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The Urban Lab of Europe!

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Project led by the City of Birmingham



**Unlocking Social and Economic
Innovation Together!**

**URBAN
POVERTY**



The USE-IT! project

Social deprived neighbourhoods – urban regeneration – poverty alleviation:

Linking large capital investments with community skills and assets to combat urban poverty

Although Birmingham is a key economic hub, the reality of poverty and underemployment amongst indigenous and migrant populations is leading to increasing social, economic and environmental isolation. Therefore, the USE-IT! project seeks to identify and connect social, cultural and economic assets already existing in poor and migrants communities to major capital and infrastructure investments, in order to reduce displacement and maximise the economic and social benefits of urban development for marginalised residents. The building of a new hospital, local social enterprise structures and universities rich in cultural and creative capital will be relied on to enable the population to self-empower in a sustainable way.

The model proposed will rely on Community Researchers, recruited among local community and trained in research methods to identify local assets. Mechanisms will be tested in order to unlock the potential of poor communities and facilitate the creation of a matching skills service to enhance employment and encourage the spin-off of social enterprises that are socially innovative and resilient. The project will provide peer-to-peer support for communities, and act as change and innovation drivers to bring out bold and sustainable solutions.

As a result of the project, people in the communities will be supported to raise their aspirations and to access affordable educational and training opportunities. They will access jobs opportunities linked to the large investment projects planned for the area (macro-assets), and new businesses will be created and developed in the area by local people.

Partnership:

- Birmingham City Council
- University of Birmingham - University
- Karis Neighbour Scheme - NGO
- Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs - Private Company
- Birmingham Voluntary Services Council - NGO
- Localise West Midlands - NGO
- Smethwick Church Action Network - NGO
- Co-operative Futures - NGO
- Birmingham City University - University
- Canal and River Trust - NGO
- Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust - Public Service Provider
- Father Hudson's Care - NGO
- Health Exchange CIC - Private Company
- Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
- Citizen Coaching CIC - Private Company

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1 Executive Summary

Birmingham is a key economic hub and a popular destination for migration in the UK. Nevertheless it is still the 6th most deprived city in England when measured by extent of deprivation. Birmingham City Council fully understands the scale of the problem and has set up the £3.13m (€3,54m) project **USE-IT!** that has been selected as one of 17 “Innovative Urban Actions” by the European Commission initiative. It runs between 2017-2019 testing a **new solution to combat urban poverty** by linking larger capital investment projects (macro-assets) in deprived neighbourhoods with local community skills, talents and ideas (micro-assets) to unlock social and economic innovation.

As its ‘test field’ serves **Greater Icknield**, a highly-populated inner transect with high poverty and migrant populations. The USE-IT project will make use of the major developments projects in Greater Icknield (housing and hospital construction) to improve the socio-economic situation of the deprived residents, striving to increase the employment prospects of the residents and migrants, to generate jobs and stimulate the local economy.

The **mechanism to unlock the potential of the poor communities** (cf. chapter 1), the local skills of residents and incoming migrants consists in the identification of local skills through community researchers, the matching of job skills in the community with the job demand through the larger investment projects and the creation of a community of social enterprises and social production connected to the larger investment projects. The partnership to test and implement that mechanism is wide and diverse, consisting of private, public, civic and third sector entities.

So far (cf. chapter 2) the partnership and cooperation structure has been established, the training of community researchers has started as well as the identification of local people with relevant qualifications to be hired by the hospital (already within nine months more than 70 individuals could be identified). Also the Soho Social Enterprise Network has been set up; as a result three new social enterprise start-ups have already been founded within 9 months.

Key challenges (cf. chapter 3), implementing the complex USE-IT! approach, have been getting the complex partnership with the different working culture running; to reach the local communities and involve them in the project; to recruit the community researchers and coordinate the large partnership within the social enterprise network as well as engaging property developer for the USE-IT approach.

2 The USE-IT! project

2.1 Starting situation

Birmingham is a key economic hub and a popular destination for migration in the UK. The city's economy developed quickly and based on the SMEs and creative sector strengths, **Birmingham is still the 6th most deprived city in England when measured by extent of deprivation**. 40% of the population – many migrants – lives in Ladywood, an area of Birmingham that is classified as one of the most deprived in England. Birmingham Ladywood, one of the districts covered by USE-IT!, has been named the British capital of benefits by Guardian in spring this year as it has the highest number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), the unemployment benefit in UK, with more than 9,000 claimants including 2,370 claiming for more than a year. This is up almost 1,000 since a year ago – with a 310 increase in long-term claims. More than one in five people in her constituency are claiming JSA¹. More than 40% of the population has no educational qualification².

Despite larger (infrastructure) investments, urban regeneration programmes and neighbourhood management in recent years the socio-economic situation of those citizens, living in deprived neighbourhoods in Birmingham, could not significantly be improved. The hoped trickle-down effect did not materialise. This has resulted in persistent levels of deep-seated poverty and isolation. People even feel threatened by the new development projects.

Conrad Parke from Sandwell MBV put it the following:

“There are two typical, not connected approaches in Birmingham that have been applied in urban regeneration, combating poverty in deprived neighbourhoods:

- 1. Physical interventions through large infrastructure investments to attract further investments in the neighbourhood. This with the expectation that through these investments the neighbourhood will be regenerated and benefits to the community trickle down automatically (top-down approach).*
- 2. Neighbourhood management, trying to empower the local people and organisations in the neighbourhood, but mainly focusing on social and cultural issues – not on the economic problems (bottom-up approach). Also leaving individuals and organisation high and dry when the money runs out.*

Both approaches as stand alone were to a certain extent successful, but could not reduce the poverty: the neighbourhoods keep being deprived; inhabitants have low income and are unemployed.

What is needed, and the USE-IT approach tries to implement, is to combine the two approaches, filling the gap: Using the physical interventions directly to combat poverty by improving the

¹ Access the article here: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/jan/26/unemployment-map-party-political-split>.

² 2011 census and IMD 2015.

socio-economic situation of the inhabitants of deprived neighbourhoods; This by linking the macro assets (larger, physical interventions) with the micro assets (skills and potentials of the inhabitants).”

This situation comes along with severe cuts to public sector finance (€1 billion between 2011-2020) and an increased complexity and

fragmentation of initiatives that want to support the people in the deprived neighbourhoods. In addition Birmingham has been attracting migrants since decades. Their skills and qualifications are often not known, leading to the situation that they accept work that does not correspond to their abilities and qualifications. Their skills are not fully utilized, leaving them in poverty.

