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# **An Evaluation of The Migrant Access Project Plus Final Report April 2020**

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# Executive Summary

## Background

The Migrant Access Project operated within West and South Leeds, 2018 until March 2020. It aimed to provide support to new and existing migrant communities to better help them integrate, and thus reduce pressure on existing services, minimising low level tensions and thereby concerns from settled communities within Leeds. Our 2018 interim report focused upon the Migrant Access Plus Project (MAPP) that was running in the Armley and Holbeck areas of the city. Our 2019 report explored the extension of the project into three additional areas as part of the second year of delivery: Beeston Hill, Little London/Hyde Park/Woodhouse and New Wortley. This final report draws together all findings and overall learning from the delivery of MAPP, following a third year of extension funding.

## Findings

### Outcomes and benefits for the wider community

- The MAPP project has resulted in the creation of a wide range of resources that are freely accessible on the internet including The Transition Guide (a simple guide to the first six months of being a refugee in Leeds starting from the first steps after receiving your Leave to Remain onwards ), available at: <https://transitionguide.org.uk/> and New to Leeds – a simple guide for anyone new to the city, including migrants from across the world, available at: <https://newtoleeds.org/>
- Stakeholders described important community level impacts in terms of effective signposting about available services provided by volunteers and improved social integration between different cultures.
- MAPP stakeholders cited the value of training provision and use of positive stories as important elements in building cohesion.

### Buddying

- Several changes were made to MAPP during the course of the project based upon learning from the first year of implementation. These included taking a city-wide focus, rather than a single location, for the recruitment of volunteers and offering different roles for buddies beyond one to one support.

- Settled community members need more support to become involved as volunteers in projects such as MAPP.

### **The impact of MAPP**

- Community involvement in MAPP, encouraged via participatory budgeting (two rounds of U Choose projects) resulted in support for a range of local community-driven projects, which enabled integration and skills building. This approach was particularly valued and was believed by participants to be a critical factor in fostering integration between different ethnic groups. It also provided a successful model of how to stimulate civic engagement through providing sense of ownership and devolving management of financial resources to lay members, empowering relatively marginalised communities.
- MAPP enabled the delivery of training sessions and meeting with local services, to support immigrants learning about how “Leeds works”, with several specialist sessions covered on request. Community drop in sessions were beneficial in terms of sharing skills and knowledge for new arrivals.
- Volunteers reported several individual outcomes including increased knowledge about Leeds and its services, improved language skills, more self-confidence and being better networked. Several volunteers moved into education, and employment. Training was described as important in making new arrivals feel valued in their existing skills and competencies (some MCNs worked in highly skilled jobs back in their countries) as well as developing new ones, and in creating a sense of community amongst those trained.

### **Recommendations**

**The following are recommendations about how the benefits and impact of MAPP can be continued and embedded:**

- Create mechanisms to support community members to feedback their experiences and co-produce aspects of delivery, within a flexible project approach to implementation.
- Provide support for settled community members to enable them to become involved with projects such as MAPP.
- Provide childcare to enable the recruitment of female volunteers.

- Provide additional language support to enable volunteers to develop their skills in completing funding applications to ensure the continuation and sustainability of community groups.
- Strengthen and extend the legacy of MAPP, by enabling more sustainable and longer term engagements between the volunteers and the third sector organisations commissioned to deliver the project, e.g. by providing longer term funding and employment for delivery staff.
- Support volunteers to move into secure employment and develop skills to apply for funding, for instance to create new social enterprise initiative in their communities.

## **The evaluation**

Our evaluation approach placed the project staff, partners, stakeholders and service users of MAPP at the centre of qualitative data collection, drawing upon a theory of Change (TOC) approach. This final evaluation report details data from a total of 17 stakeholder interviews (some repeats), as well as data from 2 focus group discussions held with a total of 17 Migrant Community Networkers. These data were gathered in three phases between 2018 and 2020.

