming – for all partners.

In order to ensure the cooperation and coordination of activities and to **improve the links between Work Packages** one solution is to **concentrate every other Project Board meeting on one or two content specific aspects** of USE-IT! rather than on project management issues (administration and finance).



Also three **Ad-Hoc Groups** have been established that **bring partners from different Work Packages together** to collaborate on one macro-asset: the Hospital Group, the Reservoir Group and the Port Loop (housing) Group. These groups have been established to further align and enable greater collaboration across the Work Packages. The groups provide platform for partners from different Work Packages to exchange ideas and discuss the project implementation, its actions, linkages and synergies and to reflect on the learning: what should become a general approach or policy in urban renewal and regeneration to combat urban poverty in Birmingham.

This approach was tested for the first time at the project 'Away day', organised in January. All project partners were invited to a **workshop identifying better linkages between the Work Packages** and prioritising the work with regards to specific opportunities that emerged in the last months. The partners collected ideas on how the

different Work Packages could be working together in a day-to-day, general way and also how the different Work Packages should be supporting each other to achieve the project's overall objectives.

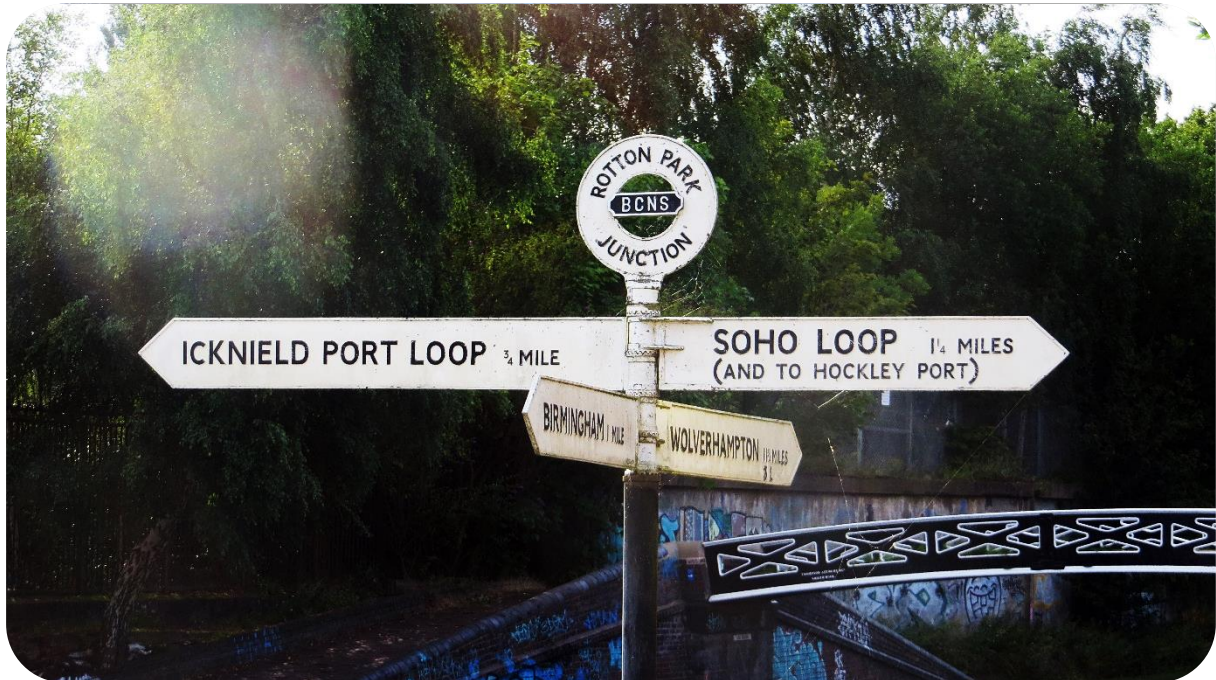
Ideas – partly already implemented – have been among others to establish a **co-working day** in one location to connect with the other Work Packages or to have a shopfront/ café for joint working across the Work Packages. The idea to set up working groups for the single bigger developments in Greater Icknield (hospital, port loop, reservoir, etc.), in which members of the different Work Packages take part, is already implemented.

