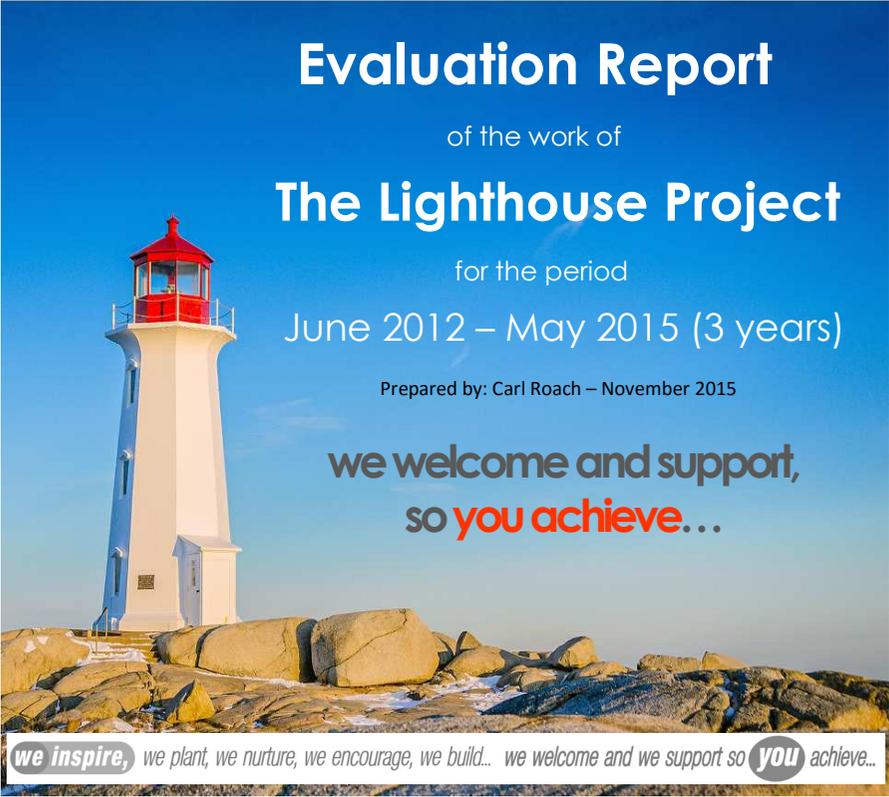


# Executive Summary



**Evaluation Report**  
of the work of  
**The Lighthouse Project**  
for the period  
June 2012 – May 2015 (3 years)  
Prepared by: Carl Roach – November 2015

**we welcome and support,  
so you achieve...**

*we inspire, we plant, we nurture, we encourage, we build... we welcome and we support so you achieve...*



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## Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to reflect on the work of the Lighthouse Project over the last 3 years of project activities between June 2012 – May 2015 with the aim of:

1. **Identifying the differences** it is making to people, and
2. **Identifying the impact** it is having on the lives of those who attend, and
3. **Identifying the effectiveness** of our approach in tackling local issues and meeting local needs

## The aims of the Lighthouse Project

The strap line for the Lighthouse Project is, **'we welcome and support, so you achieve...'** which is a reflection of our ambition to inspire and improve the lives of local people and organisations.

Within our overall aim we have identified 5 key areas that our work focuses on, based on needs and issues identified by our beneficiaries as being important to them:

1. **The improvement of quality of life and access to opportunities** to support them in dealing with multiple-disadvantages, exclusions and poverty.
2. **The improvement of life and work based skills** to help and support them to move closer to the job market and return to work.
3. **The reduction of digital exclusion** by giving them the skills and access they need for beneficial use of the internet and the ability to function in the digital world.
4. **To improve** understanding of how to manage and maintain **health, mental health and wellbeing**.
5. **To improve access to advice and ongoing support** for tackling life issues and problems.

