



National Research and Development Centre
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UKBET
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Welcome to the UK project

Year 2 Impact assessment research report

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Actions co-financed by the European Fund for the Integration of
Third Country Nationals 'Working together to manage migration'

'Wonderful project. UK immigration needs to think for sake of the state this needs to be done.'

Community outreach worker based in the UK.

'...projects like this to help integrate into society and access different services like GP.'

a group of WUK participants in the UK after watching the PLUK films.

'Before the training learners were in dark about the life in the UK. Actually they were mentally dependent on their relatives in the UK. After the training they are trying to think in their own way.

It is because they know at least some basic life styles in the UK. Some participants had fear about the life in the UK but now they hope a better and dignified life in the UK.'

Bangladeshi teacher of English on the PLUK programme

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1 Scope and purpose of this research

Welcome to the UK (WUK) is a three-year project funded by the European Commission's European Integration Fund (EIF). The over-arching aim of the WUK project is to support the successful integration of third country national women to the UK (i.e. women originating from, and with citizenship of, countries outside the EU) through direct teaching, capacity building training for teachers and volunteers, materials development and research both in the UK and Bangladesh. An overview of the whole WUK project is provided in Appendix 1.

In Year 1 the project's organisational lead was LLU+ at London South Bank University. For years two and three, the lead organisation is Learning Unlimited (LU) at the Institute of Education, University of London. Although the lead organisation has changed, the project leader and individual associates and researchers remain the same for the duration.

Year 1 of the research for this project was undertaken in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the Code of Practice at London South Bank University and received approval from the Ethics Committee in November 2010. Learning Unlimited continues to abide by these ethical guidelines and those laid down by the British Education Research Association (BERA) upholding the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice. Learning Unlimited has continued to ensure that internal quality systems for this research project and individuals named on the project are guided by these ethical standards and are externally validated by an appropriate regulatory body, in this case the NRDC, at the Institute of Education, London.

Aim and objectives

The rationale for the research element of this project is to explore the impact of the Welcome to the UK (WUK) project in order to inform future work on this and other related projects. This research report for Year 2 builds on research already undertaken in Year 1 and, in line with recommendations from the Year 1 research and external evaluation reports, seeks to focus more on the impact of the befriending strand in the UK and the Preparing for life in the UK (PLUK) workshops in Bangladesh:

- a. **The befriending programme in the UK:** to investigate the impact of the befriender programme on supporting integration, with a particular focus on the experience of befrienders and input from befriendees and other key stakeholders.

- b. **The 'Preparing for life in the UK' (PLUK) programme in Bangladesh:** to investigate whether and how participation on the PLUK workshop programme has impacted on spouses' knowledge and confidence in relation to becoming part of life in the UK, prior to coming to the UK and, where possible, on arrival in the UK. In addition, the research seeks to identify aspects of the workshop content, including resources, teaching and learning activities and approaches, that have facilitated increased knowledge and confidence

The research team comprised:

- Beth Kelly, Pauline Moon, Karen Dudley, Afroza Akthar Ali and Julia McGerty from Learning Unlimited
- Afroza Akthar Ali, Ahea Hannan and Rima Akhand (the 3 UK-based volunteers who carried out interviews in Bangladesh)
- Md Eahtasham Karim and Fahmida Sultana (UK Bangladesh Education Trust – UKBET) - who supported data collection in Bangladesh.

For further information about the Welcome to the UK project or this report, please contact Karen Dudley at Learning Unlimited (www.learningunlimited.co Tel. 020 7911 5561, info@learningunlimited.co).

2 Background and context to the research

The Welcome to the UK project's Year 1 impact assessment began to unpick what integration means to project participants in the UK and Bangladesh either through their experiences of living in the UK, or preparing for that transition from Bangladesh. It is evident that there are a range of meanings attached to the notion of integration as indicated by Ager and Strang's (2008) observation that *'the concept of integration is used with widely differing meanings'* and Robinson's view (1998) that integration is a *'chaotic concept'* and *'a word used by many but understood differently by most'*. This report continues to explore the theme of integration, and the impact of two main strands of the Welcome to the UK project in supporting integration, and the voices of those involved in the project in different ways are central to this research.

The EU perspective on integration

The stated purpose of the European Integration Fund, which funds the WUK project, is in accordance with the Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union (<http://www.enaro.eu/dsip/download/eu-Common-Basic-Principles.pdf>) that points out that *'Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States'*. The central themes identified are the need for *'immigrants'* to *'adapt'*, and the *'receiving society'* to provide *'the opportunities for the immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation'*. The impact assessment for the WUK project recognises the importance and value of a dynamic two way process in supporting integration, and that all those involved in the work of the project, including trainers, volunteers, researchers and wider stakeholders, have an important contribution to make to the impact assessment process.

Research commissioned by the European Commission, Entzinger and Biezeveld (2003) identified two major dimensions of integration; structural and cultural. Sales and D'Angelo (2008) explain these dimensions:

'a structural dimension, involving participation in the major institutions of a society, such as the labour market, education and health care system.'

'a cultural dimension or 'acculturation ... the changes in immigrants' cultural orientation and identification.'

Entzinger and Biezeveld also note that changes take place in the host society as a result of migration. Using this dimensional analysis lens, both the PLUK and befriender programmes can

be seen to use structural approaches in the materials and activities developed for the programmes. In addition, the PLUK workshops provide a 'cultural' space for the women to consider their stance towards UK society and matters of concern to them regarding their transition to living in the UK, including how they can participate in society. This research describes the impact on both structural and cultural dimensions of the participants' lives, and will be used to inform the further development of the programme in Year 3. Thus the structural and cultural dimensions of the project are interconnected and reinforce each other.

The Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2011) reported on a European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. The report identifies key areas that would support *'integration as a way of realising the potential of migration'*. It identifies a shared responsibility where country's policies should create favourable conditions for migrants' economic, social, cultural and political participation. It highlights integration through participation which includes acquiring knowledge of the dominant language of the country, participating in the labour market, participation in education and ensuring better living standards. It emphasises rights and obligations as a way of achieving equal treatment and a sense of belonging, and participation in action at a local level as a way of encouraging the involvement of local stakeholders. It also recognises the value of the involvement of countries of origin in preparation for migration and integration, which is a key strand of activity of the WUK project in its pre-departure work in Bangladesh.

The UK perspective on integration

The Year 1 research report noted the change in policy from November 2010, requiring spouses to evidence a minimum of A1 level of English (in relation to the Common European Framework) as part of the visa application process prior to departure from the country of origin. This has impacted on the WUK project as it was a change in policy after the project design and content had been agreed. Project participants in Bangladesh, as well as expressing real interest in learning English to enable them to engage with the process of becoming part of life in the UK and to make their transition easier, are inevitably interested to know whether there are links from the PLUK programme to discrete English language learning courses and qualifications to support visa applications. Further concerns and need for clarification are anticipated during Year 3 of the project following the announcement of further changes to migration criteria and requirements outlined in the Home Office Statement of intent regarding Family migration:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/news/soi-fam-mig.pdf> (Home Office, June 2010, accessed June 30th 2012).

The English language and integration

Hassham and Aspinall's findings, in their research *What kind of language services should public authorities provide for ethnic minority groups: the case of Bangladeshis in London (2011)*, identify the particular significance of English language learning for Bangladeshi women in relation to their integration in the UK:

'Participants across both gender groups did not resist learning English – on the contrary, both men and women accepted and recognised that learning English was important for practical and functional reasons... Bangladeshi women's motivations were partly for increasing future work opportunities, but primarily for accessing statutory services, healthcare provision and for supporting their children's educational progress.'

These findings are reflected in the content of the PLUK workshop programme and in statements made by the women in Bangladesh prior to participation on the PLUK programmes. They also reflect a '*social practices perspective*' (Barton, 2007), which was highlighted in the Year 1 report; rather than relying on a purely skills-based perspective to interpret the process of learning English, people place value on improvements in English which impact on both what they can do and how they feel in their everyday life.

Further research into integration by *Ward and Spacey in Dare to Dream: Learning journeys of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali women* recognises that multiple factors affect integration (2008). This research recognises the importance of confidence-building as well as language learning in relation to women's integration and interaction in the UK:

'English language is not the only factor...confidence levels often combines with English to influence interactions with English speakers.'

'she can't chat so says hello then walks away.'

