



University of Brighton

Community

University  
membership programme  
Part  
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# Learning from On Our Doorsteps

An evaluation of CUPP's Seed Funding Programme between 2010-2012  
Professor Stuart Laing, 2016



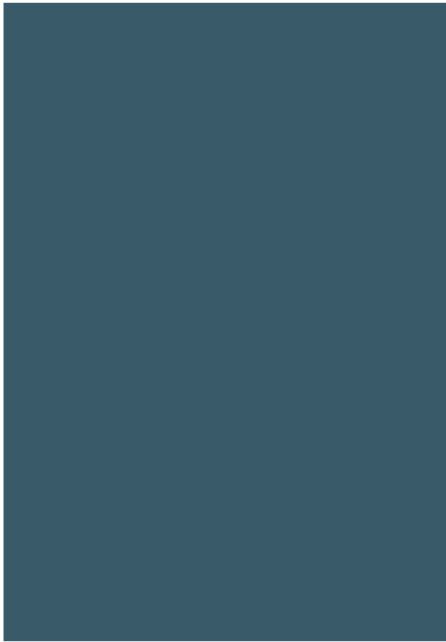
# Recommendations

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Taken as a whole, the 2010-12


# Immediate Community Benefit

All projects worked through partnership and interaction between the university and community organisations and for just under half the projects a



However the actual number active within each project ranged widely from one (a PhD student, who also effectively led the whole project) to thirty, with five projects involving groups of over twenty students. These projects tended to be those where the student activity was nested strongly within the curriculum of a specific course. Where activity was adjacent to, rather than incorporated within the curriculum the typical size of student group was between six and nine. In two cases difficulties in recruiting led to only two students being involved.

Several projects involved student activity based on specific course and/or subject expertise. Students were deployed on the basis of already having a particular skill (or level of expert knowledge) which they could apply within the project and where their own corresponding benefit could be related back to their curriculum. Types of specialist skill/knowledge deployed included: questionnaire design and analysis; dietary and fitness advice; sports coaching; health care awareness and listening skills; health education; energy conservation in building use; street and neighbourhood design; design of three dimensional design and object making; historical research; making of poetry and drama; event organisation; journalism.



Students identified the distinctive value of their involvement as the direct and unmediated contact it allowed with the potential clients, customers or users of the academic subjects they were studying. This was felt to be subtly different from that type of contact structured through a formal placement, which typically takes place through the frameworks of an employer organisation.

A major (and necessary) function of a placement is to learn the (formal and informal) organisational rules and disciplines of a particular professional culture or large enterprise. In many projects the focused volunteering provided something slightly different – and complementary.

# Research

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Nine projects included research conducted partly or wholly by students. Research methods used were varied, including design and conduct of questionnaires, field or condition surveys, interviews, archival research and production of objects. Community partner involvement in the research activity varied. In some cases research was co-designed and conducted, in some the community partner acted as the commissioner and primary audience for the research. In others community members were the direct subjects of research – and formed the initial audience/readership of the research outcomes.

There were also ten projects that produced academic research output but with somewhat limited correlation between these two groups of projects. Only five of the nine which included student research also resulted in academic public output.

Of the ten projects which did produce academic research

# Neighbourliness

Brighton has five campuses spread across three separate coastal urban areas each very differently situated. In the city there are: a City Centre campus at the heart of the city's cultural quarter; the Moulsecoomb campus set in a mixed residential and light industrial area; and the Falmer greenfield campus on the edge of the city, but close to some of its least affluent areas. In Eastbourne university buildings are situated among some of the most wealthy residential parts of the town, and in Hastings a new campus was constructed in the centre of a town during this period.

Brighton, then, is a university very much physically intertwined with diverse residential and commercial communities. On every campus practical issues of getting on with neighbours on big issues and small ones are therefore the stuff of daily life. The programme was developed for a university with that particular characteristic.