## The anticipated outcomes

*We envisaged that we would help people to learn new skills to help them become more confident and get back into work, move out of poverty, try new activities, develop new interests, make new friends, reduce isolation, or improve their mental health and wellbeing.*



*We planned to provide a safe and welcoming space called the Lighthouse Project and to run it as a community hub in collaboration with other organisations.*

*We envisaged that we would be able to build and increase our visitor footfall, develop new services and activities, and increase our partner working.*



## Summary of our overall impact - what we found

"We managed to **grow our visitor footfall** and recorded **84,600** visits in the **three years** that this evaluation covers."

"We **added to and developed** 29 new **services and activities.**"

"We **increased the number of organisations** that use the Lighthouse Project for **delivery of services** or to **run activities** as part of our **community hub** from 7 to 23."

## The impact and changes reported by our Beneficiaries

"The differences and changes that their visits made to them included:"

- Feeling more confident, more hopeful and less isolated.
- They were able to independently access and use the internet and a range of digital services.
- They made new friends and social connections, took up new activities and interests, and improved their health and mental health, which produced positive changes in their lives.
- They were able to look for work, and use their new skills and training to move them closer to the jobs market, or into volunteering to gain work experience

"The impact that their visits to the Lighthouse had on their lives included:"

- They were **upskilled and trained** which made them feel less excluded and disadvantaged.
- They were **more confident about communicating online** and understood how best to promote themselves in job applications and interviews.
- They **increased their confidence** which meant they felt more able to participate and contribute in activities, and be more confident in looking for work.
- They **felt less isolated**, more connected, and consequently less stressed.
- They **moved closer to the job market** and were able to promote themselves to potential employers through the use of CV's, cover letters and emails.
- They were able to go online and **participate in the digital world** and they no longer felt inadequate or excluded.
- They were able to **improve their health and wellbeing** which meant they felt more valued.
- They were able to **self-manage their job hunting**, and applications for jobs and volunteering.
- They were able to **progress with resolving life issues** and felt more optimistic.

"The effectiveness of the approach the Lighthouse Project adopts includes:"

- **Beneficiaries told us they hold the Lighthouse Project in high esteem**, and value the support given, and the work that is done. **They felt inspired to achieve**, and found that in a short period of time they were more confident and equipped to self-manage and move on in life.
- The work of the Lighthouse is supported by a growing number of organisations, some of whom directly contribute to the work and activities offered, and others who recommend their clients and beneficiaries to attend in order for them to receive help, training or support.
- Our approach builds **communities of individuals** who become confident and are inspired to make new connections and links with each other and other organisations; and it also builds a **network of organisations** that can more effectively relate to each other and collaboratively support the community in a way that offers benefits for all.
- We have seen that our approach **improves people's ability to face up to, and tackle, multiple issues** in a single location, it helps them **feel safe and valued** which in turn makes them feel more willing to engage with and access services that help them progress towards successful outcomes.



## Headlines from our Visitor Survey

### "Why did you visit the Lighthouse Project?"

- **The top five reasons** for visiting us were: to use the internet (54%), for help to create or amend a CV (51%), use of Universal Jobmatch (48%), for online job hunting and job seeking (47%), and use of email (44%).
- It is clear from the responses that beneficiaries **make use of the Lighthouse Project for more than one reason**, and the diversity of activities which are accessible in one location is valued by them.

### "In what ways has visiting the Lighthouse Project changed your life/situation?"

- **The highest reported changes were**, making new friends & social connections (67%), learning new skills (61%), increased confidence (55%), ability to look for work online (54%), and ability to use the internet (52%).
- This evidences our aim of inspiring people to achieve and become more active in society.

### "What was your experience of visiting the Lighthouse Project?"

This section was grouped into a few themes:

- 99% reported that they **felt welcomed and supported**, and 97% reported that they have **a good experience** from their visit.
- 97% reported that they **felt their needs were listened to**, and 65% reported that **their needs were met** by their visit.
- 99% reported that they **felt Lighthouse Project services were needed in Middleton**, and 82% felt that they could input into our work.
- 99% said that they would **recommend the Lighthouse Project to others**, and 98% said that they would miss our services if they were not available.
- 100% said that **they would use our services again**, and 100% agreed that **we should continue our work in the future**.

