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1. Purpose of the Evaluation	1
a. Timescale	
b. Project aims	
c. Evaluation framework	
d. Anticipated outcomes	
2. Summary of our overall impact	5
a. The impact and changes reported by our beneficiaries	7
b. The impact and changes reported by our partners	11
c. The impact and support reported by the public	15
3. Facts and figures – outcomes and indicators	17
4. Reflections – What have we learnt?	23
a. What worked well	
b. What difficulties did we have – what didn't work well	
c. How could we improve	
d. What would we do differently	
5. Case studies	25
6. Conclusion	27

Appendices – Separate document

1. Evaluation Framework	2
2. Menu of Activities	4
3. Evaluation indicators	6
4. Community Service Hub model	9
5. Visitor Survey results May 2015	10
6. Partner Consultation Sept 2015	11
7. Petition of Support comments 2015	14
8. Digital Toolbox	23

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

1. The Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to reflect on the work of the Lighthouse Project 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 timescale of the evaluation

The Lighthouse Project has been running for over 5 years, it first opened in June 2010 and it was started by Inspire Middleton as a new community resource designed to support local people and satisfy local needs. The evaluation is a review of the last 3 years of project activities between June 2012 – May 2015.

The Lighthouse operates from a space of 10,000 sq.ft. which provides a mixture of different sized training and activity rooms, a large lounge space, kitchen, refreshment area, IT suite, and foodbank.

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.

This aim gives us scope to help and support people in different ways and we can add various things after the word **‘achieve...’** depending on what is important to the person using our services. This keeps us focused on providing **person centred solutions** which are rooted in **satisfying local needs** and issues.

As our overall aim is open ended we have identified a number of specific areas that our work focuses on, which are 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 evaluation framework

The aims above were summarised into a framework that was used to guide the activities and the collection of information for the evaluation. The **evaluation framework** is attached in Appendix 1.

The framework identified the problems we were trying to resolve (needs), and from these we identified the rationale about how change could be made to happen (approach), which in turn helped us plan how to make change happen (aims and objectives). From the aims and objectives we identified the results we expected to see (outcomes) and how we might measure them (indicators).

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.

This would then enable them to make progress in dealing with life issues, and be successful when they participate in community life and access the same opportunities and services that others do.



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 would offer a wide range of services and activities that would be open and available for anyone to use on a regular basis, and beneficiaries would be able to pick from a menu of activities to find suitable support in the centre which would

then help them to improve their lives so that they could **‘achieve...’**.

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

At the start of the evaluation period the recorded footfall for the previous year was 18,300 visits, we worked collaboratively with 7 organisations, and we ran/hosted 17 different activities or services in conjunction with those organisations.



2. 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."

- In the year June 2012-May 2013 our **visitor footfall increased by 42%** to 26,023, and in the following year (2013-2014) it **increased again** by a further 15% to just over 30,000 visits.
- In 2014-2015 visits dropped slightly (5%) to 28,575 partly due to the fact that Heywood Model Railway Group, one of our partner organisations, decided relocate (Mar 2014).
- **Middleton Central Foodbank started operating from July 2014** in the space that Heywood Model Railway Group vacated and this helped us to recover some of the lost footfall due to new visitors attending the foodbank.

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

- In the three years up to May 2015 our **range of activities increased from 17**, and we now offer support from a menu of **46 different activities**, (including those offered by partner organisations) that beneficiaries can choose from or be signposted to. Our full '**Menu of Activities**' is detailed in Appendix 2.
- In addition to the current activities there were 20 other activities that we ran/hosted for a period of time but have since come to an end or they have moved on, e.g. National Careers Service.
- Some services ended because of organisational changes or cost cutting, e.g. GM Probation which was restructured, and Stress Class Courses stopped due to NHS room hire cost cuts.
- We found that some services were popular for a while but once demand reduced they came to a natural end or others arose in their place.
- We consider **our ability to be flexible and respond to the changing needs** of beneficiaries or local issues as a positive thing which many other organisations are unable to do.
- As a follow on from this evaluation we plan to reconnect with the organisations who no longer deliver with us and explore the possibility of any of their activities being reinstated.

"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."

