

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

Community University Partnership Programme

**On Our Doorsteps 2010-12:
Summary Report and Analysis**

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Introduction

This paper reviews the character and achievements of three cycles of a particular university-community engagement programme, *On Our Doorsteps*, which was run at the University of Brighton in the years 2010–2012 inclusive.

On Our Doorsteps was operated by CUPP (the Community University Partnership Programme), the community engagement unit of the University. CUPP has been in place since 2003 and has since then developed and overseen a very wide range of types of community engagement, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. *On Our Doorsteps* was developed as a variant of tried and tested models and introduced in 2010 in order to give particular emphasis to working with the university's immediately neighbouring communities.

The programme was based on three main ideas: being a good neighbour; realising the mutual benefit achievable through community-university partnerships; and focusing on activities within the immediate localities of University of Brighton campus buildings (which are spread across five sites and three coastal towns). Bids were invited annually from partnerships of university staff and community organisations for a sum of £5000 to fund projects which could meet these aims. The bids were considered against six criteria: the equality of the partnership; the degree of locality; the identification of genuine community need; the realisation of mutual benefit; the likelihood of a longer term partnership being established; and the volunteer opportunities involved.

This process led to six projects being funded in 2010, eight in 2011 and another six in 2012. One of the 2011 projects was then not further developed, leaving a total of nineteen funded projects across these three years. These nineteen projects form the subject matter of this review. A brief outline of each project is given at Appendix One of this paper, but much more substantial details of each project can be found on the CUPP website (about.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/).

The purpose of this review was not so much to ask in precise detail how far each project met the aims of the programme as a whole – although the material here clearly contributes to such an evaluation. Rather it was to ask three broad questions:

- What was actually achieved by each project ?
- What, if any, common patterns of activity or experience can be identified across the different projects ?
- What longer term impacts have the projects had ?

From this it was hoped to deduce lessons that could be learnt about how to conduct similar projects in the future.

The review took place over the academic year 2014-15 and used existing documentary evidence (the project bid documents and the project evaluation reports) and interviews with some of those involved in the projects as a starting point. In many cases the interviewees were able to provide further documentary evidence from the projects or of their subsequent impact.

For the purposes of this paper the findings of the review are structured into two categories –project achievements and systemic issues. Six parameters of achievement are considered: immediate community benefit; student involvement and student benefit; research activity; neighbourliness; longer term community benefit; and longer term curriculum benefit. Also three systemic issues are identified, documenting of which may be of help to future developers of such programmes. These are: the subject range across the projects; the diversity of roles and identities of participants; and how the projects were initiated. Finally a conclusion sums up the dominant characteristics of the *On Our Doorsteps* programme and indicates possible lessons for future programmes of a similar kind – either at Brighton or elsewhere.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

Immediate Community Benefit

Each project utilised specific mechanisms in order to enable fulfilment of their project aims (and the consequent provision of community benefit) within their one year period of funding.

These mechanisms can be clustered into three types of activity or product: direct interactions with individual community members; forms of writing (eg a report or a publication); and participatory events.

Most projects (68%) made use of two or more of these types.

First, as regards direct interactions with community members, it is, of course, by definition the case that all projects worked through partnership and interaction between the university and community organisations. However for just under half the projects a primary community benefit was designed to occur precisely through the very nature and quality of these interactions in themselves, typically spread across the whole life of the project.

This tended to be the case when one of the key focal points of the project was to help members of an existing social group needing further immediate social support (often on a one-to-one basis).

Eastbourne Local Food thus provided therapeutic and supportive experiences for both local residents and those with mental health needs. **The Bigger Splash** provided additional expertise to assist the development of young swimmers. **How are you feeling?** helped stroke victims to articulate and recognise their experience. **Work, Write, Live** helped older people in a residential setting to retain and reflect on their memories.

Representative comments from participants included:

Well it is just being in a natural place where you can see the changing seasons, different trees around the side and the Elderflower and even the weeds are quite attractive you know and it's nice to watch those (**Eastbourne Local Food**)

I think it's cause we're there for the same purpose; it sort of builds [pause]... a link sort of thing like a common purpose (**Eastbourne Local Food**)

*The responses students gave to our questions about what our kid should eat before a race has dispelled some myths that our kids like to perpetuate ! No more Jelly Babies (**A Bigger Splash**)*

*Kate must have really listened to what everyone had to say, as her poems were so accurate and really resonated with the experiences our group have had (**How are you feeling ?**)*

An outlier here was **People, Place, Product** where the interactions were between individual design students and one or more organisations with which the students were collaborating in order to produce tailored objects or products of value to that organisation.

Secondly, by contrast, a smaller group of projects (32%) had as their primary goal a written report, typically based on analysis or on a questionnaire, which was designed then to enable a community group or a set of organisations to instigate some further action that would assist their aims.

The **Triangle Community** project delivered a report which was judged, '*very useful to Triangle, not only providing specific suggestions to create improvements, but demonstrating that a large proportion of what was supported could be achieved by the community itself, with very little outlay, and with no need of formal approval..*' **Rother and Hastings LGBT** produced a report mapping the equalities policies of seventeen organisations that were members of the Hastings and Rother Equalities Forum, setting up a basis for a further stage of analysis. The culminating report of **Hastings Community Planning Resource** specified the organisational and funding requirements for creating the desired planning information resource for Hastings. The **Roundhill** Society published the summary of the findings of the co-designed neighbourhood questionnaire as a basis for discussion with the City Council. **Hanover Carbon Centre Race** delivered a report on energy conservation and savings in running the local community centre building, while **Reaching Out** reported a needs analysis and an implementation plan for a new befriending service to its steering group.

