



EAGER

Empowering Active Greenock East Residents

FOR CHANGE

CVS Inverclyde

Evaluation and review of the effectiveness and impact of the of
the Eager for Change Project April 2012 – December 2015



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Section1: Introduction

About CVS Inverclyde

CVS Inverclyde was established in 1996 with the purpose of supporting and representing community and voluntary organisations and social enterprises. This is often referred to as the third or voluntary sector. It is run by a Board of Trustees.

Since 2011 CVS Inverclyde has worked in partnership with Inverclyde Community Development Trust to form the Third Sector Interface in Inverclyde. Every local authority area has a Third Sector Interface. Their purpose is to

- Build the relationship between the Third Sector and Community Planning Partners
- Support volunteering and volunteers
- Develop the Third Sector
- Increase Social enterprise

The mission of CVS Inverclyde is to strengthen the capacity of third sector organisations, improve understanding of the sector and create connections that result in better outcomes for the sector and local people.

It does this through a range of activities including

- Providing advice and support
- Delivering training courses and sessions
- Supporting third sector forums
- Local funding
- Sharing information and news

About EAGER

EAGER is a lottery funded project that started in April 2012 and was completed in December 2015. It covers the area of Greenock East and Central in Inverclyde. The purpose of the project was to increase the ability and skills of existing and new community groups to organise, develop and run projects that make a difference to their community.

It was part of the a wider locality based BIG Lottery Fund called “Our Place” to address local issues such as, crime, deprivation, health, education and economic activity. Part of its vision statement says “a community that can change things by itself- where people come together and grow the skills to create solutions which solve community challenges.”

EAGER was managed and delivered by staff at CVS Inverclyde and organisations such as the Social Enterprise Academy. The programme was designed and delivered with a mixture of organised courses, one off training sessions on key subjects and ongoing support with individuals and community groups. Work was focused upon delivering 4 outcomes

1. The community will have increased skills which will enable them to develop and operate projects.
2. Community groups are able to reflect the views of the entire community in the design of services.

3. The community can successfully influence the delivery of services which matter to them.
4. Community groups will have improved capacity in Information Technology, Marketing and PR and Evaluation and Quality.

About the evaluation

CVS Inverclyde asked Outside the Box to carry out a final evaluation and review of the effectiveness and impact of the Eager for Change Project.

The sources of information that the evaluation has drawn on are:

- Informal chats with participants and stakeholders
- Discussions with staff and managers at CVS Inverclyde
- Materials produced by the EAGER project
- Vision and mission statement for CVS Inverclyde
- Year One Evaluation report of Eager for BIG Lottery
- Year Two Evaluation report of Eager for BIG Lottery
- Eager training materials and customer feedback
- BIG Lottery Fund - Our Place Learning Report 2015
- Big Lottery Funding Our Place Guidance
- CVS Inverclyde website and social media
- EAGER Facebook
- Scottish Government website resources for the Community Empowerment Act
- SCDC website resources for the Community Empowerment Act
- SCDC Policy Briefing Community Empowerment Act
- CHEX Policy Briefing Community Empowerment Act

Participants who attended the different training programmes and activities over the course of the programme were invited to focus groups held at CVS Inverclyde. Informal interviews, phone calls and email exchanges were also held with individuals from key community organisations who had participated in the EAGER programme. The discussions explored experiences and impact as individuals, and for their organisations and communities, and views on achieving the four outcomes for EAGER.

Section 2: Community Empowerment Act

About the Community Empowerment Act

The Community Empowerment Act was approved by Scottish Parliament in 2015 and different parts of the Act will gradually come into effect during 2016. There are three key elements

- strengthening of community planning to give communities more say in how public services are planned and provided
- new rights enabling communities to identify needs and issues and request action
- an extension of the community right to buy for land and buildings

Throughout the Act there is a focus on communities facing disadvantage and inequality with a clear emphasis and strong role for community led groups and organisations to participate in shaping, planning and improving local public services.

Opportunities for the community sector

The Community Empowerment Act sets out opportunities for communities and community led organisations to participate in shaping local services and especially for those that represent disadvantaged areas, interests and groups of people.