Ward and Spacey also find that Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali women with little education or fluency in English '*are highly likely to be living in poverty with little access to paid employment and that they are significantly underrepresented in adult education*'. This underrepresentation was investigated by NIACE and DWP in 2012 and reported on in *ESF Fund: gender Equality good practice guide*. This report, which recognises the importance of language, identifies some key barriers to women participating in education such as lack of confidence, fear of losing face

or respect with their family and friends, and lack of funds for fares to access programmes. This lack of access to education was seen as a factor in the low level of participation of women in the workforce (NIACE, DWP, ESF, 2012). The key barriers highlighted in NIACE and DWP research, and strategies for supporting the women in overcoming key barriers, are central to the WUK programme in the UK. This programme supports women learners in overcoming barriers to learning, and builds confidence through befriender support, funding for travel costs, free childcare and a programme of trips, visits and events outside the classroom which provide plenty of opportunities to get to know the local area and interact with other people and agencies. In Bangladesh, PLUK workshop participants greatly value the opportunity to get to know and interact with Bengali/Sylheti-speaking volunteers from the UK.

Researching integration

In *Measuring Integration: Exploring socioeconomic indicators of integration of third country nationals*, Sales and D'Angelo (2008) point out that their research on indicators is mainly based on quantitative data, and they indicate that further qualitative research into the experiences of people entering the UK is needed. All partners in their research agreed that integration is a contested term, and the process of integration is multi-dimensional, involving both people moving into the UK and the host community. Some aspects of integration, such as integration into the labour market, are, at least in principle, measurable, while others, such as feeling a sense of belonging, are more difficult to quantify and cannot be understood through official statistical data (Sales and D'Angelo, 2008, pp 6).

The research methodology used for this WUK impact assessment takes a primarily qualitative approach. It has aimed to capture, in particular, the voices of participants on the PLUK programme, in order to find out what meanings they attach to their experiences of the transition of moving to, and living in, the UK. We asked participants to what extent participation on the project had supported the development of their knowledge, skills and confidence about living in the UK. We have aimed to use ways of exploring existing perceptions and experience *'that take account of the life world of these learners'* (Street et al, 2006).

The research can also be described as action research in the sense that it has a primary purpose *'to produce practical knowledge that is useable to people in the everyday conduct of their lives'* (Reason, Bradbury, 2006), i.e. to the learners in Bangladesh before they arrive in Britain, to learners and bfrienders in the UK, and to teachers and trainers in the UK who work with newly arrived third country national women and men.

Building on the research findings from year 1

The Year 1 impact assessment identified key themes that emerged from interviews with learners in the WUK classes in London, including the following (quotes are from the Year 1 report):

1. **Changing stances to people and living in London**, for example:

'Because of the help of studying English like ESOL, so now I feel confident and I can face London confidently.'

'I can reach people who are from, who are, who live here for long time, so I feel I'm in a part of this country, I can relate to other people, I can understand what are they talking about and most of all I can speak English now than before... I can face people like chatting.'

2. **Identity: gaining or regaining a voice**, for example:

'To be happy belongs to my English level, when I improve my English, I am sure I'm going to better than now..... I am a intelligent people, I have a lot of things inside, I know a lot of things, but I don't explain and I don't communicate in cultural life, it's important for me because this is important for, I don't want to watch life.'

3. **Gaining independence**, for example one learner attributed her independence to her improved English and explained it in relation to support that she had previously needed:

'I don't need my friend to help, I am free, I can go I can manage my life alone.'

4. **New possibilities: economic opportunities, identity, and freedom**, for example:

'Our country women working everything, men work outside in a job, but this country man and woman are similar, so it is very comfortable and I like this one.'

It is evident from these quotes, that learning English featured significantly in what the learners in the UK in Year 1 said about their experiences of becoming part of life in the UK. They imbued learning English with wide ranging meanings, and they considered there to be a lot at stake, including identity and economic opportunities. Learners appeared to be using a social practices perspective (Barton, 2007), rather than a more skills-based perspective, to interpret the importance of learning English.

Similarly, the research findings for Year 2 indicate that the women in Bangladesh anticipate that learning English will have a potentially positive impact on their everyday lives. They too appear to imbue learning English with a range of meanings. It is also evident that the impact of learning English is not as central for the women in Bangladesh, as compared with the women who are already in the UK. This is not surprising, as the women in the UK are involved in managing a multilingual life in which English plays a significant part, and were attending ESOL classes when they were interviewed in year 1. By contrast, these are anticipated experiences for the women in Bangladesh. Although the role of learning English features much less centrally in what the women in Bangladesh said, their ideas still relate significantly to the themes from Year 1 referred to above.

The themes that arose in Year 1 reflect aspects of the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (2011) in that they refer to economic, social, cultural and political participation. In the Year 2 research on the impact of the PLUK programme, the issue of participation is a key feature in participants' changing knowledge, skills and confidence, as well as their feelings, in relation to their transition to living in the UK.

3 Executive summary

The Welcome to the UK project

- The WUK project is informed by large scale research across the European Union and in the UK into integration. The research carried out for this report is mainly qualitative, based on the voices of learners, volunteers, teachers, specialist advisers and other stakeholders involved in this project and its area of work.
- The Befriender and PLUK strands of the WUK project are both identified as valuable and useful by all of the stakeholders and have made a positive contribution to their experiences of integration to date.
- A variety of interpretations and perspectives on integration were identified by the participants in the research, but shared territory includes a sense of 'belonging' and the importance of developing confidence, skills and knowledge in relation life in the UK, the social aspects of everyday life, English language skills, accessing services and interacting with people. It is evident that meanings attached to the notion of integration also include feelings about new lives in the UK, and being less dependent/more independent.
- Video/film making was viewed as an innovative aspect of the programme in both years 1 and 2 and this has given a voice to third country national women who might otherwise not be heard, and enabled them to actively contribute to the WUK programme both in Bangladesh and in the UK, share their experiences with a wider audience and further develop important skills, knowledge and confidence.
- The WUK project has opened up horizons for all those directly involved in the project: the learners, volunteers, teachers and trainers, both in the UK and Bangladesh.
- The WUK project is committed to sharing ideas, approaches and materials in relation to supporting integration. Strategies for sustainability and further dissemination are important in order to ensure the work can continue after the project funding finishes.
- Findings, materials and resources from this project are of interest to other stakeholders including providers working with, or planning to work with, similar target groups, policy makers and funders.

Befriending in the UK

- As all of the Year 2 volunteer befrienders are also speakers of other languages and have direct experience of settling in the UK, befriending builds on 'shared journeys and experiences' in relation to integration.
- Befrienders can become '*role models to open up choices*', friends with whom to '*get out there*', and sympathetic listeners with whom learners can develop conversational language skills and confidence.
- The befrienders themselves indicated a stronger sense of belonging in the UK through working with their befriendees.
- The families of befriendees are seen to be important to the success of the befriending relationship; some were supportive, others did not recognise the potential value of the befriending relationship. Strategies to address this issue are being developed for Year 3 of the project.

Preparing for life in the UK (PLUK) programme in Bangladesh

- There is evidence of a positive impact of the WUK project's PLUK programme on the development of the women's knowledge, skills and confidence in relation to preparing for life in the UK.
- The PLUK programme content identified concerns, issues and interest linked to knowledge of life in the UK, social aspects of life in the UK, the importance of learning English, dependency and independence, feelings about migration and major life transitions.

4 The Research

4.1 Befriender Programme in the UK

Through the WUK project, local adults are recruited and trained as volunteer befrienders to support learners on the WUK programme in the UK. WUK learners are given the opportunity to be matched with a volunteer befriender and can either request a befriender who speaks the same or shared language, or someone with whom they would need to communicate in English (see Appendix 2). On successful completion of the befriender training programme and receipt of a satisfactory CRB check, befrienders are matched with one to three learners to support. Befrienders are offered on-going support through 1:1 meetings, phone calls and termly support sessions with the project's befriender supporter. They are also invited to join learners on trips, outings and events organised through the WUK programme as well as making their own arrangements to meet and support their befriendees face-to-face or on the telephone. In Year 2 of the WUK project, all befrienders originate from countries outside the UK.

In Year 2 the project team produced a leaflet for learners to take home and share with their family which gave information about the befriending process and other aspects of the WUK courses. The befriender supporter also had greater links to the WUK classes in Year 2, and worked directly with the befrienders from the first contact at the interview onwards: during the training, while befrienders were getting to know their befriendees and tutors, on visits to the Welcome to the UK classes and at taster, half term events and trips. All of this facilitated the frequency, quality and type of support offered.