- In 2012 we formed links and **started working with five new organisations**, which included running regular drop-in sessions, workshops, short courses and one-off activities.
- We also **piloted a new course** (Live Your Best Life), and explored social activities to support mental health service improvements and to find ways of filling gaps in local provision.
- In 2013 we **added a further six new organisations to our partner base**, and in 2014 another five started to make use of the Lighthouse Project as a base for outreach/delivery.
- We now have **23 organisations** (excluding the **40 Foodbank referral organisations**) that directly make use of our centre on a regular basis. These organisations are in our **Evaluation Indicators** in Appendix 3.
- We operate as a community hub and have developed a '**Community Hub Service Model**' diagram, attached in Appendix 4, which we use to illustrate how our own activities, and those of our partner organisations, fit with each other in support of the different areas of work that we undertake, e.g. employment and skills, mental health, etc.
- Not all the services or activities that started with us during the period covered by the evaluation have continued. Some organisations have been restructured, some have chosen to relocate their services to other areas and some have found that the focus of their own commissioning has changed.
- For example the Alzheimers Society ran a monthly memory wellbeing café with us from 2011 and this was relocated to a housing association residential care home that offered them direct access to residents in their own lounge. This was a positive move for them, which we supported, and we continue to signpost beneficiaries to their services in the new location.
- In the years covered by this evaluation public services have experienced many structural changes and cuts as part of government & local authority austerity measures, which negatively affected many community groups too. Despite this we have managed to grow and develop our work through these difficult times, part of which is because we are not reliant on government or local authority support.
- Our ongoing ambition is to extend the scope of our community asset/offer by building on the relationships that we already have, and looking for new partners to collaborate with. Our 'Community Hub' diagram indicates some of the new areas we want to explore, marked in solid green, and new partnerships with a purple outline.

The impact and changes reported by our Beneficiaries

In April/May 2015 we surveyed a sample of 100 Lighthouse Project visitors over a period of 4 weeks and asked them to answer questions about **why they used the Lighthouse Project** and **what difference it made to their lives**. We also asked them to tell us **about their experiences** of using the centre.

The questions asked covered the following topics:

1. Why did you visit the Lighthouse Project?
2. In what ways has visiting the Lighthouse Project changed your life/situation?
3. What was your experience of visiting the Lighthouse Project?
4. How did you find out about us?
5. What is your age and gender?

A full summary of the **Visitor Survey** responses we received is attached in Appendix 5.

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

- Feeling more confident, more hopeful and less isolated.
- 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 independently access and use the internet and a range of digital services.
- 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 **increased their confidence** which meant they felt more able to participate and contribute in activities, and be more confident in looking for work.
- 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 **self-manage their job hunting**, and applications for jobs and volunteering.
- They were **more confident about communicating online** and understood how best to promote themselves in job applications and interviews.
- They **felt less isolated**, more connected, and consequently less stressed.
- 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 **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.
- Responses from the May 2015 visitor survey indicate that **100% would use the Lighthouse Project again**, 99% said they would recommend the Lighthouse to others, and 100% said that they want the work to continue in the future.
- Beneficiaries were **confident that their needs had been listened to (97%)**, and that their needs were met by their visits (65%).
- They positively reported that **they can input and feedback into our work (82%)**, that they had a good experience (97%), and that they felt welcomed and supported (99%).
- **Our approach is accessible and supportive** of a wide range of people, both men and women, and right across a broad spread of age bands from 20 – 75yrs +.
- 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.
- 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.
- The Lighthouse Project **had become a destination of choice for groups and organisations** to offer their services for outreach or regular drop-in activity.
- This is evidenced by the increase in our collaborating groups, and it reflects the growing understanding of the benefits of the **'Community Hub model'**, and the appreciation of its value in improving access and reaching more people.
- 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%).
- Other reasons included:
 - Visiting for help and support (38%), to learn Online Basics (37%), for printing (37%) and to learn about computers (33%), and attending training (25%).
 - Social activities (29%) and spending time in a shared space (24%).
 - Visiting a partner organisations or to meet someone else (12% and 11% respectively).
- 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.
- The next group of changes were, "I was encouraged to learn more" (44%), and "I learnt to use a computer" (42%), "I feel more hopeful" (40%) and "I feel less isolated" (40%), and "I was encouraged to volunteer" (40%). This evidences our aim of inspiring quality of life and access to opportunities.
- Beneficiaries also reported improvement in wellbeing at (37%), taking up new interests (35%), "it has changed my life" (22%), improved health (17%) and improved mental health (13%). This evidences our aim of inspiring improvement to health and wellbeing.

"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.

