

Entrepreneurial Outreach Project

Summary Report

ACH **ENGINE SHED**



University of
BRISTOL



West of England
**GROWTH
HUB** >>>



The Opportunity

The Bristol city-region is renowned for innovation, enterprise and economic resilience. The area is awash with provision of world class business and social enterprise support schemes, facilities, expertise and, increasingly, access to finance . However, there are barriers that prevent many from accessing these support mechanisms or even the markets and business networks that appear easy to access for others.

One group that is currently excluded from the mainstream business support ecosystem is refugees and newly arrived communities. This is particularly problematic since research shows that these groups are especially likely to be entrepreneurial. In early 2018, Engine Shed sought

guidance from ACH and Barton Hill Settlement which suggested that existing schemes do not fully tap into the opportunity of creating more businesses, of whatever type, including for the reasons stated above. Anecdotally, around 20 - 25% of refugees see self-employment or small enterprise development as their chosen route for economic engagement.

We heard that to make a difference, people need to feel they have control over their destiny, and this calls for a style of support that helps people take the necessary steps on their journey. This can build strong and sustainable pathways that provide a 'guide' for peers.

That guidance also cited the belief that Engine Shed would be able to help build, physical, aspirational, language and cultural bridges necessary to enable this opportunity to be realised.

We therefore identified the opportunity to bring ACH, Barton Hill Settlement, Engine Shed, The University of Bristol and WECA together to build on the expertise of existing actors within communities and run an action research project that would focus on learning more about the real challenges and translate that for the benefit of the 'ecosystem' through practice.

The Model

The project, funded by ACH, Engine Shed, the University of Bristol and West of England Growth Hub (part of WECA) has reviewed current delivery models, and through focus groups and direct delivery, sought to identify and define the relationship between entrepreneurs from refugee, migrant and related communities and this infrastructure.

In a unique experiment the project hosted an experienced business advisor within ACH, a leading provider of services to Bristol's newly arrived communities, to look at whether the combination could find the solution to allow take up and trust in business support services, including the rich array of established, 'mainstream', business support programmes

The ultimate objective is to create systemic change that unlocks potential in our economy through being inclusive and enabling everyone in society to contribute.

While this project has focused on specific communities there are really no ethnic, gender, geographic or socio-economic boundaries to this opportunity.

The project was steered by a Steering Group representing a number (but by no means all) of support providers and partners. These are listed at the end of the report.

among entrepreneurs from these communities and those supported by Barton Hill Settlement.

Our expectation was that this work would raise the confidence, vocabulary and access of entrepreneurs in different communities, so that they are more likely to develop their business and/or connect with existing support provision.

Our focus was with businesses already established that need to help to scale up, although there will likely be opportunities to signpost aspiring entrepreneurs and assist routes to employability.

Apply this model to specific communities (such as by status, geography) and with different foci e.g. understanding basic entrepreneurial challenges in the 1st instance, and then a secondary challenge, such as 'how does inclusive employment help entrepreneurship'.

We can describe the model we have developed as follows:



Embedding the advisor with some of the city's leading experts on cultural responsiveness to entrenched social issues has enabled unprecedented access, it has also opened links to some of the leading experts across the world.

This includes Monder Ram, Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME); Bridget Anderson, Director of Migration Mobilities Bristol and Professor of Migration, Mobilities and Citizenship; Violet Roumeliotis, CEO of SSI Australia; Matt Smith, Director of Policy and Research at the Centre for Entrepreneurs (CFE), and by attending

the annual EMEN (European Migrant Entrepreneurial Network) Conference in the Netherlands.

This learning combination has enabled a richer base to the "understanding the barriers" element of this project which has actively consulted with, and informed, members of the Home Office, including Hannah Gregory, Deputy Director for Integration and Vulnerability, as well as Rt. Hon. Caroline Nokes, the (now former) Minister of State for Immigration, specifically around refugee and migrant entrepreneurship.

Outputs

10 Case studies have been produced and will be distributed to partners in the first instance.

Quotes from Muna Abdi and Adriene Layne were obtained at the Community Business Event in September:

Muna Abdi, Director of Primeway Care; a Limited Company care agency formed in 2014 which now employs over 60 people in Bristol, many of whom are from a refugee background.

'I haven't had any help. And then I have met Lydia and Fuad...and Lydia came, and I said, 'okay are you a researcher?' - because I don't like researchers because what they do is they don't come back. Lydia said 'honestly, I am so different' so I said, 'let me hear you'. And then we came from there - now we have a good relationship. She's a friend. She's somebody who will listen, who is empowering me, giving me the links I need. And I joined the project. The project is just amazing people who've got all this help. And I thought, 'where were you the last three years I was struggling?'