The starting point is a requirement for Community Planning Partnerships to exist in each local authority with more public partners, and to engage with community organisations on issues and deliver outcomes. An example is participatory budgeting, where communities participate in prioritising local authority or health budgets, or community groups bid to use money to achieve agreed outcomes.

Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) will develop Local Outcome Improvement Plans and Locality Plans for disadvantaged areas. Communities and community groups will have a role using local knowledge and experience to identify the key needs and issues in the community and in developing plans.

Community organisations representing disadvantaged communities and people may receive extra support and resources to participate effectively in the community planning process. All CPPs will have to review and report on the support and resources provided to community organisations.

Participation requests may also strengthen the role of communities and community led organisations and help form stronger partnerships with local authorities and health boards. Communities and community led groups can identify issues, needs, opportunities and service improvements that tackle inequality, improve health and wellbeing or contribute to regeneration and economic development.

Community control of assets has a range of benefits for community organisations. For example, it may encourage groups to develop new projects such as a community shop, hub or café that generates income and opportunities for the community. Increased community control may also lead to wider health benefits such as increasing the confidence of local people and giving them a sense of control over what happens in their community.

Challenges for the community sector

The Community Empowerment Act establishes opportunities and a clear role for communities and for the wider community sector. There are some challenges for communities, community led organisations and community support organisations like CVS Inverclyde to ensure they are able to participate fully.

Community challenges

Having access to good quality information, advice and ongoing support about what the Community Empowerment Act means in practice for communities and community led organisations will allow them to choose when and how they wish to participate.

Supporting and encouraging community led organisations to participate in opportunities and in community planning in a way that makes sense for them will be an ongoing challenge.

Challenges for the community also include,

- Representing community views and in particular ensuring that the views of traditionally under-represented groups, such as younger people, older frailer people and people from black and ethnic minority communities are also heard.
- Gathering community views and getting information to and from the community about what is happening, and encouraging people to identify local issues, needs and responses.
- Partnership working with a variety of different public and community based partners with different perspectives, approaches, views and ways of working.
- Getting information and accessible papers for meetings and notes of meetings, such as CPP meetings, in time to prepare, plan and reflect.
- Having the time, resources and people available and prepared to participate fully.
- Being part of setting the agenda for developing community participation in the locality plans and Local Outcome Improvement Plans.

Section 3: Participants' experiences

The evidence gathered in this evaluation shows that the EAGER project had a positive impact and was effective in making a difference to individuals and organisations who participated fully in the programme.

What we did

We invited people and key organisations who had participated in the EAGER programme over the three years, to participate in focus group type discussions and one to one conversations. The group discussion approach was not popular with participants, so instead we held a series of one to one informal chats, phone conversations and email exchanges with interested participants. The conversations were informal and based around initially gaining some insight into

- What had they enjoyed about the EAGER programme
- What impact it had for them as individuals and as a group
- What improvements or changes would they suggest in the delivery of a future EAGER type programme

We also explored views on the impact for each of the four outcomes for the EAGER project.

1. The community will have increased skills which will enable them to develop and operate projects.
2. Community groups are able to reflect the views of the entire community in the design of services.
3. The community can successfully influence the delivery of services which matter to them.
4. Community groups will have improved capacity in Information Technology, Marketing and PR and Evaluation and Quality.

Things people enjoyed about the EAGER programme

The training sessions were very popular with participants. They particularly liked:

- Meeting different people, groups and organisations
- Using a workshop approach to seek solutions and ideas using peoples' own expertise
- The opportunity for learning and sharing ideas
- Flexibility around when sessions were held – trying to fit around everyone
- The speed and pace of sessions with time taken to explain things
- Using case studies, stories and examples to give ideas, inspiration and help with understanding

Participants also like the taster session approach to some of the training sessions because they were an easy opportunity to try out new things without signing up for a longer course.

Two key training programmes that were highlighted were the Leadership Training provided by Social Enterprise Academy and the Trustees and Charities training delivered by CVS Inverclyde.

Some participants liked the geographical focus of the work on Greenock East and Central, and the priority the area had been given. They liked being part of a bigger and wider programme with the 'Our Place' Big Lottery Funding.

Participants also liked the ongoing individual support that EAGER provided in more specialised areas such as marketing, PR and IT.