To ensure the **communication flow across the Work Packages** each delivery partner is called to **inform more strongly via the social media channels** about its activities, results and success stories. They could be supported by the communications team of the overall project (cf. 2.2).

Another suggestion introduced by the project manager was the **introduction of the online platform [Asana](#)**. Asana is a professional online based project management and communication platform for teams to track their projects and tasks, so they can get results. This platform is used to strengthen the internal communication and the collective understanding of who does what, when and why in the project.

Results gathered by the community researchers from their interviews and surveys (cf. 2.4) should be shared with the other Work Packages, especially with the 'Creation of a community of social enterprises' (cf. 2.3) and 'Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities' (cf. 2.5).

2.2 Communicating a multi-faceted project to local communities



- Establishing social media channels to inform the communities and wider public about the USE-IT! activities
- Attending community based events to spread the word and engage with the public
- Using communication channels of local organisations and initiatives to promote USE-IT! events

The USE-IT! project intends to improve the socio-economic situation of the deprived residents. This by making use of the local community skills, talents and ideas, linking them with larger capital investment projects in the surrounding of their neighbourhood. To be able to do so, the project partners rely on the collaboration with the local people, initiatives and organisations.

That is why the USE-IT! project and its approach (how it can be helpful to the people and how they can participate) has to be made known to win them for the collaboration.

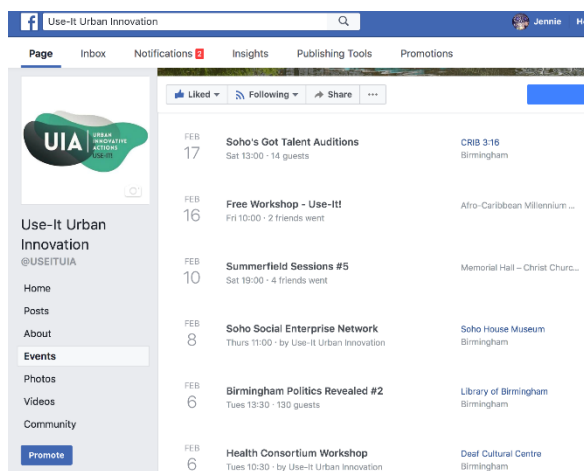
Under the leadership of the Birmingham City University, a communication strategy continues to be developed to enable citizens, public services and academia to come together, practically and meaningfully, to communicate the aims and results of USE-IT! project.

Key activities

To promote and inform the communities and wider public about the USE-IT! project, its activities, its events and to encourage their participation, the Birmingham City University has

set up social media channels: Twitter ([@UseItUIA](#)), Facebook ([@USEITUIA](#)), Instagram ([useitua](#)) and Youtube. Some USE-IT! events are even live-streamed, which is received well.

At the moment 250 people are following on twitter, 350 on facebook and 100 on instagram. Single posts and events often achieve a much wider reach – bringing in previously unengaged residents and potential partners. Also the direct communication with a number of people through social media has started.



Another form to spread the word about USE-IT! and engage with the public (sharing information about the project, brokering relationships between individuals, (community) organisations and partners/ anchor institutions of the USE-IT! project), is that **they attend community based events with an own stand.**

“What makes me proud of USE-IT!”

Partners' answers during 'Away day'
“The local people connect and become active. They do things which just them can do!”

“Seeing that ugly spaces in Greater Icknield come to life.”

Also they **use the communication channels of local organisations.** Through the cooperation with the BVSC, the Centre for Voluntary Action, their weekly publication and website can be used to promote USE-IT! events and activities.

Key challenges & Solutions

In spite of these activities, the challenge, also due to the limited staff and time, is to **communicate comprehensibly the complex project approach of the USE-IT! project** (the three main components ‘Creation of a community of social enterprises and social production’; ‘Identification of local skills through community researchers’; ‘Matching job skills in the community with demand’), its diverse activities and to **reach the respective target groups**; This with the aim to build up trust and relationships for the cooperation.

