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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The USE-IT! project Journal N° 5

Project led by the City of Birmingham



**URBAN
POVERTY**

The USE-IT! project

Social deprived neighbourhoods – urban regeneration – poverty alleviation:
Linking large capital investments with community skills and assets to combat urban poverty

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

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

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

Partnership:

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

For further information

USE-IT! UIA website: www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/birmingham

USE IT! Facebook: www.facebook.com/USEITUIA/; @USEITUIA

USE IT! Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UseItUIA>; @UseItUIA;

USE IT! Instagram: www.instagram.com/useituia; useituia

USE IT! YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCfZrYQBA87FsszE4JvhlZug/featured

USE-IT Zoom-in – The creation of social enterprises: [Download](#)

USE-IT Zoom-in – Jobs for overseas migrants: [Download](#)

USE-IT! 1st journal: [Download](#)

USE-IT! 2nd journal: [Download](#)

USE-IT! 3rd journal: [Download](#)

USE-IT! 4th journal: [Download](#)

USE-IT! Social entrepreneurs programme: <http://sohosen.org.uk/>
www.i-se.co.uk/news/use-it-social-entrepreneurs-programme/
www.i-se.co.uk/news/use-it-catalysing-social-change-in-birmingham/

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1. Executive Summary

USE-IT! is a £3.13m (3,6 Mio. €) project by Birmingham City Council and one of the “Innovative Urban Actions” from the European Commission initiative. It tests **new solutions combating urban poverty by linking larger capital investment projects (macro-assets) in deprived neighbourhoods with local community skills, talents and ideas (micro-assets)**. It does all that with the intention to unlock social and economic innovation and to improve the socio-economic situation of the deprived residents. The project strives to increase the employment prospects of the residents and migrants by generating jobs and stimulating local economy.

For an overview about the USE-IT! project, the background, its innovative approach, mechanism and partnership as well as the challenges implementing such an approach, take a look at the [previous journals](#) of the USE-IT! project.

The 5th journal focuses in **chapter 2** on the **project progress and successes** of the different work streams in the USE-IT! project. Successes are amongst others a commissioning research model that has resulted in 24 commissioned research projects by ‘Community Researchers’,

225 overseas migrants being supported into NHS jobs, which can generate £ 7.4m in local salaries and 36 new social and community businesses; that have already attracted about £ 250,000 of new income into the local area.

Chapter 3 provides an overview about the **challenges** along 7 typical challenges for the implementation of innovation projects that the UIA Initiative has identified.

In continuation of the 4th and previous journals, **chapter 4** presents **main learning points** from the USE-IT! project. This with regards to the importance of a diverse partnerships cooperating with local community based organisation; linking community development with larger investment projects; using community researchers to give communities a larger role in influencing policies; the need to change the current provision of public services to address urban poverty and get people into work and how to promote social and community businesses.

Chapter 5 provides an overview about the **next and last steps** that will follow till the official ending of USE-IT! at the end of 2019.

2. Project progress & successes



2.1 Communicating the project

USE-IT! NEWS

Unlocking Social and Economic Innovation Together

Progress

The USE-IT! Brokerage and Communications Manager, Jennie Sandford, continued to produce **content and updates for all social media channels** ([facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#)) about USE-IT! on daily basis and to promote project events like the Community Researcher training workshops.

In addition, she supported the project partners and related local organisations in their **promotion activities** i.e. by designing flyers, posters, banners, providing social media advice, etc.

For the communication of project and individual events like 'Impact Investing for Place: Breakfast Meeting with Big Society Capital', 'Soho Social

Enterprise Network Micro-Fund' or 'Smethwick ChangeSpaces' were filmed, **videos produced** and uploaded on the USE-IT! [YouTube channel](#).

To document and disseminate the USE-IT! story, successes and lessons learnt a **new website** was commissioned as well as filmmakers to make an end of project film plus 4 shorter, strand focused films.

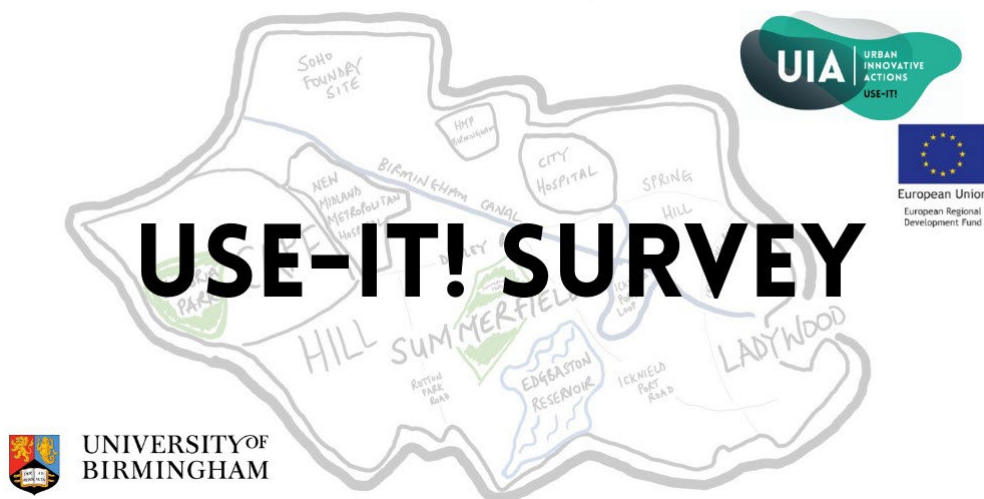
For the internal communication, but also for the interested audience, the USE-IT! Brokerage and Communications Manager, published a **monthly e-newsletter** about what is happening and will happen in the USE-IT! project.