This supports our aim of providing a person centred approach to supporting individuals.

- 82% reported that they had **been encouraged to learn a new skill**, and 79% had been **helped to look for work**, with 74% being **helped improved their job hunting skills**.
- 72% had been **helped to learn computer skills**, and 56% reported that **they relied on the Lighthouse Project for their access to the internet**.

This evidences our aim of upskilling people and creating opportunities for them to progress.

- 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.

"How did you find out about us?"

1. 'Friend/Word of mouth' at 40%
2. Job Centre recommendation at 31%
3. Passing by the building at 15%
4. The remaining responses included, 'other', social media/website, 'other organisation'.

This evidences the diversity of our reach and the value of being centrally located and personally recommended.

"What is your age?"

- Top age range was: 45-64 at 60%
- Second was: 25-44 at 20%
- Third was: 65-74 at 12%
- Fourth was: <25yrs at 4%
- Fifth was: 75+ at 3%

This supports and evidences our open and accessible approach where we offer support to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

"What is your gender?"

- Top was: Male at 58%
- Second was: Female at 42%
- No other gender types were indicated.

The impact and changes reported by our Partners

In September 2015 we consulted with a **sample of 12 individuals from 6 of our regular partner organisations**, and these comprised **front line workers who had directly delivered services or activities** in the Lighthouse Project on behalf of their employer, or service managers.

The questions asked covered the following topics:

1. What barriers do the people you support face?
2. How does the Lighthouse Project help to reduce/remove those barriers?
3. How do you find working with us?
4. What value is this to you?
5. What do you think about our work?
6. What is your view of what we do?
7. What could we do to improve our services/offer?

A full summary of the responses given in the **Partner Consultation** is attached in Appendix 6.

"What barriers do the people you support face?"

- People have **problems with IT equipment and gaining access to advice** because they have never used a computer.
- **Barriers** such as low employability skills, low income, living on benefits, long term unemployment or worklessness.
- **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.

"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 providing open access services and adopting a non-judgemental approach.
- **Offering immediate, short term and long term areas of support**, giving young people the opportunity and resource to be empowered to help themselves.
- 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.
- **By providing an appropriate space for service users to talk, be listened to**, and then workers can act appropriately and

professionally to move things forward for the individual.

- **By allowing us to meet with other organisations within the Lighthouse Project**, through joined up activities and partnership work.

- 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.
- Always a pleasure to arrive at the Lighthouse Project and **get a warm welcome, a cup of coffee and a necessary catch up about regional and national issues** affecting our respective roles within the community – thank you, it's very much appreciated.
- 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.**
- **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.
- 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.
- I have found working with the Lighthouse Project as part of the Foodbank scheme **really pleasant, straight forward, professional and practical.**
- **It provides** the young people we interview with **a confidential space with good central access** to a facility local to the Middleton people.

"What value to you is working with us?"

- **More client engagement.** need as they feel comfortable seeing us and they know who we are.
- 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
- **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. **Partnership work is now vital for all organisations**, not only to avoid duplication but also for sustainability.

- **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 community members through what can sometimes be very complex issues.
- All organisations need to pull resources, skills and knowledge together to provide a well-rounded service to the people they serve. **So to have a local organisation like the Lighthouse Project which we can work with** is very reassuring and of much value in such difficult social and economic times.

"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

- **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.
- The value for Positive Steps in this locality is that the **young people find it very easy to travel to**.
- 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.

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 Art on display e.g. designed by people with disabilities is inspiring and motivational to others

"What is your view of what we do?"

- **You provide a fantastic 'community hub'** resource where people can access a range of services.
- **You offer 'One Stop' drop-in to support** residents of Middleton to access computer courses, health and wellbeing sessions, creative arts and crafts, referrals to specialised agencies – Advocacy, RMBC, etc. and a foodbank distribution centre.
- You are a **community focussed organisation** that supports the needs of local people.
- **A home for lots of exciting and additional creative projects** and activities.
- **It is an access point for the foodbank** and it's an essential part of the Middleton community and I know it is seen as a life line by the regulars who attend and volunteer there.
- It is a **place to refer people** to in a crisis.
- **The Lighthouse Project is a 'constant'** for some people who may have chaotic lives and a necessary 'grounding' point if they reach crisis point.
- The community of Middleton appreciate the facility as **we regularly see the same faces all enjoying themselves**.

"What could we do to improve our services?"