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## 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Migrant Access Project Plus

Migration work in Leeds between 2018-2020 took place within the overarching 'Stronger communities benefitting from a strong city' breakthrough programme. This aimed to empower communities to connect with each other as well as to other opportunities in Leeds. The project intended to enable Leeds communities to do more for themselves and develop a sense of pride and belonging in where they live, through provide support to new and existing migrant communities as a mechanism to better help them integrate, reduce pressure on existing services, minimise low level tensions and any associated concerns from settled communities within Leeds.

The key objective for the MAPP project was **to develop a city-wide approach to aid integration between new and settled communities, resulting in reduced pressure on services, support for local settled communities and a more cohesive society.**

The focus for this project was about ensuring that newcomers to Leeds fully understood how the city works so that they were able to settle smoothly, and not negatively impact on those already settled. MAPP was intended to involve specific local communities in Leeds including Armley and New Wortley, Holbeck and Beeston as well as Hyde Park, Woodhouse and Little London. Some of the project was implemented city-wide.

This final evaluation report focuses upon summarising all of our data and providing an overview of impact which includes discussion of the consequences of MAPP for the wider community.

## 2: Evaluation Methodology

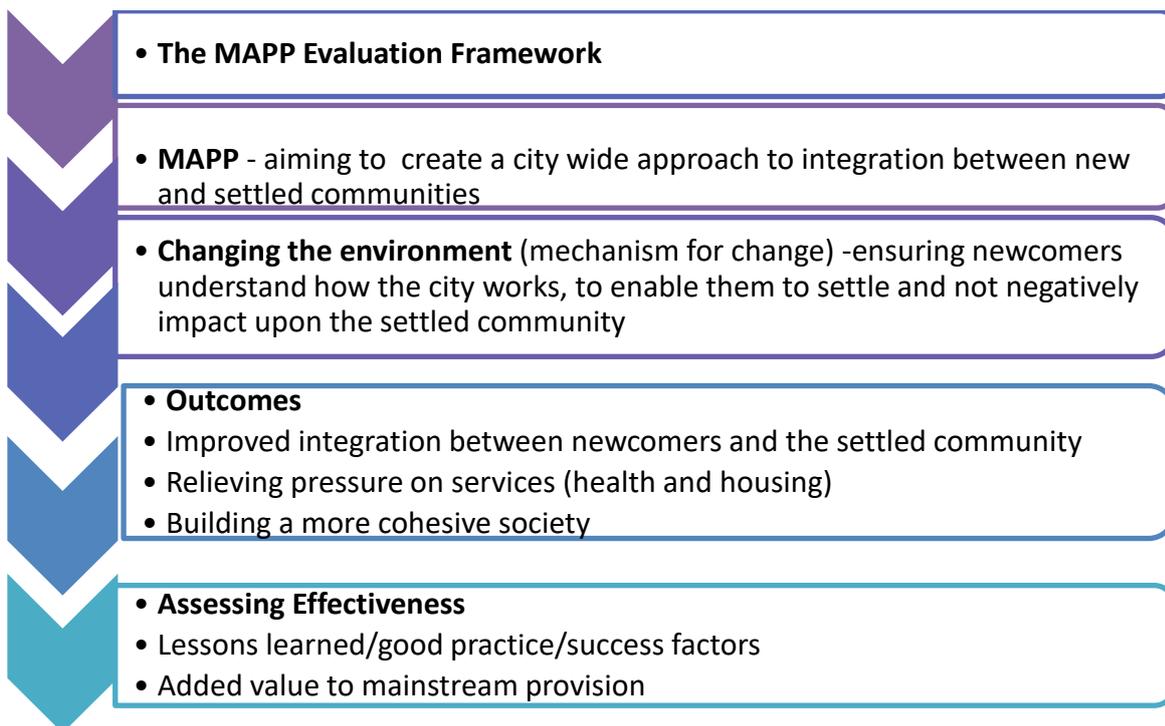
### 2.1: Evaluation Aims and Objectives

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to provide qualitative insight into the impact of MAPP project streams on perceptions of ‘low level tensions’ in communities, perceptions of integration, the effectiveness of support from the project across key areas and the impact of the project.