To better reach the target groups in the future, in addition to the mentioned key activities, **target-group oriented print materials** will be developed and put out into the neighbourhoods. Here the particular idea is to communicate the benefits of the USE-IT! activities for the target group and how they can become part of it. The benefits will be illustrated along concrete examples and personal stories of people that have already benefitted from the USE-IT! project (for instance people that have found a job because of the USE-IT! project; cf. 2.5).

Another idea is to organise a **USE-IT! Community event** together with the key partners and anchor institution of the USE-IT! project. Here the focus would be, too, to communicate the benefits and first successes of USE-IT!.

To feed the social media channels with the successes of the USE-IT! project and its approach, there is the idea to develop **video diaries** of the

journey of the Community Researchers (cf. 2.4) and to conducted **video interviews** with them. The same is planned with social entrepreneurs that are supported through the USE-IT! project (cf. 2.3) and with people that have found a job through the USE-IT! project (cf. 2.5).

These interviews and diaries will be used to identify **'USE-IT! Champions'** and win them as "ambassadors" for the promotion of the USE-IT! activities. This will provide a more direct, authentic and trusted route to the harder to reach communities. Also gatekeepers of target-group community groups are to be identified and disperse the USE-IT! activities through them. A further communication idea is to hang up once a while a **large banner over a populated street** in the neighbourhood with a message that calls the attention and invites to visit the USE-IT! website

or social media channels to know more about the USE-IT! activities and how to become involved or benefit from the USE-IT! project.

Another challenge, due to the complex partnership in which each partner organisation operates and engages (cf. 2.1), is to **find out in near-time what is going on** in the near future **in the individual Work Packages** of USE-IT! (keep a channel of communication open with the partners) and to assist these activities through coordinated communication activities together with the respective partner.

Therefore it is planned to organise a **communication specific workshop for the partners**, focusing on topics like how to tell stories, how to share news and how to use the social media platforms.

2.3 Creation of a community of social enterprises



- Establishing and bi-monthly meetings of the SOHO Social Enterprise Network

- Set up of social enterprise consortia to link local organisations to new markets and opportunities

- Mentoring & Start-up programme 'FUSE' and Start-up social enterprise WhatsApp group

- Baseline study about Social Enterprises in Greater Icknield

- Thematic social enterprise workshops and online-portal for internal communication

- Social enterprise website with Social enterprise online toolkit

- Brochure 'Unlock your inner social entrepreneur' and Social enterprise awareness days

The USE-IT! project aims to support employment and the development of socio-economic activities in the community through social enterprises, boosting "community services" through citizens and socially innovative producers; this linked in particular to the new hospital and housing developments in the area.

Key activities

For that at the beginning of the project the '**Soho Social Enterprise Network**' (SOHO network) was launched to support community-rooted entrepreneurs and social producers. As direct support of the network the '**Social Enterprise Propeller**' around business support was established, the **Social Enterprise Start Up programme** set up and started with **peer-to-peer support** and the **facilitation of work placements**. Further information about these activities is provided in the [USE-IT! journal Nr. 1](#).

In the last half a year the activities focused on growing the social enterprise sector, **linking local**

organisations to new markets and opportunities and the chance to supply local residents. For that **consortia of Social Enterprises** have been formed across four key markets: health and social care, creative, built environment and food.

The **SOHO Network meets bi-monthly** with 30 active members and an expert speaker at each event (access to funding, new opportunities for trading, etc.). The network meetings provide opportunities for Social Enterprises to access new information, develop news ideas, grow new partnerships and create new trade opportunities. The meetings are complemented by **thematic workshops**, covering topics as crowdfunding and social value measurement. To inform about and provide information for social enterprises a **social enterprise website** was set up. The website was designed by a local social enterprise. The website will be further elaborated with the time to provide new products and services for social enterprises. From the website i.e. a range of resources and **toolkits for social enterprises** can be downloaded.