- **Keep progressing** and looking for opportunities to expand and develop what you do.
- **Continue doing the good work** and maybe increase the number of services to provide expanded opportunities for people.
- Because of the central town location most people in the town would find your services more accessible than coming to Langley or Boarshaw etc., perhaps advertise sessions/activities a bit more within the different areas of Middleton.
- It would be good to invite local employers, if possible, to present the skills they are looking for as a company to your visitors.
- In my view the proposed move to sustainable, well maintained premises will allow the Lighthouse Project to feel even more embedded and secure as a fabulous resource in the community.

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.

The consultation was in the form of a **'petition of support'** which allowed people to affirm their support for our work as well as offer comments about its value to them.

We intended to use the petition to evidence the value and support for our work in the community mind, and to encourage our building owners, the local authority, planning committee and other organisations to support us during our enforced relocation.

Comments were received from past and present users of the Lighthouse Project, volunteers, and even those who have not yet used our services but have heard of our work. The comments cited below are a small selection taken from the online version of the petition as a sample of the community's view.

The petition was widely circulated and it was publicised in the local press, via online news sites, social media and on our own websites. At the time of writing support had been received from over 900 people.

The petition read as follows:

**"I/We support the work of the Lighthouse Project,
Middleton Central Foodbank,
Middleton Dial & Inspire Middleton.**

**They provide vital community services and in the light of pending eviction from
Warwick Mill they should be helped to stay or to find a new home
and be supported financially to continue their work."**

A full summary of all comments received through the **Petition of Support** are attached in Appendix 7.

"We support the work of the Lighthouse Project?"

- **All of the signatories of the petition indicated their ongoing support for our work;** the comments below are typical examples of those we received.
- "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?"

- Many of the respondents also viewed our work as being a **vital community resource.**
- "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."
- **"A vital community resource** which gives hope and help in a town where it is needed."
- "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 to promote emancipation and liberation of oppressed individuals."
- **"Absolutely essential service** – I use it regularly in my work as a Rochdale Council Community Champion..."
- The Lighthouse Project is the best support network in North Manchester, helping support communities in Middleton and the surrounding areas. I myself have found the project a supportive community with dedicated and caring staff. **A tremendous resource, which helps me feel valued and supported in the community work that I do."**
- "The Lighthouse Project was valuable to me whilst setting up my first business. The use of computers and printers and advice and guidance from the staff and volunteers made the biggest impact on opening and setting up my business. **Without the use of facilities in the Lighthouse** I would have been affected financially and wouldn't have been able to promote my business."



3. 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

Figures and findings from our 6 key areas of need

These figures and findings are taken from the figures collected from our evaluation broken down into the six key areas of need which help us fulfil our overall aims.

The Issue:

Reduced quality of life and **reduced opportunities** caused by experiencing multiple disadvantages and exclusions.

Outcomes:

- Improved quality of life and the ability to self-manage and access support
- Increased self-confidence and motivation to make positive life changes
- Opportunities to volunteer to support others or gain experience.

Indicators:

- Number of collaborating organisations and sessions delivered
- Visitor attendance
- Number of volunteer visits
- Beneficiary feedback and comments

Findings:

- The number of **collaborating organisations increased from 7**, at the start of the evaluation period, **to 23 by the end**. This was a progressive increase of 5/6 year on year, achieved through the development of new relationships and the addition of new services and activities.
- **Visitor footfall** recorded in the year prior to the start of the evaluation was 18,300, and **this increased to an average of 28,200 per year** which is an overall increase of 54%. There was some fluctuation year to year due to some specific partner organisation circumstance changes.
- There were **8,946 volunteer visits** to support our work during the period of the evaluation, which is an average of 2982 per year. Prior to the evaluation this was 1500 visits per year, **nearly a 100 fold increase**. Volunteers play a key part in supporting our delivery and adding to our capacity.
- From our May 2015 sample visitor survey: **99 % felt welcomed and supported by their visits**, 96% said their needs were listened to, 65% said their needs were met, **67% had made new friends and contacts**, 55% reported increased confidence, 40% had been encouraged to volunteer, 43% had been encouraged to learn more, and 61% learnt new skills.

The Issue:

Unemployment and worklessness due to distance from the job market, limited skills & qualifications, and lack of basic workplace and digital skills.

Outcomes:

- People moving closer to the job market
- Developing new workplace skills and digital skills
- People getting back into work
- People being able to use a computer and the internet safely and confidently
- Being able to communicate electronically by email.