This evidences the trust that our beneficiaries place in us, and how much they value the work that we do, and the support that they receive from us.



## The impact and changes reported by our Partners

### "What barriers do the people you support face?"

- **Difficulty accessing services** due to: anxiety, isolation, previous refusal, discrimination and lack of understanding around mental health issues, and a dwindling community resource base due to reduced funding.
- **Low skilled**, often with no reading or writing skills, low educational attainment, lack of qualifications/training, lack of Job opportunities that fit into their skill sets, lack of statutory services available, there are people with offending backgrounds and lack of education in English and Maths.
- People have **problems with IT equipment and gaining access to advice** because they have never used a computer.

### "How do we help to reduce/remove these barriers?"

- **You give people dignity and opportunity to access support** and gain skills to help themselves by building them up and making them feel valued.
- **By allowing us to meet with other organisations within the Lighthouse Project**, through joined up activities and partnership work.
- Giving advice and support on a range of issues, **by offering employability training and access to courses**, and being hands on to help with any issues.
- You have **strong connections in the community**, you encourage mixing between a variety of people and other social integration.

### "How do you find working with us?"

- Having worked in the voluntary sector for over 10 years in the Middleton area, **I'm always very impressed by the delivery of the services within the Lighthouse Project** and wouldn't hesitate to work more in partnership with them in the future.
- **We have a good relationship with the staff and volunteer team** and we share information, advice and ideas to further improve things for people using the service.
- My colleague and I enjoy coming every fortnight to do our advice sessions as we feel we are helping in some small way. **I find the work of the Lighthouse Project is excellent.**
- You support VIC activities and refer new clients to our services and offer joint promotion/cross referrals. **I find all members of the Lighthouse team to be friendly, informed and supportive of our service.** You provide a mixture of groups and organisations in the Lighthouse hub.

### “What value to you is working with us?”

- **More client engagement.** community members through what can sometimes be very complex issues..
- It is of great value to us as we have the **perfect ‘community place’ to hold our advice sessions** and lots of the regulars will now come to us for any advice they need as they feel comfortable seeing us and they know who we are.
- **It allows our organisation to have a local access point** and base for our service, and our beneficiaries are able to use the additional facilities provided by the Lighthouse.
- **Having friendly, professional support from a partner agency** makes my work easier to manage and I feel assured of the mutual respect which in turn gives me the confidence to support
- **You provide us with an ideal outreach venue** and resources that we are able to use in the support of local military veterans who we are trying to reconnect with civilian life.
- You allow us to base some of our activities in your centre. **It allows our service to have a local access base** for our service users to use. As a worker in a front line service it is invaluable.
- The Lighthouse Project is a **valuable work**. We get job satisfaction as we help people with housing benefit, council tax support, free school meals & other queries as part of our remit.

### “What do you think about our work?”

- The Lighthouse Project is a **necessary community and professional resource** – as a partner organisation we feel strongly that together we are working towards a more inclusive and connected Middleton which focuses on supporting those in most need, addressing issues of deprivation and isolation in order to encourage positive wellbeing and prevention from further decline in mental, emotional or physical health.
- You are **willing to work with external groups** and other organisations and allow them to do their thing in a shared space.
- I think the work of the Lighthouse Project is needed within Central Middleton as **it meets a need that other groups/organisations can’t reach** because of their location, resources etc.
- **You help people avoid isolation**, get them out of the house and stop/reduce damaging behaviours, e.g drinking and drugs.
- Workers and volunteers are **always on hand to help with any queries** and there are a range of organisations who use the centre to see clients – this means that workers and service users get to know about local initiatives.