To support the growing of new social enterprise start-ups and help them to develop their enterprise idea into a sustainable business, the **‘FUSE’ Social Enterprise start-up programme** was set up. It introduces all the difference aspects of running a business such as business planning, finance, marketing, product and service development and board recruitment. To support the communication and networking between the **start-ups a WhatsApp group** was installed.

So far 8 new social enterprise start-ups have been founded and are supported.

To **raise the awareness about social enterprises** the [brochure](#) **“Unlock your inner social entrepreneur”** was published and **two social enterprise awareness days** organised.

Key challenges & Solutions

The creation of a community of social enterprises is advancing. A major challenge has been so far

establishing the trust in the local communities to become social entrepreneurs. This is made even more difficult by the fact that there is not one community but a number of communities requiring multiple engagements and lots of relationship development.

Main solutions to start to establish the trust has been so far **organising awareness raising and publicity activities** (i.e. [brochure](#) **“Unlock your inner social entrepreneur”**, social enterprise awareness days, social enterprise [website](#)), also through engaging with community leaders and established organisations to reach the different communities.

In addition **one-to-one support and mentoring** through the SOHO Network is offered for individuals who may be interested in developing a social enterprise.

Another idea is to identify peers with regards to the different communities that

“What makes me proud of USE-IT!”

Partners’ answers during ‘Away day’
“To realise there is already a good mixture of social and community enterprises and the opportunity to sit down with them and help them grow.”

“To see that the development of a health consortium within the social and community enterprises takes place.”

have successfully founded a social enterprise. At community happenings and events they support in promoting and presenting the opportunity of becoming a social entrepreneur and join the

community of social enterprises in Greater Icknield.

Another issue was that in the beginning the work package partners organised **separated local awareness raising sessions** for community organisation, for cooperatives and for social enterprises. That led to poor attendance at some of the meetings and confused people as they did not understand the difference between a community organisation, a cooperative and a social enterprise.

The solution was to **join the separated meetings**. As a result they are now holding joint awareness

raising sessions where they intend to get all local people in one room who have community ideas, give them all the information and then meet with them individually as part of the session to allow them to see which “model” fits their idea best.

Another challenge is to **recruit mentors** for the social enterprise start-ups. Currently they are in touch with a number of private sector partners who want to offer the opportunity to their staff to mentor. One enterprise has offered to produce a number of short promotional videos of existing mentors and social enterprises start-ups, so that prospective mentors can get a good understanding of their potential role and the commitment required.

2.4 Identification of local skills and assets through community researchers



- Promotional material and recruitment and inception events to recruit Community Researchers

- Community Research workshops & trainings to become Community Researchers

- Setting up the 'Community Partners' programme to reach a wider audience

- Launching of the community survey questionnaire

- Community Research site trip to give an idea about the macro-developments in Greater Icknield

The USE-IT! project intends to identify and map ideas, talents and skills of local people in the Greater Icknield area and their qualification needs related to the larger urban development projects. For the identification they have engaged so called 'Community researchers', who identify local assets and personal skills through interviews and surveys conducted with the local population.

Key activities

To recruit community researchers at the beginning of the project '**Recruitment and Inception events**' at local partners' venues were organised. The potential community researchers were offered **trainings to become community researchers**. These trainings were also used to co-design the questionnaire for the local residents to know about their skills, ideas, etc. Further information about these activities is provided in the [USE-IT! journal Nr. 1](#).

In the last half a year the workshops and training sessions for the community researchers continued and the [survey questionnaire](#) was launched. Themes have emerged which are the basis for future activities. This includes work in particular around food, art and culture.

To recruit further community researchers and promote the Community research programme (besides further community partner workshops)

a **flyer** was designed and distributed in the neighbourhood. In addition, members of the University of Birmingham did an **interview broadcasted via a local radio station**; local organisations ran **information sessions** about the community research programme.



These local organisations also provide support and supervision for their own clients that are community researchers in carrying out their interviews and surveys.