“EAGER has been very good for encouragement, support and advice.”

“The taster training sessions were great. They gave you an idea of lots of different things that you could think about and then find out more in detail later.”

“One of the best things was meeting other people, hearing their stories and sharing the things we knew.”

“Charities do such a wide range of things. But we can all learn from each other. We should be sharing our knowledge and skills far more. We all have different levels and experiences but can still learn from each other.”

“It was hard finding time to fit everything in but also a time that works for everyone else. CVS Inverclyde were very flexible, holding courses in the evening but also checking-in with everyone when was the best time.”

“One to one sessions thinking about how we promoted ourselves as a group were very helpful. I wasn't sure about them at first because I couldn't work out why we needed to do it never mind how. But talking through the reasons and the issues with Bill has really helped us as a group.”

Impact as individuals and as a group

Participating in the EAGER programme has had a positive impact for individuals and for organisations. Participants talked about having greater:

- confidence in their own knowledge and skills
- confidence in working in partnership with other organisations
- confidence and skills in seeking own solutions to problems and issues
- confidence in sharing ideas and experiences
- knowledge and understanding of the local environment and policy context
- skills in influencing and designing local services and activities for local people
- skills in testing out ideas and thinking through different solutions

“What we do as community groups is not top secret. Sharing ideas is important - we are working to the same end and its better when we work together. We get better results and that's better for everyone and the area.”

“EAGER has been really great for increasing my knowledge and finding out what is useful for me and for the things we want to do as a group.”

It's also been really good for meeting new people, finding out what else was going on and new projects. It's given me more confidence meeting new people and just asking questions - finding things out!”

“My favourite bit has been testing out ideas with people and practising thinking through different solutions - I didn't do this before and it's been a life changer.”

“Before EAGER I thought it was important to make decisions quickly and stick to them. I have learnt that it can be helpful to keep an open mind and to try and think through different solutions and approaches to problems. It works for my group and I take this approach in my everyday life too – it's made quite a difference.”

“It was great for confidence building because we met with other people and groups we wouldn't have come across otherwise. We shared ideas and learnt from each other.”

Improvements and changes

Most participants found it difficult to suggest improvements to the programme. Some suggested continuing with a similar approach across CVS Inverclyde services especially for things like taster training sessions, workshop-style approaches to problem solving and ways to continue to meet new people. Some suggested that the approach could be tried in another area of Inverclyde.

There was some concern that the geographical boundary resulted in some organisations and individuals missing out on opportunities that would have been useful to them because they were located outside the boundary.

“Some groups and individuals have missed out on the training and support because they were not in the defined geographical area - that seems a bit unfair”

“No suggestions on how to improve EAGER. The whole idea was to share and learn together - it worked for us.”

Views on the EAGER Outcomes

1. The community will have increased skills which will enable them to develop and operate projects.

Participants agreed that key individuals and organisations within the community have gained skills to help them develop and operate projects. They identified the range of training courses and taster sessions and on-going support as a key to the success of this outcome. Participants also said that the EAGER programme was the starting point for changes and development. Individuals and organisations would continue to need and value the support provided by CVS Inverclyde.

Many people also expressed the desire for more opportunities like these for people in Greenock East and Central and also for people and groups outside these areas too.

“I feel better equipped now to take an idea or a suggestion and to put it into practice. I didn't have the confidence to do this before. But now, I can think through how to make ideas into activity that people will enjoy and will make a difference for our community.”

“It has made a real difference to us to be part of EAGER. We know many people and groups took part but we also know that not everyone who could took the opportunity.”

2. Community groups are able to reflect the views of the entire community in the design of services.

Participants agreed that they were better able to reflect the views of the community in the design of services. They also said that the difference the EAGER project had made was that they could now identify groups of people who were less likely to be involved, such as, younger people, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, and older frailer people. However, some participants noted that reflecting the views of an entire community was a very difficult thing to achieve.

“This is a tricky but important one, we learnt to agree and disagree with each other and still be civil.”

“The getting and reflecting the views of an entire community is a tough one. I think we should aim for this but I’m not convinced many can achieve it.”

“What has been good about this outcome is that it has made us think about other people’s views and perspectives.”