Two projects produced rather different kinds of written outcomes. For **How are you feeling?** this consisted of a book of poetry, accompanied by a CD, the impact of which is discussed further below. **The Bigger Splash** developed improved documentation to support the coordination and mentoring of students placed in neighbourhood voluntary sports organisations.

Thirdly all projects but two staged some kind of plenary event(s) designed to bring different types of participants together. In around half the projects such a culminating event – of either a discursive or celebratory kind - formed the central aim of the project. Elsewhere the event was a way of showcasing or reporting back on the activity that had formed the core of the project.

These events can be grouped into five main types – workshops; public consultations; exhibitions; performance; and festivals.

The term 'workshop' here in fact itself covers quite a wide range of activity – from a developmental seminar for participants (**The Bigger Splash**, with twenty attendees) to reporting back on findings to project participants and stakeholders (**Rother and Hastings LGBT**, and **Hastings Community Planning Resource**, each with about one hundred participants) to a symposium (**Taking a Stand**,

thirty non-university attendees) and a health education training session (**Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing**) for twenty community centre users.

Two projects (**Moulsecoomb Community Farm** and **Football and the Community**) effectively culminated in public consultation events – in the latter case by design, in the former because the outcome of the consultation event was a factor in altering the direction of the project. Each had around thirty participants.

Two projects – both from the field of design – used exhibitions as a way of summarising their activity and presenting it to a wider audience. Architecture students involved in **Triangle Community** exhibited in a local Brighton gallery and attracted local councillors and the local MP to view their proposals, with a confirmed attendance of forty. Also student work from **People, Place, Product** was exhibited at the University degree show, at the Brighton Eco-Technology Degree Show held at the Brighton AMEX stadium and at the 100% Design Show in London. Many hundreds visited all three exhibitions.

Two projects (**Work, Write, Live, and How are you feeling ?**) – both involved in the creation of poetry – presented their work back to participants and others through live poetry performance, with respective audiences of thirty-five and twenty.

Finally six projects used a participative festival or activity event to deliver their aims.

In the case of **Commemoration** there was an event already planned (the 89th anniversary of the erection of the Indian Gate at the Royal Pavilion) by the community partner to which the students contributed (attendance unknown).

Taking a Stand culminated in a symposium (see above) and a football festival involving around ninety (mostly student) participants. **Roundhill Community** held a street party for one hundred and fifty local residents. **Growing Local Food** ran a local food fair at the Grand Parade campus with an attendance of a hundred, while the main aim of the **Bridge Community Centre** was the delivery by a group of young teenagers of a themed summer event for primary school age children at the local Adventure Playground, involving about thirty people. **Eastbourne Local Food** ran a seed swap event attracting an estimated sixty participants.

The diversity of these events and the consequent varying intensity of community members' involvement makes the quantitative evidence here of limited significance. However, leaving aside projects for which the data is unknowable, the total number of community participants at these events was around eight hundred and fifty, an average of around fifty five per project.

Student Involvement

Sixteen (84%) of the nineteen projects included student activity, involving a total of around 190 students, with an average of twelve per project. However the actual number active within each project ranged 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, whereas in the case of projects where the activity was adjacent to, rather than incorporated within the curriculum the

typical size of student group was between six and nine. In two cases only two students were involved, which in reality reflected an inability to recruit rather than an optimum situation.

The student involvement can be categorised into eight different types

- PhD topic (**Rother and Hastings LGBT**)
- Masters course unit/professional curriculum (**Triangle Community; Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing; Eastbourne Local Food**)
- Masters voluntary placement (**Commemoration; Getting in I-Touch**)
- Undergraduate curriculum (**Work, Write, Live; People, Place, Product**)
- Undergraduate voluntary activity within the University (**Eastbourne Local Food**)
- Undergraduate course-related voluntary activity (**The Bigger Splash; How are you feeling ?, Hanover Carbon Centre Race; Taking a Stand; Getting in I-Touch**)
- Mixed level student voluntary activity – not course related (**Roundhill Community, Moulseccomb Community Farm, Bridge Community Centre**)
- The general student body (**Growing Local Food**) – this project involved the development of an intra-university food co-operative and had no specific course connection.

While the range and diversity of types of student involvement demonstrate the considerable flexibility in the generic *On Our Doorsteps* framework in matching project requirements to student capacity and availability, there were some dominant patterns that emerged.

Twelve (75%) of these sixteen projects involved student activity based on specific course and/or subject expertise, where the 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 in some way. In this sense knowledge exchange took place via the students bringing specific subject knowledge or skills to the project and then enhancing those by their interaction with the experiences, knowledge and problems of the community partners. Also in a further three projects, which were not related to particular courses, the individual student involvement showed the same pattern.

The types of specialist skill/knowledge deployed by students included: questionnaire design and analysis; dietary and fitness advice; sport 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.