Successes

Social media has been the main focus for reaching the varied groups and communities in Greater Icknield. Annual stats from February 2018 to February 2019 recorded 421,966 social media (Twitter/Facebook) impressions and 6,049 engagements. In August 2019 USE-IT! had 1.206 followers across all platforms. In particular in the last three months there subscribers raised by 11 %.

Without having this planned as an activity of the USE-IT!, the USE-IT! Brokerage and Communications Manager communicated available jobs in the new Ladywood Leisure Centre via the social media channels and brought the local job club with another local organisation together to run workshops/job fairs in Ladywood. As a result, more than 16 local residents got a job.

2.2 Identifying and mapping local skills and assets through community researchers



Progress

Based on the commissioning research model, which allows accredited Community Researchers to be listed on an online platform to be contracted for research tasks, several **research projects for the Community Researchers were commissioned**. Based on this success, some Community Researchers have developed the idea of a 'community research social enterprise' and work on that idea (cf. 2.4).

Also more **quantitative surveys** have been coming in, which provide information to identify and map local skills and assets in the pilot area.

To disseminate the results and experiences of the Community Research stream of the USE-IT! project the University of Birmingham attended two conferences and submitted a paper to 'Space and Culture'.

Successes

Since the start of the USE-IT! project in 2017, more than 80 community researchers have been registered on the 'Community Research Training' programme;

Through the commissioning research model, 24 research projects by 'Community Researchers' have been commissioned. Two of them are completed, three further projects are about to be launched. One of the research projects has resulted in the city council being awarded an additional £ 300k grant to do further work around childhood obesity (read this [article](#)). The commissioning model has also been key to developing the idea for the community research social enterprise.

Also more than 200 quantitative surveys could be collected to identify and map local skills and assets.

Research projects by community researchers

- Childhood Obesity – completed
- Hope Foundation - completed
- European Skills Recognition Passport
- Better Health ESOL evaluation (exploring motivation to learn)
- Voices of Jamaica (and other 'Windrush' migrants)
- Health and Wellbeing Coaching Social Enterprise
- Creating a 'Wild' Neighbourhood
- Creating an 'Age and Gender Friendly' Neighbourhood
- Bereavement Supportive Communities
- Equanimity to address barriers to learning for children and young people
- Community Arts project: Hidden Mothers
- City LAB - development of the social enterprise
- Place Perceptions - Neighbourhood and City Inclusion (Using mental maps and environmental perceptions)
- Causes of unemployment (Illeys)
- Opportunities for local procurement in Soho Ward
- Supporting Soho 1st with developing its idea of makerspace and helping out with identifying suitable premises
- Identifying the needs of BME North Smethwick communities by Jalal Community Connect Foundation
- Health, wellbeing and clinical data dashboard social enterprise model
- Mystery Shopper: Urban Splash Show Home launch event (8th June 2019)
- Canal and River Trust volunteering and adoptions project
- Eat, Make, Play - running consultation stall
- Walkability
- Alternative Community Tours
- Exchange study
- UK2070
- Tate' Industrial'
- University as a public good

2.3 Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities



Progress

Based on the successful experience of matching overseas migrants with educational health or medical background from the neighbourhoods of Greater Icknield with job opportunities in the new hospital (for further information read the [USE-IT Zoom-in – Jobs for overseas migrants](#)), the partners of the ‘Matching job skills with job opportunities’ stream of USE-IT! have started to **develop an employment pathway for people with overseas construction qualifications/experience**. This by linking them to the new company commissioned for completing the construction of the new hospital (the previous company went bankrupt, which had stopped the construction of the hospital). The company has committed to support “those living the closest but furthest away from a job”.

To further support the language skills of overseas migrant that want to work in the health or medical sector, **trainers for the English language test for healthcare professionals (OET)** have been provided. The free courses have started in

September as alternative to the International English Language Testing System ([IELTS](#)), which was partly criticised by some overseas migrants.

Since the successes of ‘Matching overseas migrants with an educational health or medical background with job opportunities in the new hospital’ have become known beyond the limits of Birmingham, the British TV station [Channel 4](#) has started **filming three, one hour documentaries** based on USE-IT! and the experience of overseas health professionals finding work in the British National Health Service ([NHS](#)).

To explore the links between qualifications and local economy in the USE-IT! area, a ‘skills and poverty mapping exercise’ was delivered. It shows the occupation structure of employment and compares it to the qualifications of USE-IT! area residents and the workplace population. It further examines the economic implications of the qualifications mismatch in the USE-IT! area, measuring the economic demand and supply shortfall.

Successes

The 'Skills Matching in the NHS' has been a massive success and has received three awards:

- HPMA (Healthcare People Management association) - Runner up for Effective use of diversity
- ENEI (Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion) - Highly Commended for Community Impact
- Sandwell Business awards - Runner up Contribution to local community

This has led to further programmes being taken up by the NHS in other areas.