3. The community can successfully influence the delivery of services which matter to them.

Participants agreed that they were better placed to influence the delivery of services that matter to them. They said that the approach of some of the training sessions using workshop approaches to test out ideas and solutions really helped with thinking about and planning how they would do this. The Leadership Course was highlighted as a good example of this.

“We have more confidence and have found hidden talents in our group. People have had a chance to shine and it has empowered individuals and communities.”

4. Community groups will have improved capacity in Information Technology, Marketing and PR and Evaluation and Quality.

Participants said that on the whole they were improving in this area and that the tailored one to one sessions provided by CVS Inverclyde as part of the EAGER programme had made a difference. It was an area that participants said nearly all community groups needed help with.

“Yes we are better - but it’s a new area for us to think about and there still room for improvement.”

“This is all about us operating in the modern world. Many of these things, such as IT and evaluating stuff is very new to us. But if we want to be able to make a proper difference in our communities we need to work on getting better.”

Section 4: Overall Assessment

The evidence gathered in this evaluation shows that the EAGER project had a positive impact and was effective in making a difference to individuals and organisations who participated in the programme.

The purpose of the project was to increase the ability and skills of existing and new community groups to organise, develop and run projects that make a difference to their community. The vision statement for the 'Our Place' Big Lottery Fund in Greenock talked about "a community that can change things by itself - where people come together and grow the skills to create solutions which solve community challenges."

The assessment of the impact of the EAGER project is based on how the programme reached its outcomes and target indicators and whether it reflects the vision of communities with skills that can work together to create local solutions and responses and begin to take advantage of the opportunities set out in the Community Empowerment Act.

All the feedback in this report points to a programme of activities and support that was of high quality, responsive, useful and valued by people and organisations. The comments from participants show that the EAGER programme was highly valued and made a difference to the communities, their organisations and lives of the people who participated.

The participants were very clear in their respect for the CVS Inverclyde staff in the delivery of the programme and for the skills, knowledge, and work they did to support and encourage them. Participants gave feedback that the support and training they received was individual, responsive and high quality.

The feedback in the report shows that the overall aims of the EAGER programme were met resulting in increased confidence, skills and knowledge for individuals and community groups in Greenock.

Areas where the EAGER Project the biggest impact

- Community groups identifying training needs and participating in training sessions
- Supporting community groups to develop their projects and ideas into plans
- Delivering flexible responsive training in a range of subjects and issues
- Increasing skills and knowledge and ways to approach problems and seek solutions
- Providing on-going support for community organisations in a range of areas
- Tailored training like the leadership course and trustees and committee skills training
- Encouraging and supporting young people onto the boards of community-led organisations
- Encouraging and supporting people from underrepresented communities to participate
- Increased partnership and connections for community organisations
- Increased opportunities to shape and influence things such as participating on the advisory group for EAGER

Outcomes and indicators

We looked at the four outcomes and target indicators for the project. The four outcomes supported the overall aim of raising the skills, knowledge and capacity of individuals and community organisations. Over the three year programme, CVS Inverclyde staff worked hard to deliver the key indicators for the four outcomes of the project. The target indicators for the outcomes were ambitious and some were easier to reach than others. More time within the project was also allocated to achieving the first two outcomes. The fourth outcome had less time allocated towards achieving it.

Overall, the project was very successful and is raising the capacity and skills of individuals and community groups that participated. The outcomes and target indicators were also useful in preparing the community and community organisations with the skills, knowledge and increases in confidence that will help them take advantage of the opportunities in the Community Empowerment Act.

Set out below is a table outlining how well the programme met its target indicators, including some of the challenges and key successes.