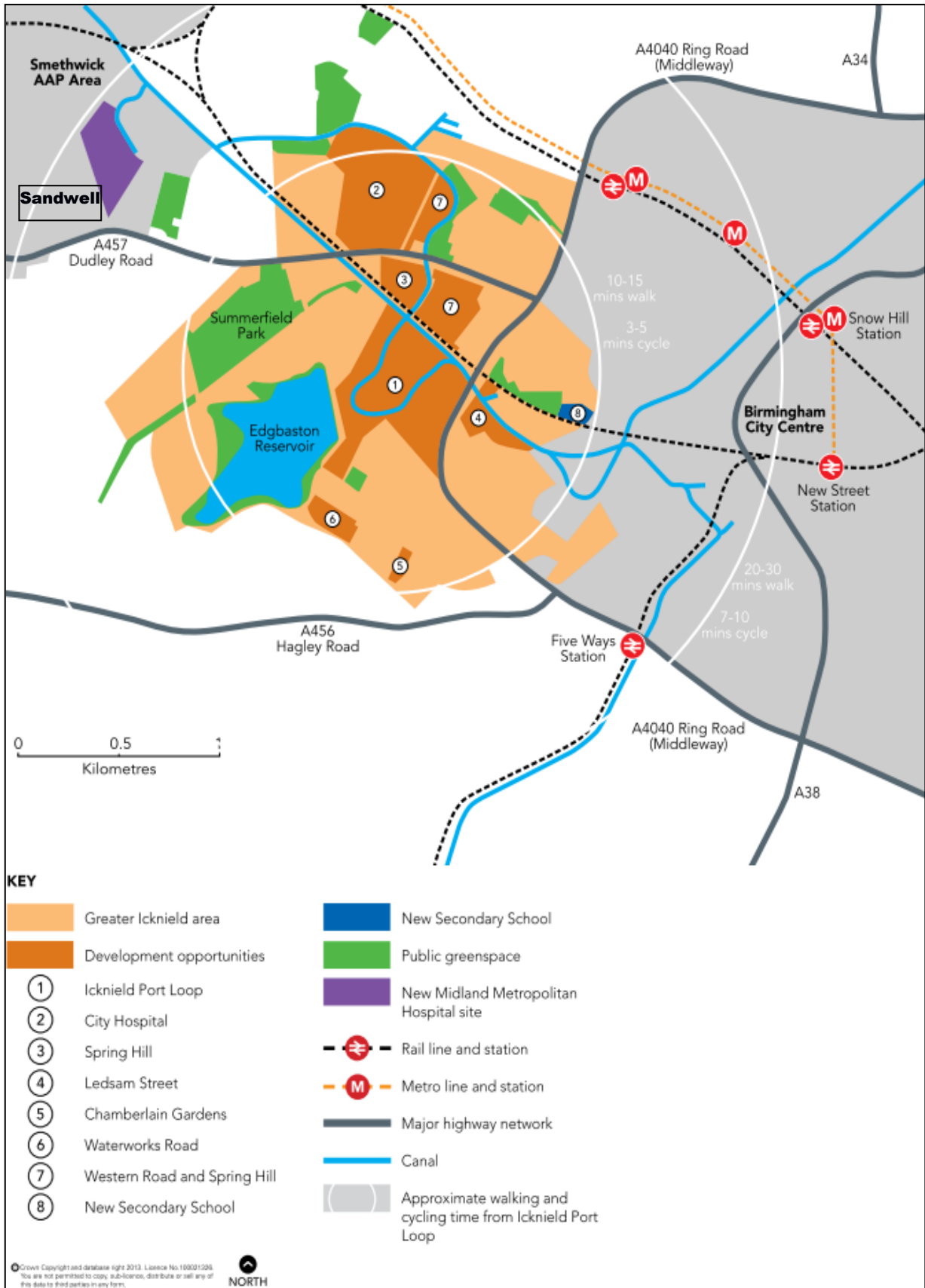
2.2 Innovative approach

Birmingham City Council fully understands the scale of the problem. As the interventions over the recent years did not bring the expected outcomes – concerning poverty reduction – they set up the £3.13m project USE-IT that has been selected as one of 17 [“Innovative Urban Actions”](#) by the European Commission initiative. It will run between 2017-2019 testing a **new solution to combat urban poverty by linking larger capital investment projects in the deprived neighbourhoods with local community skills and assets, unlocking social and economic innovation.**

As its ‘test field’ serves Greater Icknield, a highly-populated inner transect with high poverty and migrant populations (62%) that cuts across the core urban area of Birmingham and Sandwell local authorities west of Birmingham’s city centre. The Birmingham wards of Ladywood and Soho and the Sandwell ward of Smethwick form the Greater Icknield area with a population

of 81.361 people. In the area more than 40% of the population has no formal qualifications, 54% of the pupils do not reach the expected standard of 15-16, for many of them English is not first language. Rates of persistent poverty are more than four times the city-regional average and the unemployment rate doubles the UK average.

In February 2016 a Master plan for Greater Icknield was published. It has identified over 60 hectares of new development opportunities within the Greater Icknield area, making it the largest brownfield housing led redevelopment proposal within Birmingham. With the potential to provide approximately 3000 new homes and 1000 new jobs the area will make a substantial contribution to helping the City meet the needs of its growing population. The housing projects aim in particular to ensure that Greater Icknield becomes known as a destination of choice for families wishing to live within Birmingham.



Map of Greater Icknield; Source: Greater Icknield Master plan.

The Master plan describes a number of key opportunities including the following:

- *Icknield Port Loop* - a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) has been formed by the joint venture partners (Canal and Rivers Trust and Birmingham City Council) and a competitive process underway to appoint a private sector development partner for the housing projects. Serco have been confirmed to construct and operate the proposed swimming pool.
- *City Hospital* - Construction commenced in 2016 and it is anticipated that the City Hospital site will be available for development by 2018/19.
- *Chamberlain Gardens* - Completed in 2016.
- *Spring Hill* - Outline planning permission is due to be granted for 500 new homes. The site is currently being marketed by its owners under the name of Soho Loop.

The construction of the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital is located directly to the area north-west of Greater Icknield belonging to the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The hospital will be a major provider of health resources and employment in the local area.

The USE-IT project aims to make use of these major developments opportunities to improve the socio-economic situation of the deprived residents in Greater Icknield.

Thus, the innovative approach of USE-IT is to link the micro-assets of Greater Icknield (skills, talents, ideas, passions, micro-capital within the neighbourhood) to macro-assets (urban development & capital infrastructure projects). It will use the larger development projects to unlock socio-economic opportunities for the marginalised residents and migrants in order to combat urban poverty and empower them to

take decisions and actions to improve their socio-economic situation linked to the changes happening in their neighbourhood. Through linking the micro with the macro assets the project strives to increase the employment prospects of the residents and migrants, to generate jobs and stimulate the local economy and their ability to engage and influence the public planning, investment and strategy that takes place in Greater Icknield.

Mechanism

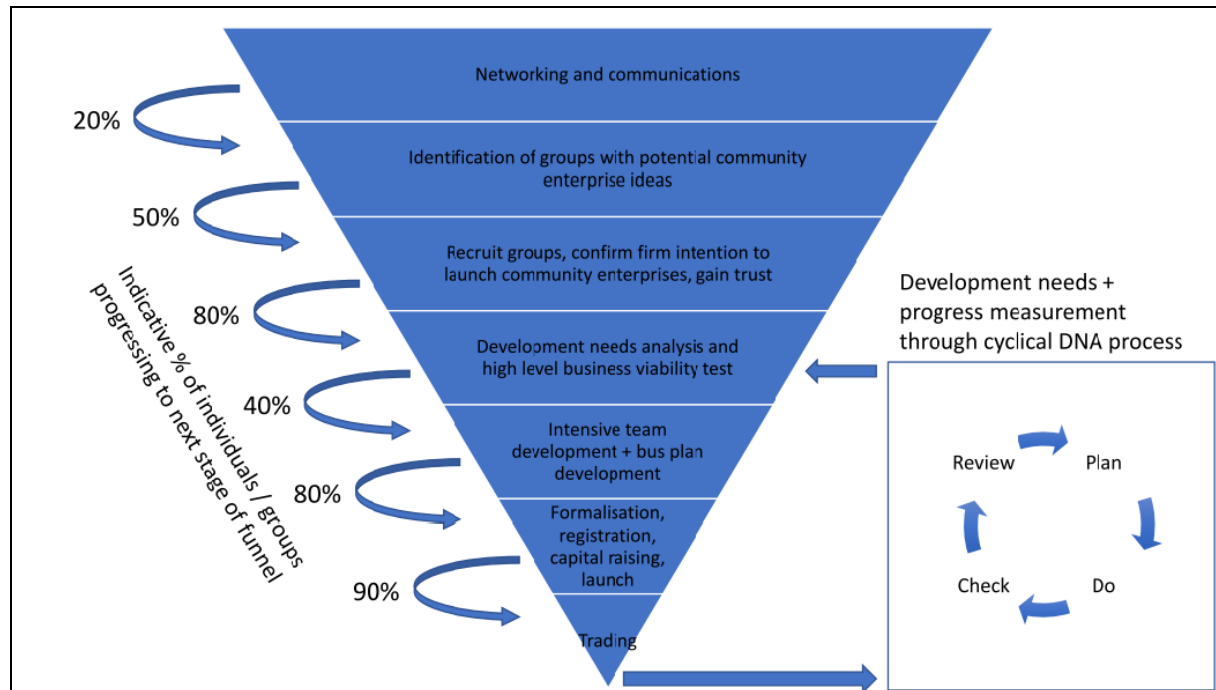
The project is testing new mechanisms that unlock the potential of poor communities, the local skills of residents and incoming migrants, as a resource and connect them with the larger investment projects in Greater Icknield. The major investment project in the area is the building of the new £350m Midland Metropolitan Hospital and four new housing developments (Icknield Port Loop). The mechanism consists of