### 2.2 Our approach

Our evaluation approach placed the project staff, partners, stakeholders and service users of MAPP at the centre of qualitative data collection. A Theory of Change (TOC) approach provided an overall framework for the evaluation to make explicit the links between programme goals and the context in which MAPP was being implemented (Judge and Bauld, 2001).

Figure 2.2.1 – Theory of Change



## 2.3 Overview of data collection

The evaluation team were supported in gaining access to stakeholders and service users by staff involved in the implementation of the project, who advised us of suitable stakeholders and community members to approach.

### 2.3.1 Stakeholder data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in the delivery of MAPP over the life-time of the project.

#### 2.3.1 – Table of Stakeholder Interviews 2018 (n=7)

Stakeholder Interviews	Area of work
Primary Care	Armley
Housing worker 1	Holbeck
Housing worker 2	Holbeck
Project Worker 1	Armley and Holbeck
Project Worker 2	Armley and Holbeck
Project Support Worker	Armley and Holbeck
Volunteer Development Worker	Armley and Holbeck

3 further semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders during 2019, and 4 workers also provided their views by participating in a focus group discussion together.

#### 2.3.2 – Summary of stakeholder roles in 2019 data collection (n=7)

Project Worker 1
Project Worker 2
Project Manager
Community Development Worker 1
Migrant Community Networker 1
Migrant Community Networker 2
Community Support Officer 1

In 2020, one final focus group was held with 3 stakeholders to discuss overall learning from the implementation of MAPP.

#### 2.3.3 - Summary of stakeholder roles in 2020 data collection (n=3)

Programme Manager
Project Manager
Project Worker

The stakeholder schedules were developed in line with the objectives for the evaluation and broadly covered experiences of involvement with the project, delivery, views on outcomes in relation to the project aims as well as suggestions for improvements and learning.

### **2.3.2 Community members data collection**

Service users were given the opportunity to self-select to participate in the evaluation, and 10 Migrant Community Networkers (MCNs) in Holbeck agreed to take part in a focus group, in February 2018, and a further 7 participated in another focus group held in February 2019, alongside a community development worker. 17 MCN views were included in the evaluation. The focus group schedule explored engagement, involvement, benefits, learning and suggestions for improved delivery.

In terms of the characteristics of the migrant community networkers participating in the focus groups, there was a majority of women over men. The groups were highly diverse, representing a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and length of settlement in the city of Leeds, comprising both BMEs and recent migrants from a variety of countries and backgrounds. Some of the MCNs in the focus groups had previous experience as front-line service/community workers in Leeds, while others were new to the world of third sector volunteering and were engaging with MAPP themselves as an opportunity for integration as new arrivals in the city.

## **2.4 Analysis**

All transcribing and analysis of interview data was completed by the evaluation team. The qualitative data was analysed according to the two primary objectives of the research, i.e. to assess the impact of the project upon alleviating pressures on the settled community and upon the migrant communities' access to services. Our analysis also explored issues of integration, and relative impact on services. Mapping and analysing the views of the participants in yearly phases was deemed an important element of our approach to feedback learning in an ongoing manner, in line with the theory of change approach.

## **2.5 Ethics**

The evaluation received ethical approval through Leeds Beckett University ethics procedures, and adhered to the following practices:

- Informed consent – written or verbal consent was obtained from all participants in the interviews and focus groups
- Confidentiality and anonymity – no personal identifying information has been used in reporting the data

- Secure information management – security was maintained through password protected university systems

