

Learning & Employment
for Parents / Carers in
Tyldesley, Shakerley, Wigan

Project Evaluation
November 2008

“what if. . .?”



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for Parents / Carers in
Tyldesley, Shakerley, Wigan**

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Consultant's Statement

Wider Impact Consultancy is pleased to submit a positive report in relation to the overall delivery of the Learning & Employment for Parents / Carers project in the Tyldesley and Shakerley areas of Wigan (The Project).

We are delighted to commend the project, in particular those responsible for the inception and delivery of the project. Particular mention must be made of the current project worker, multi-agency partners and of course project beneficiaries, all of whom are working hard to deliver outputs agreed with the principal funder, Sure Start.

Outputs agreed with the principle funder are being exceeded and impressive outcomes will help to cement the value the project can make to the social, physical and economic regeneration of the Tyldesley / Shakerley communities and the Borough as a whole.

Based on research findings and our experience, a number of positive recommendations are suggested, which if acted on, have the potential to further enhance the project and enable its roll out to other areas of the Borough and indeed the United Kingdom.

Edwin Lewis, Wider Impact Consultancy Limited
November 2008

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Learning & Employment for Parents / Carers in Tyldesley, Shakerley, Wigan



Photograph: Project Worker Julie Baxendale (centre) with beneficiaries, tutor and Shakerley Community Centre staff

SureStart



*'I used to think I was not worthy, I used to shuffle around the estate, but now I strut –
I AM someone!' (Janet 43 years)*

Report Commissioned by
Wigan Council

Delivered by
Wider Impact Consultancy
www.widerimpact.com

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Wider Impact Consultancy has been invited by Wigan Council to carry out an independent evaluation of the Learning & Employment for Parents / Carers project in the Tyldesley and Shakerley areas of Wigan (The Project).

Tyldesley / Shakerley is deemed one of the most socially deprived areas in the Borough and has been designated an inclusion Area One (East) by Sure Start. **59%** of the Tyldesley population are below level 2 on literacy and **81%** of the population are below level 2 in numeracy. (Skills for Life Survey 2003).

As part of the Council's response to such challenges, the Information, Advice and Guidance Team delivers impartial information, advice and guidance to progress residents into learning, education and / or work. In order to achieve this, Wigan Council, the Department of Adult Services delivers advice and guidance to Sure Start eligible parents / carers. This is in line with the Government's Sure Start principles relating to working with parents and children: being responsive to the varying needs of those parents and being flexible in the delivery of the service available to parents.

1.2 Project Aims

The overall aim of the project in the Tyldesley / Shakerley area is to support the Sure Start national vision of *'achieving better outcomes for all parents, increased opportunity to effectively participate in the labour market, ensuring pathways out of poverty and strengthening families and communities'*. (Sure Start Guidance).

This clearly fits with the outcomes required by 'Every Child Matters' relating to *'achieving economic wellbeing'* with parents, carers and families supported in being economically active and with the Sure Start appropriate opportunities in employment, training and or education.

1.3 Project Delivery

The project has been operating and growing since September 2002. The design and delivery model has evolved around the demands and needs of the parents / carers within hard to reach sectors of the area. The project has, without doubt, 'moved on' since the appointment of the current Project Worker, **Julie Baxendale**, during whose tenure is the period we have been commissioned to evaluate.

This project targets hard to reach parents / carers assisting them in accessing learning and work opportunities to meet their individual needs.

This is achieved by offering:

- Support for individuals by the Project Worker
- Literacy and numeracy courses within the Shakerley area
- A work preparation course

The ongoing support to parents / carers aims to assist them in accessing a range of learning and work opportunities to meet their individual needs. This will be through:

- 1:1 advice
- Referral and support in starting learning
- CV writing service
- Job search support
- Support with application forms and interview techniques

The work preparation course includes:

- Skills for work analysis
- CV preparation
- Writing letters for employment
- Completing application forms
- Interview techniques
- Confidence building

- Team working
- Motivation
- Assertiveness
- Inter- personal skills embedded into the course structure

1.4 Summary of Findings

Linked to commission terms of reference:

1. The project is meeting outputs agreed with the principal funder and it is highly likely they will be exceeded in a number of areas.
2. 'Wider Impacts' include:
 - Clear benefits to project beneficiaries children and other family members that includes:
 - Parental and project support for the children of beneficiaries
 - Family cohesion
 - Community cohesion
 - Support for the development, delivery and survival of the Shakerley Community Centre
 - Potential reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Enhanced partnership / multi-agency working
 - Best / 'value for money' use of a wide variety of local services linked to the regeneration of local communities
3. Strong evidence of '**good practice**' and 'lessons learnt' that can be replicated and rolled out in other areas of the Borough. Examples of 'good practice includes:
 - A committed / highly skilled Project Worker
 - The Project Worker having just one job – delivering the project
 - Support for the Project Worker
 - A well thought out project that includes:

- Local delivery
- Free childcare
- A long term approach that enhances the **personal skills** and **qualities** of beneficiaries
- A structured bespoke approach that aims to **recruit, retain** and **achieve**
- Courses / tutors and field trips that meet the needs and requirements of beneficiaries
- A **partnership approach** that involves multi-agency and committed individual support

4. Lessons learnt include:

- Training should be provided to Project Workers that should include the following components:
 - Project Management
 - Components for delivery of such a community based project
 - Partnership / Multi-agency working
 - Monitoring & Evaluation / Tracking
 - Time Management
 - Health & Safety
- Project Workers should be based in the local community – ideally a community centre location, suitable to meet with beneficiaries and deliver courses
- Project Workers should be provided with administrative support
- Thought needs to be given to freeing up long-term funding to support training for beneficiaries
- There is a developing need to work with the voluntary sector to enable more voluntary work placements for beneficiaries
- Budget provision should include the facility to provide meals / light refreshments for beneficiaries

- Care should be taken to monitor and limit the number of clients Project Workers are responsible for supporting

1.5 Recommendations

Based on our research, we are pleased to summarise our recommendations concerning the delivery of this project and potential roll out in other areas of the Borough / United Kingdom. Full details of recommendations can be found in **section 9**.