1. Creation of a community of social enterprises and social production

To support employment and the development of socio-economic activities in the community and boost the supplier side of “community services” through citizens and socially innovative producers, a local network will be created to support community-rooted entrepreneurs and social producers. The Network helps local people to develop their enterprise skills and trade their way out of poverty and social exclusion. The Network aims to support the creation of social enterprises linked in particular to the new hospital and the housing development. Consortia of Social Enterprises are being formed focusing on health, food, creative industries, construction, and tourism. Social enterprises related in the wider sense to the

health sector at or near the hospital premises could help the hospital to address health issues in different and new ways. Other social

enterprises could forge a link between the existing communities and the new communities moving into the area.



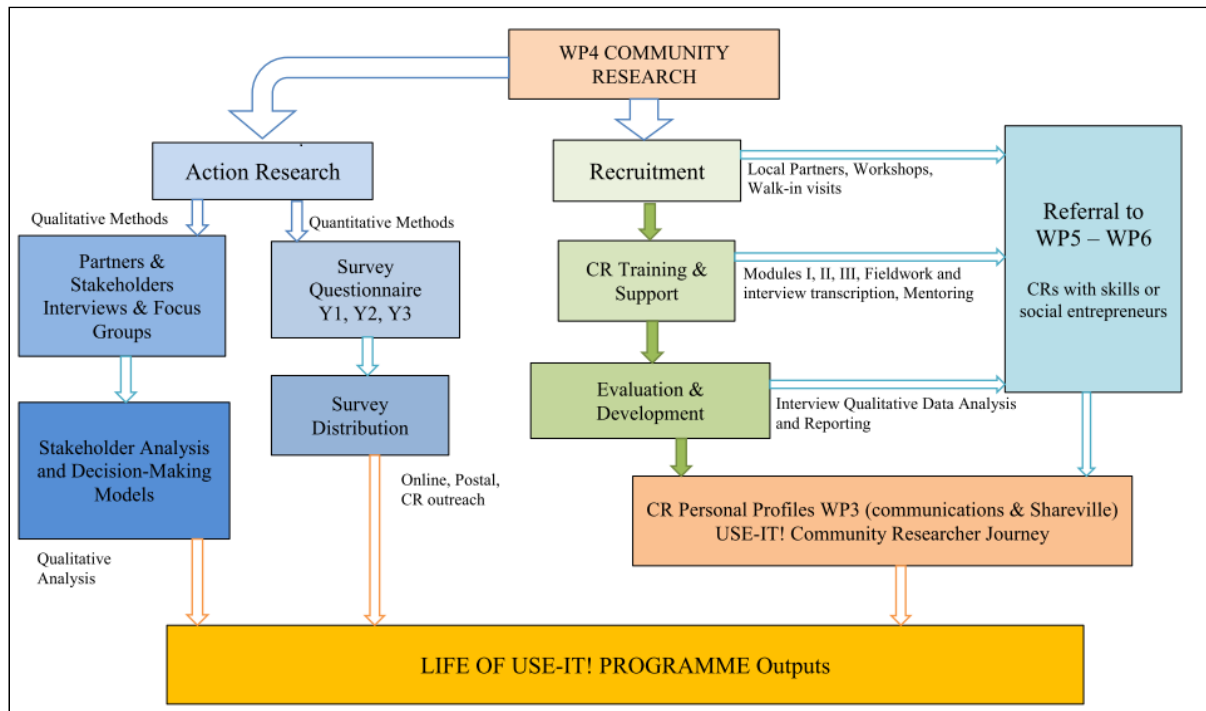
Funnel model of community enterprise development; Source: iSE (Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs).

2. Identification of local skills through community researchers

To identify and map the ideas, talents and skills of local people in the Greater Icknield area and their qualification needs related to the larger urban development projects, local community researchers will be identified and trained. Their role will be to

- co-produce a research agenda that can unlock the potential of anchor institutions and large infrastructure projects and animate collaborative planning practice;
- identify local assets and personal skills and link these to the new urban developments, predominantly with the new hospital and the Icknield Port Loop housing development.

Based on the job and skills demand in the local economy the community researchers will be set to look for residents with the appropriate but underutilised qualifications. In addition this information will be used to create matching skills service to enhance employment support and support for poor communities to spin-out social enterprises. The community researchers will also inform the residents about potential opportunities for them linked to the large investment projects. In addition the access to affordable educational and training opportunities will be improved.