To give the community researchers an idea about the developments that are taking place in Greater Icknield and which skills are looked for, a **community research site trip** was organized. During the trip several sites in Greater Icknield were visited (Soho foundry, Black patch park, canals, Edgbaston reservoir, Centre of the Earth, Summerfield Community Centre). The trip also included a visit to Memorial Hall at Christ Church Summerfield, where Community Champions

from the Friends of the Edgbaston Reservoir presented their ideas and projects happening in the area. This was very engaging for the community researchers who were asking questions and commenting on different ideas. At the city hospital Conrad Parke, leading the activities of 'Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities' (cf. 2.5), explained the importance of the hospital and skills matching opportunities that USE-IT! offers.



Do YOU live around HERE?

USE-IT!
UNLOCKING SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC INNOVATION
TOGETHER



USE-IT! is a partnership project aimed at creating social and economic opportunities for residents from the Greater Icknield area: Cape Hill (Smethwick), Ladywood, Summerfield, Spring Hill (Birmingham).

ONGOING FREE TRAINING AVAILABLE
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- **On-going support and mentoring** - our experienced team will provide support and help in research - sessions take place locally in the Greater Icknield area but there will be opportunities to undertake training on our Edgbaston campus and explore the opportunities for collaboration between the University of Birmingham and Greater Icknield
- **Further learning opportunities with the University of Birmingham** - options to develop research training in different research techniques - accredited community researchers eligible for fully funded bursaries for postgraduate study (planning & urban regeneration) at the University of Birmingham
- **Help shape your city and neighbourhood** - your efforts will help shape policies in the area
- **Opportunities to earn some income once training is completed and you undertake research**

There will be more training events if you are not able to do these dates. **Please contact us for more details:**

University of Birmingham: Aleksandra Kazłowska a.kazłowska@bham.ac.uk; Sara Hassan s.hassan@bham.ac.uk; Lisa Goodson l.j.goodson@bham.ac.uk; Peter Lee: 0121 414 3645; **Brushstrokes:** David Newall Mobile: 07464928690; **Smethwick CAN:** Gareth Brown Mobile: 07786 074977 Email: director@smethwickcan.org; **Karis Neighbour Scheme:** Harry Naylor Mobile: 07952 765 794

This project is co-financed by the European Regional and Development Fund through the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative



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So far 34 community researchers have been recruited and trained since the beginning of the project. These have started to conduct their interviews and to map the community skills. Through the interviews and conversations held with the residents by the community researchers, residents have been reached that would not have otherwise be listened to.

Key challenges & Solutions

Although further local organisations have been approached for the **recruitment of community researchers**, the recruitment has remained a challenge. Despite the level of initial interest it has been difficult to get organisations in the area to identify and send representatives onto the community research training. English language, time commitment (without being paid) and conceptually understanding the community research role hamper the attendance of potential community researchers at the community research programme.

Community researchers that dropped out of the community research programme gave following reasons:

- lack of time to commit to doing the interviews for accreditation;
- intimidation by the mentoring and quality of their interviews and transcripts which hindered their progress or caused them to drop out;
- getting into employment or getting interested in starting a social enterprise after being referred to the USE-IT! activity of 'Creation of a community of social enterprises' (cf. 2.3).

In response to that the lead partner of the community research programme intends to develop a **light version of the community research programme** that requires less time commitment.

The idea is to have besides 'community researchers' '**community partners**'. Community partners are expected – as the community researchers – to find out about local needs, ideas and skills and what is happening in the neighbourhoods. But this not by focusing on interviews and surveys, but by joining (informal) meetings, workshops, events, discussion rounds, etc. in the neighbourhoods/ of the communities. Relevant information retained through listening and asking questions at such "meetings" will be reported back (written or orally) to the project team. There is the idea that not only the community partners report back (i.e. through reports), but that also the mentoring team of the community partners regularly gets in touch with them through personal talks to "collect" the information. These personal talks might provide more detailed information than a written report.