This Project

1. All those involved in the conception and delivery of this excellent project should be congratulated and thanked for their innovation, dedication, hard work and effort.
2. The Project Manager Julie Baxendale should be singled out for particular recognition.
3. Consideration should be given to providing the Project Worker with administrative support.
4. Consideration should be given to freeing up multi-agency budgets to support the delivery of ongoing training for beneficiaries.
5. Meetings should take place with local Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Organisation(s), with a view to expanding the provision of voluntary placements for beneficiaries.
6. The current and anticipated work load of the Project Worker should be closely monitored.

Roll Out

7. The project is worthy of roll out to other areas of the Borough / the United Kingdom, and the following recommendations should be noted:
 - a. Future Project Workers should receive training in areas such as:
 - Project Management
 - Components for delivery of such a community based project
 - Partnership / Multi-agency working
 - Monitoring & Evaluation / Tracking
 - Time Management
 - Health & Safety

- b. Julie Baxendale's skills and experience should be considered in terms of her input in course design and delivery
- a. Projects should be based in local communities, with Project Workers based and making best use of community centres
- b. Free childcare should be a non-negotiable component
- c. Administrative support should be available to future Project Workers
- d. Budgets should include the provision of light refreshments and meals for beneficiaries
- e. The work loads of Project Workers needs to be carefully monitored

General

- 8. The Wigan Council Community Safety Team should be made aware of the project and its potential to influence crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 9. Consideration should be given to the local authority hosting an multi-agency event / conference, when opportunity could be taken to:
 - a. Celebrate the success of the existing project
 - b. Thank the principal funder / multi-agency partners
 - c. Attract new funders / multi-agency partners
 - d. Exchange 'best practice'

1.6 Conclusions

Wider Impact Consultancy is pleased to produce an extremely positive report on a project that is unique and delivering '**value for money**' in its area of operation. According to multi-agency partners, no other agency is currently able to deliver a much needed service to beneficiaries, who are mainly long-term, 'hard to reach', unemployed parents / carers of children under 5 years, living a deprived area of the Borough.

There is no doubt that the approach of the project is worthy of roll out in other areas of the Borough / United Kingdom.

It is clear the project will play an important and significant role in the Government's drive to end child poverty by 2010, which aims to encourage 300,000 more lone parents such as those residents in the project area back to work.

Centre to the approach delivered by the project is a recognition of meeting the needs and requirements of beneficiaries, which is based on a simple and uncomplicated approach:

- **Recruit**
- **Retain**
- **Achieve**

The project clearly recognises that the majority of beneficiaries face **barriers** that are holding them back and preventing them even thinking about getting a job. Many of the barriers appear to be related to 'self-worth' and confidence, as well as findings reported by a recent CAB Paper, *Barriers to Work. Lone Parents and the Challenges of Working*, October 2008.

We are delighted to commend the project and thank those who contributed to this report.

2.0 Acknowledgements

Wider Impact Consultancy would like to thank the following for their time and effort in making this report possible:

Clients, without whose support, this report would have no meaning

Jim Bailey, Trustee Shakerley Partnership Board

Jonathan Bilsborough, Research & Information Officer, Community Safety Team, Wigan Council

Joyce Hanlon, General Manager, Working Wonders

Julie Baxendale, Project Worker, Learning and Employment for Parents / Carers Project

Lynne Davidson, Team Manager Learning and Employment Services, Wigan Council

Marjorie Marsden, Trustee Shakerley Partnership Board

Pam Kelly, Lone Parent Advisor, Atherton Job Centre

Sue Hansen, Tyldesley Community Education Centre

Suzanne Carter, Parental Involvement Officer, Tyldesley Sure Start Children's Centre

Contributions have included data, information, time and most importantly honest feedback on the impact of the production of this report.

3.0 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of this independent evaluation, which has been commissioned by Wigan Council are:

1. To confirm that the project is meeting outcomes agreed with the principle funder – Sure Start.
2. To establish 'wider impacts' in relation to community based outcomes, other than those anticipated during the inception of the project.
3. To establish 'best practice' and 'lessons learnt' that may be utilised in the roll out of the project in other areas of the Borough.

4.0 Methodology

The brief has been delivered in three sections:

1. Desktop (Secondary) research:
 - Access to data and information kindly provided by Julie Baxendale, Project Worker
2. Primary research, which includes:
 - Face to face interviews with key Wigan Council staff:
 - Lynne Davison, Team Manager, Wigan Council Learning and Employment Services
 - Julie Baxendale, Project Worker
 - Face to face interviews with partner agency representatives
 - Face to face interviews with project clients
 - Group meetings with project clients
 - Face to face interviews with community representatives
 - Observations of project delivery
 - Shadowing the Project Worker, Julie Baxendale
3. Submission of this final report drawing together the findings of the above sections.

5.0 About the Project

5.1 Introduction

Tyldesley / Shakerley is deemed one of the most socially deprived areas in the Borough and has been designated as Inclusion Area One (East) by Sure Start. **59%** of the Tyldesley population are below level 2 on literacy and **81%** of the population are below level 2 in numeracy. (Skills for Life Survey 2003).

As part of the Council's response to such challenges, the Information, Advice and Guidance Team delivers impartial information, advice and guidance to progress residents into learning, education and or work. In order to achieve this Wigan Council, Department of Adult services delivers advice and guidance to Sure Start eligible parents / carers in line with the Governments Sure Start principles relating to working with parents and children: being responsive to the varying needs of those parents and being flexible in the delivery of the service available to parents.

5.2 Project Description

The title of the Tyldesley / Shakerley project is: Learning and Employment for Parents / Carers – Impartial information, advice and guidance to enable the target group to progress into learning, education and / or work. This includes work preparation training.

5.3 Project Costs

A modest **£37,480** for period 2008 / 09 has been secured from the principal funder, Sure Start, to fund the Outreach Project Worker post, with on costs, childcare for beneficiaries, marketing, equipment and room hire.