## The impact and support reported by the Public

During August – October 2015 we carried out a consultation with the general public in and around Middleton, and further afield, to raise awareness about our pending relocation, and to find out what they thought about our work and its value to them.

### “We support the work of the Lighthouse Project?”

- “I wholeheartedly support the Lighthouse Project, **their work is central to the Middleton community**. They have helped so many people in so many ways – Middleton needs this place.”
- **“This is an extremely valued commodity in the Middleton area.** I along with various friends of mine have been through a lot in our private lives, and being able to get together in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere has helped us a great deal. I have noticed how many others have benefited by coming on a regular basis.”
- “The Lighthouse is a **beacon of community activity** where local people support local community. Don’t let this light be extinguished!
- “The Lighthouse Project has **helped me to build on my confidence** following my brain surgery, I am forever grateful to Carl and the Lighthouse Project for being there for me.”
- **“Without the Lighthouse Project** my disabled wife would be lost in the black hole of life.”

### “They provide vital community services?”

- “I have witnessed the Lighthouse Project first hand and **it’s a service that is vital to the local community**, helping local residents and giving the support needed to local residents.”
- “RMBC should help this great group; **we have VERY FEW if any places like this in Middleton.** Stop feeding Rochdale and concentrate on other surrounding places in the borough.”
- “The Lighthouse has **provided an essential community hub for countless people** in the Middleton and the local area. The locality and the support the Lighthouse provides has enriched many lives of local people who otherwise would be required to fend for themselves.”
- “We at Brentwood Middleton day centre see ourselves as a partner organisation, **who work alongside the Lighthouse Project in providing crisis support and immediate need for the Middleton Community**, they provide a foodbank and we support them in their endeavours, **we cannot afford to lose this vital service.**”
- **“As a Social Worker** I recommend this project as a viable and necessary place for facilitating training, and access to agencies “
- **“Absolutely essential service** – I use it regularly in my work as a Rochdale Council Community Champion...”

## Facts & Figures – Outcomes and Indicators

### A selection of Headline figures

- **84,600 visits** over 3 years, an average of **28,200** per year

- Total footfall of **120,000 visits** between June 2010 – Sept 2015

- **46 different activities / events**

- **23 collaborating organisations & 40 foodbank referral agencies**

- **8966 volunteer visits** over the last 3 years, an average of **2982** per year

- Over **900 signatures** from our petition of support

- **99% of visitors feel welcomed and supported**

- **1190 people supported with emergency food from the foodbank** (756 adults & 434 children) ~ July 14-May 15

- **13.2 tonnes of food donated and 10.8 tonnes given out in 544 emergency food parcels**

- **1700 drop-in sessions and workshops delivered**

- **1500 regular social & interest group activities**

- **338 attending multi-session work club groups and courses**

- **2650 starts on digital skills courses**

- **2894 CV's created or amended**

## Reflections – What have we learned?

### What worked well?

- **Providing a safe space**, a good welcome, and personal support for people, and giving them repeated opportunities to advance themselves.
- **Engaging with people and listening to them**, allowing them to talk, showing empathy and understanding, and being able to encourage and guide them to relevant support or services that help them to progress.
- **Encouraging people to volunteer**, to get work experience and build / re-build their confidence.
- **Offering quality employability training**, and opportunities to develop workplace skills and experience that moved people closer to the job market.
- **Helping people feel less excluded and isolated** by improving their digital skills and helping them to start using the internet independently.
- **Encouraging attendance at art, craft, and hobby based sessions**, and also participation in social activities that help reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing.
- Being able to offer and deliver a **wide range of diverse activities** that help people to change and improve their lives.
- Offering structured appointments as well as flexible sessional activities.
- **Having a positive and flexible approach to helping and supporting people**, and the ability to adapt to changing situations/needs/ demands – with a 'can do' attitude.
- Having **good community links** and relationships.
- **Being liked, loved, and appreciated** by our visitors.
- Being able to effectively promote the benefits of the 'community hub model' by **building supportive links with external organisations** and developing good partner relationships.
- Not being over managed, and **allowing people to self-progress**.
- **Having a good reputation** for being innovative, professional and **showing an understanding of people's needs** and how to direct them towards solutions or other organisations.