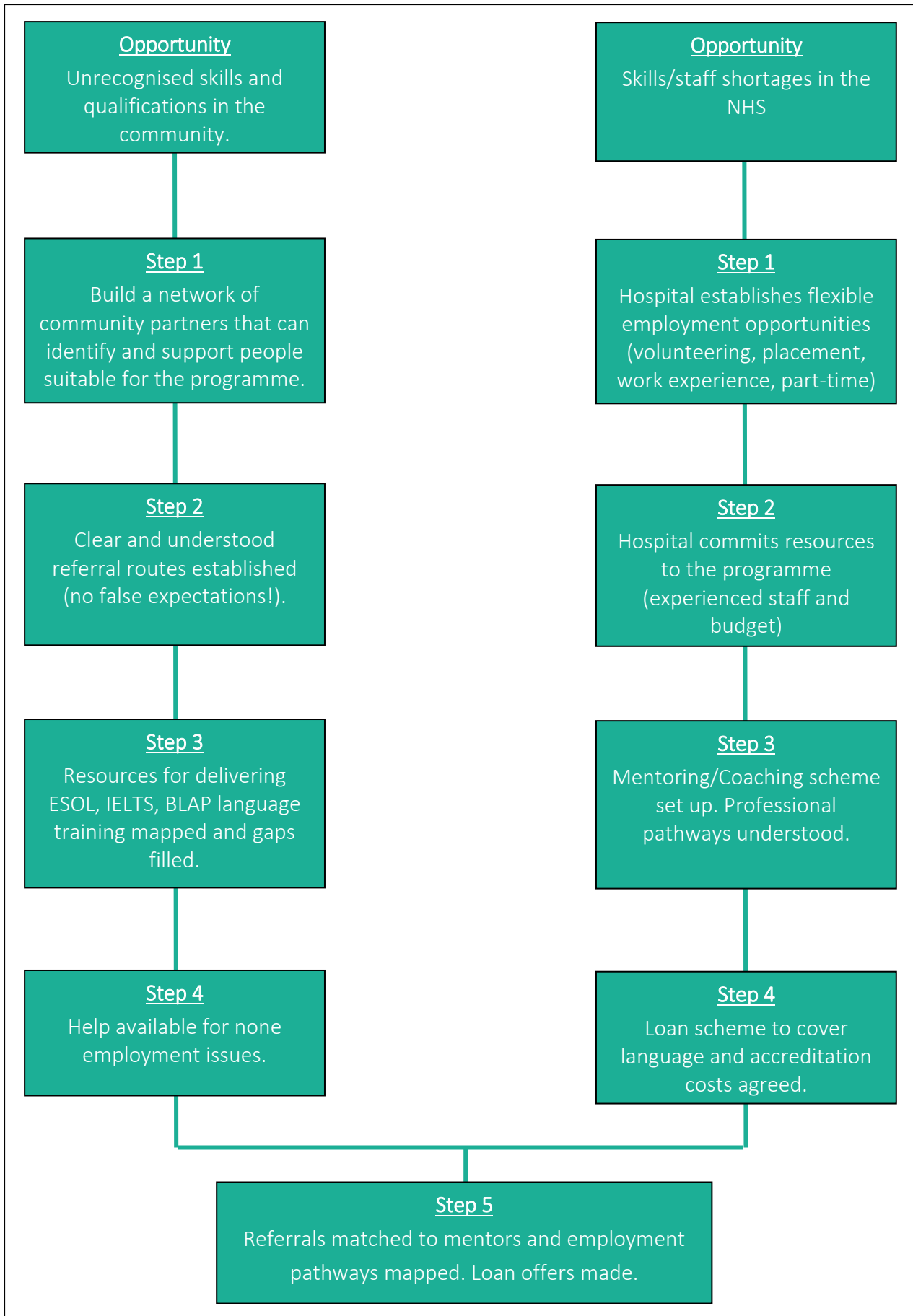


Community Research Flow chart; Author: Dr. Peter Lee.

3. Matching job skills in the community with demand

Employment teams from Birmingham and Sandwell Councils have received feedback from major employers that there is an existing and future skills shortage in the local economy with a massive gap in medical qualifications and well as a growing demand for construction skills. It is also known that business skills are needed. Community researchers and third sector project

partners will look for residents with relevant medical and non-medical qualifications that could be matched with the jobs available in the hospital and in the construction sector. Identified residents will receive training and coaching as well as support in the accreditation of their education and apprenticeship (for new migrants) to be able to take the jobs available.



Critical success factors matching job skills in the community with demands; Author: Conrad Parke.

4. Understanding and strengthening community assets and finance

To strengthen and use innovative forms of community finance to continue to connect macro-assets with micro-assets current

community capital assets and finance going into the community will be analysed.



The USE-IT! Mechanism.

“What makes USE-IT special”

Conrad Parke, Sandwell MBC

“As a neighbourhood practitioner of about 20 years’ experience it means I also have 20 years’ experience of failure. The schemes I have been involved with have either been “bottom-up”, in other words working at a community level helping to develop local people and organisations, which have done some great work but then left those individuals/organisation high and dry when the money runs out. Or have been “top-down”, in other words large infrastructure investment justified on a “trickle down” theory of benefit to disadvantaged neighbourhoods which, we now know, never works.

USE-IT! is the first scheme I’ve been involved in that tries to bridge the two different models – and does so by working with the existing micro assets and macro assets. In other words USE-IT! is a model that works with and respects what is already there and doesn’t require massive funding to try and do something “different”.

Partnership

This approach requires new ways of collaboration. To be able to implement successfully the innovative and complex approach, it requires the inclusion of stakeholders and partners that are most professional and competent for the single tasks. As the project goes beyond the city limits of Birmingham, the neighbouring community of Sandwell is part of the partnership as well. Thus, the key partnership consist of

- 2 local authorities:
 - [Birmingham](#) City Council (work package lead for overall project coordination and Understanding and strengthening community assets and finance)
 - [Sandwell](#) MBC (work package lead for matching job skills in the community with demand)
- 1 infrastructure and service provider :
 - [Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust](#) (owner of the hospital in construction)
- 3 land owners of sites to be developed:
 - [Birmingham](#) City Council
 - [Sandwell](#) MBC
 - [Canal & River Trust](#)
- 7 private sector partners: [Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs](#) (work package lead for the Creation of a community of social enterprises and social production), [Co-operative Futures](#), [Localise West Midlands](#), [Citizen Coaching CIC](#), [Health Exchange CIC](#) and [Chamber of Commerce of Birmingham](#)
- 4 third sector organisations: [Smethwick Church Action Network](#), [Father Hudson’s Care](#), [Karis Neighbour Scheme](#), [Birmingham Voluntary Services Council](#)
- 2 higher education and research institutes: [University of Birmingham](#) (work package lead for the Identification of local skills through community researchers) [Birmingham City University](#) (work package lead for the overall project communication maximising the communication dynamics between and within communities and with the delivery Work Package teams)

They all work together on a place-based approach to deliver an integrated programme of community research, education, employment support, social enterprise creation and social finance for the residents of Greater Icknield.



USE-IT! Partnership.

3 Key activities, interim results & achievements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the partnership and working structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training of community researchers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the Soho Social Enterprise Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of local people with relevant qualifications to be hired by the hospital

3.1 Establishment of the partnership and working structure

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated fund granted by the Urban innovative action initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus trip to the pilot area as teambuilding activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly round up emails to keep the information flow between all partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project board, work package and steering group meetings to coordinate the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-department coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USE-IT! Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

Key of the USE-IT approach is the collaboration and coordination of the key players from the public, private and civic sector and their tasks to jointly tackle the issue of urban poverty in Greater Icknield.

Main driving force and enabler to work together in a place-based approach has been the **integrated fund granted by the Urban Innovative Actions initiative** as Lloyd Broad, Project Policy Director for the project and Head of International Affairs of Birmingham City Council has stated. Only through the partnership this fund could be accessed. In addition, no single, sectoral funds have to be acquired and coordinated; all activities can be paid from one fund, reducing the administrative efforts allowing the cooperation to focus strategically

on the area as a whole. So the integrated funding brings partners together, that normally would not cooperate that extensively – in a typical scenario they would run separate projects funded through divided, sectoral funds.

The partnership of the public, private and civic sector helps to deal with urban poverty from different perspectives and sectors in a coordinated attempt. Information, experiences are shared and can be used by the other partners. This helps to develop integrated and coordinated solutions, bringing the different skills and resources of the partners together. For instance the two university partners bring in their analytical skills and the interest and experience to publish results. The Birmingham City University has strong ties to Birmingham’s

communities as roughly half of the university's full-time students are from the Birmingham and wider West Midlands region, and a large percentage of these are from ethnic minorities. The Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs and Co-operative Futures bring in their networks and experience in social enterprise development. Birmingham City Council and Sandwell MBC bring in the strategic public interests, funding and the decision-making power of municipalities. The Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust brings in the willingness and opportunity of jobs for people from Greater Icknield and establish cooperation's with social enterprises.

These different skills and resources complement each other; without joining them, the implementation of a project such as USE-IT would not be possible.