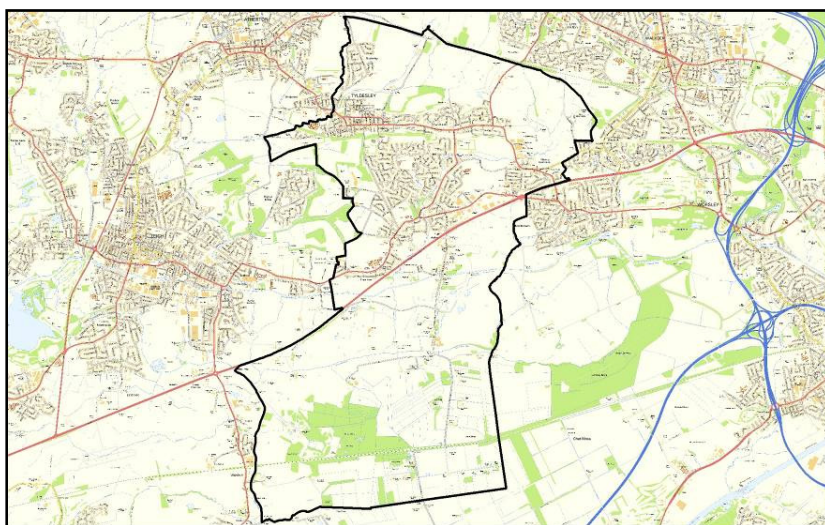
5.4 Project Aims

The overall aim of this project being delivered in the Tyldesley / Shakerley area is to support the Sure Start national vision of *'achieving better outcomes for all parents, increased opportunity to effectively participate in the labour market, ensuring pathways out of poverty and strengthening families and communities'* (Sure Start Guidance).

This clearly fits with outcomes required by 'Every Child Matters' relating to '*achieving economic wellbeing*' with parents, carers and families supported in being economically active and with the Sure Start appropriate opportunities in employment, training and or education.

5.5 Geographical Area

The below map broadly outlines the location of the project



5.6 Project Outputs

Table 1 highlights annual outputs agreed with the principal funder.

Table 1

Output Description	Target
Adults Reached	125
Sessions Delivered	480
Joint Initiatives Undertaken	50
Refer to Lone Parent Advisor	12
Into Employment	12
Into Voluntary	4
Into Skills for Life Training – Literacy and Numeracy	20
Joint Sessions	12

5.7 Project Delivery

The project has been operating and growing since September 2002. The design and delivery model has evolved around the demands and needs of the parents / carers within hard to reach sectors of the area. It targets 'hard to reach', unemployed parents / carers of children under 5 years, assisting them in accessing learning and learning and work opportunities to meet their individual needs. This is achieved by offering:

- Support for individuals by the Project Worker, **Julie Baxendale**
- Literacy and numeracy courses delivered at the Shakerley Community Centre
- A work preparation course
- Facilities and coordinates other courses in community

Ongoing support to parents / carers aims to assist beneficiaries in accessing a range of learning and work opportunities to meet their individual needs. This will be through:

- 1:1 advice
- Referral and support in starting learning
- CV service
- Job search support
- Support with application forms and interview techniques.

The Work Preparation Course includes:

- Skills for work analysis
- CV preparation
- Writing letters for employment
- Completing application forms
- Interview techniques
- Confidence building
- Team working
- Motivation
- Assertiveness / Inter- personnel skills embedded into the course structure

6.0 Research Findings

6.1 Introduction

We are reporting outputs and outcomes achieved as a result of project interventions in the Tyldesley / Shakerley areas, which will be presented as quantitative (hard) and qualitative (soft) formats, to ensure that a true picture is presented of the project as a whole. In line with the terms of reference agreed with the commissioner of the research, we will also be:

1. Establishing 'wider impacts' in relation to community based outcomes, other than those anticipated during the inception of the project.
2. Establishing 'best practice' and 'lessons learnt' that may be utilised in the roll out of the project in other areas of the Borough.

6.2 Data and Information

Table 2 highlights output delivery since the appointment of the current Project Worker.

Table 2

Output Description	Target	2007 / 08	2008 / 09 (Sept 2008)
Adults Reached	125	324	189
Sessions Delivered	480	522	488
Joint Initiatives Undertaken	50	65	73
Refer to Lone Parent Advisor	12	20	11
Into Employment	12	12	7
Into Voluntary	4	8	15
Into Skills for Life Training – Literacy and Numeracy	20	124	50

Source: Tyldesley & Shakerley Learning & Employment for Parents / Carers project October 2008

It will be noted that the project over-achieved during 2007 / 08 and is on course to over-achieve on its outputs during 2008 / 09.

6.3 Courses Being Delivered by the Project

Table 3 highlights courses on offer to beneficiaries of the project and numbers currently enrolled for each course.

Table 3

Day	Courses	Accredited / Non Accredited	Number of Course
Monday	Basic Computers	No	6
	Intermediate Computers	No	11
	Family Crafts	No	15
Tuesday	Literacy	Yes - Skills for Life	12
	Numeracy	Yes – Skills for Life	13
	CLAIT	Yes	10
Wednesday	Work Skills Certificate	No	9
Thursday	Literacy	Yes – Skills for Life	16
	Numeracy	Yes – Skills for Life	9
Other Courses on Offer	NVQ:		
	Childcare	Yes	1
	Customer Care	Yes	1
	Beauty (Nails)	Yes	1
Courses due to Commence	Business Administration	Yes	1
	Sign Language	No	-
	Card Making	No	-

Source: Learning & Employment for Parents / Carers, Tyldesley / Shakerley project, October 2008

Courses are funded by the Learning and Skills Council

6.4 Adult Literacy and Numeracy Core Courses

The Adult Core Curriculum courses are based on the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in 2000.

According to **Joyce Hanlon** (General Manager, Working Wonders), adult literacy and numeracy delivered on behalf of the project by the *Working Wonders* Social Enterprise Company, are helping

learners achieve the range of skills they need in order to reach a national standard of competence within literacy and numeracy, thereby giving them the best possible chance to function independently and efficiently.

The curriculum assists teachers to meet the individual needs of adults through the selection and teaching of skills appropriate to those adults' needs. The curriculum informs tutors of the skills a learner requires to meet national standards, together with the knowledge and understanding that underpin those skills and is supported by sample strategies to develop them.

On enrolling with the project, learners are individually assessed to establish an overall level. The assessment tool used on the project is the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) Initial Assessment. The initial assessment is followed by a diagnostic assessment. Set-tasks, observation and discussion are used to establish areas that need to be addressed.