The 'community partner programme' is less time committing as community partners neither need to do interviews and to transcribe them nor join the accredited community research training and Open Network qualification. The disadvantage is that they cannot become accredited community researchers, unless they show interest in getting the accreditation and take part in the community research training workshops.

A further challenge is to **maintain the number of community researchers over time and to ensure their commitment** with regards to promote the community survey questionnaire and to do the interviews with the locals.

One solution might be to **link community researchers to local partner organisations** they are engaged with or supervised. These local organisations assist them in the implementation of their tasks; or a USE IT office may be opened in Greater Icknield that supports the community researchers.



It also happens that community researchers hear about the activities in the other Work Packages ('job matching' and 'social enterprise development'), joining them, and as result reduce their commitment to the community research programme as the other Work Package activities seem to provide a more direct link to opportunities on the job market.

An idea to keep the community researchers/ partners, that join activities of the other Work Packages, committed to the Community research programme is to agree with the other Work package partners that committed and active community researchers/ partners are preferred for the activities / programmes of the other Work Packages in case there is a "waiting list".

Also **further promotion and incentives might be developed** to become a community researchers, besides the free accredited research training and £20 vouchers for each completed questionnaire. Incentives could be given by illustrating how the skills they learn as community researchers can be beneficial and used for other jobs, thus improving their opportunities on the job market and / or how the data can be used for their own professional life or enterprise. There could be also a public recognition of their work. For example a community researcher, which has done many interviews, will be interviewed and broadcasted in the local radio/TV or the person is

invited to a special ceremony of the city. Further it could be transmitted that the community researchers are part of something big. It is not only about interviewing local people to identify local assets; it is also about being part of the USE-IT! project, which has been selected as one of 17 "Innovative Urban Actions" by the European Commission initiative.

Another challenge is the rather **low response rate to the [survey questionnaire](#)**. Reasons are that people have no immediate personal gain filling in the questionnaire. In addition the survey is quite large and contains detailed sensitive questions about financial household situation. In response to it the survey has been **anonymised** whether it is being filled online or paper-based. The problem of its length has been slightly addressed through focusing the questions.

Another solution to improve the response rate, beside advertising more strongly the survey questionnaire via social media, local partners and local radio, is to **translate** the questionnaires **into different languages** with the help of the community researchers (as Greater Icknield is a migrant neighbourhood). Another idea is to organise a communication workshop with the community researchers.

But it also might have to be acknowledged that in areas of urban transformation and also parts of the community being refugees and asylum seekers there might not be enough trust or collaboration to fill out the survey. This has been addressed through the incentive that, when you fill in the survey questionnaire, you take part at a **prize draw**.

A further solution could be to **present the survey** personally **at local events** in the neighbourhoods, explaining what the survey is about, how it will benefit the community/ neighbourhood, what

happens with the information provided, who can help filling it out, etc. It would be advantageous to present the survey questionnaire together with a person that is recognised by the community the “event” attracts as there might not be enough trust with regards to the external person (i.e. from the university). After the presentation the people should be asked to fill out the survey on the spot or take it home and fill it out there. People should be allowed to ask question about the survey.

Also the questionnaire might be rearranged. Awkward questions like questions about the financial situation, should be put at the end of the questionnaire as people are reluctant to fill out a questionnaire, which starts with questions someone does not like to answer. At the beginning should be questions easy to answer. Also the information should be provided that a questionnaire not entirely filled out, still can be sent in – as people often believe that only a fully completed survey should be handed in.

In order to consolidate the community researcher and partner programme beyond the lifetime of the USE-IT! project, there is the idea to create a community hub in one of the housing development areas where a social enterprise can be started, interested in developing the community research, Community Researchers’ training and local engagement in cooperation with the Higher Education sector.



2.5 Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities



- Language training classes for 'identified' local residents

- Agreement with National Health Service to extend the USE-IT approach to other hospital trusts in Black Country

- Analysis of skills shortage and development of guide to the qualification equivalency process

Establishing the 'Learning Works' to offer training and coaching

- Setting up a partnership with social care providers

The USE-IT! project aims to identify and train local residents with relevant medical and non-medical qualifications that could be matched with the jobs available in the hospital, a major provider of health resources and employment in Greater Icknield.