Representative student comments about the value of their involvement were:

For me the placement has been such a useful experience in finding the ways that history and politics can engage and captivate people. (Commemoration)

Working as a Nutritional Advisor as part of the Eastbourne Swimming club provided me with a very rewarding opportunity to be included as part of the Eastbourne community, instead of just being classed as a student. This allowed me to apply the knowledge that I have learnt on my course to new and interesting sporting situations within the area. I found applying this knowledge to questions parents had regarding their child's nutritional needs an interesting role to fulfil (The Bigger Splash)

I feel that I grew from the experiences that were shared with us by these wonderful and amazing gentlemen

I would not have seen this in hospital (How are you feeling?)

This project has offered me the opportunity to work on a live project, to apply the skills I have learnt throughout my degree and to interact with the users of the building and the wider community with the aim of reducing the carbon footprint of the building (Hanover Carbon Centre Race)

The structure of the student involvement in many cases fell therefore somewhere along a spectrum between the opposite poles of general volunteering and professional placement. Students identified the distinctive value of their involvement in *On Our Doorsteps* projects as being the type of 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 such employment placement is to learn the (formal and informal) organisational rules and disciplines of a particular professional culture or large enterprise. In many *On Our Doorsteps* projects the focused volunteering then provided something slightly different – and complementary.

Students from professional courses commented on the added value of this different perspective while those from ‘academic’ courses noted the excitement of being able to apply their subject knowledge to real world situations. This type of involvement might provisionally be titled ‘specialist/expert volunteering’.

Research

The *On Our Doorsteps* projects were connected with research in some quite diverse and divergent ways, which can be grouped into two main aspects - research enquiry (typically conducted by students) as a primary process of delivering a project and subsequent academic research output (publications or conference papers).

Nine projects included research as part of their primary activity. These were: **Triangle Community: Commemoration; Rother and Hastings LGBT; Roundhill Community; How are you feeling ?; Moulsecoomb Farm; Hanover Community Centre; Work, Write, Live;** and **People, Place, Product.** All included research conducted partly or wholly by students. The research methods used were varied, including design and conduct of questionnaires (4 projects), field or condition surveys (3), interviews (2), archival research (1) and production of objects(1). There were also varying types of community partner involvement in the research activity. In some cases (perhaps most fully in **Rother and Hastings LGBT**, but also to some extent in **Roundhill Community** and **Hanover Community Centre Race**) the research was co-designed and conducted. In others (such as **Triangle Community**) the community partner acted as the commissioner and primary audience for the research. Community members were also the direct subjects of research – in **How are you feeling ? and Work, Write, Live;** - and formed the initial audience/readership of the research outcomes.

There were also ten projects that produced academic research output. However there was somewhat limited correlation between these two groups of projects. Only five of the nine projects

which included student research as part of their core process also resulted in academic public output.

The main causal factor here appears to be the degree of closeness of involvement of university staff in a project's research activity. Of the four projects which included student research but had no publications three had very limited staff involvement in the project and one involved a member of staff who left the university shortly after the completion of the project.

Of the ten projects which did produce academic research output, five led to recognised academic written research publication.

Rother and Hastings LGBT generated a book chapter on 'Rural Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Equalities: English Legislative Equalities in an Era of Austerity'. Also the project as a whole was analysed as part of a PhD thesis and formed a case study in a presentation to the university doctoral college about forms of collaborative research.

Aspects of **Eastbourne Local Food** were reported on in a chapter on 'Gardening – an occupation for wellness and recovery' in the *International Handbook of Occupational Therapy Interventions* and in an article on 'Gardening as an occupation' in the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The project also formed the subject of one Master's dissertation and a number of conference presentations, and provided evidence within a doctoral thesis.

How are you feeling ? was discussed in 'A community poetry project for stroke survivors in Sussex' in the *International Practice Development Journal*.

A working paper of the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, titled 'Connecting communities through food: the theoretical foundations of community supported agriculture in the UK'. built on the experience gained from the **Moulsecomb Community Farm** project and a journal article, 'Making a difference: the power of football in the community', was produced for *Soccer and Society* through the **Football and Community** partnership.

Two further projects were extensively disseminated in major conference papers. Three papers derived from **Work, Write, Live** were given at: a Higher Education Academy conference in Brighton; the 16th anniversary international creative writing conference at Imperial College and a conference at Birkbeck on the role of reflexivity in academic research.

Taking a Stand contributed to five papers – four at international conferences in Australia (Monash and Deakin Universities), New Zealand (University of Waikato) and the U.S.A. (an international sport conference at Portland, Oregon).

Two other projects had more peripheral research outcomes. A short article on **Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing** was published in the conference proceedings of the inhouse University of Brighton Learning and Teaching annual conference (2012) and a conference paper on the experience of **Growing Local Food Communities** was presented at a Transition Universities Conference at Winchester in 2011.

Finally **People,Place,Product** resulted in a travelling exhibition which was reported in *Icon* magazine (December 2012) and figured as a research output in a successful submission to the Research Excellence Framework exercise in 2013.

Just under half the projects, however, produced no academic research output. The reasons for this are varied.

Three projects (**Commemoration**, **Community Town Planning** and **Roundhill Community**) had limited involvement from university staff and were all led by community members. In two cases the end of project reports were (untypically) written entirely by community partners and in another no end of project report was submitted. This suggests that there was probably no accumulation of data by university participants which could have formed the basis for academic publication.