Tutors are carefully matched to the needs of the group. This careful matching helps ensure rapport between learner and tutor. Elements looked for include: empathy with client group (they treat learners as equals); excellent people skills; adaptable and friendly in approach; young outlook and in addition have shown that they can run friendly, informal sessions.

According to **Joyce Hanlon**, *'Such provision, which is mapped to the Adult Core Curriculum, aims to provide learners with a solid, secure knowledge of basic literacy and numeracy. Increasing skills developed within a highly supportive environment; gives the learners the best possible chance of gaining confidence and motivation. The tutors' vital encouragement and involvement, coupled with the learner's growing and real awareness that their skills levels are increasing, leads to aspiration and hope. These are the elements that drive the internal change that is needed by many people to break out of the cycle of low skills and hopelessness, which in many cases goes back generations.'*

'People have to function independently with literacy and numeracy if they are to find sustained employment and progress within the workplace. The courses being delivered by the project are aimed at helping people to be independent'.

6.5 Adult Literacy and Numeracy Core Courses Outputs

Table 4 highlights learner age ranges. Table 5 highlights numbers attending courses between 2007 and September 2008. Table 6 highlights learner's accredited achievements. Table 7 outlines comparative data from other Borough delivery locations.

Table 4 Learner Age Ranges

Ages	07 / 08	08 / 09
16 – 18	2	0
19 – 34	35	38
35 – 49	5	12
50 +	0	

Source: Working Wonders, October 2008

Table 5 Numbers Attending Course

	Literacy	Numeracy
2007 / 08	Male 2 Female 21	Male 1 19
2008 / Oct 08	Male 0 Female 26	Male 0 Female 24

Source: Working Wonders, October 2008

Table 5 Learner's Accredited Achievements

Period	Entry Level	Literacy Level 1	Literacy Level 2	Numeracy Level 1	Numeracy Level 1
2007 / 08	0	13	6	6	7
2008 / Oct 08	0	2	0	0	0

Table 7 Comparative Data

Location	Number Engaged	Time Period (Months)
Shakerley Community Centre	23	10
Bramble House	9	6
Sunshine House	37	12
Bedford High School	75	12

Source: Working Wonders, October 2008

6.6 Skills for Work Course

The course has been devised by the Project Worker, Julie Baxendale and is delivered to support learners' three phase journeys into employment:

- **Phase One** - Identification of clients needs i.e. information on education or employment, advice on education or employment. Referral to literacy and numeracy to Level 2. Referral to education opportunities. Signpost to employment, signpost to Sure Start projects. Career focus advice and guidance. Support in achieving chosen route
- **Phase Two** - Work preparation course
- **Phase Three** - client to start education, voluntary placement and / or employment

Progression sessions and continuing support is offered throughout by the Project Worker.

6.7 Course Aims

To support parents as parents in their aspirations for returning to learning, voluntary work and / or paid employment.

6.8 Course Objectives

1. To engage with both Sure Start members and to engage new members within Tyldesley and Shakerley
2. To deliver a targeted service for parents and carers of under 5's, that will provide:
 - a. Information and advice
 - b. Supported processes of mentoring and advocacy
3. To develop and deliver this course to meet the needs of parents and carers of under 5's in relation to learning and work
4. To identify individuals needs and offer referral to Sure Start projects (create awareness) that can satisfy individuals needs
5. To make referrals to local adult training providers

6.9 Skills for Work Course Content

Table 8 highlights course content over a 12 week delivery period.

Table 8 Course Content © Learning & Employment for Parents / Carers, Tyldesley / Shakerley project

Week No	Course Content
1	Skills analysis and CV preparation / confidence building
2	Assertiveness training / confidence building
3	Group Activity and completion of CV / confidence building - develop group work skills / understand leadership role
4	Confidence building and group work - develop group work skills / understand leadership role (can be trip out)
5	Confidence building and group work - develop group work skills / understand leadership role (can be trip out)
6	Writing letter of application / confidence building
7	Completing application forms / confidence building
8	Communication training / confidence building
9	Interview skills
10	Career planning – cascade session individual with Julie
11	Visit to Tyldesley community education college (optional)
12	Visit to Wigan and Leigh college(optional)
Course Includes	Undertaking voluntary placement - possibly within Sure Start (optional), through 1:1 interviews with Julie Baxendale. Referrals to learning, Sure Start projects / Lone Parents advisor, Jobcentre Plus

Source: Learning & Employment for Parents / Carers, Tyldesley / Shakerley project, October 2008

6.10 Referrals and Networking

Throughout the research period we have been impressed with the Project Worker's extensive contact list and knowledge of partnership agency members. Examples include:

- Active Living Team
- Adult Community Education (ACE)
- Alliance Learning Ltd
- Asylum Seekers Team
- Bolton Business Venture
- Bolton College
- Bolton University
- Children's Fund
- Connexions
- Community Outreach Team
- Community Race Relations Team
- Creative Support
- DIAS
- Equal Project
- Edge Hill University
- Family Group Meetings
- Friendly Faces SWAP
- Queens Hall Methodist Mission
- Grow it Eat it
- Groundwork
- Home Start
- Howe Bridge Leisure Centre

- Community Nursery Nurse
- Hinsford Nursery
- Hindley Community Centre
- In Biz
- Join the Millions
- LASAR
- Learn Direct
- Leigh Ethnic Elders Centre
- Lone Parent Advisor
- MANCAT
- Men Matters
- Midwife (Sure Start)
- Mornington High
- Jobcentre Plus
- Noah's Ark Nursery and Play Centre
- NMAS
- Outreach Children's Information Service
- Parenting Officers
- Play Rangers
- Prince's Trust
- Primary Child Mental Health Team
- Right from the Start
- Salford College
- Skills City Limited
- Smoking Cessation
- Higher Fold Community Centre
- Saint Peters High School
- Salford College
- Salford University
- Skelmersdale College
- Stockport College
- Sure Start
- Talktime
- TCEC
- Training Services
- Tutor Bases IT
- Tyldesley Community Education Centre
- Tyldesley Library
- Westleigh Education Centre
- Women into Business
- Working for Myself
- Working Wonders
- W&L (Skills for Life)
- Wigan Family Welfare
- Wigan & Leigh College
- Wigan Welcome
- WISH

It should be noted that this extensive list is a true representation of the partners engaged and working in partnership with this project.