For the establishment of the partnership and the cooperative working atmosphere Lesley Poulton and Karolina Medwecka, both from Birmingham City Council, have emphasized the importance of a **team building activity** in the beginning of the project. For the official project launch the project organised a **bus trip to the pilot area**. Lord Mayor of Birmingham along with two local Councillors attended the launch and gave their political support to the project. During the bus trip the group was able to visit the new hospital's construction site, the Edgbaston Reservoir and see where the new housing development will be based, the Ladywood Health and Community Centre that hosts lots of third sector organisations and reaches to the poorest communities on the patch. The visit ended in one of the shops led by Citizen Couching who are a project partner responsible for social enterprise development and mentoring. The visit allowed all participants to see the striking differences of the deprivation

levels as well as understand what opportunities there are in the area.

Another important activity to **keep the information flow between all partners** and provide updates on the USE-IT! progress are the **weekly round up emails**, which are sent by the project manager Karolina Medwecka to all partners and interested politicians. The weekly round up provides an easy to read overview and update on what has happened in the Work Packages, about successes and achievements and other relevant information for the project. For that Karolina Medwecka is in a constant contact with Work Package leads (email exchange and 1:2:1 meetings) and organizes monthly Project Board meetings. In addition the **USE-IT! Facebook, Instagram and Twitter** account was established to enable the sharing of news, activities and events, but to also create conversation between interested parties and a record of progress. To **coordinate the project** following structure was put in place:

1. A **project board** was established, at which the project management team and the work package leads take part. They meet on a monthly basis. The schedule is agreed on members' availability basis. All management decisions are taken there and the project progress and direction of travel is discussed and coordinated.
2. To coordinate the work within individual work packages the **Work Package** leads organise separate **meetings** with their work package partners, coordinating tasks and outcomes.
3. To bring all partners together, the **steering group meeting** is convened twice a year. The group approves project changes and accepts project progress reports as well as discusses further plans and direction of travel.

These activities and structures have eased – based on the comments of the project partners – to get together, make connections to other partners and coordinate the single activities. It was stated that a relationship of trust between the partners has been established that allows challenging each other ideas in a constructive way. To ensure **cross-department coordination** Lesley Poulton, District Head from Birmingham City Council, has the tasks to ensure the internal communication and coordination (**connecting inner and outside world of USE-IT! to ensure synergies**). This i.e. by attending cross-

departmental meetings, policy briefings and several high level boards like the Development Board or Jobs and Skills Board chaired by the Corporate Director of Economy. Colleagues from other directorates or projects are invited to come to USE-IT meetings and as a regular feature they are invited to the USE-IT! community meetings.

“Effective communication is the key for the partnership and for the successful collaboration.” *Karolina Medwecka*

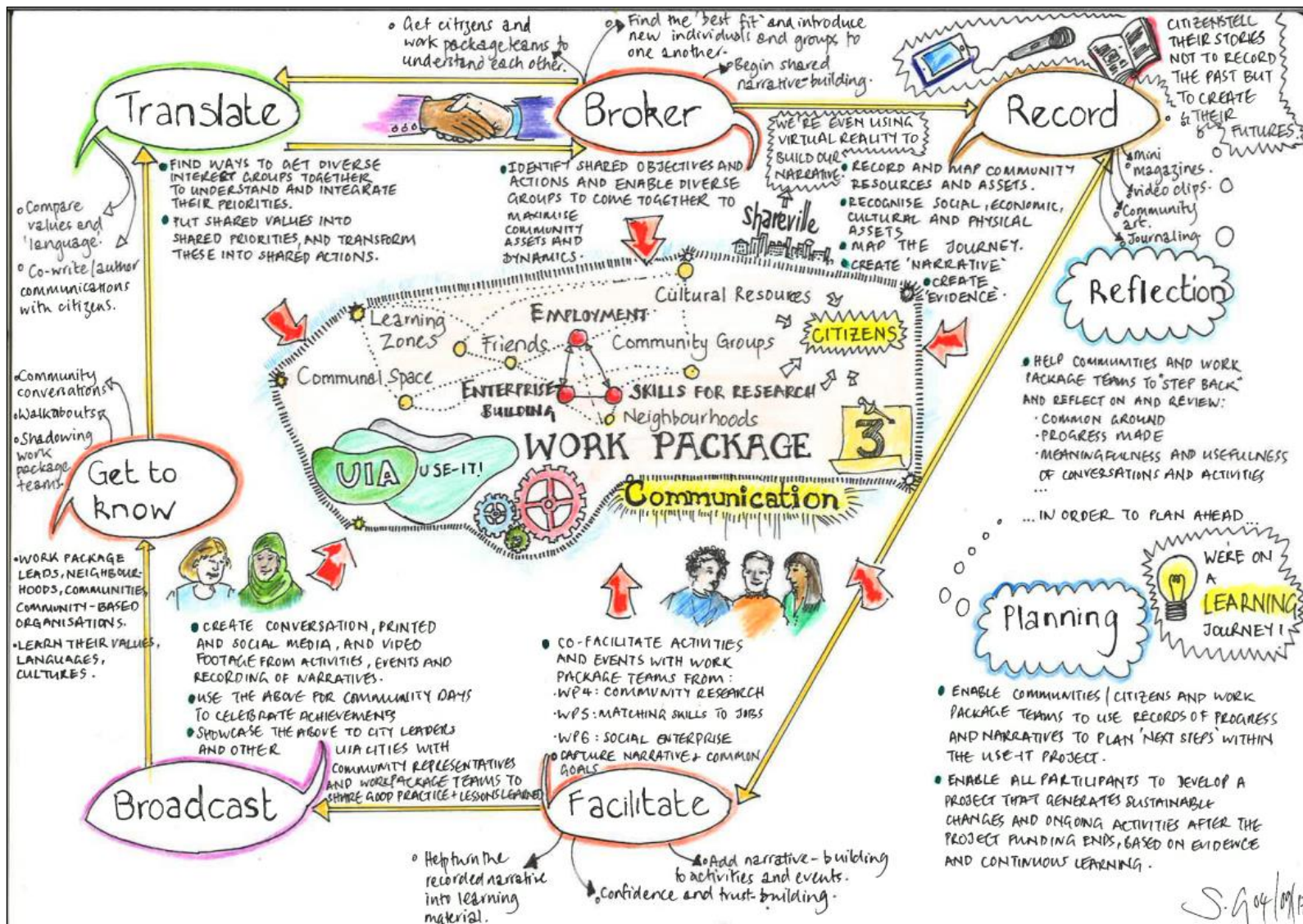
3.2 Establishment of the Soho Social Enterprise Network

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the Soho Social Enterprise Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online-portal to support communication between social entrepreneurs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline study about Social Enterprises in pilot area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 new social enterprise start-ups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business diagnostics 	

To create a new ‘place-based’ community of social entrepreneurs and like-minded individuals who want to effect positive change to tackle poverty and social isolation in their neighbourhoods the **‘Soho Social Enterprise Network’** was launched by the [Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs](#) in April 2017. The intention of the network is to point out the opportunities for social enterprises in relation to the development projects in Greater Icknield, not only to access new markets but also to bring them to the point where they can continue to grow, collaborate and develop clusters.

Thus, the network wants

- access new information, sharing skills and expertise,
- develop new partnerships and trade together,
- develop new ideas, products and services,
- develop trade opportunities.



USE-IT! communication; Author: Susannah Goh.