In Year 2 there were 14 befrienders in total; 12 new befrienders who completed the Year 2 befriender training and two befrienders who continued from Year 1. In total 13 of these actively undertook befriending support during the year. All learners on WUK courses who had initially requested a befriender were matched with a befriender and the matching process continued throughout the project year as new learners joined the programme and befriender availability changed. Of the 39 learners who were matched with befrienders, 26 were actively supported in some way although the type and amount of befriender support offered varied.

During Year 2 there were three half term events for learners, befrienders and their families – all focusing on issues and interests identified in Year 1: 'Healthy Families' in October 2011, 'Home Sweet Home' in February 2012 and a progression event in June 2012. In addition there was a trip to Southend-on-sea in June 2012. Learners and befrienders were all invited to attend the

Preparing for life in the UK film premier at the British Film Institute in May 2012. Attendance at the events varied, with significantly with higher attendance at the events which were held at Morley College or when learners met at Morley College before travelling together with teachers, project team staff and befrienders to the venue.

4.1.1 Research design

The Welcome to the UK project has wanted to learn from the experiences of all key stakeholders in order to evaluate the impact of the befriender strand, and inform future work in Year 3. A range of perspectives were obtained from volunteer befrienders, learners matched with befrienders (befriendees), the befriender trainer, the befriender supporter and the WUK project team.

In addition, two specialists from the WUK advisory group, who run projects similar to the befriending programme in their own organisations, were interviewed: a local community outreach worker who works with economic and socially disadvantaged families and a mentor coordinator from a project which also receives EIF funding to support newly-arrived women who have been in the UK for one year or less and has a well-established mentor scheme, similar to the WUK befriending programme, which recruits, trains and supports local volunteers to support newly-arrived women. These interviews were undertaken in order to identify and confirm common principles and approaches to befriending, and explore opportunities and suggestions to further develop and strengthen the WUK project's befriending strand.

Recommendations from the project's advisory group have also been used. The befrienders and learners in the UK were also invited to watch and respond to a film made by learners in Bangladesh in the PLUK strand of the programme; their responses to the film were gathered.

In Year 2 of the befriending process, particular emphasis has been placed on unpacking the impact of the befriending process in relation to the challenges to successful and effective befriending, in order to identify strategies to take forward into Year 3. Therefore, this Year 2 research has placed particular emphasis on the perspectives of: the befrienders, all of whom had experienced moving to and settling in the UK; the befriender trainer and supporter; and other specialist advisors, in particular those with experience of managing similar schemes. The Year 3 impact assessment research will include a summary of the experience of the befriendees, in order to establish the full impact of the befriender strand of the project.

Methods:

Sources used to inform the impact report:

1. A focus group of volunteer befrienders in the UK: A focus group with six trained volunteer befrienders was held on 10 December 2011 to discuss aspects of the befriender programme and consider and respond to a number of questions in small groups and then as a whole group:

meanings they attached to the notion of befriending

what aspects and characteristics of befriending they offered and/or experienced

how befriending impacted upon 'getting and being involved in UK society'

how befrienders' understanding and involvement in social networks can be of use and relevance for their befriending role

possible barriers to effective befriending and strategies for managing these

the significance of English in the befriending process

which topics, activities and materials used as part of befriending were useful or not useful and the reasons why

2. Volunteer befriender interviews: Three volunteer befrienders were interviewed on a number of key themes in relation to the impact of the befriender programme. They were interviewed during the period when they were offering befriender support and the interviews, lasting about half an hour, were recorded with their agreement. Seven key themes were explored:

befrienders' feelings

befriending and feelings of belonging in the UK

the befriending process and programme

befrienders helping others, shared experiences

language and the befriender - befriendeed relationship

befriendeed's family situation and impact on participation on the befriending strand of the WUK programme

observations of interest by the befrienders

3. One to one interviews with the befriender trainer and befriender supporter: Interviews were held with both the befriender trainer and the befriender supporter on a one to one basis exploring a number of key themes in relation to design, roll out and impact of the befriender programme.

4. Written responses to questions given by groups of befriendees and bendifenders at the PLUK film premier: All WUK learners and bendifenders were invited to a screening of two films made in Bangladesh. The audience was divided into groups, and following the screening of each film, the groups were asked to discuss and record their responses on what integration means to them, the value of befriending and what advice they would give to women settling in the UK. They were also asked for their opinions and feedback on the films.

5. Notes from the WUK advisory group meetings: Comments and suggestions were collected from the advisory group (and drawn from the minutes of the meetings), to ensure that the perspective of people with an overview of the project has also informed the research.

6. Interviews with a community outreach worker and a mentoring project co-ordinator: One to one interviews were carried out with two specialists from the WUK advisory group who work on projects that focus on similar issues: one supporting newly arrived families in Southwark and the other co-ordinating a mentor project in Tower Hamlets. One interview was carried out face to face, the other by telephone.

7. Interviews and feedback from the WUK project team: Data was drawn from interviews and review meetings held to evaluate the befriending strand.

4.1.2 Findings

The findings have been grouped in nine key themes:

Theme 1: Meanings attached to the notion of integration

Theme 2: Meanings attached to the notion of befriending

Theme 3: The befriender role and recommendations for the training programme

Theme 4: Befriending: shared experiences and transitions

Theme 5: The value of befriending for befrienders

Theme 6: The befriending process and programme

Theme 7: Language and the befriender - befriendee relationship

Theme 8: Befriendee's family situation and impact on programme

Theme 9: Other observations and suggestions

Theme 1: Meanings attached to the notion of integration

Meanings attached to the notion of integration underpin the befriending process. In line with Ager and Strang's (2008) point, that '*the concept of integration is used with widely differing meanings*', learners, befriendees, befrienders, the befriender trainer and supporter have a range of views about integration.

Befrienders and befriendees were asked about integration and what can help people feel part of the UK, at the PLUK film premier. They were all very positive about the films and wished they had had the opportunity to attend workshops in their own countries before leaving, or on arrival in the UK. In addition, they referred to the importance of learning English, making friends, going to college, schools helping children, and positive experiences with GPs. They also identified the value of befriending in supporting learners in the process of becoming part of the UK, and their points are explored in more detail in the next section. One group wrote, '*to know about projects like this to help integrate into society and access different services like GP etc.*'

When asked what advice they would give to the women in Bangladesh who made the film about coming to the UK, the groups made a range of suggestions:

'Not to be so scared' 'take the opportunity to improve.'

'This is an exciting multicultural society... (be) ready to meet many people from many different countries in London.'

'Try to learn to read and write English before you come to London.'

'Make yourself involve in the community i.e. school.'

As these statements signal, the befriendeds and befrienders draw on their own experiences and focus on ways of becoming part of life in the UK that emphasise skills, knowledge and being proactive. The befriender trainer and supporter also emphasized the importance of skills and knowledge; in addition, they attempted to unpick the notion of integration and pointed to the importance of a sense of 'belonging' in relation to integration, as described by the befriender trainer:

'Depends on the individual, the community they are now in and they came from because I suppose it depends on what integration meant for them where they came from originally.'

'Is it being part of family, but very much in the home and not going out? When you come here (to the UK) your idea of integration will be very different from someone who went out to work, held certain responsibilities in their community. It is very much an individual thing.'

'On the other hand it is part of belonging, do you feel you belong to the area you live in? Do you feel you share anything in common with people around you? Do you know people in the area? It is a bit of give and take, to and from the people in the area.'

The mentor project co-ordinator confirmed the principle that integration requires interaction between people and services, and that from their project's experience, successful integration is 'a two-way thing' involving both the newly arrived person and the host society.

Theme 2: Meanings attached to the notion of befriending

It is evident that there are a very wide range of meanings attached to the notion of befriending. Some focus on how it can support integration processes, and becoming part of life in the UK. Other meanings relate to the nature of the role, and the experience of being a befriended or a befriender.

The community outreach worker interviewed strongly believes in the value of befriending for society as a whole, and views befriending as a *'wonderful offshoot from mainstream society'*.

She was extremely positive about the impact of the Welcome to the UK project in supporting women to become more independent and confident and actively participate in life in the UK:

'Wonderful project. UK immigration needs to think for sake of the state this needs to be done...'