6.11 Feedback from Partner Agency Members

We have been impressed with positive feedback from representatives of partner agency members. For example **Pam Kelly, Jobcentre Plus** says, *'Julie is offering a unique service to clients that as far as I am aware, no other agency is in a position to offer. We regularly refer our clients to her and to date, we have referred 25; of whom, 3 have found work, 1 is in college and 2 are undertaking voluntary work. Julie helps clients break down barriers that are preventing them moving on in life. She also delivers a holistic approach to her work. For example, a lovely young lady is training to become a nail technician and understanding clients don't like the smell of smoke, Julie has arranging for her to get help from an organisation that supports smoking cessation'*. **NB.** As the project is geographically targeted, Atherton Job Centre is the only Job Centre that is able to refer suitable clients.

Suzanne Carter, Tyldesley Sure Start Centre, is equally supportive of the project. *'There is no doubt Julie understands the needs of those she is supporting. For example the vast majority are far more comfortable with attending courses in their own area and will not initially travel off their estate. She 'thinks outside the box' and adapts what is on offer to meet the needs of her clients. She also takes the women outside their comfort zones when the time is right, to ensure they move on and take advantage of services on offer outside the area. Feedback we receive makes it clear; the tutors used by the project treat learners like friends, rather than pupils and are earning their respect. There is no doubt the project is offering a unique and important service that no other agency can deliver and is making significant differences to the lives of the women and their children. We are delighted to be working in close partnership with the project'.*

Sue Hansen, Tyldesley Community Education Centre is extremely supportive of the project's approach to supporting clients, *'Julie really understands the barriers many of the women are facing and takes time to listen and build up their trust. Whilst she is very supportive and persuasive, she is never in their faces. She helps them to take small steps and is never too heavy handed. Julie has put the word 'caring' into her job and understands what the women are going through. She understands how hard it is for clients to escape the benefit trap.*

6.12 Client Case Studies

Wider Impact Consultancy was delighted to meet with clients, who have provided frank and perceptive views about the project. Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Case Study 1 Jane

Jane is 25 years old and lives in a Council owned home with her 5 year old daughter. She left school aged 15 years, with no qualifications. She does not live with her daughter's father. She has worked in a chip shop before she became pregnant and has not worked since her daughter was born. She is in receipt of around £470 in benefits. Before becoming involved in the project, Jane described her life as 'boring'.

She heard about the project from her sister and has never regretted becoming involved. *'It is brilliant, as there are people here who I know and my daughter stays in the crèche while I am learning. I have passed Level 1 in English and Level 2 in Maths. I have also passed the intermediate computer course and am moving onto the CLAIT course.'*

Jane is on the way to achieving an NVQ Level 2 in customer service, having accepted a job placement in the Community Centre Café. She has also passed a food hygiene course.

Asked what difference becoming involved in the project has made to her life, Jane is clear, **'I can help my daughter with her reading'** *'I am not the same person. I knew I was bright, and this has proved it. I am involving people in my life. It is as if a light switch has been turned on. I am laughing and am happy. I can now get a job and give my daughter a better life. Get a driving licence and decent fella'.*

Case Study 2 Chloe

Chloe is a single mum aged 21 years and lives with her young son at her parent's home. She hated school and understands now she *'got in with the wrong girls'*.

She did however achieve GCSEs in subjects such as Maths, English and IT and gained employment in retail on leaving school aged 16 years. She has not worked for 3 years, since her son arrived and has been depressed. She is currently in receipt income support and child benefit allowances.

She met Julie following a referral from her cousin and is delighted to have opportunity to *'re-build my life'*. Chloe plans to improve her skills and qualifications in areas such as Maths, English, IT and Administration; and is clearly relishing being a part of the project. There is no doubt free childcare is a big plus, as *'there is no way I could afford such childcare at the moment if I want to improve my chances of employment'*.

So far she has achieved English Level 1 and is working towards Level 2. She is currently practicing for her Maths test. She is also working on CLAIT.

Asked why she is a part of the project and doing so well, Chloe is clear, *'It is being delivered on the estate, I know everybody, there is free childcare and **my son is also coming on – I am so proud of his progress.** He is talking better and is nicer to the other kids. He wasn't used to play and I could never leave him before coming her. I am also being treated as an adult. I love it!'*

Asked the keys to the success of the project, Chloe says, Julie, the courses I need, free childcare, being close to home, having a laugh and the tutors – they really care about us.

Asked about her ambitions, she is clear, *'I want to work in administration in an office, working up to a manager's position. BUT I need to take one step at a time. Julie and the courses have taught me that.'*

Case Study 3 Janet

Janet is 43 years 'young' and has five children aged 5 to 25 years. She has recently separated from her husband and lives with her 5 year old child. She is in the process of 're-building my life' and not being so dependent on benefits, of around £400 per month.

She left school aged 16 years, carried out a number of jobs, until meeting her husband. She always felt he held her back. She was not encouraged to do well at work. Her place was at home, with no career. *'I was very frustrated, but put with it'.*

Since meeting Julie and joining the project, she feels this is 'my time'. In just 4 months, she has achieved Level 2 in English, basic computers and is now on the CLAIT course.

She is clear why she is on the project, *'It is giving me what I need in terms of my education and the skills I need to get a real job.'*

Asked why the project is successful, she is equally clear, *'Julie understands us. She was waiting outside the door when I walked up to the Centre on the first day. I was dreading walking through that door – I was shaking. Everyone is a team here and they are so encouraging. The tutors are first class and treat us as adults'*

Janet says, *'I am touched by the support my children are giving me. They have brought me a computer and are really proud of me'.*

Asked what difference the project is making on her life, Janet thinks for a while, smiles and says, ***'I used to think I was not worthy, I used to shuffle around the estate, but now I strut – I AM someone!'***

6.13 Wider Impacts

We have been particularly impressed with the following 'wider impacts', noted during the research period, which include:

6.14 Impacts on Beneficiaries Families

Whilst outputs are focussed on guiding beneficiaries into employment / and or training, there is no doubt the children and families of beneficiaries are benefiting as a result of their parents taking part in the project:. For example:

- a. As beneficiaries improve their skills in literacy and numeracy - ***'I can help my daughter with her reading'***
- a. As their children get access to free crèche facilities – ***'my son is also coming on – I am so proud of his progress'***
- b. Family cohesion, as families are supporting their parents - ***'I am touched by the support my children are giving me. They have brought me a computer and are really proud of me'***

6.15 Community Cohesion



Having shadowed the Project Worker, we have been impressed with how beneficiaries, of a wide age range, are 'pulling together' as **community members**, laughing and supporting each other as they learn in a classroom environment, attend trips and most recently, form a committee to deliver a Christmas party.