Also funding for the English qualifications exams for the overseas migrants could be unlocked. Sandwell Council is now funding IELTS. The Black Country and West Birmingham sustainability and transformation partnership (STP) is now funding the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board test (PLAB) for doctors –a necessary further qualification doctors have to get after IELTS. Health Education England (HEE) is now funding IELTS training in the Black Country, £ 250,000 per year for three years.

The new developer for completing the new hospital has signed-up to the recruitment of local people into construction jobs. This is in part

because the USE-IT! project was able to demonstrate that a partnership was already in place and existing pathways established for linking local people to construction jobs on the hospital site.

By now, about 225 individuals with relevant medical and non-medical qualification are on the USE-IT! clients database. 149 have been invited to the free training for the language exam IELTS (passing it is a prerequisite to be able to start with the training to become a doctor or be able to work in the NHS). 104 are studying or have studied IELTS, 11 have decided to study OET instead. 14 have passed OET/IELTS. 18 persons have started work experience placements at the Hospital. 45 are in paid work in Health Care as an interim employment opportunity. 6 have been invited for placement as General Practitioners in primary care settings. 3 have accepted.

Taking the currently 225 clients being supported into NHS jobs and comparing each client's qualification to their future job role/earning potential, the USE-IT! project partners calculate that this will generate £ 7.4m in salaries, half of which will be for clients living in the pilot area of the USE-IT! project. Thus, they estimate that £3.7m will be added to the local economy - more than the overall cost of USE-IT! project.

2.4 Creating a community of social enterprises



Progress

The delivery partners of the stream 'Creating a community of social enterprises' of USE-IT! have put **further social enterprise/ co-operative consortiums in place** and developed new products and services with them. Products are diverse from walking and city tours, handyman service, food, health and social care.

The delivery partners **supported social enterprise start-ups** from the pilot area through the [FUSE programme](#), provided advice to select the appropriate model for business and to become registered ([Warm Earth](#), [Eat, Make, Play](#), [Modern Clay](#)). For existing local social enterprises they organised workshops to support their growth. The workshops were about social media for business and direct Payments/Personal budgets. In addition, they awarded a challenge fund of £ 3000 to a local environmental organisation to underpin new product development around using food waste to provide compost to drive under-soil heating.

Three examples of new social enterprises

[Warm Earth](#) – a group of local residents have developed a horticultural project growing and selling plants as well as creating products such as window boxes. The organisation provides volunteering opportunities and meaningful activities to the local community.

[Eat, Make, Play](#) – a community business that uses surplus spaces, food and materials to generate products. They provide workshops in food preparation and sewing/upcycling skills, as well as running social activities. This improves people's lives by developing employability, life skills, lifelong learning and wellbeing.

[Modern Clay](#) – a group of local freelance artists who have come together to form a co-operative. This has enabled

Further they put the **Schools Programme in place**. The programme promotes the development of social business in young people and teachers. Schools have been supported to plan and develop their own social enterprises and put those ideas into action, learning about enterprise and the measurement of social value and impact. The work has been evaluated and a report published to support wider dissemination and allow the practice to be replicated in other schools across the City.

In addition, a new co-working office space was opened ([Smethwick ChangeSpaces](#)).

Since January 2019, Community Researchers (cf. 2.3) have been working with the team of the University of Birmingham on developing a proposal for a **community research social enterprise**, writing up a business plan and the commissioning research model. The working title of the enterprise is “DAWN - **D**eveloping **A**ssets **W**ithin **N**eighbourhoods”. So far the mission, objectives and the market for a community research social enterprise were discussed and developed into a draft mission statement. This will be used to animate future discussions and start the process of developing the core aspects of the business plan.

Through a USE-IT! event, **a local social enterprise** that writes health awareness children’s books **could be linked to the Hospital Trust**. The Trust’s charity is now sponsoring a series of books to help children who have a hospital appointment.

Further pop-up markets were implemented to promote social businesses and inform about the Social enterprise Network [SoHo](#).

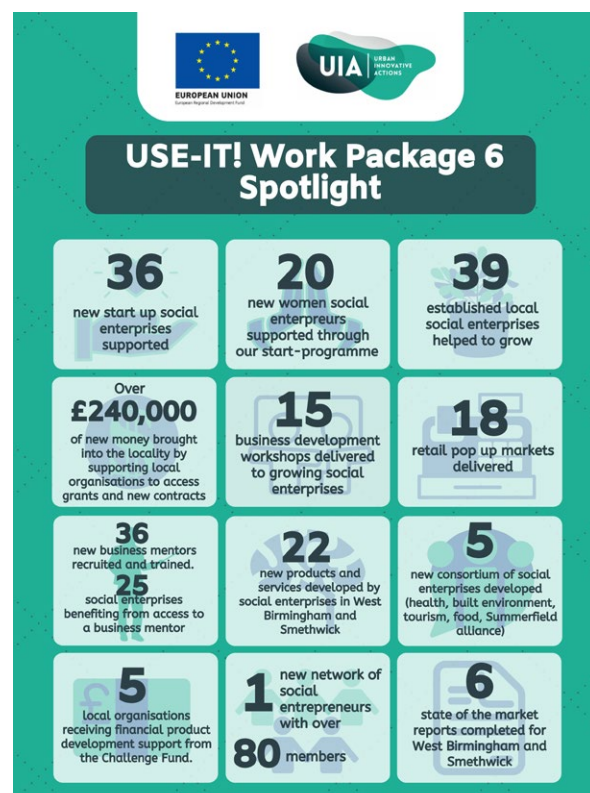
For the **business mentors** specialist **trainings** were provided by the local organisation [BRAP](#). For evaluation purposes, they sent out questionnaires to all social enterprises they have worked with to capture the value of

them to pool their resources, including their shared studio space and specialist equipment. This business model allows them to work more collaboratively and also make an income from the renting of their resources (studio space and equipment).

mentoring in terms of accessing new markets and supply chain opportunities.