She believes befrienders provide an invaluable combination of skills, knowledge and support: *'The befriender will have knowledge of community, society, country'*. She also pointed out that parents need knowledge and skills for life in the UK, not just to enable them to manage everyday life, but to pass on to their children. From her experience she has observed that befriending can support women to *'get on'* and *'get involved in UK society'*, because a befriender may be the first person to *'nurture'* and provide encouragement to actively participate in their local community. She said that in order to be effective, befrienders should be sensitive and empathetic, and show understanding, offer comfort and recognise what newly-arrived women want.

The befriendees also explained that befriending could make an important contribution to their processes of integration and becoming part of life in the UK by helping them to understand more about the UK, and to develop their language skills and confidence:

'...it is important as there is someone there to ask questions if you are not sure. We wish we had one 10 years ago.'

'Improve English and confidence, practice using the phone.'

'They help the people. They know about the England culture and they help to learn the English language.'

'Introduction to difference between UK and our country. To give some advice to us.'

The mentor coordinator raised the issue that to feel 'integrated', women need an awareness of the choices available to them in the UK, and that befriending can support the development of this awareness. She pointed out that some women consider certain aspects of life and services to be unavailable to them, because they are perceived as male dominated, and a mentor or befriender who accompanies women, when accessing services, can help to remove fear and build confidence:

'...hugely important for women to access services and interact with other people...(befriending) should be all about accessing services, getting outside, meeting

people, doing real life things. For example, getting an oyster card, topping up an oyster card, accessing the library, meeting people there and asking questions’.

The befriender trainer and supporter believed that befriending could support the processes of integration by fostering a sense of ‘belonging’ to the UK, providing a positive role model, and, for learners without close family support in the UK, filling a role which might otherwise be taken by family back home:

‘...if you don’t have family living quite close to you here, you need someone else to say what you need to do ...to go to the dentist, do I need to pay? My child is in hospital, is it true I can stay?’

Befriendees’ and bendifenders’ feedback demonstrates the multifaceted nature of the befriending process. Firstly, they explained that befriending provides support with systems, such as accessing the local library, finding out about college courses, job seeking. Secondly, they talked about the more ‘social’ aspects of the befriender relationship, and its ‘informal’ nature, for example, meetings and chatting on the telephone, as a befriender explained:

‘With my befriender went to the park. We used to talk by phone. She met me and we went to the museums, to drink a coffee and walk.’

These two aspects of befriending are intertwined, as a befriender illustrated in her feedback:

‘Talked in the phone about job centre, meeting to drink coffee. I meet her in X children’s centre.’

Befrienders who aimed to keep the relationship informal, described befriending as being available for the learners and being flexible, as a befriender explained:

‘Most of the work was very informal, simple, everyday things they just met a woman, spoke English and had a cup of tea.’

Alongside informality, another ‘social’ aspect of befriending was ‘friendship’, with successful befriending developing into a positive new relationship for both bendifenders and befriendees. Some of the befriendees talked about their relationship with their befriender as if it was a friendship, for example:

‘I am chatting long time on the phone when I am free. Some time we go together in the park and shopping.’

The issue of friendship was also raised by the befriender trainer and supporter:

'Befriending is more friendship, sharing knowledge... an exchange between them and then women.... They give something back ... a cup of tea, a piece of fruit, something made by them. They exchange in terms of culture, such as sharing recipes....supporting language, learning each other's languages.'

'For those women that are quite isolated in their lives, it is a valuable and important chance for friendship.'

The positive experience of the befriending process is not confined to the befriended. The befrienders who were interviewed 1:1 also described mainly positive feelings about the experience. They spoke of being pleased to develop their own skills, feeling good about the work they did, feeling good about being helpful and making a positive difference to someone else's life, and enjoying learning about new cultures:

'Makes me feel good being a friend, when you find you are important for someone, see people appreciating your efforts- really good.'

The befriender supporter noted that the befrienders' work could be undervalued by the befrienders themselves:

(It is) 'simple but befrienders need to know it is valuable.'

Theme 3: The befriender role and recommendations for the training programme

Befrienders in years one and two of the project undertook a wide range of support activities with the learners they were supporting. This included telephone and face-to-face conversations about:

- recipes (one particular befriender changed her diet and lost weight as she became more aware of healthy foods and healthier ways of cooking foods using information provided by her befriended)
- pregnancy and parenting (specifically Diabetes during pregnancy and where either of the women had recently had a baby or were expecting a baby)
- plans for half term and holidays including clarifying details for half term events and trips
- comparing different aspects of life in UK to that of country of origin
- getting advice about housing
- studying in general, learning English and the *Welcome to the UK* courses including some reading and writing support, signposting to useful resources such as the BBC Skillswise site and the local FE college for pre-vocational training such as Childcare

- encouraging a befriender to apply for voluntary work or employment such as becoming a dinner lady or offering reading support at children's primary schools.

Some befrienders and befriendees arranged to meet at Morley College, others met for coffee and a chat or to go shopping together. One befriender provided support to a befriendee whose background is particularly complicated and was able to offer interpreting support between the befriendee and her lawyer. Some befrienders visited befriendees at home-usually with the recent arrival of a baby.

Befrienders said that they would benefit from further clarification of the role of befriending. They suggested that course materials could be developed in order to describe the befriender role to learners and their families more clearly, and explain its potential value. The befrienders' focus group agreed that it is as important to say what befriending is not, for example, not providing immigration advice, as to say what it is, for example, supporting access to services and organised events.

The befriender trainer and supporter, like the befrienders, also noted the importance of clarifying the role of the befriender during befriender training:

'Befriender training could usefully provide some further help in how to explain the process of befriending to their befriendees.'

'So people understand they are not a social worker... not about getting in the way of the family...something different .. informal support role...'

They also suggested that minimum expectations of the befriender's role should be established including:

- attending all training and support sessions
- maintaining contact with the befriender supporter
- agreeing the type of support needed by the befriendee
- attending events such as the half term events and the outing at the end of the year with befriendees
- committing to and offering at least one hour face-to-face or telephone befriender support per week per befriendee; this sometimes needed persistence, as they explained:

'Speaking regular to befriendedees had definitely made a difference – befrienders need to ensure that if (there is) no response, or (the learners) do not want a befriender, they do not lose heart. They need to develop persistence.' (Befriender)

The community outreach worker and the mentoring project coordinator raised a range of key issues that befriender training should take account of. Firstly, she described the sadness new-arrivals can feel, the challenges of the transition to a new life with a new family in a very different country and culture, and the valuable part that regular support and friendship can play. Since many of the newly-arrived women from Bangladesh are young adults who were living with their immediate family prior to migration, their transition is effectively one from childhood to adulthood.

Secondly, the mentor co-ordinator suggested that for some befriendedees, a befriender is 'a gateway to the outside world'. Similarly, the community outreach worker pointed out that it is important for women to receive encouragement, support and opportunities to develop their English language skills, knowledge of life in the UK and confidence while their children are growing up, or they may become housebound and isolated when their children leave home:

'Now their children have gone, old lady alone at home, if speak they English could have friend next door, go to each other's house. In East London this age (group) are depressed (with) no one to talk to.'

Thirdly, the befriendedees' support needs depend on their existing skills, knowledge, confidence, the number of years they have been in the UK, and their family status, including, whether they are parents. The mentor co-ordinator gave an example of a group of women she had mentored ('mentoring for mums'), who had been in the UK between four and eleven years and needed information about the school and nursery systems. (They subsequently set up a support group and shared information, ideas and helped each other at regular coffee mornings).

Fourthly, befrienders may need to develop their skills, confidence and their interpersonal skills in order to motivate the befriendedees and *'tease out goals and breaking them down into smaller parts'*, as the mentor coordinator explained. For example, *'I want to learn English'* or *'I want to get a job'* needs to be broken down into manageable goals and activities to help achievement and these skills are built in to their mentor training programme.

Theme 4: Befriending: shared experiences and transitions

All the Year 2 befrienders originate from countries outside the UK, which means that they have an important shared experience with their befriendees in relation to moving to and settling in the UK. Befrienders spoke about how being involved in befriending had prompted them to reflect on their own life journeys and experience of arriving in the UK:

'They give you the past in the present.'

'Like coming here from Bangladesh is very different, everything, so they must be very scared, I went through maybe 30% of what they did ... So I would like to help them ...'

'I remember I moved to the UK 8 years ago. I remember how stressful and scary for me as well. Now I am settled and like to help other people through my experience.'

This shared experience is at the heart of the befriending process as one befriender highlighted, when she described her understanding of the befriending role:

'Being a good listener, understanding what they are going through as we have experience of being new to a country.'