One project (**Bridge Community Centre**) suffered from a lack of data being provided by one community partner and also from the serious illness of another key individual and a planned research dimension of the project never got off the ground. In another project (**Hanover Carbon Centre Race**) the university leader left the University shortly after the completion of the project. In a further two cases (**Triangle Community** and **A Bigger Splash**) the university leaders were unable to give any priority to developing the research possibilities.

Finally **Reaching Out**, although generating no direct research output, has led to a collaboration between its university leader and the university leader of **Work, Write, Live** which is planning a major research bid to Leverhulme and draws on the experience of both projects.

The experience of these projects suggests that where a project had the active involvement of a senior experienced researcher there was a high likelihood of a measurable research outcome. Where there was either limited university involvement in project leadership or leadership by staff less experienced in research the research publication possibilities of the project were much less likely to be pursued.

Developing Neighbourliness

One of the key defining features of this particular community engagement programme is already implied in its title, *On Our Doorsteps*. More particularly two of the three core ideas of the programme were:

- Being a good neighbour
- A focus on activities within the immediate localities of University of Brighton campus buildings

The second of these needs a little contextualising. The significance of this is not (as it might at first seem) so much an attempt to overcome any issues of the University of Brighton being an ivory tower or a separate 'castle in a swamp' as a reflection of the (now relatively unusual in the UK) mixed multi-campus nature of this particular university. Brighton has five campuses spread across three separate coastal urban areas. The campuses are each very differently placed with regard to their physically adjacent communities. In the city of Brighton and Hove there are: a city centre Grand Parade campus – opposite the Royal Pavilion and 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 the university buildings are situated in a ribbon cluster among some of the most wealthy residential parts of the town, while in Hastings a new campus is being developed in the very heart of the centre of a town undergoing regeneration.

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

In practice the individual projects treated the idea of physical proximity in one of two ways.

For fifteen (78%) of the projects the activity either centred on or included very specific physical locations as their main places of intervention.

The **Triangle Community** and **Roundhill Community** projects focused on a small number of streets in areas within a mile of one of the Moulsecoomb campus, while **Moulsecoomb Community Farm** considered the viability of a community farm on land to the north east of that campus. The **Hanover Community Centre** is less than a mile from the Grand Parade campus as is Patching Lodge where **Work, Write, Live** was based, while **Commemoration** focused on a commemorative event at the Royal Pavilion Gardens, about a hundred metres away.

The Falmer campus is directly bordered by both the AMEX stadium (**Football and Community**) and the Falmer Academy school, the location of the Bridge Community Centre (**Community Engagement and Wellbeing** and **Football and Community**). In Hastings the Ore **Bridge Community Centre** is around three miles from the new campus.

How are you feeling ? was unusual in working across two urban areas, partnering with Stroke Clubs in Hastings and Brighton and Hove (two), while **Getting in I-Touch** was sited at a Hastings care home.

In three other cases the projects brought members of the community into the university itself, to university- sited vegetable and flower gardens (**Eastbourne Local Food**) to events at the Grand Parade campus (**Growing Local Food**) and to a football festival and symposium on the Eastbourne campus (**Taking a Stand**).

The remaining projects took a wider geographic remit. **Rother and Hastings LGBT** worked with a group of organisations that covered the whole of the Hastings and Rother district, while **Hastings Community Planning Resource** and **Reaching Out** (in Eastbourne) focused on the needs of their respective towns as a whole. **People, Place, Product** involved individual students working with many different organisations, mostly in Brighton and Hove, but including some further afield.

In practice the potential restriction of 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, however, have been a different matter if the university had been on a single campus or less immediately adjacent to such a considerable diversity of residential and commercial districts.

Continuing Community Benefit

A central aim of the *On Our Doorsteps* programme was to enable the establishing of 'long term relationships between university and community that can contribute to building neighbourliness'. This perspective then invites the question – what further activity occurred beyond the life of the

funded project ? and what other legacies of the project are there which create community benefit and/or positive university/community relationships.

In reviewing these nineteen projects, there seem to be five categories of answer to these questions: continuation or continuing direct impact of the project activity itself; continuing impact of the project's achievements, but primarily only within the university ; short term continuation(now ceased) of the project activity; indirect legacies of the project relationship; and dormant relationships, capable of revival.

Firstly there are six cases where the work of the project continues to have a very direct positive value for the community partners. These include: **Work, Write, Live**, where the original project activity has been replicated in 2013-4 and 2014-15 and is planned to continue in 2015-16 resulting in continuing benefit to the well-being of the residents of Patching Lodge: **Eastbourne Local Food** , where the two gardening groups and related activity have continued uninterrupted since 2010; and **People, Place, Product**, where the new form of design brief for final year 3- D degree students has continued to be adopted by about 50% of the students in 2013-14 and 2014-15, resulting in the creation of designs and objects of value to a wide range of local organisations.

Hanover Centre Carbon Race created a different kind of benefit as the work of the project highlighted that if the proposed interventions in the energy management of the building were implemented savings in the region of £2,728 and £3,409 per year would be achievable. Subsequent evidence shows a 60% saving in the Centre's fuel bills. Similarly in terms of long term impact as a result of the **Reaching Out** project Age Concern implemented a dedicated LGBT older people's befriending service in the Eastbourne area. This is now operating, largely run by the social group itself.