The aim of the network is to develop links between local people, businesses, public sector bodies, local groups and local investors to create a body of like-minded people keen to connect with, and support community-rooted entrepreneurs and social producers. The network will facilitate collaborations for sharing skills and resources creatively through regular meet-ups and an online networking platform that will publish requests for support and facilitate collaboration, information sharing and connectivity


The network wants to attract people that are interested in starting a Social Enterprise, already set up as a Social Enterprise or interested in working with a Social Enterprise. The Soho Social Enterprise network wants to establish a shared set of principles, policies and methods of working together, developing, delivering and evaluating an own Soho Social Enterprise Network Plan, for which all members take responsibility and support the delivery of the Plan. For the coordination of the network the [Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs](#) is responsible, so far financed by the USE-IT project.

As direct support of the network they want to establish the 'Social Enterprise Propeller' around business support, delivered by project partners. This includes: social enterprise awareness; workshops; access to finance, new markets; pop up markets; sales and procurement support. Additional project activity includes

- *Social Enterprise Start Up programme:* Start-ups can apply for a £500 grant; a 'Challenge' competition for new start-ups and sector consortium development will be set up and the winner will receive £3.000 (this fund will be available annually).

The funds for the start-up grants comes from an external funding provider, which the Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs applies for and pools to support the social enterprise development.

- *Peer to Peer support*, especially for early stage social enterprises. At the moment the [Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs](#) looks for supporters/mentors, who are available for a minimum of 3 meetings with the mentee.
- *Facilitation of work placements:* at the moment the [Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs](#) is looking for organisation(s) that could host work placements.



SOHO SOCIAL ENTERPRISE NETWORK

This new Network is a fantastic opportunity for Social Enterprises in West Birmingham & Smethwick to


- Access New Information
- Develop New Partnerships
- Develop New Ideas & Products
- Develop Trade Opportunities

Speakers
Pauline Roche - WM Funders Network

Suitable if you are interested in starting a Social Enterprise, already set up as a Social Enterprise or interested in working with a Social Enterprise.

<http://www.i-se.co.uk/>

ise
growing the social economy

WHEN
THURSDAY 5TH
OCTOBER 11:00 – 13:00

WHERE
SOHO HOUSE,
SOHO AVENUE,
HANDSWORTH,
BIRMINGHAM B18 5LB

Pre-Booking essential, contact
Mariam Yate,
mariam.yate@i-se.co.uk or call
0121 663 1711

Soho Social Enterprise network invitation.

The network meets each bi-monthly, 50 people coming in average. Up to now about 100 people have taken part in the meetings, which mainly come to inform themselves about social enterprises. During the first meeting offers of the participants were collected how they could support the endeavour of the network to establish a community of social enterprises and also which needs they have. Some partners in the network have assigned roles, i.e. general support, mentoring, business planning with the social enterprises and reaching out to new social enterprises. The meetings are run by the Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs. The incentive for existing social enterprises to join and offer their support is that the new network allows making new contacts and building consortia for new business opportunities.

To support the **communication and exchange between the social entrepreneurs** an **on-line portal** has been created. Access has been granted to all partners involved in work package ‘Social enterprises’ and the Project Contract Manager of USE-IT as well as social enterprises that work within the USE-IT project. People can put up ideas for social enterprises, which are revised and narrowed down by the [Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs](#) and the other partners. Promising ideas are channelled to Citizen Coaching CIC, CO-OP Futures, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Health Exchange CIC that further elaborate the ideas and support the potential opportunity with their individual expertise. The portal is used to promote events, workshops, market places and seminars providing an accessible route to information. Records of events whether they be photographs or videos are also retained on the portal. Network members also have the opportunity to pose questions or queries concerning the management and development of their social enterprise therefore encouraging peer support and community learning. Partners are developing resources – practical toolkits and

information to support the development of social businesses as well as market information relevant to the social enterprises in the network.

To **identify active Social Enterprises in Greater Icknield, their needs and gaps** and who is working with whom together a **baseline analysis** was done. As one outcome, based on the results of the baseline study, the [Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs](#) has run first workshops on social finance and pitching your business for social enterprises and people that want to start a social enterprise. At the moment there is already an active database of over 100 social enterprises. 20 are already being given direct business development support through the network. **8 business diagnostics** with network members have been completed. Social Enterprises have been grouped in the following consortia: health, social care, creative industry retail, construction and tourism. In addition the baseline study identified the ‘big players’ that could support the business development of social enterprises.

As a result 3 new social enterprise start-ups have already been founded.



The Start-up Journey.

3.3 Training of community researchers

- Recruitment and Inception events

To recruit community researchers the [University of Birmingham](#) organized two ‘**Recruitment and Inception events**’ at local partners’ venues (and will continue to do so). They will be offered trainings to become community researchers. The trainings consist of three modules, from which the first one has already been started.

- First trainings

1. Understanding Social Research
2. Fieldwork
3. Data Analysis

The training pack and workshop material has been produced as well as contracts for community researchers with the agreement terms and conditions.

USE-IT! is a partnership project aimed at creating social and economic opportunities in your community. For the next 2 years USE-IT! will be offering residents living in Windmill Eye, Summerfield, Ladywood and Spring Hill an opportunity to get involved with this exciting project.

We will be working with local residents, councils, charities and developers to make sure that investment happening locally (e.g., the new Smethwick Super Hospital and Icknield Port Loop housing) will benefit the people living in the area. The project will help to create new opportunities for local people of all backgrounds. We recognise that communities have a wide range of skills and experience that they bring to the project!

Come along to one of our lunchtime events to find out more:

Thursday 15th June 2017 12.30pm-2.30pm
at Ladywood Community and Health Centre
St. Vincent Street West
Birmingham B16 8RP
OR

Monday 19th June 2017 12.30pm-2.30pm
at Brushstrokes
St. Philip's Parish Centre
Messenger Road
Smethwick B66 3DU

Outreach flyer to inhabitants.

Based on the first experience the modules have been modified to be more focused on the qualitative research and interviews required for the project and tailored to achieve a coherent topic guide by the end of module 1 that can be a starting point for the interviews for module 2. So far 11 community researchers from Greater Icknield have been trained. They can decide how

much they get involved: from attending a training session on carrying out research, designing a survey and asking family and friends to complete a questionnaire up to researching their community in more depth.

The questionnaire was co-designed by the [University of Birmingham](#) and the first cohort of

community researchers during a workshop to ensure its proper functioning. The questionnaire is designed that it can be used flexibly in different contexts and households and is understood by different sections of the community. The questionnaire can be used in both paper and online version. All questionnaires need to be completed and validated by including the name of the community researcher.

As incentive to become a community researcher following is offered:

- Free accredited training and an open college network qualification in researching local communities
- On-going support and mentoring to carry out the research
- Further learning opportunities with the University of Birmingham
- Opportunities to earn some income once training is completed and you undertake research. For every 10 questionnaires completed they will receive a £20 voucher with a maximum payment of £100³.

The Lead of the Work Package 'Identification of local skills through community researchers', Peter Lee from the University of Birmingham also mentioned that people are interested in becoming community researchers because they want to do something useful and some even mentioned they are "bored of doing nothing". Others are interested to do some research on their behalf / for their organisation in their own peer, too.

"People look at deprived area and ask 'What's wrong with this community'?"

³ It was the plan that with the vouchers at all major shops in the high street can be paid. But because of procurement problems at the moment vouchers can only be spent for two of the major supermarkets.

Community researchers were also encouraged to practice mock interviews which proved to be very beneficial especially their feedback after the interviews.