With a multi-agency steering group, the work to develop **Birmingham as a Social Enterprise City** is taken forward. Recently a citywide baseline of social enterprise activity has been completed.

Successes



Birmingham has become a Social Enterprise City, which will benefit the continuation of the work on the development of a community of social enterprises that has been started with USE-IT!. It

Supported new social enterprise start-ups

- Golden Sparkle (Queenie Thomas registered) – Health/older peoples support
- Asperger's Heroes (David Derbyshire, registered) – Health/Coaching
- Feed My Creative (Janet Gray, registered) – Gifts, recycled products, workshops
- Boatel (Saima Razzaq trading as sole trader) – Tourism, boat tours, floating hotel
- Elev8te Projects – (registered CIC)
- Elizabeth Higgs (trading as sole trader) – Dyslexia Assessment and support
- Bearwood Community Hub (Registered not yet trading) – shared workspace/consultancy.
- Mothership Projects CIC (registered and trading) – women's support
- Friends & Neighbours CIC handyman project – Delroy Thomas (feasibility at Board Stage)
- DoNation – events management fashion for a cause, registered CIC
- Smethwick CAN (Smethwick Snax) - food
- Caroline Singh – mental health support
- Hampstead Diamonds Community FC (Harjinder Jheet) – sport/fitness
- Frank Swish (Gary Scott) – sport/fitness
- Summerfield Co-operative (B16) (batch cooking) - food
- Sam Morgan
- Pouring Oil on Wine – counselling, coaching, support for widows, registered CIC
- Smethwick CAN (Smethwick Food Hub) – food
- Vegan Vybes – (Lynda Mcfarlane) – vegan food
- Ladywood Cleaners Co-operative – cleaning/built environment
- Carol Henry (Community Support in Soho) – community development
- Make Good Upcycling (Alison Goodman)
- Community Craft Workshop – crafts/gifts retail
- Heart of Birmingham Tours – Hamid Lea - tourism
- Be Ever Vigilant CIC (Registered and Trading) – Patricia Panton - education
- Creative Mindfulness (not registered) – health/wellbeing
- Sherine Edward Dodds (not trading, not registered)
- Samantha Brown – – coaching, human rights, human trafficking – support to schools, Registered CIC
- Helping Hands Africa (registered and trading) – Mbye Jallow – foreign aid
- Sham Malhi – health/social care, Trading as Limited Company
- Zero Waste Life (Charlotte Watkivs)
- Citizen Home (registered) – Retail – recycling/zero waste
- Black Heritage Walks CIC
- Eat Make Play (registration as Community Benefit Society)
- John Parman – CF supporting with the registration of Community Benefit Society

will continue to open up markets, opportunities for joint working, consortium development and planning of co-ordination of the social economy to respond to major changes in the City including the arrival of high speed train connection and the Commonwealth Games.

The Network of Social enterprises has been established, whose 80 members meet on a frequent basis. They have a permanent [website](#) to support social enterprises to develop, grow and provide access to support through new tools and support material.

Six social enterprise / co-operative consortiums are in place to access new market opportunities for social businesses: built environment (construction), Summerfield Alliance (place-based), Tourism (Birmingham Explore), Food Consortium (through Smethwick Food Hub), Health consortium and Retail Consortium. All consortiums are working to develop products and services.

36 new social enterprises have been supported to start up and 25 social enterprises have received mentoring by 36 mentors. This led to the **registration of 10 new social and community**

businesses and further ones that trade as sole traders. These enterprises are genuinely embedded into their local communities and offer direct benefits to the residents that engage with them.

22 new services/products have been developed and taken to market by the social and community businesses.

About £ 250,000 of new income into the local area have been unlocked by supporting social enterprises to win contracts and attract funding for services. Thus, some social enterprises have developed from grant reliant to trading.

Through the development of market opportunities within this it has been possible to influence public procurement for the Commonwealth Games 2022 which are due to be held in Birmingham. It has been identified that that these games are to be the social games and 1% of each built environment contract is to be spent with social enterprises i.e. £3,500,000 through their inclusion within the supply chain. As the legacy of the USE-IT! project develops, we expect this 'buying social' approach to develop.

3. Challenges

The UIA Initiative has identified seven typical challenges for the implementation of innovation

projects, as USE-IT! is one. The USE-IT! project had to deal with some of these challenges.



3.1 Leadership & Collaboration

A key component of the USE-IT! project has been its **large and diverse partnership** of private, civic and public organisations and single people. At the same time, this was a challenge **to effectively collaborate and communicate** across the work packages to aid collaboration as the wide range of people and partners have different ways of working and organisation's values.