Finally **How are you feeling ?** delivered a specific project publication and accompanying CD, but also an example of the poetry was published in the winter 2011 edition of *Stroke News*, the magazine of the national Stroke Association. Feedback from those who heard the poems performed or read them suggests they benefitted from either an insight into the emotional landscape of the stroke experience or (in the case of stroke victims themselves) from an accurate articulation of their own experiences. Comments from readers of *Stroke News* included: *I just could not believe that a person could write words that are in my head, waiting to escape and people would understand what it's like to be on this strange planet. I can't thank you enough.*

Secondly there are two cases where the projects have had clear long term impacts, but mainly within the university community itself.

In the case of **Taking a Stand** the annual football festival activity has continued every year since 2012, although predominantly as an internal university event as after 2012 the Justin Campaign became substantively subsumed into larger campaigns such as PrideSport and the FA supported Football v. Homophobia However a five year celebratory event is planned for 2016 to include a workshop or symposium with community participants.

With respect to **Growing Local Food** the most tangible long term outcome has been the University of Brighton Food Co-operative – which after some periods of uncertainty is now clearly owned by the University of Brighton Student Union and operates on three Brighton campuses, sourcing its

produce predominantly from local suppliers. There is however also some continuing community impact as community members also access the food co-op (it is listed on the Brighton and Hove city food partnership list of food buying groups) and the project has led to a city-wide guide for developing local food buying groups. There is also an ongoing relationship between the university and the Food Partnership in implementing events and engagement activities (in addition to research links which were already established).

Thirdly there are examples of projects which did continue actively for a time after the funding period but have now ceased. In the case of **Rother and Hastings LGBT** the work of the initial project continued uninterrupted for at least a further two years. The findings of the initial mapping were published in October 2011 and this led to an online questionnaire co-designed with members of the Forum. The results of this were jointly analysed and presented at a launch in March 2013. The report made a number of recommendations to specific organisations, the impact of which could become the basis of a further piece of research. With **The Bigger Splash** the project activity was successfully repeated in 2012-13 but was not continued after that.

Fourthly there are a number of examples of positive, but indirect, effects of the work of projects.

In their project evaluation report the **Roundhill** Society representatives wrote: *We believe that the proximity of the project to the University and the profile of residents within our neighbourhood, a long established neighbourhood society who have strong links with the Community Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) provides a very sustainable basis for long term partnership with the University of Brighton.* This positive orientation towards the university is borne out by two recent occasions on which students temporarily residing in the area have been invited to contribute to the Society newsletter and have expressed their appreciation of the welcome they have received from local residents.

In the case of the **Bridge Community Centre** a legacy of the project is that the local comprehensive, the Hastings Academy, has now developed a broader perspective on their educational practice and created a more formal partnership with the Bridge to work with some of their more challenging students. This has superseded and subsumed the type of activity which the *On Our Doorsteps* project sought to champion.

Finally there are a number of projects which have resulted in continuing friendly relationships between the University and community organisations but without any immediate or specific actions resulting. Thus with regard to the **Commemoration** project Brighton and Hove Black History Group members have attended, and run, seminars at the School of Humanities. **Triangle Community** representatives have been regularly in touch with CUPP staff to consider future possibilities and the University has continued to maintain links with the Bridge Community Centre and Albion in the Community at Falmer. All these can be conceptualised as 'dormant' relationships capable of revival if circumstances allow. This concept can be illustrated by the case of the situation of the Hastings **Community Planning Resource** project where, although there was no continuation of the project itself after 2010, the relationship with the main community partner, Nick Wates Associates, has more recently been revived to support the Big Local project in North East Hastings and the work of the Hastings Trust.

Longer Term Student and Curriculum Benefit

From the university perspective there is one further aspect of project legacy which can be identified.

Of the nineteen completed projects thirteen (68%) showed a benefit for the future design/delivery of the curriculum and/or the student experience beyond the period covered by the one year's funding.

This benefit can be divided into two main kinds: the replication of active student involvement in subsequent years; and the use of the knowledge gained from the projects as course content for a wider student body.

First in six cases (32%) the student project activity (or something closely related) was repeated in subsequent years and all but one of these is still continuing at the time of writing (2015).

Eastbourne Local Food has sustained its activity annually since 2010 with a total of over 110 Occupational Therapy students and around twenty Hospitality students involved over that period. **How are you feeling ?** has generated the inclusion (from 2013) of a new optional Community Engagement module on the pre-registration nursing degree. This is being taken by about 20% of the students and includes student practical engagement in such settings as hospices and the Salvation Army (ie the not for-profit sector which has links with or impact on health and social care in the community).

Taking a Stand has continued its annual summer football festival in all years since 2012 and a five year celebration is planned for 2016 which will again include a form of symposium. **Work, Write, Live** has repeated the original project activity at Patching Lodge in 2013-4 and 2014-5 and is planning to continue into the future – possibly replacing the undergraduates with Master students, while **People, Place, Product** has retained the focus on localism and partnership as one option for the design brief for final year projects; about 50% of the students select this option.

In the case of **The Bigger Splash** the project was repeated successfully in 2012-13 with seven undergraduates; however a change of university role for the academic leader resulted in the non-continuation of the activity beyond that year.

Secondly in twelve cases (63%) the original projects led to forms of curriculum change which have affected a much wider body of students than those actually involved in the project activity itself.