'So, what I'm saying is that if Fuad and Lydia didn't open the

door, I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know what's going on. And I'm someone who is really active in the community. But what I want to know is other Mum's in the community - how do they know? So, I would say Bristol needs to open the doors more often... because people in offices plan things, but how can you plan unless you know what's going on, on the ground?

'What Bristol needs to do is open doors, people do not need the money, they need the support. Where can you go? Who can you speak to? How can you support me? Sometimes you just need someone to listen to you because you are struggling.'

Adriene Layne, Director of YelloButterfly Communications; a company with a social mission to bridge the gap between the literate and pre-literate worlds with its Record and Learn and Voice Letter devices.

'I literally hijacked Lydia...I said, 'who are you?', she said, 'Hi I'm Lydia, I help BAME people in business' and I was like 'Thank God! I've been struggling'. And Lydia said to me - I'll never forget it she said 'well your struggle is over' - and she kept her word, I promise you. If I had a cloning

machine, I would have cloned Lydia.'

The project has engaged with 30 entrepreneurs to date, with an emphasis on quality, thorough entrepreneurship facilitation, to ensure the person behind the business has the best chance of thriving in business or can safely stop their progression to what may be an unfeasible venture in the long run.

It is noted that the success of the project has been the qualitative approach rather than a data gathering one – something that acts as a large barrier to community engagement with some other mainstream programmes.

Facilitation during the project resulted in introductions for 3 entrepreneurs to The Princes Trust, 4 to BSWN, 2 to Outset and Get Set for Growth and 1 to the Growth Hub. 6 businesses

have been strengthened due to the 1:1 support and facilitation received; 1 entrepreneur is planning to launch in the Autumn, 5 are actively exploring feasibility of ideas; and 2 have ceased moving along an entrepreneurship path.

The latter should not, of course, be seen as a failure. 1 entrepreneur has successfully applied for the BAME bursary at SETSquared; 2 have found or changed jobs; 1 has returned to university to study a Masters' at Bristol; and 3 entrepreneurs have successfully completed their Level 2 Food Hygiene certificate for their food businesses thanks to a funded course by Himilo (an ACH subsidiary).

The project also facilitated the introduction between Babbasa and the Princes Trust in a bid for more young people to receive as much support as is available within the community.

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- Muna Abdi

Learning

The Enterprise Outreach project is very much an experimental design for a future method of working. It set out to understand what was holding the business support sector back when it came to working with entrepreneurs from refugee, migrant and related communities. Albeit from a small sample.

Overall the project has been successful in that we have been able to both support a number of entrepreneurs and elicit clarity on the challenges facing entrepreneurs in our target communities. We have been able to do this in what has been perceived, by the entrepreneurs and those we have shared the outcomes with (including at the celebration and showcase event on 12th September 2019).

The successful outcome is the identification and better understanding of a number of barriers, which we summarise here:

- Long-standing lack of trust towards some mainstream support services and business finance lenders.
- Personal and 'hard' data collection acting as a barrier to engagement into some (mostly ERDF) funded programmes and a feeling of being used as targets.
- Time-limited business support (such as the "12-hour business assists") seen as a barrier to the effectiveness of support – a feeling that they will be 'dropped' when the time runs out, or that they need to use the time sparingly. Many entrepreneurial journeys take a long time, especially when entrepreneurship is being balanced with employment or family obligations.
- Some instances of our target communities not being seen as relevant to support providers.
- An inability to activate entrepreneurs with standard business plan style workshops.
- Lack of engagement for entrepreneurs, within city areas populated with refugee, migrant and related communities.
- Lack of diverse representation in some mainstream business support teams, and lenders, as well as a lack of understanding and response to some newly arrived communities' needs.
- A business jargon and language barrier further adding to disengagement from mainstream services.
- Insufficient influence into local supply chains to direct the entrepreneurs towards supply opportunities.

- There is sometimes a pressure to create social enterprises rather than a for-profit which can be perceived as a statement that the individual is not capable of running a “proper” business, or that to run a ‘for profit’ business is seen as a bad thing due to the culture of the city.
- Well-meaning yet incorrect business advice being given by some community organizations to fill the lack of proper guidance being offered to people within inner city areas.
- Access to mainstream finance blocked for many, due to loans being interest bearing, or no ability to provide collateral, and unavailable to those from the Muslim community.
- It is essential to listen to the target community and deliver services to meet needs. It’s not as simple as just having access to community hubs and being mindful of jargon, but ensuring services are relevant.

Our focus on newcomer communities has identified the above and whilst some of these are specific to such communities, many are as applicable to other groupings where background and environment create a disadvantage.