The USE-IT! Brokerage and Communications Manager, Jennie Sandford, **utilised a number of strategies** to deal with the “**communication**” challenge:

- She established a social media presence, and easily shareable bite-size pieces of news and information, using existing groups and online places where people might already be active.
- She organised a number of physical communication events to demonstrate how things could be shared and covered and the benefits of communication across the partnership.
- She attended a wide range of partner events to show support and report on the activity.
- She established a regular e-newsletter.
- She produced videos as a way to tell the stories from the project.
- She shared successes
- She remained open and approachable so that people across the partnership felt able to reach out for help.

The use of project management data to inform individual partner performance has also provided the partners with clear information regarding who is performing and information on what has been achieved.

In order to steer and coordinate the project and its partners effectively, the overall project manager, Karolina Medwecka, did not only **organise steering group and project board meeting**. To have a better understanding what is

happening at the local level and what changes might be needed, she **met at a frequent level the key partners and individuals at work in the pilot area**. This build up trust in the communities as well and allowed her to have a good overview what is happening at the local level and connect partners if necessary.

Further challenges with regard to leadership and collaboration in such a multiple partnership project have been mentioned in the [1st](#) and [2nd](#) journal.

3.2 Participative approach for co-implementation

The USE-IT! project was divided into relatively independent working packages and within each working package the main partners were collaborating with even more local partners. So not only communication and collaboration between the main partners and work packages had to be ensured, but also the communication and information flow between the partners within each work package. And this information had to be streamed to the overall project level. This made the **communication and collaboration quite complex** to ensure an integrated implementation of the USE-IT! project and making use of the synergies between the work packages. One method to summarise the information flow from the single local partners to the work package leaders and from there to the main partners of the USE-IT! project was instead of requesting each local partner sending in a monthly update they had to enter the information in one single centrally held document. This has been a revelation in terms of project management allowing to update the whole work package monthly and see at a glance which outcomes have been successfully achieved and what work still had to be done.

The USE-IT! project is about developing mechanisms for co-implementation and joining

“forces” (each partner brings in their specific skills and services to improve the work). *how to keep the horizontal cooperation between all the different stakeholders in the different work packages?*

One main challenge was to **gain support** in particular **across large scale organisations** like the hospital trust with multiple departments and complex systems. As it is about a cultural change how services are provided, in particular the larger organisations needed time to react and incorporate this “cultural change” into their institutional processes. To convince them in doing so, it was key to start with a specific project (not an overarching strategy) linked to an organisational priority of the larger organisation. Demonstrating that the USE-IT! approach can deliver and make a difference, opened doors and minds and made it possible i.e. in the case of the Hospital Trust to get a senior manager to “buy-in and trust”. With the senior management support in place, the roll-out of the approach to other priority areas within the organisation was possible.

Further challenges with regard to the horizontal cooperation between the involved stakeholders have been mentioned in the [1st](#) (chapter 3.4), [2nd](#) (chapter 1.1) and [3rd](#) journal (chapter 1.1).

3.3 Communication with target beneficiaries

The USE-IT! project covers a large and varied project area with a wide range of people and target beneficiaries. In addition, it has a number of distinct streams, each requiring different target groups and thus a different targeted approach. Communicating to and with all of them with the limited staff time and resource available to implement communication activities was a big hurdle. To deal with that challenge, a number of strategies to communicate both the opportunities and successes of USE-IT! within the limits of the USE-IT! Brokerage and Communications Manager capacity were applied:

- Establishing a social media presence, and easily shareable bite-sized pieces of news and information, using existing groups and online places where people might already be active, to share and extend our reach.
- Physically establishing a local presence in Ladywood and making links with local activists and established organisations to utilise their networks.
- Keeping the tone and language of communication materials as accessible as possible, so that the audience and potential beneficiaries could understand the message and use it.
- Using online and printed flyers and banners to promote events and workshops and supporting local organisations with the design and print of their materials.
- Using a free, subscription-based e-newsletter to allow anyone to access monthly news updates from the project.
- Making films that describe opportunities and activity as people seem to prefer to watch video over other forms of communication.

- Targeting specific messages to groups and areas that are most likely to engage.
- Remaining open and approachable so that people felt able to reach out for help and information.

In addition, some partners engaged with existing community organisations that are trusted and communicated and used their “communication channels”. This was a very effective way of communication to the target groups.

“It feels like we have needed the last two years to fully embed ourselves in the communities and it’s only now that a lot of the hard work is starting to pay off. We’re on a roll now but sadly with only a few months left it seems that the project is ending as it’s really starting to make an impact!”

Jennie Sandford,
USE-IT! Brokerage and Communications
Manager, Birmingham City University

Another initial challenge was the promotion of social enterprises in the pilot, introducing to local people what the concept of social enterprise is about. Many people did not understand what a social enterprise was and therefore attendance at the awareness raising sessions was poor. A solution was joining the awareness raising sessions with those for the community work done by Smethwick CAN and Co-operative Futures and having “issue” based meetings. Attendance became much better.

Further challenges with regard to the horizontal cooperation between the involved stakeholders have been mentioned in the [1st](#), [2nd](#) (chapter 1.2) and [3rd](#) journal (chapter 1.2).

3.4 Monitoring & evaluation

Some USE-IT! partners have felt the monitoring of the outcomes of USE-IT! a challenge as throughout the project the reporting system and templates changed. This was due to the size of the project, the number of partners and the range of activity being undertaken. There has been some duplication of reporting in terms of monthly reports to work package leaders, annual reports to the city of Birmingham, information for the journals and zoom-in.