In some cases this has been a matter of the whole orientation or 'colour' of a course curriculum.

The final evaluation report of **Triangle Community** noted that it was *'the first to be undertaken by Architecture with certain explicit social – as opposed to design – aims in mind..... an exemplar of a new way of working with our neighbours, one in which the community's needs are as important as the design outcomes'*.

The university leaders of **Taking a Stand** have reported noticing that since 2012 there has been an increase in the prominence of issues of sexuality and gender identity within the sport courses (eg an increased number of dissertations dealing with such issues). They believe that this reflects both national political developments and a local increase in awareness.

The **Work, Write, Live** project has contributed to the development of three new degree courses – an MA in Creative Writing (commenced 2014-15) and two new undergraduate degrees in English Literature and Creative Writing and English Language and Creative Writing with a first intake in 2016-17.

In other cases this has been a matter of developing new modules or enhancing the content of existing modules.

Rother and Hastings LGBT contributed new material to the curriculum of the undergraduate modules, 'Contemporary Rural Geographies' and 'Geographies and Sexualities' and to the MSc in Applied Community Psychology.

For Hospitality students although the activity of tending the garden in **Eastbourne Local Food** did not figure directly in the curriculum the issues raised by the project were reflected in the modules, 'Food, Culture and Society', 'Gastronomy', 'Sensory Evaluation of Foods' and 'Trends and Issues in Hospitality and Event Industry Sectors', while **Growing Local Food** contributed to the curriculum through a module on 'Citizenship for Environment'.

The experience and documentation of the **Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing** project have been included in the curriculum of the PGCert Health and Social Care Education as a case study - sometimes taught by the former students (now Nursing lecturers) who were directly involved. Material developed in **How are you feeling?** has also been used in this course as well as being presented within a new pre-registration Nursing optional module, 'Arts and Health', while information and lessons learnt from the **Hanover Centre Carbon RACE** project have been used in lectures in the modules Building Surveying 2 and Building Pathology and Life Care. Finally material from **Reaching Out** has figured as a case study in Research modules in both the undergraduate and postgraduate Occupational Therapy curriculum.

Six projects, however, delivered no subsequent student activity or curriculum benefit. There seem to be a number of key factors causing this absence. In two cases the original projects, although having student involvement, had no connections with any particular courses – therefore there was no immediate locus for any learning to enter the curriculum. In a further two cases there was no student involvement in the original projects. In another case the project was strongly led by the community partner, with limited university staff buy-in to the detail of the project and in another illness to a community partner contributed to leaving key aspects of the project incomplete.

Overall, the extent of longer term curriculum benefit across the programme was somewhat of an unanticipated outcome. With hindsight this may seem less surprising for where else does the curriculum come from other than the recording of, and reflection on, specific innovative activity, whether through scholarship, laboratory or field research or practical activity? The lessons of these *On Our Doorsteps* projects are then that with a little more deliberate planning and focus from the beginning the degree of curriculum benefit (to a very wide student body) which can be derived from these projects may be one of their most enduring legacies.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES

In addition to these assessments of what the *On Our Doorsteps* projects achieved consideration of all the projects together also suggests some distinctive characteristics of the programme as it has

evolved. These are: its subject range; the complexity of the diverse roles and identities of the participants; and the patterns of origin of the projects.

Subject Range

The selection process for *On Our Doorsteps* projects did not set out to ensure any particular balance of involvement across the different schools and faculties of the university. Nevertheless the spread of academic disciplines deployed across the nineteen projects analysed here has been extremely wide.

In total academic staff and /or students from seventeen different academic disciplines or professional subjects were represented. The largest grouping here (eight), as might be anticipated, is that of the social sciences, with a predominance of applied subjects. These comprised: Human Geography; Town Planning; Environmental Studies; Hospitality; Sports Studies; Business Studies; Education; and Applied Social Sciences. Two design disciplines were represented – Architecture and 3-D Design – and also two humanities disciplines – History and English Literature.

The greatest concentration of disciplinary involvement was in the health professions area where Occupational Therapy figured in three projects and Nursing in two. Finally three applied science disciplines were involved – Sport Science, Land-based studies and Building Surveying.

There is no obvious explanation for the breadth of this disciplinary involvement. One possibility is that there were only a limited number of academic staff across the university with an interest in this type of community engagement work and they are spread thinly across the academic schools. However what the breadth does illustrate are the wide range of interests and needs which individual academics and community groups will bring forward for consideration and the diversity of academic subjects which can then be involved in work of this kind.

Roles and Identities

The initial proposition of university-community engagement tends to be binary. It is assumed that we are concerned with two separate entities that need to be brought into relationship – entities which, by implication, have sufficient differences in nature (aims, purposes, normative assumptions, rules) so as to require a process of understanding and negotiation in order to work together.

This is an entirely reasonable starting point. However the experience of the *On Our Doorsteps* programme suggests a rather more complex picture.

First, even just within the university, the projects delivered a number of different roles for students, relating mostly to where the student activity was placed along the spectrum from at one end being part of a compulsory course curriculum (as in **People, Place, Product**) to general volunteering without any connection to any course (as in **Roundhill Community** or **Growing Local Food**). Equally staff roles varied in relationship to the degrees of autonomy which students were allowed and also in relation to the balance of project leadership between university staff and community partners.