Theme 5: The value of befriending for befrienders

The befrienders spoke very positively about the whole process of befriending. In 1:1 interviews, befrienders described befriending as facilitating a two way process of learning and the development of new skills:

'Person who loves to meet other people...get to know each other... they are usually from others countries... Learn about different cultures.'

'Especially in my position I have young child but no job but I can still do something and get more experience. So now I am thinking to get another course to improve skills. Thinking of a new course as a community interpreter job.'

'I think this helps me as well.'

'Maybe, I am happy because I am stronger now. I am still getting more experience and different. I am thinking about going back to work, this helps me because I am not stuck at home all the time I can do something different so I feel this helps me. I am learning still I am learning from these people.'

They reported that they had learnt about and reflected on what integration means, and about living and belonging in the UK: *'I understand integration makes you life easier, when I go to college I don't stay with my own people I integrate with other people that is my natureit makes my life easier.'*

'When I came here my husband help me, I did not have someone outside so my husband help me. When I arrive my befriender said to me oh I don't know how to take him to school, before easy for me because my husband helped so. Now I do something for them... she phoned once asked about problem she was going to the council – I have got experience from my husband. I advised go to citizens advice bureau.'

'I feel like I have grown up with them, I would be happy to do it again.'

Theme 6: The befriending process and programme

A range of key aspects of the befriending process and programme were identified in the research:

- 6.1 communication between befrienders and befriendees: matching, making contact and ongoing communication
- 6.2 the support structure for befrienders
- 6.3 links between the WUK ESOL programme and befriending.

6.1: Communication between befrienders and befriendees: matching, making contact and ongoing communication

In total, during Year 2 of the project 39 WUK learners were matched with 14 befrienders. Of these, 26 were matchings in which some befriender support took place, 7 were introductions which were not successful or followed up, and 26 were further matchings as appropriate, e.g. when new learners were matched with a befriender, a befriender left the programme and their learner was matched with new befriender, or where it was felt appropriate to re-match learners and befrienders.

It was generally agreed by the project team that the befriender matching process developed for Year 2 was more robust than Year 1. It became evident during Year 2 that it is very important to consider localities when matching befrienders and befriendees, as the more successful pairings in years one and two generally lived nearby or had had children at the same school. It was also

recommended that more information should be collected about the participants in order to facilitate the matching process

In most cases befrienders were able to make contact with learners and establish the basis for befriending support. The importance of preparing for and managing the first meeting was highlighted.

Organised events, such as half term workshops, the film premier and end of year sea-side trip provide valuable facilitated opportunities for contact. This reinforces the importance of events like these, for creating contact opportunities, developing social networks, as well as providing an opportunity to discuss key topics, such as health and education.

Befrienders reported using a variety of ways of keeping in touch with their befriendees and stressed the value of telephone contact when face-to-face contact was difficult to arrange:

'Just speak on phone. Just talking like friends but they know if something happen I can help. They have felt so not alone.'

'We are talking about trip to seaside, may find ways to meet. With difficult as she is studying so and works and north of London. I suggest maybe one day on a Friday I can go to Morley College and meet with her.'

'Never met other women personally. Everyone busy going to college, work, have children, I have child, sometimes difficult. Not met two learners in person.'

Some befrienders found communication was difficult to establish with the learners they were matched with. One befriender found the learner never called her, and would only respond to e-mails. It was suggested this may have been because she did not have enough credit for the phone. Strategies for managing and overcoming possible barriers to effective communication were discussed extensively: with befrienders, in the advisory group, in interviews with key stakeholders, and as part of the annual project review process. More strategies will be built into Year 3.

6.2: The support structure for befrienders

The befriender trainer and supporter helped befrienders to establish and maintain contact with learners. As identified in the Year 1 project review and external evaluation, befrienders also identified the importance of this support structure and reported that they both appreciated it and found it encouraging and motivating:

'You are in touch and help people, we have people like (befriender supporter) we can call with problem and help us sort it out. So not like we are left on our own. Just lovely ...'

The befriender trainer and supporter made recommendations for the further development of the support structure. They highlighted that they needed more time to support and encourage the befrienders:

'More time needs to be factored in for ongoing support. We need to play the role of befriender to the befrienders and that means we need to be on the end of the phone.'

'We need to be proactive, ring up and give support frequently... (with) time and cost implications.'

Both the outreach worker and mentor co-ordinator acknowledged that issues always arise during befriending, and befrienders need training and support to respond appropriately.

6.3: Links between the WUK ESOL programme and befriending

It was generally agreed by the project team that there were stronger links between the WUK classes, the befrienders and the befriender trainer and supporter during Year 2. The opportunity for befrienders and befriendees to have a facilitated introduction in the WUK classes, prior to the first half term event, was identified as having a positive impact, and this will be arranged for Year 3.

The befriender trainer and supporter felt that the time that befrienders and befriendees spent together enhanced the learning process provided by the learners' WUK course:

'Without a befriender, generally the learners only have one class a week of ESOL with support of befriender they reinforce the learning in class.'

They pointed out that befriending 'give the women further opportunities to practice and develop their language skills outside the classes.'

Also as recommended in the Year 1 project review and by the external evaluators, the links between the WUK courses and befriending were strengthened throughout the year. The befrienders who were interviewed 1:1 indicated that strong channels of communication across the whole project were important, for facilitating the befriender process and for supporting the befrienders. Befrienders also felt the WUK teachers had an important role to play in clarifying the befriending process and encouraging learners to take up and maintain contact with a befriender. They said:

'So we speak to (befriender supporter) maybe English teachers speak to girls about befrienders and say we are all together on UK project.'

'In the beginning- these girls knew they had befrienders but they did not want a befriender, they did not exactly know why I need a befriender to help them may be scared. Husband answered phone and said –sorry she does not want a befriender. so speaking to (befriender supporter) we think that these girls should know we are working with Morley College, in English classes and befrienders they work together because otherwise they think it strange why this befriender wants my help.'

The befriender trainer and supporter reported that meetings during the year between themselves, and ESOL tutors and learners were valuable:

'I found it very useful to meet women during class time, to take from them issues, or areas that they would like to be improved... positive reinforcement for befrienders also for me it was important to meet the tutors. We could make it earlier on next year, we could meet more regularly, meeting tutors and befrienders.'

They also recommended developing these links in the third year of the project, and continuing with the approach introduced in Year 2, where befrienders are introduced to learners in their WUK classes:

'If befrienders are introduced through the ESOL classes, it (gives) time for quiet talk and getting to know each other as part of the class. The befrienders and women (can) consolidate their relationship in a safe environment before meeting in external venues.'

It was also suggested that there should be an early evening reception for the learners, their families, teachers and befrienders towards the beginning of the year,

Theme 7: Language and the befriender - befriender relationship

All WUK learners were given the option of requesting a befriender and saying whether they would prefer to communicate with the befriender in English or another language. Befrienders agreed that a shared language and culture other than English was very important when supporting befriendees who were beginners in English. One befriender gave an example of how she had arranged for another befriender to take on the support for her Spanish-speaking Latin American learner with low-level English, when it became clear that a shared common language and culture was important for the type of support need identified.

When the befriended's spoken English level was higher than Entry level 1, the befrienders did not feel that a shared language other than English was so important. They considered that the befriending relationship provided an opportunity for the befriended to practise and develop her English with a sympathetic and supportive listener:

'I met the learner every two to three weeks, at the weekend as she is very busy at work. She is always excited to see me and tell me about everything for 2 -3 weeks. She is happy to improve English. At home speaks in Chinese. She does not have a lot of friends that speak in English. She is happy so this makes me happy as well.' (Befriender's languages: Polish and English; befriended's languages: Cantonese and English)

'I was worried about English language barrier but my girls (befriendeds) speak English so not problem - no cultural problems, more like friends now. I was worried.' (Befriender's languages: Polish and English; befriendeds' languages: Cantonese and English, Russian and English, Bengali and English)

The befriender trainer and supporter reported that befrienders had supported the befriendeds with their English language learning in a range of ways: supporting befriendeds to understand texts, giving feedback on their writing, suggesting useful websites. One befriender who had accompanied a befriended to a meeting with a lawyer acted as an interpreter. This was not planned but was considered to be very helpful to all concerned:

'She can get advice from Eritrean community but I went with her to her lawyer ... she found it helpful. They were misunderstanding each other, sometimes the girl thought the lawyer was being rude to her but when I went to see her, the lawyer was really nice.' (The befriender and befriended both speak Tigrinya and Amharic)

A strategy for providing English language development opportunities for both the befriender and the befriended in Year 3 is being considered. It would involve timetabled homework support sessions, in addition to the WUK classes. For this to be successful, a shared understanding of the roles and situations of both befrienders and befriendeds will be needed, as the befriender trainer pointed out:

'Befriendeds need to understand that befrienders are also in many cases still developing their English language....English support group could be developed with a 'Befriender Plus' focusing on the language, study skill and homework. Befrienders have a range of skills and abilities, not a teacher, ...someone who knows it is fine to say I do not know and fine to pass it on...'