"What makes USE-IT! special"

Peter Lee, the University of Birmingham

*"Research and knowledge by universities is increasingly individualised and privatised whilst the student experience has been financialised. The result is that, in reaching for global recognition, universities often overlook local communities or present barriers to their poorest residents. USE-IT! aims to develop a long-term relationship between local communities, policy stakeholders and higher education. Whilst poverty is a feature of many inner city areas – especially in Birmingham and the wider metropolitan area – there are also tremendous assets and great resilience. USE-IT! is built from a Realist Evaluation method and asset based approach to community development which emphasises **context-mechanism-outcome**. In order to be truly sustainable and deliver collaborative planning principles new investments need to be set in their local context and mechanisms identified to unlock the potential of hidden assets. From a university perspective this means recognising the value of our student community in order to develop a shared research environment to help communities unlock assets. From a community perspective it means training and mentoring residents and stakeholders in order to help shape a co-produced research agenda; finally, by having a dialogue with key stakeholders investing and planning new developments the parameters of collaborative planning can be developed and challenged. Collaborative Planning often fails because the correct mechanism to connect existing communities from the start to emerging investments in housing and urban infrastructure does not happen. USE-IT! aims to co-produce a research and policy agenda with local communities for the purpose of closing the gap between existing and emerging communities and assets."*

3.4 Identification of local people with relevant qualifications to be hired by the hospital

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis of skills shortage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information meeting about the “Learning Works”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 71 individuals with relevant overseas qualifications have been identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of a guide to the qualification equivalency process

At the beginning of the project [Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust](#) analysed the skills shortages within the hospital in a form of a detailed list of NHS vacancies. This information is provided to the community researchers who will be trained to identify these skills during the interviews they will do (questionnaire as mapping tool).

People that have been identified as potential candidates to work in the hospital will receive further training. For this the [Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust](#) has established the [Learning Works](#), a one-stop-shop for access to training, development and employment opportunities with Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust. This service is delivered in cooperation with Sandwell Council and Job Centre Plus. For that a joint working agreement has been concluded.

To inform interested people about the “Learning Works” the [Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust](#) organized an information meeting.

Already at this time of the project **94 individuals with relevant overseas qualifications** including doctors, GPs, nurses, midwives, paediatric surgeons, public health professionals and an internationally recognised eye surgeon from Syria **have been identified** in the local area (60 individuals had been the three year target). Many of these are refugees and asylum seekers. This is a strong prove of the hidden skills in such migrant neighbourhoods, which are needed in the labour market in the UK.

The individuals were identified in particular through local organisations with an established record of working with new arrivals, refugees and asylum seekers. They put the word out and almost immediately the Hospital Trust got about ten inquiries. Often each person who comes forward then brings another person with them. For example a doctor from the Sudan was referred to by an organization called RESTORE. As soon as he saw what the University of Birmingham were trying to do he immediately contacted a further 20 Sudanese medical colleagues that he was friends with.



9.30 – 11.00, Tuesday 30th May

The Learning Works Community Drop-In

Drop-in and find out how you can help people access careers in the NHS.



The Learning Works is a one-stop-shop for access to training, development and employment opportunities with Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

With over 7,000 staff, the Trust is a major employer in the Sandwell and West Birmingham areas. It's vital to the fabric of the community – not only in terms of healthcare, but also as a key source of employment.

With over 400 different job roles available within the Trust, it's far from being simply a place where doctors and nurses go to work. We rely on thousands of other people – be they scientific staff, manual workers, porters, drivers, caterers, construction workers, clerical or professional staff – to keep our essential services running, and to benefit the community as a whole.

The Trust is fully aware of its social responsibilities beyond clinical care. Tackling unemployment, social deprivation, and promoting regeneration are just as important within the community.

By using the expertise of The Learning Works to provide training, development and potential employment opportunities, we can help people of all ages achieve their financial needs or achieve their career ambitions. The Trust is also effectively investing in future generations of its own workforce, from the very community that it serves.

The Trust has therefore developed the Learning Works to offer training and development opportunities to all. We are working closely with some high-profile partners – like Sandwell Council and Job Centre Plus – to deliver this service.

So come along between 9.30 and 11.00 on Wednesday 31st May to find out how the Learning Works can start to work in partnership with your organisation.

Outreach to inhabitants.

They are now being supported by two of the USE-IT! partners, the Kariss Neighbourhood Scheme & Father Hudson's Care to become eligible for work in the health sector, through language qualifications and professional accreditation and being matched with a mentor from the relevant profession. In the meantime they are helped by the Learning Works to find temporary work in the hospital while they go through the language/accreditation process.

As background it is important to know that there is a general shortage of skilled personal for hospitals in UK. This is backed up by national newspaper headlines:

- The NHS has a shortage of 40,000 nurses
Guardian 24/9/17
- NHS to spend £100m bringing in up to 3,000 GPs from abroad
Guardian 31/8/17

- NHS trust spends £19k on Philippines trip - but hires just THREE nurses
Express and Star 29/08/17
- Almost 10,000 EU health workers have quit NHS since Brexit vote
Guardian 21/09/17
- Brexit staff exodus 'could plunge the NHS into crisis'
Evening Standard 06/08/17

See also the BBC article:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/health-38640068>

To support the professional accreditation, the Hospital Trust has **developed a guide to the qualification equivalency process** required for different medical professions.

“What makes USE-IT! special”

Susannah Goh, Birmingham City University

“As universities, we are used to studying people as subjects. USE-IT! enables us to be together with others, as people without the usual ‘observer and observed’ divide. Having been a community development worker in my early career, I have got to know how much expertise, intelligence and dynamism there is in inner city communities, which has long been undervalued in academic and policy-making circles. Now we place the citizens at the centre of the initiative as proactive change-makers; and citizens and project partners are learning each other’s languages and terms of reference. It’s humbling, enjoyable and reassuring to be a small fish in a big pond, and not an expert but one of a group of people all creating diverse real-life expertise together.”

4 Key challenges implementing the project

Implementing a project like USE-IT with such a large and diverse partnership of private, public, civic and third sector stakeholders and a complex approach of linking the micro-assets of the neighbourhood to the macro-assets (larger

urban development & capital infrastructure projects), leads to challenges, which not always can be foreseen, but have to be dealt with.

Key challenges have been so far:

4.1 Leadership & Co-implementation: Complex partnership & different working culture

The different origins of the partners from the public, private, third, civic sector is reflected in different objectives and expectations towards the project, different organisational and working cultures as well corporate languages of the main partners. This has challenged the cooperation and co-implementation of the project in the beginning. For example:

- The University of Birmingham is experienced in research and analyses, but less accustomed to co-work with local residents and communities as “equal partners”. They had to find the right approach to contact and activate local residents as community researchers and to jointly develop the questionnaires.
- Some 3rd sector partners, working closely with the communities in Greater Icknield, had been apprehensive that the university would just “research the people” and “give them nothing back” – that they would “just use” the residents.
- Some social enterprises had the perception the public sector works too slow, losing interest in the cooperation.

Such perceptions could be dispelled for the most part through the strong co-operation and coordination of the partners as described in chapter 3.1. In particular the regular project board meetings have contributed to a positive group dynamic, above all by discussing together the progress and further planning of the project. Through the continuous meetings, the partners were able to get to know each other, learn about each other's objectives and interests and develop a common understanding of the project's goals and activities (have a common understanding), as well as to adapt their own ambitions accordingly.

The initial getting together helped to clarify what can be done within the USE-IT project and what are the limits. At present, the meetings help above all to better link the activities of the individual works packages and to exploit synergy effects. For example, it was agreed between the work packages leads of ‘Matching job skills in the community with demand’ and of ‘Social enterprise network’ that during the Community Research trainings there will be a slot to present the opportunities of social enterprises and the

support the social enterprise network provides. Thus, activities are mutually used to promote own activities.