More complicated however were situations where individuals were involved simultaneously on both sides of the partnership – that is as both members of the university and members of the community being partnered with. This took two main forms.

Given the emphasis of the programme on physical proximity to the university campuses and the patterns of housing in the three coastal towns it is not surprising that in about a third of the projects university members involved were also local residents of the streets and districts which were the focus of the projects. Students were resident in the **Triangle** and **Hanover** districts of Brighton. Students involved in **People, Place, Product**, used local organisations close to where they lived (the neighbouring pub, a knitting club which met in a local shop) as their partners. **Growing Local Food** was inspired by university staff and students already involved in community based organisations promoting local food supply in Brighton. The **Bridge Community Centre** project in Hastings was developed out of the experience of a member of university staff living in the Ore community.

Even more concretely in four cases the leading University member was also directly involved in a leading role in the type of community organisations being partnered with. The main proponent of **Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing** was both a university lecturer and a trustee of the Bridge Community Centre. The initiator and leader of **The Big Splash** was both a part-time lecturer at the university and an employee of Eastbourne Swimming Club. Of the two university leaders of **Eastbourne Local Foods** one had previously been Chair and Secretary of Hastings and St. Leonards Allotment Federation, while the other was a member of the Community Environment Partnership for Eastbourne, had worked with a student gardening group to support Edible Eastbourne and had developed relationships with the national organisation Growing Health, including participation on their steering group. Also the university lead for **Moulsecoomb Community Farm** has had a long term direct personal involvement in the operation of a community farm.

In all these cases then for a significant number of individuals 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.

The range of types of community partner was also considerable.

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. However a number of projects sought to work with more than one community partner, often with each taking a different role and also at times representing different and conflicting interests. In a small number of projects these conflicts materially affected the direction and outcome of the projects. Issues causing conflict included the aspirations of a community development group being regarded unsympathetically by local residents and differences between competing professional perspectives. Equally there were examples of different community partners taking complementary roles within a project to good effect, including the co-ordination and leadership of a whole project when university involvement was relatively weak.

The diverse and complex nature of all these relationships gives weight to the view that projects of this kind may be more usefully viewed as constituting a multi-dimensional community of practice rather than a binary partnership of two separate entities – a community of practice which not only

brings together individuals and groups with different interests and skills but which also enables individuals to bring together their own separate roles and identities into a new unity.

Initiation of projects

As with most successful university-community engagement activity the *On Our Doorsteps* projects did not emerge out of thin air but were mostly built on already existing relationships or activity.

In seven cases this was essentially a matter of an existing university-based activity being extended or developed into a new context. **Eastbourne Local Food** built 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. **Growing Local Food** in Brighton also developed from existing thinking from the University's Sustainable Development Co-ordination Unit and Environmental Action Network. **Taking a Stand** used the experience of the long standing international Football for Peace community engagement project to develop a new community intervention. **Work, Write, Live** took already developed practice in the teaching of creative writing and sought to place it in a community context. **Football and Community** extended an existing partnership between the university and Albion in the Community into a broader community setting and **People, Place, Product** re-positioned a current design brief for students to require local community engagement. Finally **Reaching Out** was based on a lecturer's existing research interests about issues of identity and loneliness in LGBT older people.

In a further six cases the nature of the projects was driven more directly by community partners and by their perception of community need. **Rother and Hastings LGBT** was generated from an initial approach to the University's Hastings campus to replicate a project already existing in Brighton. The **Roundhill** Society became aware of the project opportunity from CUPP publicity and approached a member of the University who was a member of the city Community Voluntary Sector Forum to create the required partnership. The **Moulsecoomb Community Farm** project idea was developed by a member of Food Matters, a local non-profit organisation, who approached a member of the university with whom she had previously been involved in a similar project to make a joint proposal. **Get in I-Touch** was initially proposed by a representative of Bingo and Beyond who had been informed of the opportunity at a CUPP community meeting. Finally (as already noted above) In two cases, **A Bigger Splash** and **Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing** the community proposer was also a member of university staff.

Other cases were less clear-cut as to origins. The proposal for **Hastings Community Planning Resource** was strongly led by the community partner but its origins can be traced back to an approach from CUPP to seek his involvement. The **Bridge Community Centre** proposal was strongly led by a university colleague but was formed out of her perception of community need from the perspective of also being a local resident. **How are you feeling ?** built on existing links between university staff and the community proposer but also deliberately added a new university research partner to broaden the scope of the project. **Commemoration** was somewhat different in taking an already fully formed community project and adding university capacity to increase its effectiveness.

While it is hard to draw any clear-cut conclusions from this diverse picture there are a few observations which may be made. On the whole those projects which derived from existing

university practice and /or had strong university staff involvement in the original bid had a greater chance of breadth of achievement and of longer term effect.

Standing back further however it can also be seen that the pre-existence of an extensive, well-informed and supported network of both potential community partners and university staff was necessary for the development and delivery of the overall programme. This network was and is provided for, replenished and sustained by the long term work of the CUPP organisation and staff, with the close support of the University's student volunteering service, *Active Student*.

It would, for example, not have been possible to have operated a programme of this scale and breadth within the first few years of CUPP's operation when such a network was just being created and gradually strengthened.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the 2010-12 *On Our Doorsteps* programme shows a number of distinctive characteristics.