Key activities

At the beginning of the project the partners **analysed the skills shortages** within the hospital, started to identify individuals with relevant qualifications to work in the hospital and offered them **training and coaching**. For this the [Learning Works](#) was established, a one-stop-shop for access to training, development and employment opportunities within the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust. Further information about these activities is provided in the [USE-IT! journal Nr. 1](#).

In the last half a year further individuals were identified and received trainings. The trainings are in particular 12 week long **IELTS language training classes**, because the language qualifications are the biggest obstacle preventing participants from finding work equivalent to their qualification. The language courses are initially

being funded through USE-IT! but further funding has already been identified by the Black Country Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. This partnership brings together 8 National Health Service trusts (NHS), 5 Local Authorities and four Clinical Commissioning Groups. The challenge is that from these funds only participants from Sandwell can be paid. For Birmingham based residents of the USE-IT! project a different source of funding still has to be found.

RefuAid, a London based charity for refugees and asylum seekers, has also committed to fund further **"Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board" (PLAB) language training/ qualifications** that doctors need to demonstrate they have the necessary skills and knowledge to practise medicine in the UK. In addition with Cape Hill Medical centre and medical students, a **6 week medical language and health issue session** for IELTS students was developed and delivered.

In addition to the languages classes a **partnership with two social care providers** has been set up.

They provide participants with interim work opportunities while at the same time these people help the social care companies filling their vacancies with high quality staff.

Already at this time of the project 122 individuals with relevant overseas qualifications including doctors, GPs, nurses, midwives, paediatric surgeons, public health professionals have been “identified” in the Birmingham and Sandwell area (60 individuals had been the three year target). The 122 people will be offered jobs within the NHS subject to them passing the required language exam. Many of these are refugees and asylum seekers. This is a strong prove of the hidden skills in such migrant neighbourhoods, which are needed in the labour market in the UK.

Surprisingly nearly all of these people have identified themselves to take part in this part of the USE-IT! project. Most of them heard via word of mouth or through networking with key asylum seeker/ refugee support organisations about this opportunity. For example ‘Fathers Hudson’s Care’ uses their contacts in the migrant community to identify individuals with overseas qualifications. So far no general advertising has been done. The community researchers (cf. 1.4) are just starting to become a part of the process and it is hoped they will increase numbers from the very local area.

Due to that success an **agreement** with [Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust](#) was taken **that expands the process developed by USE-IT! to recruit people with overseas health qualifications** into the NHS to other hospital trusts in the Black Country.

Key challenges & Solutions

The implementation of matching job skills in the

community with the job opportunities in the hospital is rather smooth and successful. From this, however, the aspiration arises to **communicate the successes appropriately** in order to mainstream and adequately follow-up the USE-IT! approach beyond its timeline in 2019 and the Greater Icknield area.

“What makes me proud of USE-IT!”

Partners’ answers during ‘Away day’

“First people have passed the “training” of NHS to be able to work in NHS!”

“People have gotten good job opportunities!”

Together with the Brokerage and Communications Manager of the USE-IT! project a communication strategy with the external communication team at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust needs to be developed to publicize the successes. One problem here is that **many of the matched individuals are unwilling to participate in press activity** that reveals their identity. The reason is that the participants are either concerned that any publicity could either jeopardise their legal status in the UK or bring retribution to family members still in their home country. It is hoped that when one or two are in full time jobs they may be more willing to participate.

The other challenge at present is that the success of the project has led to a back-log of participants now awaiting the IELTS language training. At the moment the main partners are in the process of finding **further funding sources and additional IELTS qualified teachers.**

3 Main learning points

Co-implementation of a complex, multi-partnership project

Such complex and diverse projects like USE-IT! with many partners and activities rely on the good and efficient cooperation of many different organisations and initiatives. This requires continuous coordination and tuning of the involved stakeholders and activities: on the one hand, in order to exploit synergies between the activities and, on the other hand, to be able to implement the integrated approach of the project.