## 3: Findings

### 3.1 Summary of Key findings from 2018

- Project delivery was noted as successful in relation to the **training** sessions, and the recruitment of skilled volunteers. The training was described as important in increasing service knowledge for new arrivals, enabling their access as well as improved navigation due (in part) to the involvement of a range of external service providers. Training was also seen as important in relation to integration, enabling new arrivals to feel valued as well as creating a sense of community amongst those trained.
- Project workers reported that it was easy to work with new arrivals and that **linking with existing provision** was important. Existing organisations were discussed as playing a role in supporting new arrivals in a range of ways (form filling and referring). Sensitising all services in advance to maximise their contribution to the training was considered critical, with commissioners also playing an important role. One of the key recommendations to improve the Migrant Community Health Educator element of the project was that the identification of the GP practices and their clientele needed to reflect a mutual benefit approach in order to ensure maximum engagement from surgeries.
- Perceptions of **low-level tensions** within communities, were noted in relation to several factors including diversity, housing and the proximity of the Managed Area in Holbeck. Tensions within Armley were also noted as existing in relation to employment opportunities.
- In terms of MAPP **alleviating pressures** on the settled community, stakeholders felt that more support might be needed for them and that not all were able to be buddies, as planned within the project design. The idea of pressure on services was questioned by stakeholders, who highlighted migrants' reservation about using existing services especially for their health.
- Stakeholders noted several areas where there had been **difficulties with project implementation** including volunteer recruitment, the buddy system, high targets within the bid and implementation issues. There were also concerns about ensuring sustainability following the completion of MAPP.

### 3.2 Summary of Key findings from 2019

Key findings from stakeholders	Key findings from the Migrant Community Networkers
<p>Project workers had used a variety of different strategies to deliver MAPP and had adapted their approach based upon feedback from participants, other professionals and initially low referral numbers.</p> <p>Participatory budgeting in the form of ‘U Choose projects’ was described as a success with local community-driven projects supported, which had enabled integration and skills building.</p> <p>Stakeholders described community level impacts resulting from MAPP as the creation of resources for city-wide use that were available on the internet, effective signposting about available services by volunteers and improved social integration between different cultures.</p> <p>Stakeholders discussed the impact of added value from MAPP resulting from workers linking to other organisations in the satellite areas.</p> <p>Stakeholders described a range of outcomes for individuals who had volunteered within MAPP including paid employment, building aspirations and increased self-confidence. Volunteers were also reported as being better networked.</p> <p>Several changes had been made to the MAPP delivery based upon learning from the first year of implementation including a city-wide focus for the recruitment of volunteers and different roles for buddy’s, beyond one to one support.</p>	<p>Overall MCNs found the training sessions and the meeting with local services very useful: in general terms to learn how “Leeds worked” and in specific areas such as domestic violence and safeguarding.</p> <p>Community drop in sessions and meetings with services appeared beneficial for the new arrivals to share skills and knowledge.</p> <p>The network of MCNs and the recurrent meetings were useful to provide individuals with practical support and a source of information.</p> <p>The approach of MAPP towards inter-culturalism was particularly valued and believed to be a critical factor in fostering integration between different ethnic groups.</p> <p>MCNs appreciated the opportunity to learn about ‘everyday survival’ tips including how to navigate the local consumer and labour markets.</p> <p>Persisting challenges in accessing housing benefits, and further and higher education; and difficulties in utilising multiple language skills (e.g. bureaucratic barriers to accessing interpreter courses). In particular the interlocking of complex visa rules and benefits entitlements appeared to constitute further barriers for migrants trying to access services (especially those on spousal visas and/or</p>

<p>Stakeholders discussed needing time to develop trust within communities, the specific challenges associated with some geographical locations including the Managed Area in Holbeck, and the need for flexibility in delivering MAPP.</p> <p>Areas for further consideration were listed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the need to provide childcare to increase volunteering opportunities for women</li><li>• the need to consider how the success of MAPP is measured beyond targets such as employability.</li></ul>	<p>with no recourse to public funds) across the field of health or education.</p> <p>While individuals appeared to have benefited greatly from their engagement with MAPP as MCNs (in terms of their language skills, development of volunteering experience, overall confidence and knowledge of the local cultural norms,) the transfer of knowledge to the wider community remained only partially accomplished.</p> <p>A training session on social benefits' entitlements for migrants on visas emerged as a positive suggestion supported by all MCNs in the group as well as the Project worker.</p>
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### 3.3 Additional findings – project extension until 2020