The mentor co-ordinator flagged up that the befriender support with English language learning should be approached carefully so that the befriender relationship does not become 'bogged down' with learning English. She pointed out that while the training can prepare befrienders to offer some support with English and homework, befrienders should be reminded that they should not take on the role of 'English teacher'. Instead, this type of support should be informal and organic, and make use of opportunities that arise for conversation practice, rather than, for example, *'sitting around with grammar books.'*

Theme 8: Befriender's family situation and impact on programme

The family and social situation of the befriender has been identified as having an impact on the befriending relationship. Some befrienders have no family in the UK; they may be separated or divorced and living on their own with children. In these cases the befriending relationship was generally positive and befrienders provided a key role.

The befriending relationship is more likely to become well-established if the family knew about befriending and could see its value. Befrienders who were interviewed 1:1 explained:

'...she lives on her own ... a befriender from my country. She does not speak English ...new in country. Why good especially in her case she is new she is here 2 years, divorced one child, she lives in one room, has had to change places and the child has been out of school for one month.'

' Husband knows about me, and it is ok.'

'I have never spoke to husband... he knows ...he is happy I think, she says he knows and he is fine.'

The less developed and/or less successful befriender relationships occurred when the befrienders already had well-established support networks in the UK through family or friends, where family members, such as the husband or mother-in-law, interceded between the befriender and befriender, or where the befriender had to leave the course, for example, to have a child. Befrienders who were interviewed 1:1 made the following observations:

'They know if something happens and they need help they can text me or call me I in touch with them every one or two weeks. They have got family and husband so they are not alone here.'

'I phoned this girl I met in Morley college.... yes I would love befriender, then she never answered by call or text me so I went to Morley college and speaking to her and she told

me her husband said she does not need a befriender ... I text her from time to time but I have no call from her.... But this is just one woman ...She is from Bangladesh ... no my husband help me I don't want any befriender.'

Some befrienders thought the situation where the husband was always answering the phone and acting as an intermediary may signal a lack of confidence on the part of the learner. Others felt that husbands were unsure or suspicious of the befriender role, and thought that they were trying to interfere in family issues or that they had some connection with the immigration authorities. One befriender explained that she had had to reassure the husband that she was not trying to interfere between him and his wife.

The community outreach worker, who mainly works with Bangladeshi families to enable women to access courses, is of the view that sometimes the partner or family is not very supportive because they may lack confidence. The befriender trainer and supporter both agreed that while the family could be a great support to the befriending process, family members sometimes needed further understanding of the befriending process:

'Concept of integration is elusive...the words we use are not that helpful ...perhaps it is natural for some families to be resistant to accept help.'

To deal with this in Year 2, an information leaflet about the WUK programme and befriending support was produced so learners could read and discuss it with their families; this was an action point from the Year 1 project report and a recommendation from the external evaluation. During Year 2 it became clear that further involvement of the family would be helpful: *'This could alleviate suspicions about the 'friend' on the part of the family.'*

While the community outreach worker and mentor co-ordinator consider it important to engage the interest and support of the women's families, they also acknowledge that in some circumstances it is more appropriate to not involve the family, for example, when there is the possibility of women suffering domestic violence.

From her own experience, the community outreach worker recognises the importance of respecting the family structure and gradually establishing the befriender relationship before trying to offer guidance or direction to befriendees. She recommends providing workshops for befriendees' male family members to facilitate their understanding and support and reduce the likelihood of resistance to the befriending process:

' ... if husband knows ok for women to be in good position, be proud for the wife.'

She also believes that befrienders have an important role to play in helping to explain to women's families the benefits for the women of taking up opportunities to learn English and build their knowledge, confidence and skills for life in the UK:

'So she can be very productive person in family, if learning a language she can pick up a job, if the son become ill she can contribute to family income. She can know about education system for children, embed some kind of inspiration to learn in her children.'

Theme 9: Other observations and suggestions

The project values the insight, feedback and suggestions from the befrienders and this has helped to shape and strengthen the befriending strand of the WUK programme. When asked what advice befrienders would give to others considering befriending, they stated:

'Take time with them, Get along with them, be honest, keep going.'

'Don't expect a lot but when you are doing it makes you feel good ... makes you feel good when you do good for others.'

'Don't worry about this job.'

One befriender, who is a school governor, said that she wants to set up a type of 'befriending programme' at her school for the parents, and requested a speaker from the WUK project at a governors meeting.

One of the suggestions for Year 3 from the stakeholders, included making a video/film about befriending to clarify what it can be, what it isn't, and to emphasise that it is a two way process, with befrienders and befriendees speaking about what they have gained from befriending.

4.1.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The overall approach of the befriender course was welcomed and was identified as very valuable and useful by all of the stakeholders interviewed.

When discussing integration there were a variety of interpretations and perspectives, but shared territory included developing skills and knowledge about the UK and developing feelings of 'belonging'. The importance of developing language skills to facilitate accessing services and the local community was highlighted, and emphasis was placed on feelings about the whole transition experience, and the development of confidence about the 'new world'. The

befrienders themselves indicated a stronger sense of belonging in the UK once they started working with their befriendees.

These ideas about integration underpin the befriending programme. Notions of 'shared journeys and experiences' are seen as central to the process, with befrienders as potential role models who might open up choices, or become friends with whom they could share ideas and develop conversational language. The notion of befrienders supporting befriendees to interact with people and explore '*out there*', and understand how to access services was identified as key to supporting integration and belonging in the UK.

The family of the befriender was important to the success of the befriending process; some were supportive, others seemed to challenge the relationship. However, ways of tackling this are being developed.

The befriender trainers felt the befriender programme was evolving and everyone was learning about the importance of bringing together the different strands of the WUK project.

The community based specialists also identified the importance of providing 'getting out there' activities, and encouraging befrienders to accompany the newly arrived women to meet people and experience the local area.

Recommendations for Year 3:

1 Befriending

- a. Produce more materials and activities to clarify further what befriending is, the value of befriending and promote a better shared understanding of the role of the befriender at the start of the programme for all stakeholders. These could include:
 - a checklist of topic-specific types of information and support including using public transport, cultural awareness, women's rights in the UK, family relationships, personal safety, sexual health
 - a video about the role and process of befriending with suggested clips about the first meeting, half term events, problem solving situations, with befrienders and befriendees speaking about how they have benefited from it, the limits of support, and things to avoid
- b. Develop stronger links between all elements of the befriender strand; trainer, supporter, befrienders, WUK tutors, project team, learners

- c. In order to maximise attendance at workshops, trips and events, either hold these in Year 3 at Blackfriars settlement, or, teachers, project team and befrienders could meet learners at Blackfriars before travelling together to the other venue

2 Befriender recruitment and training

- a. Introduce a befriender contract which stipulates a minimum commitment of one hour per week
- b. In relation the training, the matching process, and the retention of befrienders:
 - run two befriender training courses during the year and recruit a greater number of volunteers in order to accommodate potential drop out and changes in availability etc.
 - establish minimum commitment during recruitment, interviews and training
 - hold more frequent KIT (keeping in touch) meetings, with incentives to attend
 - offer more regular support
 - ensure the system for reimbursement of travel and phone expenses is more accessible and efficient
- c. Develop further content and activities to develop befrienders' knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence including:
 - ways of supporting learners to identify and work towards their own personal goals in relation to feeling part of life in the UK
 - multiculturalism/cultural awareness
 - conversation practice
 - homework support, including using the intent to support learning
 - planning journeys and travelling independently
 - places of interest
 - useful organisations
 - the role and responsibilities of the befriender
 - strategies for dealing with issues

3 Befriender/befriender matching

- a. Fine-tune the matching process based on befriendees' circumstances and personal support needs. In addition to the current practice of befriendees identifying whether they would like to communicate with their befriender in English or another common language, also consider:
 - geographical location to match people who live nearby
 - befriendees to identify the type of support they would like, e.g. conversation practice, homework support, support with specific everyday topics, e.g. using public transport
 - skills of the befriender: 'I want a befriender who can...'
 - frequency and type of support, e.g. telephone support only, regular or occasional face-to-face meetings