Individual projects treated the idea of physical proximity in different ways:

- In fifteen (78%) projects the activity either centred on or included very specific physical locations as their main places of intervention.
- Two projects focused on a small number of streets in areas within a mile of the Moulsecoomb campus, while another considered the viability of a community farm on land to the north east of that campus. Three other projects were based in locations within a mile of the City Centre campus, while another two focused on a football stadium and a community centre directly bordering the Falmer campus. In Hastings one project centred on a community centre around three miles from the new campus.
- Three projects brought members of the community into the university itself, to university-sited vegetable and flower gardens in Eastbourne, to a food fair at the Brighton city centre and to a football festival and symposium on the Eastbourne campus.

The remaining projects took a wider geographic remit. One worked with a group of organisations that covered the whole of the Hastings and Rother district, two others (in Hastings and Eastbourne) focused on the needs of their respective towns as a whole and one involved individual students working with many different organisations in different places.

In practice the requirement to work in close physical proximity to the university campuses proved no inhibitor to enabling a wide range of types and subject matter of projects. This may, have been different if the university had been on a single campus or not adjacent to such diversity of residential and commercial districts.





# Curriculum Benefit

# Systemic Issues

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long term direct personal involvement in the operation of a community farm.

In all these cases the projects offered the opportunity not so much to partner with a different entity as to bring together different parts of their individual life experience in new ways.

About half the projects had one clear community partner organisation, some of which were local voluntary residents' associations, while others sought to provide a community service to a disadvantaged group. A number of projects sought to work with more than one community partner, often with each taking a different role and at times representing different and conflicting interests. Issues causing conflict included the



# Final Thoughts

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In seven cases this was essentially a matter of an existing university-based activity being extended or developed into a new context. These included: building on current Occupational Therapy course activity and on a proposal generated by the University's Sustainable Development policy to bring community partners into the university; using the experience of the long standing international Football for Peace community engagement project to develop a new community intervention; taking already developed practice in the teaching of creative writing and placing it in a community context; and developing a lecturer's existing research interests about issues of identity and loneliness in LGBT older people.

In six cases the nature of the projects was driven more directly by community partners and by their perception of community need. These included: an initial approach to the University's

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*On Our Doorsteps projects 2010*

**Triangle Community Group Project**

A scoping project to develop strategies to improve streets and houses in an area around Lewes Road named the 'Triangle'.

**Rother and Hastings LGBT Project**

A project to improve the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) people in Hastings, Rother

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### **How Are You Feeling?**

This poetry-writing project explored the feelings evoked through having/recovering from a stroke in order to shape positive rehabilitative narratives with stroke survivors.

### **Moulsecoomb Community Farm**

The project explored the feasibility of developing a community farm on a piece of land above Moulsecoomb. The long term vision is to establish a small mixed farming project (horticulture, livestock, orchard, timber etc) on a commercially viable social enterprise basis.

### **Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing**

This project facilitated postgraduate student engagement in health and social care education at the Bridge Community Education Centre in Moulsecoomb.

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## *On Our Doorsteps projects 2012*

### **Reaching Out: Older LGBT People**

The project brought together the University of Brighton with local charitable and community groups and organisations to discuss issues of social exclusion and inclusion of older LGBT people living in and around Eastbourne.

### **People Place Product: Crafting Communities in Brighton City**

The main aim of this project was to demonstrate to students, staff and partners and the wider public the value of collaboration through design to address diverse issues of sustainability; socially, economically and environmentally.

### **Taking a Stand: Sexualities and sport participation**

In particular, the project, through two key events, sought to raise awareness of the Charter for Action, the negative impact of homophobia and transphobia in sport and most importantly, the positive dimensions of sport and physical activity for often-marginalised LGBT groups and individuals.

### **The Bridge Community Centre**

The aim of the project was to enable a group of young people to become more integrated within their own community by showcasing the Adventure Playground in Ore.

### **The Hanover Centre Carbon RACE (Reduction, Awareness, and Community Engagement)**

This project was centred around reducing the carbon footprint of the Hanover Community Centre building located near University of Brighton's Moulsecoomb Campus.

### **Work Write Live - Sharing Life Stories**

This project recounted autobiographical memories and shared them with other members of the community epitomising concepts of neighbourliness, of ering good communication opportunities and encouraging reciprocity between the university and the project partners.



This publication is available  
in alternative formats on  
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