Indicators:

- Attending work club and 'Why don't you' courses.
- Completion of Online Basics & job hunting modules
- Using online job hunting websites
- Starting training or getting qualifications
- Getting back into work
- Have a current CV
- Learning to use email
- Beneficiary feedback

Findings:

- **338 people attended** multiple-session **work club** activities and structured employability courses such as 'Why don't you' during the period of the evaluation. This peaked in 2013-14 at 136 with the average remaining at around 110 per year.
- **762 starts on** Online Basics and Online Plus computer training packages were recorded over the whole evaluation period (each package has multiple modules within it). These numbers peaked in 2013-14 at 309, and dropped slightly in 2014-15 with the average remaining at around 250 per year.
- **61 starts on online Job hunting** modules were recorded, and average of 20 per year. This figure is low as many of the skills needed for job hunting are covered in more depth through our work club sessions.
- Use of job hunting websites is not formally collected, however as **48% of visitors indicate they come to look for work** we estimate **that job hunting websites were used over 40,600 times** during the evaluation period which is an average of 13,500 times per year if one visitor only accesses one job hunting site per visit, in reality visitors use many job hunting sites when they are looking for work.
- **2,650 starts on digital skills courses** were recorded during the evaluation period; these varied slightly from year to year and in the last year were 836 starts were recorded with **the average being 883 per year**. These cover any digital skills course including computer basics, internet safety, security, online banking, social media, health, money and budgeting, etc.
- **60 people** were recorded as **returning to work** during the evaluation period; however we are aware that this figure is **very under recorded** because we did not have a formal method for collecting this information or for following up on visitors who stopped using the centre. If people stopped as a result of returning to work, and they didn't tell us about it, we were not able to record this as an outcome.
- **2,894 CV's were stored with us** during the evaluation period and these were prepared by us or updated in the centre. In the first year this was 884, last year we recorded 938, and the average is 964.
- **575 people started an online email course** during the evaluation period, the average per year is 190 starts and last year this was 155.
- From our May 2015 sample visitor survey: **79% had been helped to look for work**, 74% had improved their job hunting skills, 55% said they were able to look for work, and 50% came to create or amend a CV, 48% came to use Universal Jobmatch website and to job hunt.

The Issue:

Digital exclusion caused by a **lack of basic digital skills**, lack of access to the internet, lack of motivation, and lack of awareness of the value of being online.

Outcomes:

- Being able to use a computer and the internet safely and confidently
- Ability to communicate by email
- Have an understanding of the benefits and advantages of being online and using online services

Indicators:

- Completion of Online Basics and other learn my way modules
- Completion of the City & Guilds OB assessment
- Have an active email address and be using it
- Be regularly using the internet and online services

Findings:

- **2,650 starts on digital skills courses** were recorded during the evaluation period; these varied slightly from year to year and in the last year were 836 starts were recorded **with the average being 883 per year**. These cover any digital skills course including computer basics, internet safety, security, online banking, social media, health, money and budgeting, etc.
- **762 starts on Online Basics and Online Plus** computer training packages were recorded over the whole evaluation period (each package has multiple modules within it). These numbers peaked in 2013-14 at 309, and dropped slightly in 2014-15 with the average remaining at around 250 per year.
- During the evaluation period we started to offer visitors access to a **City & Guilds EL3 assessment for Online Basics**, in 2014-15 there were 25 completions of this accredited award.
- **575 people started an online email course** during the evaluation period, the average per year is 190 starts and last year this was 155.
- We estimate that **75% of all our visitors use the internet at some point as part of their visit to the Lighthouse Project**; using this as a guide, beneficiaries will have used the internet **at least 63,451 times** during the evaluation period, an average of **21,150 times per year**.
- From our May 2015 sample visitor survey: 56% of visitors rely on the Lighthouse Project for their internet access, **72% were helped to learn computer skills**, and 82% learnt a new skill.

The Issue:

Access to advice and ongoing support for tackling life issues and problems, caused by a lack of local provision, a lack of joined up working and services being provided in isolation.