Reflecting on the project itself, and how we have gone about it:

- The Model is not primarily a delivery mechanism, but a learning mechanism. We have not articulated this well enough and that has sometimes been misunderstood.
- The credibility of our partners, ACH and BHS, have been critical in rapidly building trust with entrepreneurs.
- Feedback from the entrepreneurs we have supported has been very positive – not least because of support not being time limited nor personal data being captured. We have also had feedback that a different approach is very welcome.
- We need to dig a little deeper into analyzing our work during the first year to understand the need better.
- There have been noted changes in the mainstream eco-system within the past year and although the project cannot take direct credit for many of them, we are confident that it has been an influence amongst others. SETsquared have launched a successful BAME bursary, and the project has supported 1 of the 3 recipients of that. Princes Trust also launched their first 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Week' in which the project was invited to speak about its work with the refugee community.
- During the EMEN 2019 Conference it was clear that the learnings from this project could, and should, be shared with an international business support community, many of whom were wanting to learn of the necessary solutions to better support refugee and migrant entrepreneurs. This project is active in developing those solutions, specifically around content, delivery and accessing new ways of finance, with the aim of mobilizing new entrepreneurial talent and building upon the skills and innovation that can be seen in the South West.

The landscape now and current need

Some of the findings, above, are now being addressed, since we started this project, through the activities of Babbasa, BSWN and others. This is excellent.

The question now is, what we should do next. Have we learned enough? Have we shared enough? Have we made enough of an impact?

Arguably, the answer has to be ‘no’ to all of those questions. However, it is also obvious that we must build on what we have learned, share them and identify how we can best apply the model we have developed, to continue seeking systemic change to economic inclusion in our city-region.

Given the increase in community-based business support activity (such as that provided by Brave, BSWN, Babbasa etc.) it is also obvious that trying to provide more business support is not best use of resources, we should instead strive to support the existing expertise. The overall need, of creating an environment that unlocks potential in our economy through being inclusive and enabling everyone in society to contribute, remains, so what is the immediate need that this project could contribute to?

In September 2019, ACH was successful in securing funding for a one-year programme jointly funded by the Home Office and The National Lottery Community Fund, which will be overseen by the Centre for Entrepreneurs (CFE). This can now fund half of our Entrepreneurial

Facilitator role, for a year from September 2019, plus a part-time case-worker, continuing the hands-on aspect of this project, but focused solely on refugee communities. £25k has also been secured from WECA, ACH and Engine Shed to continue the programme (“for the time being”) from September 2019.

Within the initial pilot, the time allocation of the Entrepreneurial Facilitator (“EF”) became circa 50% hands-on case work and 50% understanding learnings, identifying solutions and disseminating knowledge. This all means that this pilot can continue for 12m, with the EF spending half their time on understanding learnings, identifying solutions and disseminating knowledge, and half their time on case-work, with an additional part time case worker.

For the next year, the following will be adopted, for the remaining half of the FE’s working time (assuming that half the EF time is spend delivering the new CFE project):

1. Further disseminate the existing and emerging (i.e. from the CFE work) learnings,
2. Train peers in the ecosystem as to how to more inclusive of entrepreneurs from migrant communities, and
3. Search for new “anchor” partners in the West of England (by geography or community) and support them in adopting our model to deliver support and learn, more widely across the West of England.

As per the Model, the above will be carried out 'hand in glove' with the hands-on business support to ensure continual learning and real-time feedback on progress.

Funding is sought to maintain and expand this activity in line with the above, noting that this is not a scalable business support delivery vehicle, but Action Based Learning to push system change in the ecosystem.

Summary

This project is unique because it compliments rather than competes with all the other business support organisations in the West of England. It is clear that urgent attention is needed, and it is expected that this project will be the catalyst for change. It has created and tested an 'action learning' model of Support/Trust/Understand/Identify/Nudge.

We are agreed that this model should be maintained as a means to combine supporting hard-to-reach communities with learning and development of our support infrastructure.

Success can be attributed to the personal nature of the pilot and the 'human first' approach, enabling

trust to be offered by members of the refugee and migrant communities. ACH and Barton Hill Settlement, as the community pillars with personal introductions, has enabled a quick build of trust, for the Entrepreneurship facilitator to engage with follow up, making the right connections for the entrepreneurs, when and where needed.

A plan is set for the future with building momentum, eagerness and desire from many within the communities. The initial trust has been created, through present and acute engagement, resulting in many being ready for activation to explore their entrepreneurial ventures.

Steering board (as of Sept 2019)

Charly Patrick

**NatWest Entrepreneurial
Accelerator**

Peter Gifford

Emmaus

Nick Sturge (Chair)

Engine Shed

Jane Purdy

Business West

Anya Mulcahy-Bowman

Barton Hill Settlement

Liz Sands

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Jess Sharratt

University of Bristol

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Monder Ram

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