6.16 Shakerley Community Centre

There is strong evidence that the project and the Community Centre have provided 'mutual benefits' that were not foreseen at the inception of the project:

- I. The Community Centre is a true 'social enterprise business' and in short, its future will rely on community use and revenue. There is no doubt the project is bringing in both, in the form of local people attending courses, use of crèche facilities and local people being aware of such excellent and high quality facilities. The project 'pays its way', spending significant project money on a local recourse. We also noted the project has facilitated the supply of IT equipment, such as computers, which are being utilised by local people and agencies such as Connexions initiatives; that are supporting the development of young people. There is no doubt the project is playing a significant and essential role in ensuring the future of the Community Centre.
- II. The Community Centre is providing a useful base for the Project Worker. Prior to such use the Project Worker was clearly 'working out of the boot of her car', as there was no where suitable to base herself, where she could be accessible to local people, who are extremely reluctant to leave their local area. The Community Centre is an ideal and essential location for courses to be held because:
 - a. The Community Centre is providing a useful and valuable base for the Project Worker to operate from.

- b. Local people will initially leave the estate to meet the Project Worker and attend courses.
- c. The clients prefer their children to be close by when they are in classes; and the Community Centre has excellent crèche facilities.
- d. Beneficiaries take great value from a hot meal during the day; and the Community Centre provides excellent food [which has been gratefully sampled by the researcher].
- e. The Community Centre is providing useful and significant work placement places for beneficiaries.

6.17 Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Whilst it is far too early to attribute impacts on issues such as crime and anti-social behaviour to the project, we have carried out research in this area and table 9 provides an interesting insight into youth related crime and anti-social behaviour data, which covers the arrival of the current Project Worker, Julie Baxendale.

It should be noted that Trustees have informed Wider Impact Consultancy that reported vandalism to the Community Centre has also reduced over recent months.

Table 9 Reported Incidents

Category	27/06/2006 to 26/10/2006		27/06/2007 to 26/10/2007		27/06/2008 to 26/10/2008	
	Borough	Tyldesley Shakerley	Borough	Tyldesley Shakerley	Borough	Tyldesley Shakerley
Criminal Damage	2215	184	2047	141	1690	107
Anti-Social Behaviour	8451	701	10723	647	10076	553
Youth Causing Nuisance	4563	459	3891	281	3170	200
Small Deliberate Fires	913	85	432	33	419	18

Source: Greater Manchester Police Wigan Division (Recorded Crime) Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (Fire Data)

It is the view of Wider Impact Consultancy that there are **potential** links to reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour, which **could** be linked to mothers and other female relatives of young people, becoming more socially aware and / or increased use of a Community Facility, which could help engage young people / and or make them less reluctant to damage their own community. It is our view that this area should be monitored and subject to future research.

6.18 Partnership Working

As highlighted at 6.10 above, the Project Worker has an impressive portfolio of contacts, which she utilises to good effect and for the benefit of beneficiaries and the project as a whole.

Perhaps what is most impressive is how she is enabling and facilitating best use of services, which is making excellent use of scarce and valuable publically funded services. For example:

- Jobcentre Plus regularly refer clients to the project and there is a real 'feel' for partnership working, with each party supporting and 'adding value' to the other, in terms of 'joined up' support to clients
- Beneficiaries are sign posted to courses being delivered by local Colleges and other training establishments. We are also aware that the Project Worker is working with training providers to design 'bespoke' courses that meet the needs and requirements of beneficiaries
- Over recent weeks, Connexions are utilising IT facilities at the Shakerley Community Centre, enabling use by young unemployed men – a number of whom are fathers of young children, classed as NEETS, and significantly, potential beneficiaries of the project. During a shadowing visit, we took note of how the Project Worker has utilised her excellent communication skills and trust she has built up with people living in the area, to 'chivvy' a young man to 'have a go' at a course being delivered by the Connexions team. We understand the young man **and** his friends are now enrolled on the course – all of whom are without doubt described as 'hard to reach'

- Negotiations are currently underway with Groundwork West Lancashire and Wigan to explore how the *'Moving on-Moving Up Project'*, can support long-term un-employed adults living in the project area off benefits and into work
- Negotiations are currently underway with the Children's Fund to run volunteer courses at the Shakerley Community Centre, which will support long-term unemployed in securing volunteer opportunities / placements

We feel that the Project Worker's use of other agencies resources and facilities is an excellent and **'common sense'** example of partnership working, which is worthy of note. Such action is:

- Avoiding replication and duplication of services
- Ensuring services meet the needs and requirements of beneficiaries – rather than to other way around
- Ensuring beneficiaries make the best use of services on offer
- An clear example of enabling 'value for money' services, as funding and resources saved in one area can be directed to another area of service delivery – for the benefit of beneficiaries and the wider local community

7.0 Best Practice / Lessons Learnt

7.1 Introduction

There are no doubts that the project is a success in terms of:

1. Outputs agreed with the principal funder, Sure Start are being; and are likely to be achieved in the future
2. Beneficiaries benefiting
3. Wider Impacts, in terms of impacts on beneficiary's families benefiting from the project, community cohesion, supporting the future of the Shakerley Community Centre, potentially supporting reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour and enhancing partnership / multi-agency working

7.2 Best Practice

In line with research terms of reference, we have been looking to confirm why this project is so successful. In previous research, we have often referred to '*the magic dust*' that makes one project stand out from similar projects, which is often hard to understand and even harder to attribute. However in this case we are confident we can quite clearly attribute the reasons why this project is such a success. These include:

1. The Project Worker, **Julie Baxendale**, who:
 - a. Is well suited to the role e.g. :
 - i. Committed to supporting beneficiaries and the wider community
 - ii. Empathy towards her clients and everyone she comes into contact with
 - iii. Caring
 - iv. Excellent communication skills
 - v. Honest
 - vi. Hard working
 - vii. Determined

- b. Is highly experienced in designing and delivering training and support programmes
 - c. Has just one job – delivering the project, avoiding ‘watering down’ provision to beneficiaries and ensuring she has opportunity to ‘get to know’ the target area and beneficiaries
 - d. Has an extremely structured approach to her work, carefully planning and updating approaches to tasks in hand
 - e. Self-critical / flexible and able to adapt and change direction when required
 - f. Has an excellent understanding of the importance of partnership and multi-agency working
 - g. Innovative and able to ‘think outside the box’, ensuring services meet the needs of beneficiaries, NOT the other way around
2. The support provided to the Project Worker by her manager’s, **Karen Winrow and Lynne Davison**, who in addition to playing a key role in launching the project and providing day to day support, are clearly providing ‘mentoring’ support and steer the Project Worker in a difficult and emotionally demanding role.
3. **The Project** - designed and delivered by the Project Worker and a host of highly experienced multi-agency partners and committed individuals. Key components, that make the project such a success include:
- a. A need for such projects to be based and delivered in a local community, utilising local facilities, such as a community centre to deliver early courses
 - b. **Free locally based childcare** – an essential and non-negotiable component
 - c. An understanding that the majority of beneficiaries are facing complex ‘**barriers**’ that, unless tackled will prevent them progressing into training and / or employment
 - d. The requirement for a ‘long-term’ approach, that aims to enhance the **personal skills** and **qualities** of beneficiaries in areas of:
 - i. Communication Skills

- ii. Interpersonal Skills
- iii. Technical Skills
- iv. Numeracy
- v. Problem Solving
- vi. Self-Management

e. A **structured 'bespoke' approach**, that aims to **recruit, retain** and **achieve**.

Project structure includes:

- i. Recruitment – it is clear that the majority of referrals are made by family members and agencies such as Sure Start projects and Jobcentre Plus
- ii. Understanding and identifying the many social, emotional and financial barriers people face that are preventing them moving on in their lives
- iii. Tackling the barriers / building 'self worth'
- iv. Helping beneficiaries 'walk through the door' – *'the first and emotionally most difficult step'* (Project Worker)
- v. Taking part in basic training in literacy, numeracy and IT
- vi. Retaining beneficiaries during this important and challenging stage
- vii. Moving on into accredited training / courses
- viii. Work experience / voluntary work / further training
- ix. Employment – the 'first job'
- x. Sustained employment - the 'right job'
- xi. Tracking / supporting beneficiaries

We particularly noted **Pam Kelly's** (Jobcentre Plus) assessment why the project is so successful, *'It is about **empowering beneficiaries**, by providing them with confidence, the tools they need, knowledge; and finally, dreams and aspirations to break out of the benefit trap, take control and make something of their lives'*.

- f. Courses / tutors and field trips that meet the needs and requirements of beneficiaries. These need to be 'fun', relaxed, flexible and involve supportive peers from the local community.

- g. A **partnership approach** that involves multi-agency and committed individual support, with agencies / organisations making referrals and sharing facilities.

4. This project is funded via Sure Start for £37,480 per annum. However, the actual cost of this project, in terms of learning and development, would be at least a further £30,000.

7.3 Lessons Learnt

Whilst the project is clearly a success, we have taken time to gain an understanding of what lessons have been learnt, which if taken note of, we suggest will help enhance the delivery of this and future similar projects.

1. Whilst the Project Worker has turned out to be highly proficient and well suited to her role, we understand training in areas associated with such as role was not available at the time of her appointment. We believe the role is complex and demanding and appropriate training for future Project Workers should be designed and provided.

Components to include:

- Project management
 - Components for delivery of such a community based project
 - Partnership / Multi-agency working
 - Monitoring & Evaluation / Tracking
 - Time Management
 - Health & Safety
2. We understand, due to unavoidable logistical issues, a community based office / base was not immediately available for the Project Worker to work from. This meant she spent too much time commuting to and from her 'work place' and was in effect 'working from the boot of her car', as beneficiaries proved extremely reluctant to travel to meet with her. This was put right as an office within the Shakerley Community

Centre became available. A local community base should be an essential requirement for such Project Workers to work from.

3. Too much of the Project Workers core time is taken up on administrative work, filling in essential returns and keeping records – when she could be supporting clients. Administrative support should be built into future project applications / funding.
4. We are aware that funding to support training is limited to ‘annual budgets’ and often insufficient to ‘finish the job’ in relation to the majority of beneficiaries, and is holding back their progress into work. We would like to think there are ‘common sense’ ways to overcome such an important issue.
5. A developing problem is a lack of volunteer placements, which is often an important and first step into work.
6. Whilst the budget for this project is being spent in accordance with agreements with the principal funder, future funding should include the provision of meals and refreshments for beneficiaries. Such provision, delivered in a ‘value for money’ community centre, helps build trust between the Project Worker and clients, and also facilitates peer bonding; and is a further cost effective ‘hook’ to attract and retain beneficiaries.
7. Due to the success of the project, we are concerned about the size of the Project Worker’s client list. There is a real risk of Project Worker ‘burn out’ and / or compromise to the support provided to beneficiaries. Consideration should be given to maximum number of clients per Project Worker, and / or employing another / more Project Workers in areas of significant need such as Tyldesley / Shakerley. The provision of administrative support will also help alleviate such issue.