Outcomes:

- Regular attendance
- Multiple organisations using the Lighthouse Project to deliver services & activities
- Development of new collaborative partnerships and links

Indicators:

- Visitor numbers
- No. of organisations using the Lighthouse Project
- No. of drop-in sessions/workshops by outside groups
- No. of new collaborative partnerships and links

Findings:

- **Visitor footfall** recorded in the year prior to the start of the evaluation was 18,300, and this **increased to an average of 28,200 per year which is an overall increase of 54%**. There was some fluctuation year to year due to some specific partner organisation circumstance changes.
- The number of **collaborating organisations increased from 7, at the start of the evaluation period, to 23 by the end**. This was a progressive increase of 5/6 year on year, achieved through the development of new relationships and the addition of new services and activities.
- **1700 drop-in sessions or workshop activities were provided** by our collaborating organisations during the period of the evaluation. They were provided through 26 organisations, 12 still current work with us and 14 have since ceased delivering their activities or relocated.
- **16 new partner organisations started delivering from the Lighthouse Project** during the course of the evaluation period, an average 5/6 per year. There were 3 organisations working with us prior to the evaluation, and 23 at the end.
- From our May 2015 sample visitor survey: 18% indicated that they came to visit a partner organisation, 38% came for help and advice, **97% reported that their needs were listened to, 65% said their needs were met by their visit.**

The Issue:

Poor health, mental health or reduced wellbeing due to lack of confidence, low self-esteem, stress & anxieties, poor motivation, goal setting, social isolation, and limited interests and activities.

Outcomes:

- Improved health & mental health
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- Increased social connections & participation in activities that reduce isolation
- A positive outlook for the future

Indicators:

- Participation in social & interest activities
- Participation in wellbeing related activities
- Completion of learn my way health modules
- Questionnaires/feedback

Findings:

- **1500 regular social and interest group** activities were recorded during the period of the evaluation. The majority were provided by the Lighthouse Project and some by partner organisations. Not all the activities were available at the start of the evaluation and the range was extended each year in response to progressive need and beneficiary demand.
- **100 wellbeing events and activities** were recorded during 2014-15.
- **128 people started an online health course** on Learn My Way during the evaluation period, this has grown year on year and last year was 59 learners.
- From our May 2015 sample visitor survey: **97% of visitors reported they had a good experience from their visits**, 67% made new friends and social contacts, **55% felt more confident**, 40% felt more hopeful and less isolated, 37% reported an improvement in their wellbeing, 35% developed new interests, 22% reported that their visits had changed their lives, 17% improved their health & 13% their mental health.

The Issue:

Financial and food poverty which affects general life or people's ability to get back into work or reduces the ability to eat well which harms health and wellbeing.

Outcomes:

- Ability to manage personal finances
- Increased confidence in their ability to manage their household finances
- Ability to prepare & cook healthy meals on a budget
- Support for people in food poverty

Indicators:

- Completion of money & budgeting courses, inc. CAP money
- Participation in cooking/ healthy eating sessions
- Attendance at the Foodbank
- Questionnaires/feedback

Findings:

- **61 people started an online money course or attended a multi-session CAP money course** during the period of the evaluation. This is an average of 20 per year, last year we recorded 24 attendees.
- **40 people attended a cooking class or healthy eating session during 2015**. Cooking classes were not running through the whole period of the evaluation.
- **1190 people were supported by the foodbank** during the last year of the evaluation; the foodbank is a new activity that started in August 2014. This figure reflects all the people that the foodbank supported, i.e. 1 person may attend the foodbank to collect the food but the food donation supports a family of 4 people. We record 1 person visiting and 4 people supported.
- From our May 2015 sample visitor survey: **100% would use us again**, 99% felt welcomed and supported, **99% would recommend us to others**, 97% said that their needs were listed to.



4. 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.

What difficulties did we have, or what didn't work well?

- Demotivation of job seekers caused by the way the jobcentre treats them.
- Our reliance on fluctuating volunteer attendance and skill levels.
- Not making the most out of volunteers.
- We sometimes leave people to their own devices too much, due to capacity issues, and don't always feel that we are able to provide the amount of support we would like to.
- The challenge of motivating people to accept that they need maths and literacy support because of their embarrassment about admitting their needs.
- Balancing the 'light touch' with the need to monitor and record activity. Dis-jointed record keeping and the limitations of our information collection and monitoring processes.
- People not signing in or out of the visitor book clearly or at all – missing information.