“The success of our project depends on the quality of our relationships, trust and ability to collaborate and co-create.”

Karolina Medwecka, project manager

For example, the ‘external’ communication takes place at both the overall project and the work package levels. In order to deal efficiently with the available resources for communication and to ensure an effective, complementary and non-contradictory communication, the communication teams of the individual Work Packages must coordinate and cooperate with the main communication team.

In addition, the Work Packages are interlocked and can be mutually supportive. For this, however, the implementation of the single activities must be continuously communicated within the project partners and, if dependencies exist, these activities must be well (timely) coordinated with each other. This also requires a high level of coordination and fine tuning, especially as in the single Work Packages further partners are involved which, in turn, have to be coordinated with the work package as well.

For this reason, the overall project coordination is of particular importance for the successful implementation of such collaborative projects. This requires, on the one hand, a person or even better a team with sufficient resources and capacity for this task and, on the other hand, structures that enable the continuous coordination and flow of information.

Main driving force and enabler to work together in a place-based approach has been the integrated fund granted by the Urban Innovative Actions initiative. Only through the partnership this fund could be accessed. In addition, no single, sectoral funds have to be acquired and coordinated; all activities can be paid from one fund, reducing the administrative efforts allowing the cooperation to focus strategically on the area as a whole. So the integrated funding brings partners together, that normally would not cooperate that extensively – in a typical scenario they would run separate projects funded through divided, sectoral funds.

Also this partnership allows to bring different skills and resources together that complement each other; without joining them, the implementation of a project like USE-IT! would not be possible.

“A partnership empowered to be pro-active can unlock significant positive change even in a time of austerity.”

Conrad Parke from Sandwell MBV

Communicating a multi-faceted project to local communities

Nowadays, neither online nor offline communication alone is enough to reach out to

the different communities in such a project like USE-IT!. It requires the interaction of these different forms of communication (online and offline) and a continuous flow of information.

Information is not to be conveyed “dry”, but target group-oriented and with plain language on the basis of personalised stories, also transmitting benefits, in order to reach residents and initiatives and build up relationships for the project.

It is also helpful to use existing local communication channels for example via local organisations to their target groups.

Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities

There are hidden skills and qualifications in migrant communities, which are needed in the labour market in the UK. However, these are usually not determined in the official ‘welcome’ procedures and there is no clear pathway how to turn these skills into well-paid jobs. In addition, there is a lack of proof of qualification and the language barriers are usually greater than expected. This prevents their skills from being easily recognised and made accessible to the labour market.

Thus, language training is essential to achieve improvement. Furthermore, most of the potential employers do not know how to reach out into communities to engage with new arrivals. But there are organisations out there who do know how and who can help. It is needed to join them up, to build a network of community partners that can identify skills and

support the match making with employers.

“Most public sector anchor institutions like a hospital are not naturally equipped with the experience, connections or resource to deliver broader social value in addition to the quality service they already provide. However, there are other organisations that are and would love the opportunity to work with an asset like a hospital to create that ‘bit in between’, the link that can help the hospital and these organisations talk to each other, identify common goals and unlock social and economic innovation together!” *Conrad Parke from Sandwell MBV*

Creation of a community of social enterprises

The ‘Soho Social Enterprise Network’ has provided an important focal point for social enterprise development allowing social entrepreneurs to meet, network and benefit from guest speakers. Such ‘peer-to-peer’ networks, professionally managed and with professional services, are very helpful in building up social enterprises.

Identification of local skills through community researchers

Activating and using local community researchers to identify local assets and personal skills is more difficult than expected. The demands placed on them are relatively high, in contrast to the benefits that community researchers expect from participating in the programme. As a result, their commitment is lower than initially expected.

This makes it clear that further benefits, a more flexible and different approaches of engagement are needed to keep community researchers committed and engaged.

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.



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