Also collecting the data just once a year was not sufficient to use the monitoring as a management tool. With the introduction of a monthly reporting by the key partners to the overall project coordinator, the project manager received a better overview about the progress of the project and if particular actions needed to be taken.

Also to collate evidence of the quantitative and qualitative impacts through the USE-IT! activities was difficult and therefore reports were time consuming and potentially inaccurate. This was one reason to hire an external evaluation team to evaluate the process and impacts of USE-IT!. Together with them, they developed an evaluation framework to be able to demonstrate evidence of the impact of USE-IT!. But as the external evaluator were brought in 18 months after USE-IT! had started, they needed some time to 'catch up' from an evaluation perspective.

For the stream 'Creating a community of social enterprises' monitoring became easier since they had introduced the "tracker document" that captures project outcomes at a glance but also some of the interesting additional outcomes that are not project related. This document is updated on a frequent basis.

3.5 Mainstreaming the pilot action (upscaling)

Parts of USE-IT! will continue, in particular where organisations have an economic benefit of the USE-IT! approach (i.e. training and matching local people to work in the health sector). These organisations (possibly) will bring in needed resources. Another approach is to use elements of USE-IT! in new funding applications or to link USE-IT! to new Birmingham based initiatives such as the Commonwealth Games 2020 or the East Birmingham Prospectus.

But the mainstreaming of the overall USE-IT! project is a challenge. The implementation of new, innovative approaches such as USE-IT! are time-consuming. At the same time challenges in the implementation process occur and have to be mastered promptly. This requires time for all stakeholders involved. As a result, there was little capacity to work on mainstreaming and upscaling

at an early stage, especially when so many stakeholders are involved as in USE-IT!. Therefore, mainstreaming and upscaling gained a stronger focus first at the end of the project (and will stay after the official closure of USE-IT! project). To respond to that important task, a legacy coordinator has been recruited to ensure the legacy of the USE-IT! project is mapped and lessons are learnt and disseminated.

Another challenge is the austerity "policy" in the city of Birmingham. In this context, ensuring funding and personnel to continue and upscale the USE-IT! approach is a great challenge.

Mainstreaming is also hampered by the fact that USE-IT! is an approach or a process whereas large institutions are used to working to specific outputs or outcomes. This is making it difficult to "sell" the USE-IT! model.

3.6 Cross- department working

The majority of the project was carried out by private and third sector partners. The public administration mainly acted as coordinator.

Therefore, cross-department working was not a focus of the project.

3.7 Public Procurement

The majority of the partners have been private and third sector institutions. Due to that reason public procurement was not of a major issue.

Further challenges have been described in the [previous journals](#) as

- Recruiting community researchers (journal 1)
- Engaging property developer for the USE-IT approach (journal 1)
- Creation of a community of social enterprises (journal 2 and 3, chapter 1.3)
- Identification of local skills and assets through community researchers (journal 2 and 3, chapter 1.4)
- Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities (journal 2 and 3, chapter 1.5; journal 4, p. 11)

Also to **find out about the real needs of new client groups** and to link them to the major development projects in Greater Icknield was a challenge. It was dealt with through a working partnership that linked specialist micro-organisations in the community (that work with the chosen client group) via interim organisations (i.e. [Brushstrokes](#), the [Learning Works](#)) to major, macro assets (in the USE-IT! case the new hospital). By delivering specific activities trust along this pathway could be built for partners and clients and their engagement gained. Through the engagement it could be learned more about the client's needs and then responded accordingly.

4. Main learning points

The USE-IT! project started in 2017. Looking back the last 2 ½ years the project can show successes - expected as well as unexpected. The **diverse and manifold partnership** plus working with local based community organisations **was key** for it. By bringing together the different local skills and knowledge of the partners and making them available for the overall project in a coordinated way, an innovative approach such as USE-IT! could be implemented at all. Individually, the partners would not have been able to implement such a project.

Also the **flexibility to react to “incidents” and new opportunities** and to adapt the project to them was important to ensure a successful course of the project. Also to concentrate the available resources - time, finances, personnel - on what was achievable. There was no “clinging” to goals that could only be achieved with very great effort, if at all.

But another learning is also that **complex projects are complex to handle!** Even when partners are

willing to collaborate, when the complexity leads to a greater time coordination effort for one's own work, the collaboration does not take place to the extent necessary to exploit all possible synergy effects. So even when more is possible, sometimes reducing the complexity is of benefit for the overall results. Keep projects manageable!

As the USE-IT! approach is about public and private partners co-develop and co-implement a project and on equal footing (flat hierarchies), **it requires a cultural change in organisations' decision-making and working mechanisms for co-development and co-implementation.** This cultural change in institutions demands time and particular successful examples. If one successful example in the context of public austerity will be enough to cause such cultural changes in the larger institutions the future will show.

Further lessons learnt have been presented in the [previous journals](#). New and especially highlighted lessons by the partners of the USE-IT project are:

4.1 Linking community development with larger investment projects



Communities have local assets, but...! USE-IT! has demonstrated that communities in social deprived neighbourhoods have relevant endogenous assets. USE-IT! partners mentioned they were surprised to find so many motivated individuals at the local level “doing things in communities”. But you need to identify them and bring them up into light – even for the communities themselves. Here local based community organisers and brokers as well as organisation are very helpful. In addition, you need “intermediators” that are able to make the link between these local assets and larger investments projects in the city. You need to convince the involved parties, both at community level and at the investment project level, to make use of these links, in favour of the socio-economic development of the local communities.