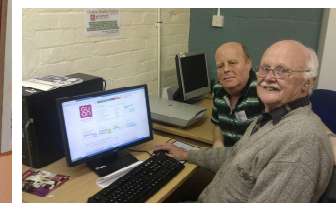
- Challenges with our data collection and database input backlog.
- People not remembering their passwords or having poor data security habits.
- Some external groups expect us to do their outreach work or they don't value the time it takes to build good relationships and connections in the community – they look for instant fixes and give up too quickly.

How could we improve?

- Increase our provision of 1-2-1 sessions with beneficiaries to help with personal progression and development for learners who are embarrassed about their needs, e.g. literacy.
- Provide more accredited courses to fill the gap between 'first step' non-accredited learning up to Level 2 learning more effectively.
- Appoint a volunteer co-ordinator, and set up a volunteer development programme.
- Set out clearer volunteer requirements and selection criteria.
- Improve our volunteer co-ordination, induction, briefing and training to help volunteers settle in and get to know each other, and make more effective use of their skills.
- Expand our training to get the most out of staff and volunteers experience by sharing roles and our 'how to' knowledge better, e.g. scanning, pdf creation, setting up accounts etc.
- Provide training about the Lighthouse website and resources, and info about the wider work.
- Appoint a full-time admin person to oversee our administration systems.
- Review and update our data collection and monitoring processes to integrate them more effectively into our daily work and activities.
- Explore and invest in technology solutions for easier data collection and monitoring.

What could we do differently?

- Have a membership scheme for regular beneficiaries.
- Start a volunteer development and reward scheme.
- Incorporate computer courses and training for mid-range ability beyond the level of the basic courses, to facilitate improved progression and development.
- Introduce regular work shadowing and training to encourage skill sharing and more effective development.



5. Case Studies

Anne G:

Ann came to the Lighthouse Project towards the end of 2013 and joined the Work Club. Ann had not worked for about ten years due bringing up her family and then caring for her terminally ill father. She had little confidence in her own abilities and no I.T. skills; she was also struggling with her own health issues but was determined not to let them stop her.

Ann received help and support from the staff and volunteers and this built up her confidence. We enrolled her on our Online Basics computer course and she quickly began to pick up new skills, enabling her to use the internet and do online job searching.

Because of the experience she had gained caring for her father Ann decided she would like to work in the Care Sector, so she began applying for jobs, sending off her CV and visiting local care homes. Within 16 weeks of her first visit she was invited for an interview and was offered a job.

Ann has been back to the Lighthouse Project to let us know how the job is going. She told us how good it was to be back in work and that she really loves it and feels part of the family she is caring for.

Emma C:

Emma came to the Lighthouse Project in 2015 and had been sent to us by Oldham Job centre to attend our 'Why don't you?' employability and personal development course. When she first came she was very shy and withdrawn due to previous personal difficulties in her life.

Whilst at the Lighthouse Project she learnt about how to improve her job hunting skills, how to use a computer and how to promote herself to potential employers using a CV and application forms, as well as gaining an understanding of how to handle stress, improve her self-esteem and feel more positive.

Emma completed the interview techniques module and wellbeing sessions and she went on to take and pass the City & Guilds Entry Level 3 Online Basics award. These gave Emma a great boost of confidence and you could see the changes happening in her life as she became able to speak to people in groups and maintain eye contact. She also went on to do some further study and gain a qualification in literacy.

Before visiting the Lighthouse Project she was very withdrawn and after being with us a short while she was a transformed person, happy to participate in groups, and encouraged to move into new things because of the confidence she had gained and the courses she had completed.

Liz H:

When I first started volunteering at The Lighthouse Project, I had been out of work for 5 years. I felt I wanted to get back into work but was nervous and lacking in confidence. I thought that volunteering was a good way of developing my skills, getting experience of the working environment and giving me the confidence I needed to return to work.

During my time as a volunteer I have enhanced my own skills by guiding people with computer skills such as job hunting, writing CVs and email skills. I have also worked on reception which has been an important experience as this is the type of work I have been looking for. I have felt very much part of a team, working alongside the other members of staff.

My time at The Lighthouse Project has been invaluable, my self-esteem has greatly increased and I have enjoyed meeting a wide variety of new people. Whilst giving something back to the community, I have taken the first steps to returning to paid employment and, following a successful job interview, I am looking forward to starting my new receptionist job at a Children's Centre.

I will be very sorry to leave The Lighthouse Project as it is a very warm, welcoming and supportive place. I cannot thank the staff and team there enough for the help, support and confidence I have been given.



6. 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

