

Nottingham volunteer-support project hailed a success by independent report

A Nottingham project that helps people to set up their own community projects as volunteers has been hailed a great success in an independent evaluation report carried out by Nottingham organisation Bright Ideas recently.

The project, called Base Camp, is funded by the Big Lottery Fund's BASIS Programme and Capacitybuilders, and specialises in helping people from Nottingham's South Asian communities.

Since 2007, Base Camp has helped to set up over 46 community groups and has brought over 200,000 worth of funding into Nottingham, which has been used to help volunteers run a huge range of community projects benefiting children, young people, families, women and the elderly in particular.

Rukhsana Aziz from Base Camp explains:

"It's amazing how many people in Nottingham want to help others or give something back to their community by volunteering.

Plus of course, with Government cuts in full swing there simply isn't enough money to provide all the services that this city needs, so people are standing up and doing it for themselves.

For example, we've helped to set up voluntary groups which provide services such as after-school clubs for children, youth clubs offering sports and arts activities for young people, English classes for non-English speaking women and support for women experiencing domestic abuse - to name just a few.

The volunteers running these groups aren't paid for the work they do, they do it because they have a real passion for helping others."

Rukshana continues:

"As you can imagine, knowing where to start can be very difficult so we help people to set up their groups and apply for funding to run their activities.

In addition, we give volunteers the chance to learn new skills, which will help them run their group successfully, and run training courses in skills such as basic accounting, budgeting, health and safety, food safety, marketing and promotion and child protection issues.

By giving people the help, support and training they need we make sure that groups are much more likely to succeed and continue their activities, which in turn benefits the communities they're helping of course."

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Base Camp is part of Nottingham charity the Partnership Council and it works closely with other city organisations that provide support to voluntary groups including Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service and Nottingham City Council.

Base Camp provides support in a range of languages including English, Urdu, Mirpuri and Punjabi.

It also understands the cultural needs of different communities.

Culture plays a big part in how services such as health education or support for victims of domestic violence is delivered in South Asian communities, so the kind of tailored support that Base Camp gives to volunteers is very important.

That was one of the findings revealed by the independent evaluation report into Base Camp's activities.

The report also praised Base Camp's hands-on approach to support, which includes working with groups on a one to one basis, often outside of working hours, to fit in with volunteers' other commitments.

The groups who have benefited from Base Camp's support also praised the project.

First4Active, a group that runs sports classes for youngsters, including cricket and football, said:

"Since working with Base Camp we are better equipped in terms of understanding how to run our group; share ideas and research; and present ourselves to other organisations and potential funders."

Another group, the Women's Multicultural Group, who provide activities for women including aerobics and a mothers and toddlers group as a way of bringing women from different backgrounds together said:

"Base Camp has helped the women's group to be more focused, coordinated and able to deliver more effective activities. The group is able to monitor and evaluate its activities and this has helped us to plan for the future."

Community projects supported by Base Camp include:

The Five Star Academy - provides after-school, educational activities for children.

The Producers - gives young people the chance to get involved in drama, art and music.

Community Enablement - helps children and young people to develop self-confidence and wellbeing plus educational skills via homework clubs, especially children who are under-achieving at school.

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The Target Learning Project - a group of women from different backgrounds that tackle women's issues around health, social care and education.

The United Women's Foundation - helps women who face multiple barriers to learning, for example because English isn't their first language. The group offers courses in useful skills such as internet safety so that parents can keep their children safe online plus literacy and numeracy classes and workshops in healthy living, cooking and creative activities.

The Nottingham Afghan Community Association - support for the Afghani community including English language classes for Afghani women.

**To find out more about Base Camp please call Rukhsana Aziz on 0115 970 8200
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