During the extension period of the MAPP project, delivery workers noted that they had focused upon a number of **key areas**:

*“So we have prioritised three things over the last few months: the buddying, , the second round of U Choose, and MCN training which exceeded the targets set and kept a good retention rate.” [Project Worker 2020]*

Project delivery had been affected by staff moving on, as well as staff sickness, therefore **lower engagement numbers** in terms of the number of MCNs had been documented during the project extension period. However, this could be interpreted as a measure of **success**:

*“The engagement numbers are lower in the last few months...this might reflect successful outcomes, with people moving onto other things – work, education... Some part-time work. Some are doing diplomas in social care, and in childcare at Leeds City College. We have also tried to connect people with the Connecting Opportunities initiative (Migration Yorkshire service)... there’s a rising keenness to get onto an educational or work pathway, for sure.” [Project Worker 2020]*

#### **Buddies moving on....**

Internal monitoring data showed the following documented outcomes for buddies as of March 2020:

- studying and volunteering (x2)
- studying (x4 – one as a translator)
- working full-time
- working part-time (x8 – one with Touchstone)
- working part-time and studying (x2), and pregnant (x1)
- studying part time (x2)
- working for Age UK, happy to do more buddying
- working on a U-choose projects (x3)
- Having a break from volunteering until Autumn 2020
- Currently going through personal difficulties (x2)
- Working night shifts and studying
- Given birth
- Would like to stay in contact (x2)

In terms of connecting migrants with other educational opportunities, for example to enable them to work as interpreters, the language requirements needed are high, which may be a **barrier** for many:

*“They can attend the Volunteer Community Interpreters Training (through the Workers Education Association) but the level required to be become an interpreter for Leeds City Council, for example, is much higher. Language skills are a barrier still.”*  
[Programme Manager 2020]

Whilst some buddies had moved on, many had also stayed engaged with MAPP:

*“Buddying has also gone down, but we still have over half of the buddies who want to continue to work with us (39).”* [Project Worker 2020]

Reflection on **UChoose Projects** was about the success of this approach to participatory budgeting:

*“KMWA (Kashmiri Muslim Welfare Association) is a good example (of a UChoose project. This has really become a multicultural initiative. U Choose has opened this up other groups – not just Kashmiris, or Muslims. Its helped promote multiculturality. They see that by doing this(applying for funding) they can help secure long term future for their buildings – their centre is now used a lot on a Saturday by a whole range of groups. MAPP is linking these groups together, and the idea of this centre as a model for other groups has been discussed.”* [Project Worker 2020]

*“Armley Walking Group is another one, they applied for funding but have become self-sustaining.”* [Project Manager 2020]

*“I can give you a summary of Round 3 here (looks at a spreadsheet). So, there were 13 funded, 8 were from new applicants, 5 were ones who had been funded before. Of the 13, 2 were from Gambia, 4 from Iran, 3 from Iraq, 2 from Libya, one from Turkey, and 1 from England.”* [Project Worker 2020]

Some community groups had then moved onto **submitting applications for larger scale funding**, however, this was again, not without **challenges**:

*“Some have moved on to apply for Micro grants, through Leeds Community Engagement. There is one language learning one, which is looking to develop ultimately some sort of language games that we have helped put an application together through Leeds Inspired Funding – these are for bigger amounts (£15k). I guess this would be the golden ticket in terms of impact...but there are lots of others that have or could look for further funding.”* [Project Manager 2020]

*“Even with the U Choose one (application), which is a two pager, we’ve had to advise and mentor and help rewrite. And this is multiplied when you move to other sources of funding, which are 50 pages long. Some of those who got funding through U Choose have looked at these (larger funding requirements) and been put off immediately.”* [Project Worker 2020]

*“ We have created a simple format for funding through the programme as part of learning and understanding criteria and we continue to share and signpost to funding opportunities and encourage partnership applications to strengthen this.”*  
[Programme Manager 2020]

Furthermore, having the opportunity to fund some projects but not others had also resulted in **tensions** between groups:

*“The Iranian group have been quite competitive about applications, particularly when one has got funded and others haven’t. Partly this is a reflection of how important it is, and also that a lot can be done with £500 for a small group – it does make a difference.”* [Project Worker 2020]

The **wider context** in which MAPP was being applied was also discussed as being important, in terms of the political climate (new community tensions in the context of the new general election and UK Exit from the EU) , as well as the history of local areas, and differences between ethnic groups:

*“That’s right, the history is important, buildings, infrastructure...”* [Project Manager 2020]

*“For quite a few people we’ve seen, they’ve mentioned the fragile environment at the moment, economically and wanting to get on a work/education pathway.”* [Project Worker 2020]

**Brexit** was noted as having a specific impact upon the Kurdish community however, some ethnic groups were described as being more challenging to engage with:

*“Kurds have moved in particular. They tend to be politically active, left, organised, and some of these have said they are moving away from the UK to other countries. Eastern European community and Romanians are harder to get on-board, it is a challenge, and some groups are just harder to engage. Other community groups are more inclusive and have changed their names to reflect that that are more inclusive/multi-cultural.”* [Project Worker 2020]

ESOL provision provided important opportunities for learning, and the approach to organising and running ESOL classes had also evolved over the course of the MAPP project :

*“Looking at ESOL classes, we’ve also tried to get a better match up between ESOL needs and the languages of volunteers (in the third year of delivery). We could have done better here, on reflection, but I’ve tried to raise the bar (referring to quality) in terms of match ups. We’ve done well with Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, but not so well with Tigrinya (Eritrea) where the match hasn’t been great. Or Amharic. Language learning is still good, even if there isn’t a perfect match, but its better if the match is there.”* [Project Worker 2020]

Overall the focus group with the delivery team revealed a fundamental consensus about the positive impact of MAPP: at the individual level enhancing the confidence of individual MCNs in taking on educational and development opportunities; at the community level promoting new initiatives and collaborations between settled groups and new arrivals, fostering inter-ethnic integration and dialogue against the grains of generally raising social tensions.

In terms of the persisting challenges, the team emphasised the difficulties in maintaining continuous relationships and the retention of volunteers given the precarious economics

context and the short term nature of the project itself. They also highlighted the importance of sustaining/enhancing the ability of individuals and groups to apply for grants to continue local work in their areas beyond the MAPP project. The provision of focused training and skills to apply for community investment initiatives and social enterprise projects and help new arrivals and settled groups to understand the language of funders, may be critical especially for non-native speakers. These findings confirm those of previous research on migrant civic engagement and community voice in Leeds (Alberti, 2017)

#### Summary of stakeholder views 2020

- **Participatory budgeting** in the form of 'U Choose projects' was again described as a success with local community-driven projects supported, which had enabled integration and multiculturalism. However, the potential for such an approach to create tensions was also acknowledged by stakeholders.
- The final phase of MAPP had seen lower engagement numbers but this may have been a measure of success in that **volunteers had moved onto educational and employment opportunities.**
- In the extension period, buddying had continued with 39 people still volunteering in the buddy role.
- Developing language skills works better when **ESOL needs can be matched to volunteer needs** however, matches are not always possible.
- **Language ability was recognised as a key challenge** faced by community groups in achieving sustainability through the completion of more significant funding applications.
- **The wider context** in which MAPP has been implemented was also recognised as influencing its success, for example, the history of local areas meant that uptake was lower within some ethnic groups. Moreover wider influences such as Austerity and Brexit were also discussed as having an impact.

## 4: Discussion

The findings from this evaluation resonate with a range of other studies of integration of migrants. Studies have pointed to the importance of locally targeted approaches to integration, but which also encompass overarching city-wide approaches (see for example OECD, 2018; Bernt, 2019; MC2CM, 2017). These same studies also highlight the challenges associated with achieving successful local and city-wide outcomes with success heavily dependent upon effective co-ordination and action by the institutions who are responsible for implementing a programme. Ensuring equal access to services for different groups and fostering a culture where migrant inclusion is a shared value are particular challenges (OECD, 2018). There are also specific challenges associated with multiple levels of governance in large cities, with national policies and agendas cross-cutting, overlapping (and sometimes causing tensions) with demands, needs and initiatives at a local level (MC2CM, 2017). The MAPP project seems to have been successful in providing targeted support in particular localities in Leeds, whilst also adopting a city-wide approach to information provision, the recruitment of volunteers, and a number of other aspects.