Also constant 1:1 meetings with the partners through the project coordinator Karolina Medwecka contributes to the positive group dynamics. As a matter of principle, the project coordinator's function is very important to bring the different partners together, coordinate and

4.2 Communication: Reaching the local communities

A particular challenge is the (continuous) information and communication with the local communities of Greater Icknield: to communicate and make them aware about the opportunities of the USE-IT! project, keeping them up to date about activities, progresses and successes. The person responsible for the overall communication of the USE-IT! project has put it as follows:

“At the beginning the other Work Package leads needed time to determine what they wanted to communicate and how they wanted to communicate their work themselves. This made it a delicate balance to speak for the project whilst not speaking on behalf of others.

Also the mode of communication with and amongst the community worked differently as expected. We thought that pop-up stands and project leaflets would be the best way of spreading the word about the project as a whole, but we have learned that this may be too corporate an approach. The communities we work with prefer word of mouth communication, regular in-person contact and a much more informal and organic set-up.”

Also having a well working USE-IT! Facebook page is a challenge as Peter Lee, responsible for

calibrate them to the joint objectives in order to bring together the different skills, experiences and resources for the implementation of the project.

Furthermore, it has become commonplace that the work package leads are informed about and invited to external meetings related to the USE-IT project. This also contributes to the positive group dynamics.

the training of the community researchers, has stated:

“The Facebook page needs a lot of attention and frequent posts that are shared especially by our local partners in the area in order to attract attention and get more followers for the project to be live.”

The USE-IT! project still needs to develop a clear communication strategy for the overall project, defining what is to be communicated, towards which target groups and what are the best modes and “language” of communication (as there is a diverse audience to communicate with). To this end, the communication of the work package leads and the communication for the overall project has to be coordinated, especially how the respective partners can support each other in their communication.

A recommendation is to identify and know about the interests of the inhabitants and to link these to the USE-IT! project. Clear and activating messages around these links have to be created and communicated (in a marketing approach) to the inhabitants, demonstrating the opportunities the USE-IT! project provides for them.

Also concrete examples and personal success

stories from people that have already benefited from the USE-IT! project (i.e. from people that are to be hired by the hospital) ought to be communicated – best through them!

The success stories and positive messages could be communicated via the social media, the local TV and radio, events that take place in Greater Icknield and the communication channels of the local ethnic community organisations. For example an Indian that has benefitted from the USE-IT! project could talk about the success and the USE-IT! project in a meeting of the Indian community organisation. It is also to consider whether so called project champions and

community leaders can be identified and motivated to “tell the USE-IT! story” to their peers. Also the community researchers could be used as communicators of the USE-IT! project and the opportunities it provides to the citizens and local communities of Greater Icknield.

Another possibility could be to span over a populated street once a while a large banner with a changing message that calls the attention of the inhabitants and invites them to visit the USE-IT! website or social media account. On the website or social media account relevant information how to get involved or benefit from USE-IT! project can be provided.

4.3 Recruiting the community researchers

The recruitment of community researchers is more demanding than expected. The ‘Recruitment and Inception events’ have not yet achieved the desired successes. Some of the attendees at the events are already established (either within their organisation or as community representative) and therefore do not need the skills that the community research training offers and are not interested to become a community researcher. So far 50 % of the envisaged 22 community researchers in 2017 have been recruited.

As a more successful approach has been proven recruiting Community Researchers on the patch by visiting local hubs like the AMC African Millennial Centre and local supermarkets.

So there is the need to reach out to different groups to ensure a diversity of the community researchers that represent the diversity of communities in Greater Icknield and develop a new strategy to recruit and also deliver the quantitative survey element. Further organisations will be approached for the potential to recruit community researchers. For this, the work package lead of the community research training has identified following NGOs: Ashley Community Housing, Centre of the Earth, New Roots, and the bus stop cafe people.

Other opportunities are community events about which the work package lead will take stock of.

4.4 Coordinating the large partnership within the social enterprise network

Although the development of the social enterprise network is progressing very well, the challenge remains in the large partnership within the social enterprise network. The process of working with such a large partnership

is taking more time to bed in. The partners come from different parts of the social enterprise sector with different experiences and different philosophies. To address this the partnership is shortly to have a planning day to enforce

communication and collaboration and support a better understanding of the knowledge and experience of the partners. It is the delivery partners plan to hold a planning session at least once per year in addition to their monthly project management meetings.

Trying to create a community of social enterprises and social production, another challenge is to build up the confidence in the local people that they are capable of running a business and can live from it. The area as previously described has high levels of social deprivation and the experience of many of the local community is not to start up and run (social) businesses.

The partners in the social enterprise network are therefore delivering an extensive number of

social enterprise awareness sessions in community locations, in schools, churches and faith based centres to create awareness of a new way to have a business that also addresses social issues.

This has already led to 3 new social enterprise start-ups – earlier than anticipated. Because of that it is envisaged that the ‘awareness sessions’ will be an essential element of the project throughout the three years.

As further incentive a system of credits / alternative funding schemes needs to be set up that supports in particular migrants in the start-up phase of their business as often for migrants or people from social deprived neighbourhoods it is difficult to get financing from banks.

4.5 Engaging property developer for the USE-IT approach

Although the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (owner of the hospital in construction) has already been won as an active supporter of the USE-IT approach, the active participation of the housing investors (i.e. Urban Splash) is still a challenge. [Sandwell](#) MBC has contacted and met with Urban Splash a couple of times. Officially they are positive about the USE-IT! project, but have asked not to be involved directly in the project; they just want to be informed. Reasons might be that they are afraid the city imposes certain “Corporate Social Responsibility” activities on them, which might not be profitable for them. Another impulse might be that (future) staff of the hospital (i.e. doctors) will buy the houses to be built and so their business is already “safe”.

Nevertheless, the USE-IT! partnership could try to check with the investor which constructive

skills are needed and could be delivered through the community.

For housing sites, which are still public property and for which a developer or investor has not been determined yet, the urban development planning office should ensure that developers and investors get preferred that actively support the USE-IT! approach; avoiding a typical investor driven development and not making use of the opportunities the redevelopment of these properties could provide for the Greater Icknield areas and the city of Birmingham.

Conrad Parke from Sandwell MBC regularly meets with the planning teams from both Sandwell and Birmingham to keep them up to date with USE-IT so they can promote it to potential developers.

5 Coming up next

The upcoming month USE-IT! will further progress with the **Creation of a community of social enterprises and social production**.

It will launch the 'social enterprise challenge' competition, work on market development looking at the local health economy, food, construction and the built environment, tourism and retail, commence the social enterprise start up programme, prepare for the 'work experience' activities for local people in social enterprises and recruit mentors for social business development. The partners will continue to populate the portal with information on market opportunities for social enterprise development and a range of social enterprise toolkits.

Further **Community researchers** will have been recruited and trained and first interviews carried out, identifying local assets and personal skills, linked to the new urban developments in Greater Icknield.

For **matching job skills in the community with the demand** the funding for the specialist

language training and the professional accreditation process will have been secured and started for the people with overseas qualification to access a professional career in the NHS hospital.

First participants will be in full-time, qualified jobs. Agreements will be in place for more Health Trusts to join the programme and for the Trusts to start paying for training and accreditation costs, instead of the USE-IT! project.

To **understand and strengthen the community assets and finance** the baseline analysis report of existing community capital assets and finance will have been delivered.

In support of the **overall project communication towards the communities** the content and form of the narrative building will be determined and what will be added to the activities and events of the other work packages, so that 'Communication' is not just passive note-taking and filming, but it adds usable contents and dynamics to the way the project develops.

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.



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