Working with communities takes time! Working with communities takes time in particular to build trust and even longer to make a difference for the better. In this way three years pass by quickly. Bridges are build but people need to cross them themselves. Where local partners or anchor institutions have been on board and willing,

connecting to residents has been very successful i.e. for the hospital and skills matching (cf. 2.3) or connecting ‘Birmingham Settlement’ and local residents for the use of the ‘Playing Field’.

“Work hard to become established within the communities you are working with to gain trust and respect, rather than being seen as a big funder who is just ‘parachuting’ into the area to offer short term support.”

Kathy Hopkin,
Cooperative Futures, partner of the ‘Creating a community of social enterprises’ stream

Not everyone is open to new approaches! There have been organizations not supportive to the USE-IT! approach (Urban Splash/Port Loop development), as it did not correspond to their classic project development approach; and they could implement their investment project anyway. This was where the USE-IT! approach reached its limits. It therefore requires the willingness of the investing organisations to participate in something like the USE-IT! approach; which makes it easier when it can be proven that the new approach is better for them than their classic one.

4.2 Community researchers



Lessons learnt from the community research stream supported by the University of Birmingham have been mentioned in the [4th USE-IT! journal](#), p. 7, and the previous journals. Peter Lee and Sara Hassar (work packages leaders of the community research stream) have highlighted additional ones:

- Through community research the narrative of place and space is not produced solely by academics or policymakers but is refined through the input of community representatives.
- Through accredited community research programmes additional resources for local communities can be provided through leveraging income streams related to research grants.
- Through community research programmes linked to the Higher Education sector as anchor institutions, the community can play a larger role in influencing policies.
- Through accredited community research programmes 'local based resources' are available

for the private and public sector to work with in commissioning pieces of research or consultancy about local and community issues.

They also stress the **institutional and project learning** from the USE-IT! approach:

- Innovative projects like USE-IT! can be a major disruptor and cultural challenge project for the established institutions. It demonstrates that a university can be a driver for public and social good and that it can live up to that responsibility even in the context of austerity. Corresponding decisions must be made at the strategic level and then lived at the operational level of the university.
- Approaches like USE-IT! demand a greater flexibility in the project design. There is a degree of controlled serendipity in the process which needs encouraging rather than paternalistic suppression of ideas and creativity, allowing to "re-configure" a programme or parts of the project approach.

4.3 Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities



Main lessons learnt from identifying and training local overseas migrants with relevant medical and non-medical qualifications that could be matched with the jobs available in the NHS hospital are to be found in the [4th USE-IT! journal](#), p. 11, and the previous journals. Conrad Parke (work package leader of the ‘Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities’ stream) mentioned two further key lessons:

1. Key element for the successes is the [Learning Works](#), the one-stop-shop for access to training, development and employment opportunities in the NHS, and its partnerships with over 40 community based organisations. Jointly they identify, qualify and support suitable overseas migrants on their path to a job in the NHS. This partnerships is also helping the Hospital Trust to unlock the potential of the Trust’s “Youth Village”, linking NHS employment opportunities for young people to supported accommodation by

enabling the engagement of other priority groups – such as care leavers, homeless and ex-offenders.

2. The usual public services to address urban poverty and get people into work is partly missing the reality – at least for the pilot area of the USE-IT! project.

This is reflected in the standard public interventions that are deployed (i.e. job centres, signposting services, careers advice, access to adult education, etc.) which are typically aimed at lower training, entry level jobs, direct employment opportunities (rather than option self-employment or business start-up). However, for the USE-IT! area, the Skills Mismatch Modelling using secondary data sources has identified that there is a higher proportion of residents that are qualified at a degree-level or equivalent qualification. There is a higher proportion of job opportunities at a degree-level or

equivalent qualification. Also it was identified that there is little business start-up support in the area prior to USE-IT! starting. This was confirmed by the community surveys that reported 43 out of 83 respondents had a 1st degree or higher and that 43 out of 70 respondents were interested in starting their own businesses.

These findings must be taken into account and public services must be supplemented or adapted based on the USE-IT! experience as the standard public interventions being deployed are not meeting the needs of many local residents.

Also the culture change of the Hospital Trust working with and delivering through community based organisations as an effective and efficient mechanism for addressing organisational priorities rather

than trying to do everything in-house is an important lesson learnt.

3. Having good language skills is a prerequisite to be able to work in the health and medical sector

Thus, the *free* language courses in preparation of the necessary language exams ([IELTS](#), [OET](#), [PLAB](#)) are crucial to match overseas migrants with educational health or medical background with job opportunities in the new hospital. But having to finance his/her and family life takes time, which complicates the continuous participation in the language courses as other commitments like childcare, birth of a baby, illness, etc. This results in constantly dropping in and out of the courses prolonging the time to develop the English skills to a required level to work in the NHS.