4 Befriendees and their families

- a. Use a range of strategies to enlist the support and input of befriendees' families, including:
 - holding an information event towards the beginning of the year
 - providing more detailed information for learners to take home and discuss with their families
 - holding more events at weekends or early evening to enable learners' families with daytime commitments to participate

5 Befriender support

- a. Explore ways of extending learning time in classes or groups, linked to the content of classes.
- b. Extend support to include the option of English conversation practice and homework support, where appropriate
- c. Explore ways of getting the befriender/befriendees 'out there', doing more activities together outside the WUK classes
- d. Develop a programme of KIT (keeping in touch) support meetings for befrienders which could include:

- guest speakers such local outreach workers and agencies which provide services and skill development of relevance to newly-arrived third country national women and befrienders, e.g. community interpreting
- a financial incentive to attend, e.g. reimbursement of travel and telephone expenses
- further information and training to support progression, e.g. access to nationally recognised befriender (or mentoring) training programmes and networks, and exploring possible progression routes for more experienced befrienders

6 Support for befrienders

- a. Increase the time available for the befriender supporter
- b. Ensure teachers have contact details for befrienders, keep in touch about key topics being covered in WUK classes and invite befrienders to class trips and visits.

7 Further research and dissemination

- a. Investigate ways to disseminate and sustain the programme after the project funding has finished
- b. Research ways of sustaining the programme through regional, national and international agencies, given the positive responses to the programme from all stakeholders involved
- c. Produce a short impact report for the 3 years of the programme to be used for dissemination and to support sustainability
- d. Research ways of sustaining the programme through regional, national and international agencies

4.2 Preparing for life in the UK (PLUK) programme in Bangladesh

The aim of this section of the research is to examine the impact of the pre-departure aspect of the Welcome to the UK (WUK) projects' Preparing for life in the UK (PLUK) programme in Bangladesh.

Three bilingual volunteers from the UK, and 10 Bangladeshi teachers of English, who work in local secondary schools and language schools, worked together to run bilingual pre-departure PLUK workshops in Bangladesh for women who are married to UK citizens, or whose husbands have indefinite leave to remain in the UK (ILR), or are planning to join family members.

PLUK workshops cover a range of key topics in relation to moving to and settling in the UK which are of interest, relevance and concern to the participants. They are designed to be delivered in both Sylheti and English, in order to maximise understanding and participation, but also provide some targeted English language practice linked to the topics. In Year 2, PLUK workshops were delivered twice a week over a six week period in four locations across the Sylhet district, areas where there is a high level of migration to the UK. In Year 2 of the project 57 participants attended PLUK workshops in the four localities. Three bilingual volunteers from the UK worked with 10 teachers to deliver the workshops. Working in partnership, the bilingual volunteers contribute their knowledge about life in the UK, and the Bangladeshi teachers of English contribute their knowledge and experience of teaching English, and of the local context of the workshop participants. In Year 1 the teachers and volunteers were trained separately. In Year 2, they were trained separately and together. The joint training was an action point from the Year 1 project report and a recommendation from the external evaluation. The training, with a lead trainer from the UK, focussed on planning and running PLUK workshops, as well as gathering feedback and data for the research. There was a strong element of continuity as one of Year 1 volunteers returned for Year 2. Also, 9 of the 10 Year 2 teachers had also attended Year 1 training, of whom 7 had helped to run Year 1 PLUK workshops.

Teachers, volunteers and workshops are organised and supported locally in partnership with UKBET (UK Bangladesh Education Trust) an educational charity and NGO based in Sylhet and working across the whole of the Sylhet district. UKBET plays a key role in the PLUK programme in Sylhet through:

Publicising the programme

Recruiting and interviewing participants

Recruiting teachers

Organising the local training

Negotiating and arranging venues

Organising and supporting the workshop programme

Supporting the teachers and volunteers

Organising award ceremonies

Background information about PLUK volunteers

The three bilingual British Bangladeshi volunteers have spent varying amounts of time in Bangladesh since their childhood. One had spent part of her childhood in Bangladesh before moving to the UK and had not been back for over ten years. Another volunteer had spent her early childhood in Sylhet and subsequently had frequent and, at times, extended, stays in Sylhet throughout her teenage years and adult life. The third volunteer had made only occasional visits to Sylhet. All were educated to at least degree level in a range of subjects: accounting, psychology, social studies and clinical aromatherapy.

Prior to the voluntary placement, all the volunteers underwent some training with the project lead in the UK and then participated in further training with the Bangladeshi teacher team in Sylhet. One returning volunteer who had worked on the pilot programme in Bangladesh in Year 1 took a lead in supporting the new volunteers, co-ordinating and supporting the research and helping with the Year 2 film projects. She also attended briefing sessions with the lead researcher, Project Manager and film-maker in the UK prior to departure.

4.2.1 Research design

Methods

In order to examine the impact of the PLUK programme, the research investigated the feelings, skills and confidence of PLUK workshop participants in relation to the process of preparing to become part of life in the UK. Additional responses were gathered from the Bangladeshi teachers of English, the bilingual UK volunteers, a small group of Year 1 PLUK participants who now living in the UK, and the project team.

Year 1 research methods helped to inform the methods designed for use in Year 2. Semi-structured focus group sessions were held instead of one to one interviews with PLUK

participants, because participants stated that they felt more relaxed in a group setting and enjoyed sharing and learning with others in group discussions.

As PLUK is a bilingual pre-departure programme which uses Sylheti (a variety of Bengali) and English, both Sylheti and/or English were used for the interviews and feedback. Responses were recorded by bilingual members of the interview team and, where required, the data was translated into English.

Sources used to inform the impact assessment

1. Focus groups with women who attended the programme in Bangladesh, prior to leaving to live in the UK: Focus groups were held at the beginning of the PLUK workshop programme and on completion. A semi-structured approach was used, with a set of agreed topics and questions, in order to provide participants with an opportunity to freely express their own views and ideas. The research focus groups were usually led by a bilingual volunteer from the UK who had undergone training, working in partnership with trained teachers /UKBET team members. Voice recorders were not used as the participants said they felt more comfortable with a volunteer or teacher making hand written notes. Before the focus group sessions, facilitators explained the confidentiality of the research and gathered signed consent forms.

2. Questionnaires for PLUK programme participants: The researchers developed response questionnaires (called 'confident/not confident topic sheets) to research the changes in participants' confidence in relation to workshop topics (see Appendix 3). Each participant completed a questionnaire before and after each topic.

The project team recognised that asking participants to identify how confident they felt about topics could be complex, so a kinaesthetic activity was developed to introduce the idea. It was introduced to the volunteers and teachers as part of their training, then used with PLUK workshop participants. This activity required participants to move around the room and stand under four confidence headings: not confident at all, a little confident, confident or very confident. First, the participants did this for a range of familiar, everyday tasks and skills such as cooking rice, swimming and driving a CNG (motorised rickshaw). After this, the confidence activity on the workshop topics was introduced using a simple questionnaire in English. Where necessary, volunteers or teachers acted as interpreters, and explained in Sylheti. Participants ticked a box to indicate how they felt about each topic, using the same confidence headings.

Participants were also asked to respond to the same questions at the end of the PLUK workshop programme, and in Year 2, participants were given a new, blank, second

questionnaire to complete. This meant that they were not able to refer to their original responses when considering how they felt at the end. If the questionnaire is used again in Year 3, the original questionnaires will be returned to participants at the end of the workshops.

3. Quotes from the videos made by women in Bangladesh: Two videos were made in Bangladesh in Year 2 of the project: one was about the PLUK project and the second was a short film made by PLUK project participants themselves using a participatory approach facilitated by InsightShare, the same organisation involved in the Year 1 WUK participants' video project. The video was integral to the learning programme and was designed to support the process of thinking through key issues in the women's lives in relation to migration and settling in the UK.

4. One to one interviews with PLUK project participants: One to one telephone interviews were carried out with a small sample of women who had attended PLUK workshops in Bangladesh in Years 1 and 2 of the WUK project and were now resident in the UK . This was a recommendation from the Year 1 external evaluation. They were interviewed on the telephone using a standard question guide by the lead bilingual PLUK volunteer.