It operated in neighbourhoods close to all five University of Brighton campuses and it made use of a very wide range of subject disciplines. Projects tended to focus on one or more of: interactions with immediate benefit to individuals and social groups; the production of a plan or report which would enable imminent future benefit; and a significant or culminating participatory event.

Most projects included significant student activity, most effectively of an 'expert volunteering' type, with strong links to a particular course or academic subject. Most projects also involved research, either as a central aspect of student involvement and/or as subsequent public academic output.

Longer term community benefit took place through: continuation of the project activity for new beneficiaries; implementation of the recommendations of the project report or plan; indirect impacts on community partner activity; and the creation of longer term relationships. Longer term benefit to the university was also secured through the continuation of student activity and the development of specific course curricula.

On the basis of these characteristics and of the review as a whole it is possible to make ten recommendations on how any similar programmes might be planned in the future:

1. Strong individual project plans might include: university-community interactions; a written outcome; and one or more participatory events.
2. Student involvement might be most effectively conceived as a form of 'specialist/expert volunteering' and should be capable of relation to a particular course or subject area.
3. A clear plan should be made to deliver a research outcome and the team should include an experienced researcher, even if only in an advisory or mentoring capacity,

4. In developing the experience of neighbourliness the nature of the immediate surrounding locality should be carefully considered.
5. Post-project relationship management with community partners (whether by project participants or by a specialist unit) should be built into the project plan.
6. The great potential for long term curriculum benefit should be recognised and built into projects from the outset.
7. The recognition that a very wide range of academic and professional subjects are suitable for community engagement activity should be widely communicated.
8. The diverse roles and identities of individuals likely to be part of such projects should be recognised as a great strength and benefit of this area of activity.
9. The continuing need to build, sustain and refresh both internal and external networks of potential participants and partners should be kept in mind.
10. Any such programme of activity should expect and encourage continual invention and enterprise. While summaries of existing best practice will always be of great help they should not be used to deter the support of creative experiment and innovation.

For no matter how much we can learn from experience University-community engagement is, for the foreseeable future, always likely to involve risk taking, imagination and long term strategic vision.

SIL

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Appendix One. On Our Doorsteps Projects 2010-12

2010

Commemoration aimed to address practical issues in history-making, in commemoration, and in local cultural politics as these arose in the design and delivery of a specific commemorative event connected with the Indian Gateway in Brighton Pavilion Gardens

Eastbourne Local Food aimed to develop green spaces on the Eastbourne campus for ongoing seasonal food cultivation, leisure gardening and recreational purposes – to be used in partnership by local residents, community groups and members of the University.

Growing Local Food sought to increase awareness of the benefits of and involvement with local food production, preparation and consumption among staff and students and neighbouring communities in Brighton.

Hastings Community Planning Resource aimed to develop a plan to improve the organisation and availability of information to underpin better community engagement in local planning and regeneration in Hastings and Rother. (<http://www.communityplanning.net/Hastings/>)

Rother and Hastings LGBT aimed to improve the lives of LGBT people in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex by creating strategic networks between academic institutions, students, local communities and services.

Triangle Community was a scoping project designed to propose improvements to the streets and houses in an area around the Lewes Road in Brighton, known as the 'Triangle'.

2011

Community Engagement for Health and Wellbeing aimed to use the contribution of postgraduate students in health and social care to develop community learning about health and well being in a community adult education setting.

Moulsecoomb Community Farm aimed to explore the feasibility of developing a community farm in land close to the Moulsecoomb area of Brighton.

How are you feeling ? aimed to work with stroke survivors to enable the creation of poetry which would express their experiences and feelings for the benefit of themselves and of the community in general.

Getting in iTouch aimed to use student volunteers to work with elderly care home residents to enable them to use iPad technology to maintain social contacts and sustain memory and identity.

Football and the Community sought to examine how Brighton and Hove Albion and its charitable trust, Albion in the Community, can work with local educational partners to enable local communities to become more resourceful, healthy and productive.

The Bigger Splash aimed, through pioneering work with Eastbourne Swimming Club, to develop an effective system for administering, coordinating and mentoring the work of University of Brighton sport students within neighbourhood voluntary sports organisations,

Roundhill Community planned to deepen community cohesion in the Roundhill area of Brighton and increase understanding of different groups' needs and issues through gathering information about their views and needs and then sharing this information and resulting plans for action.

2012

Work, Write, Live – Sharing Life Stories planned to bring together students and elderly residents of a Brighton retirement village to share stories and then enable the adaptation of the material into poetry and drama.

Hanover Centre Carbon RACE planned to find ways to enable reduction of the carbon footprint of the Hanover Community Centre building.

Bridge Community Centre aimed to enable a group of young people in Hastings to become more integrated within their own community by showcasing a local Adventure Playground.

Taking a Stand planned to use two major events to raise awareness about the negative impact of homophobia and transphobia in sport and also to promote the positive dimensions of sport and physical activity for LGBT groups and individuals

People, Place, Product planned to demonstrate to students, staff, partners and the public the value of collaboration through design to address diverse issues of sustainability, socially, economically and environmentally.

Reaching Out aimed to bring together the University and local charitable groups and organisations to discuss issues of social exclusion and inclusion of older LGBT Eastbourne residents and develop a plan for a targeted befriending service.