4.4 Creating a community of social enterprises



Main lessons learnt from creating a community of social enterprises have been mentioned in the [4th USE-IT! journal](#), p. 13, and the previous journals. In addition, Simon Veasey and Jo White (work package leaders of 'Creating a community of social enterprises'), highlight following lessons learnt:

- **Grass-roots initiatives do not consider to become profitable enterprises!** It was anticipated that fledgling social and community businesses would approach USE-IT! for support. However, a lot of the grass-roots work happening in the pilot area is at a smaller project-based level, without necessarily considering the opportunity to create a profitable enterprise. A higher level of development work and seeking out key community activators has therefore been needed to develop groups, and to give them the confidence and skills to consider how they could develop and sell their products and services.
- **Social and community businesses takes time to develop!** At the beginning many start-ups have been more grass roots organisations. Starting the journey to become a social enterprises, 'enterprise-ready' and to register as a formal business takes time and a lot of community development work.
- **Social enterprises are popular, but...** Social enterprises are becoming popular and seen as a catalyst for change by local people, but it

takes time to help local people to really understand what a social enterprise is about. It needs continuous awareness raising activities. This is essential to increase turnover and access new markets for social businesses.

- **Product development takes time!** Many of the social enterprises supported through the USE-IT! project have been at distance from their markets and being a market player. Therefore they have been slower than expected to engage as market players and engage in the developed social business consortiums.
- **In-depth support for social and community businesses is needed!** Support to existing social enterprises was less than originally expected. But those organisations on the other hand needed far more support in terms of time and resources.
- **Physical presence is key!** Key to getting to the heart of the community is to have a physical presence (at [Ladywood Community Centre](#)) and to create strong working partnerships with genuine grassroots community organisations. Only by doing this you can enable these enterprises to become sustainable. Providing temporary top-down support that disappears when a project ends is not sufficient to create a strong legacy of social and community business within an area.

5. Coming up next

By the end of 2019 USE-IT! will officially end and with it the UIA initiative's financial support. But that shouldn't be the end of the whole project. The USE-IT! partners work on the legacy of USE-IT! and check which components can be continued and in which form. The legacy coordinator will pursue to work out the

- legacy for USE-IT!, as an example of good practice in addressing urban poverty, that can be applied to other public sector investments and infra-structure opportunities;

- legacy for the individual USE-IT! work packages to make sure the work sustains beyond the end of UIA funding at that the community/ participants continue to benefit;
- legacy for the partner organisations to ensure they all leave the USE-IT! programme enhanced in some way that will benefit both them and their clients long-term into the future.

The upcoming steps are:

Dissemination of results

The USE-IT! project is in its final months. In terms of communication they will be used to work on the website, films and written materials that will disseminate the learning and legacy of USE-IT! both within the partnership and for a wider audience, with a particular emphasis on system change and policy.

By the end of November a final event – a bus tour through the pilot area – will be organised to which organizations / decision makers are invited who are of particular importance for the continuation of the USE-IT approach. They will be showcased the outcomes of the USE-IT project, bringing them together with beneficiaries and delivery partners.

With a view to the success of matching overseas migrants with an educational health or medical background with job opportunities in the new hospital in Greater Icknield, activities (TV documentary, good practice visits from other hospitals, research papers, etc.) to disseminate this good practice and the added value and wider benefits to national and European audiences is planned. Also to build on link to Matthew Hancock, Secretary of State for Health, who has registered his interest in this part of the USE-IT! project.

To showcase the community research stream, an exhibition will be prepared as well as a USE-IT! community research conference to reflect on achievements, the journey and legacy.

Continuation of 'Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities'

For the continuation of 'Matching job skills in the community with job opportunities' after the finish of the USE-IT! project by the end of this year a structured legacy plan will be developed for the involved partners. Also it is about to develop new pathways into jobs for other priority

groups (ex-offenders, homeless, care leavers, etc.). The existing, successful partnership of the Learning Works with the community based organisations will be used as the main foundation for establishing those pathways.

Fostering community engagement

To continue the work of the University of Birmingham fostering community engagement, the university wants to establish a presence in a grade II-listed former Municipal Bank in Birmingham's city centre. The space in the former bank will be used to utilise the University's role as an anchor institution to bring together multiple stakeholders to address the challenges of the city of Birmingham and deliver inclusive growth for the region. This approach ought to bring the University's research closer to people, enabling its

work to inform, and be informed by its audiences. For further information, read this [article](#).

Also further steps for the development of the community research social enterprise will be done as i.e. gaining partners like the [centre of voluntary action](#).

To make 'Community research' part of the formal process of planning consultation on urban development, the University of Birmingham is in conversation with the city council of Birmingham.

Continuation with the Social enterprise network and support of social and community businesses

In the last months the partners of the stream 'Creating a community of social enterprises' will concentrate to identify structures and resources (project based funding) to support continued development of social enterprise through the 'Social Enterprise City'. They will continue to identify new markets for new and existing social and community enterprises across the city using the learning from the consortium work. Also they will try to identify resources to provide start up and business growth for social enterprise sector growth.

Further, they will finalise a legacy plan highlighting what they will leave behind in the USE-IT! area at the end of the project.

[Co-operative Futures](#) will continue to support the community businesses that have been established under USE-IT!, namely [Warm Earth](#), [EAT](#), [MAKE](#), [PLAY](#), [Modern Clay](#) and Together Smethwick Food Hub. They will also engage with an organisation who runs a number of social enterprises themselves and wants to develop a social enterprise incubator. Helping to establish this would leave a positive legacy from the USE-IT! project.

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

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



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