Outcomes and Indicators for EAGER

1. The community will have increased skills which will enable them to develop and operate projects			
Target indicators	Achieved Target	Challenges	Successes
15 community groups identified their training needs and received training	Exceeded		A wide range of training was identified and delivered both as courses and as one off support
12 community groups are intensively supported to develop their project into a full plan	Achieved		Two excellent examples are Gibshill Community Centre and Belville Community Gardens
75 people are provided with training which will help their group or organisation grow	Achieved		A wide range of training delivered from first aid and food hygiene to leadership courses and conflict resolution
2. Community groups are able to reflect the views of the entire community in the design of services			
Target indicators	Achieved Target	Challenges	Successes
26 young people are supported to join the board of local voluntary organisations	Nearly reached	Support and encouraging young people to engage in ways that work for them and on issues that are important to them	It emphasises the potential of young people to participate fully in the activities local communities and work continues around supporting and encouraging young people
12 organisations are supported to engage their communities around the activities they deliver	Nearly reached	Starting point for engaging more people to participate in ways that work for them	It worked well for focusing groups on thinking and focussing on people in their community
30 people from under-represented groups are supported to be part of their community	Exceeded		A wide range of training and support was offered and delivered to key individuals and organisations

3. The community can successfully influence the delivery of services which matter to them			
Target indicators	Achieved Target	Challenges	Successes
15 people are supported to participate effectively on decision making bodies	Achieved	Supported by a range of training courses which encouraged new people involved	Community groups and decision making bodies are stronger and more able to reflect community issues
20 people from underrepresented groups will complete the Your Voice training programme to increase their confidence and better articulate their expectations for the community	Nearly achieved	Plans developed for this to be reached in the months following EAGER	Community groups represent the wide range of community issues and responses
8 community groups are supported to design services unilaterally or through partnerships	Achieved	Includes organisations supporting older people, The Ripe Bunch and very young children with Inverclyde Happy Tots	Has increased skills for individuals and community groups that took part
4. Improved capacity of community groups in Information Technology, Marketing and PR and Evaluation and Quality			
Target indicators	Achieved Target	Challenges	Successes
10 groups improve their use of information technology	Nearly achieved	Raised new issues and approaches for organisations	Has increased knowledge and skill for groups that took part.
10 groups improve their marketing and PR	Nearly achieved	Raised new issues and approaches for organisations	Has increased understanding of why marketing and PR is useful to community groups
10 groups improve their evaluation systems	Nearly achieved	Raised issues and discussions held around informal support to achieve it	Has increased understanding of why evaluation systems are important to community groups
4 groups adopt a quality standard	Nearly achieved	Discussions held with organisations to work towards this	Has increased understanding of why and how community groups can work towards a quality standard

Challenges

There are always challenges to developing and delivering a complex three year community capacity building project such as EAGER.

The geographical based approach worked well, and was a great opportunity for individuals and groups living and operating within the defined area. People and organisations outside the defined area were less able to take advantages of these opportunities. Geographically defined areas do not always reflect the same areas as those defined by local people and organisations.

Staffing over the three year life of the project was difficult at times but the momentum and the focus of the work was maintained by CVS Inverclyde.

Communicating the aims and different aspects of a project of this nature over three years is complex, multi-layered and it's difficult to keep the interest over three years. Digital technologies such as social media, websites and e-newsletters along with traditional methods were used. The project also promoted itself in the local shopping centre and at local events.

Reaching and engaging with communities and individuals that have traditionally participated less such as young people and people from black and minority ethnic communities is challenging and requires different approaches and ways of working.

Suggestions for CVS Inverclyde

The EAGER project was successful in achieving its outcomes and in supporting and encouraging people and community organisations in Greenock Central and East. The Community Empowerment Act provides opportunities for community groups to influence and shape services and activities in their communities and change the nature of relationships with public bodies. However, there may be ways to further increase the impacts for community organisations.

One way to do this is by continuing to focus on asset-based community development around problem solving and seeking local solutions, and building upon existing skills, knowledge and strengths. Participants identified this approach as being useful and helpful for the community organisations and in other aspects of their lives too.

Encouraging and supporting community organisations to explore small scale initiatives and activities that community groups and people can run and deliver for themselves, their members and the wider community. It will build upon community strengths and may produce local sustainable responses and complement local services.

Celebrating the successes and achievements of individuals and community organisations could be used as a way to encourage people and community organisations to participate. It can also be a way for service providers and public bodies to acknowledge the contribution of communities and community organisations. This could be done in a range of ways such as showcasing successes and stories using social media and websites, at conferences and events, and through award schemes.

This evaluation was carried out and report put together by Outside the Box Development Support on behalf of CVS Inverclyde.



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