Studies have also pointed to the challenges of maintaining support for migrant and established communities, in an environment where some support is provided at a statutory level, others through (limited-time or one-off) funding, and others through unfunded grass-roots initiatives (Cornelius and Martinez Lucio, 2012; MacKenzie et al, 2012; Zetter and Pearl, 2000; MacKenzie et al (2012) in a study of a Northern English town find that some grass-roots migrant initiatives were able to sustain themselves better in the long term than others, and that success was often down to organisations being able to meet a commonality of social and material needs and shared experiences, which cut through national and ethnic lines. The MacKenzie et al (2012) study also highlights the challenges faced by migrant grass-roots initiatives in being able to tap into additional funding streams and bid for money to allow them to sustain themselves in the longer term. The UChoose initiative developed as part of the MAPP project was seen to be successful and has resulted in the establishment of a range of community-led initiatives, some of which have continued beyond the period of their funding. A number of these have sought additional funding, and the provision of mentoring and guidance to help leaders of these initiatives sustain them in the longer-term will be vitally important.

## 4. Conclusion

MAPP aimed to create a city wide approach to integration between new and settled communities and can be described as meeting these aims based upon the qualitative data gathered through this evaluation.

The project intended to ensure that newcomers understood how the city works, enable them to settle and not to negatively impact upon the settled community. These aims were achieved through the delivery of training, the creation of online resources, and the recruitment of volunteers working to support community members via information provision. Project workers also linked to existing services to support the successful delivery of MAPP. In aiming to improve integration between newcomers and the settled community, MAPP stakeholders cited the training provision and use of positive stories as important elements in building cohesion. Training was described as important in making new arrivals feel valued and in creating a sense of community amongst those trained. MAPP was also aimed at relieving pressure on existing services such as health and housing, but workers reported a reluctance amongst new arrivals to use such services in 2018.

Individual level outcomes were evident amongst volunteers who reported increased knowledge about Leeds and its services, improved language skills, more self-confidence and being better networked. Several volunteers moved into education, and employment. Community level impacts were reported as resource creation, effective signposting to other services and improved social integration between cultures. Community integration was also evident within training sessions, drop-ins and specific U-Choose projects that fostered cohesion between ethnic groups.

Whilst funders had been keen to offer support in specific geographical locales, implementation was city-wide to ensure that more community members could access training based upon the availability of venues and links to public transport. Targeting resources into specific community areas can also serve to increase low level tensions even when approaches such as participatory budgeting are used. Furthermore, low level tensions that exist within communities relate to multiple complex factors, such as local history, housing concerns, wider policy changes such as austerity and Brexit, not just new arrivals.

Transferrable learning from stakeholders relates to the need to be flexible to adapt delivery to community need and feedback (e.g. different roles for MCNs and buddies, and the use of participatory budgets), to create added value by working with existing agencies and to take time to build trust and create relationships with communities.

Challenges remain in terms of persisting barriers to services such as a lack of childcare, eligibility for welfare benefit provision and education as well as language barriers. Complex visa rules and benefit entitlements exclude some groups from accessing services, particularly those on spousal visas and/or with no recourse to public funds.

## 5: Recommendations

This section focuses upon what community members want and need in terms of support:

- Create mechanisms to support community members to feedback their experiences and co-produce aspects of delivery.
- Provide support for settled community members to enable them to become involved with projects such as MAPP.
- Provide childcare to enable the recruitment of female volunteers.
- Provide additional language support to enable volunteers to develop their skills in completing funding applications to ensure the continuation and sustainability of community groups.

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