8.0 Summary of Findings

8.1 Summary of Findings

Linked to commission terms of reference:

1. The project is meeting outputs agreed with the principal funder and it is highly likely they will be exceeded in a number of areas.
2. 'Wider Impacts' include:
 - Clear benefits to project beneficiaries children and other family members that includes:
 - Parental and project support for the children of beneficiaries
 - Family cohesion
 - Community cohesion
 - Support for the development, delivery and survival of the Shakerley Community Centre
 - Potential reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Enhanced partnership / multi-agency working
 - Best / 'value for money' use of a wide variety of local services linked to the regeneration of local communities
3. Strong evidence of '**good practice**' and 'lessons learnt' that can be replicated and rolled out in other areas of the Borough. Examples of 'good practice includes:
 - A committed / highly skilled Project Worker
 - The Project Worker having just one job – delivering the project
 - Support for the Project Worker
 - A well thought out project that includes:

- Local delivery
- Free childcare
- A long term approach that enhances the **personal skills** and **qualities** of beneficiaries
- A structured bespoke approach that aims to **recruit, retain** and **achieve**
- Courses / tutors and field trips that meet the needs and requirements of beneficiaries
- A **partnership approach** that involves multi-agency and committed individual support

4. **Lessons learnt** include:

- Training should be provided to Project Workers that should include the following components:
 - Project management
 - Components for delivery of such a community based project
 - Partnership / Multi-agency working
 - Monitoring & Evaluation / Tracking
 - Time Management
 - Health & Safety
- Project Workers should be based in the local community – ideally a community centre location, suitable to meet with beneficiaries and deliver courses
- Project Workers should be provided with administrative support
- Thought needs to be given to feeing up funding to support training for beneficiaries
- There is a developing need to work with the voluntary sector to enable more voluntary work placements for beneficiaries

- Budget provision should include the facility to provide meals / light refreshments for beneficiaries
- Care should be taken to monitor and limit the number of clients project Workers are responsible for supporting

8.2 Conclusions

The project is without doubt achieving outputs agreed with the principal funder and there are excellent examples of best practice that will clearly support the delivery of similar projects in other areas of the Borough and indeed, the United Kingdom. Lessons learnt should not be treated as criticism, rather opportunities to further enhance the delivery of an excellent and innovative project that is clearly delivering what beneficiaries require.

We have no doubts that the project is suitable for replication in other areas, and recommend that 'lessons learnt' and other recommendations highlighted at **Section 9** are taken note of.

There is no 'magic dust' responsible for the delivery of this first class project. Just a highly skilled, experienced, dedicated and extremely hard working Project Worker, supported in the delivery of an innovative and at the same time 'common sense' locally delivered, client centred project, which makes 'best value' use of local facilities and support available from a host of multi-agency partners and dedicated individuals.

9.0 Recommendations

Based on our research, we are pleased to make the following recommendations concerning the delivery of this project and potential roll out in other areas of the Borough / United Kingdom.

9.1 This Project

1. All those involved in the conception and delivery of this excellent project should be congratulated and thanked for their innovation, dedication, hard work and effort. The delivery of such as project requires a team effort, which of course involves beneficiaries.
2. The Project Worker, Julie Baxendale should be singled out for particular recognition.
3. Consideration should be given to providing the Project Worker with administrative support, with particular emphasis on collation and the completion of project returns. Too much of the Project Worker's time is spent on such work, which risks compromising the support she can provide to clients.
4. Consideration should be given to freeing up multi-agency budgets to support the delivery of ongoing training for beneficiaries.
5. Meetings should take place with local Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Organisation(s), with a view to expanding the provision of voluntary placements for beneficiaries.
6. The current and anticipated work load of the Project Worker should be closely monitored. There is a real risk of the Project Worker becoming 'burned out' and / or compromising the support required to existing clients. Consideration may need to be given to limiting her client list, or bringing in a further Project Worker to the project.

9.2 Roll Out

7. The project is worthy of roll out to other areas of the Borough / United Kingdom, and the following recommendations should be noted:

- e. Future Project Workers should receive training in areas such as:
 - Project Management
 - Components for delivery of such a community based project
 - Partnership / Multi-agency working
 - Monitoring & Evaluation / Tracking
 - Time Management
 - Health & Safety
- f. Julie Baxendale's skills and experience should be considered in terms of her input in course design and delivery
- f. Projects should be based in local communities, with Project Workers based and making best use of community centres
- g. Free childcare should be a non-negotiable component
- h. Administrative support should be available to future Project Workers
- i. Budgets should include the provision of light refreshments and meals for beneficiaries
- j. The work loads of Project Workers needs to be carefully monitored

9.3 General

- 8. The Wigan Council Community Safety Team should be made aware of the project and its potential to influence crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 9. Consideration should be given to the local authority hosting an multi-agency event / conference, when opportunity could be taken to:

- a. Celebrate the success of the existing project
- b. Thank the principal funder / multi-agency partners
- c. Attract new funders / multi-agency partners
- d. Exchange 'best practice'

10.0 Conclusions

Wider Impact Consultancy is pleased to produce an extremely positive report on a project that is unique and delivering 'value for money' in its area of operation. According to multi-agency partners, no other agency is currently able to deliver a much needed service to beneficiaries, who are mainly long-term, 'hard to reach', unemployed women living in a deprived area of the Borough.

There is no doubt that the approach of the project is worthy of roll out in other areas of the Borough / United Kingdom.

It is clear the project will play an important and significant role in the Government's drive to end child poverty by 2010, which aims to encourage 300,000 more lone parents such as those residents in the project area back to work.

Central to the approach delivered by the project are meeting the needs and requirements of beneficiaries, which is based on a simple and uncomplicated approach:

- **Recruit**
- **Retain**
- **Achieve**

The project clearly recognises that the majority of beneficiaries face **barriers** that are holding them back and preventing them even thinking about getting a job. Many of the barriers appear to be related to 'self-worth' and confidence, as well as findings reported by a recent CAB Paper, *Barriers to Work. Lone Parents and the Challenges of Working*, October 2008.

These include inflexible jobs and employers; lack of affordable childcare; lack of tailored support in making the transition to sustainable work; being financially worse off in work than on benefits; inflexibility of the benefit system and money problems.

The project recognises such, and is providing beneficiaries with a highly successful community based, bespoke service that no other agency is currently in a position to deliver, which is playing a significant role in helping beneficiaries into sustainable work.

The Project Worker does however deliver a work of caution, *'There is no quick fix answer to getting a lone parent, living in a deprived community and who faces significant barriers, into work. It takes time, an understanding, resources, and will often require a long-term multi-agency approach'*.

We are delighted to commend the project and thank those who contributed to this report.

...measurable results
to help avoid expensive mistakes.

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