## Conclusion

### Making a real difference

The Lighthouse Project is making a real difference in the lives of the people that we work with, we are seeing noticeable changes occur as a result of them using the services and attending activities at the Lighthouse; they are learning new skills and putting them into practice which boosts their confidence and encourages them to feel more assured that their lives can be different.

The Lighthouse Project is significantly impacting lives and we have seen many beneficiaries begin to flourish and thrive in our supportive and encouraging environment; they are less fretful and more optimistic because someone has taken time to believe in them, as a result they have started to change and to fulfil their potential through their achievements and progression.

We have noticed changes which happen for one person usually encourage someone else to have a go too, and once helped people are really keen to share what they've learnt with others. Through this peer-to-peer support we see our community being changed, one person at a time.

When people see the scale of need present within a community they can often disqualify themselves from being an agent of change because they say, "What difference can I make!" We see things differently at the Lighthouse, we see the value of the individual first, so we say, "it is worth helping people because... it makes a difference to this one!"

We believe 'Everyone is precious and worth the effort of being supported to, achieve...'

### The Lighthouse Project is meeting its key aims of:

1. **Improving quality of life and offering access to opportunities** so that people can start to face their challenges and tackle the multiple issues they face. We have seen lives changed because of the time they have spent at the Lighthouse, be this as simple as having a brew and feeling valued because someone talked to them, or because they were supported to deal with a problem or they started attending a group or activity.
2. **Improving life skills and workplace skills** so that they can move closer to the job market. We have seen many people come to us afraid of touching a computer and unable to see the value of their work experience, or be able to put themselves forward when opportunities arise, and they have progressed to become confident about who they are, and what they have done, and they can now get this across when applying for work.
3. **Improving digital skills** so that they can use the internet independently, no longer relying on friends or children to do their digital tasks. We have seen people who have actively avoided computers all their lives suddenly take hold of the opportunities that these skills afford them as they are gently guided into the world of online communication and connectivity.

4. **Improving peoples understanding** of how they can live better lives and feel healthy and well. We have seen people come in shy and fearful, trapped in their own world, who have been gently lifted and encouraged to see that there is hope and a way of making progress. Many people want to change, and they know that they should, but they simply don't know how to do it. With just some simple examples of what to do many quickly take hold of the opportunity and run with it.
5. **Improving access to advice and ongoing support.** We have been building collaborative partnerships with other organisations since we first started, and our pro-active approach to working out how the skills of each organisation can be put together in creative ways produces a better outcome for all.

**Our collaborative Community Hub approach to working** has been shown to be very effective in tackling local issues and meeting the needs of individuals, and more and more organisations are recognising the value of this and the benefit of integrated service delivery in shared spaces.

We have found that some groups are still cautious about joint working because they fear what they might lose to others; we don't see it like this, why try to re-invent the wheel, if someone else can do something better than you and they are willing to work with you in a collaborative way then why not, after all it can only lead to benefits being gained by everyone.

### Thank you from the trustees

We could not have done this great work on our own.

Thank you to everyone who has visited and supported the Lighthouse Project over the years, you are an answer to our dreams and original vision; we value the trust that you have put in us and it has been a privilege to welcome and support you, and to watch you flourish & achieve...!

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our work, who has given us constructive feedback, or has responded to our consultations and calls for support, and thank you for all the positive comments and encouragement, without you our work would not be the same. Together we are better.

Thank you to our amazing volunteers who give your time week after week in support of others, we greatly value all that you give, and our achievements are your achievements too.

Thank you for reading about us, and we commend the work of the Lighthouse Project to you.

*CARL*

**Carl Roach**

Trustee and Development Manager for Inspire Middleton,  
November 2015