5. A written report submitted by the lead volunteer: The lead PLUK volunteer wrote a report describing the Year 2 research process in Bangladesh and the telephone interview process conducted in the UK.

6. Questionnaires completed by Bangladeshi teachers who delivered the PLUK programme in partnership with the bilingual UK volunteers: Questionnaires were distributed to the teachers through the UKBET office after the workshops were completed, and returned, via the office, to the UK.

4.2.2 Findings

The findings focus primarily on the PLUK participants' knowledge, skills and confidence at the beginning and the end of the PLUK workshop programme in relation to preparing for life in the UK. At the beginning and end of the PLUK workshop programme participants expressed a range of ideas and concerns about the new life in the UK they were preparing for, and these have been grouped into six key themes. Their responses to the content of the PLUK workshop programme and workshop approaches are also included. In addition, feedback from volunteers, Bangladeshi teachers, the UKBET and project team, as well as two PLUK participants from Year 1 now living in the UK, have also helped us to explore the key themes and the impact of the PLUK programme. One theme looks at collaborative working across the project, and draws in particular on the experience of the teachers and volunteers:

Theme 1: Practical knowledge of life in the UK

Theme 2: Family and social life in the UK

Theme 3: Learning English

Theme 4: Being independent/less dependent on others

Theme 5: Feelings: more confidence, less fear

Theme 6: Aspirations and expectations

Theme 7: The value of collaborative working across the project

Theme 1: Practical knowledge of life in the UK

At the beginning of the workshops, PLUK participants identified a range of topics, practical issues and services in the UK that they wanted to know about, including: the education system and studying; getting a job; setting up a business; driving; going to nice places; gardening; money and opening a bank account; doctors, health and hospitals; shopping; travelling and using public transport; living independently; getting to know their new locality; children's education, nurseries and crèches; and domestic violence. In addition, they indicated a need for information about what people in the UK typically do in certain situations, for example:

'...if I did start work there, would I be able to leave my job as I wished, I mean for women who become mothers, what will happen then?'

One participant stated a combination of concerns; *'New place, new life, different language and culture'* while another said:

'I am concerned about everyday life over there. You know how to do things on your own, shopping, accident and emergency, when I think about this I feel a bit worried. Since it's something I have never done before.'

After the workshop programme, participants stated that they felt more knowledgeable and confident about tackling a range of aspects of life and systems in the UK, for example:

'These workshops make me feel very confident about life in the UK. I know how to call the police in emergency cases, know how to find a job, know how to consult a doctor and know how or what to do in the case of dealing with a G.P. surgery.'

'I can go shopping on my own.'

'We have learnt about accident and emergency e.g. how to call the fire service.'

Using the Entzinger and Biezeveld (2008) analysis, many of the topics the participants referred to at the beginning and end of the programme are of a 'structural' nature, that is, concerned with social participation in UK institutions such as health, education and work. However, they also relate to notions of culture and *'stance in new country'*, for example, the issue of doing things on their own. At the end of the programme, participants' statements indicated that their increased knowledge about the UK will enable them to 'get started' using UK systems. 'Getting started' might be identified as a strategic position from which they will be able to start tackling those complexities inherent in systems that will only emerge when they arrive in the UK. This lines up with feedback from a Year 1 PLUK participant, now living in the UK, who stated she felt quite confident about using the public transport as a direct result of the knowledge gained from the PLUK workshops in Bangladesh.

Teachers also reported that the content of the PLUK programme had engaged the participants particularly women's health, shopping and transport, and they also concluded that the participants had learnt more about the UK:

'They became more confident after attending in PLUK programme, they know how to join with NHS, how to make and bank account in England. Now they are free from anxiety.'

The teachers' suggestions for improvement included: more language practice and more information about immigration procedures and further education opportunities.

Theme 2: Personal, family and social life in the UK

The social aspects of life in the UK that the women spoke about at the beginning and end of the workshops are wide ranging. They include hopes and concerns about how the social aspects of their new lives in the UK, including their future family life would turn out. While looking forward to being with their husband they often said they would miss their family in Bangladesh and the support it offered. Some highlighted positive expectations and hopes in relation to family life, for example:

'I already know my husband's family and if I can live peacefully with them my life will be beautiful. I have a child and I think life will be better for him there, he will have more opportunities.'

Anxieties about fitting in with the new families, included how to establish a positive relationship with their mother-in-law. They talked about the relationship building that would be needed in order to prevent things going wrong, for example, the belief that a successful relationship with their mothers-in-law is dependent on reciprocal respect:

'...Well I have to listen to them and especially mother-in-law since usually there are problems with the mother-in-law,...to be respectful to her and understand her, but on the same way she has to understand and support me....But I wouldn't like to be abused for no reasons.'

One of the volunteers commented that they had not expected the participants to want to talk about their future relationship with their mother-in-law. Another unexpected issue that participants raised was mental health. The wide ranging nature of the issues raised by the participants signals the depth of their thinking about their future life in the UK.

At the beginning of the PLUK workshops, participants raised the issue of how they would deal with social situations and relationships that the extended family would have helped with in Bangladesh, for example, if family issues can't be resolved. After the workshops, some women said that they felt better prepared for dealing with negative experiences which might arise in the UK, for example:

'I know and understand about domestic violence. I can help myself or help others if they need help...'

One woman pointed to a mixed view of her future life: positive in relation to the children she hoped to have, less positive in relation to herself:

'My life is now over but my children's life will be better. After marriage our life is over, we live for the children....' You are educated, you have a job, our life will not be the same.'

What this participant says relates to the hope frequently expressed by migrants, that their children's opportunities will be increased. This woman also anticipates a huge change in her identity, from an identity in her own right to that of supporting her children's emerging lives and identities. The impact of moving to the UK on identity also emerged as a key theme in Year 1. A significant number of participants on the PLUK programme said that much would depend on what their mother-in-law wanted.

After the workshops, the women signalled that they expected to be able to make contact with people outside the family in the UK and that they were starting to tackle their fears about meeting people. For example:

'I was also scared of meeting people but after attending the workshops I feel better about mixing as well. Also I was worried about going to the GP and other practical things, now life will be a little easier.'

'I feel less hesitant about speaking to people, and also feel my expectations have changed, since meeting you. We used to worry about English or foreign people now it has become easier to think of living there.'

"Before attending the workshops I was worried how I will speak to people in England, but now I feel confident about mixing with them."

Feeling more able to meet people links with a theme identified in the Year 1 research, that of changing stances to people in the UK. It would appear that having participated on the PLUK workshop programme, many participants could now imagine themselves meeting and interacting with people outside the family in the UK.

One of the volunteers observed that while the workshop participants had a range of concerns and recognised that their life in the UK would be different, they were hoping that it would be better.

Theme 3: Learning English

At the beginning of the PLUK workshop programme, participants all spoke about the need to learn English in the UK, and expressed a range of motivations. Some expressed concerns and a lack of confidence about their ability to learn English, for example:

'I am not well educated....tough to communicate in English and live there.' 'I will not have close family members to share problems with.'

Like the women in the UK who had been the focus of research in Year 1, women in Bangladesh related learning English to becoming independent, for example:

'We will be stuck at home and feel we will be prisoner in own home. We will be alone when family members go out. That is why we want to learn English and be able to go out independently.'

'I really would need support if my family doesn't allow me to study'

Other social consequences of having limited English were also referred to, for example:

'I need to make friends over there otherwise I will feel lonely.'

Joining ESOL classes was also linked to accessing services such as registering with a doctor and going to hospital, plus going shopping. As in Year 1, learning English is also linked to opportunities and aspirations, such as employment and accessing training courses, including tailoring courses.

After the workshops programme, participants all identified the importance of continuing to work on their English for the practical aspects of everyday life, for example, shopping independently, visiting the doctor, plus their future work prospects, and feeling part of life in the UK, for example:

'Improve my speaking skills and that will help me a lot to gain employment. I'll also be able to help teach my children, there is no age (limit) to learning.'

'I will like to increase my knowledge of English. If I can communicate with people fluently this will make me feel like I am one of them.'

Volunteers also noted the importance that the women placed on improving their English, identifying it as fundamental to improving their lives in the UK. However, on arrival, the cost of English courses can present a barrier, as a Year 1 PLUK participant who had been living in the UK for about 3 months and wanted to learn English to improve her job prospects explained:

'I am thinking of enrolling on an English speaking course to improve my level of English. I have got a few prospectus from the local college. I mean I would love to study but can't go onto a full time Uni/College level course due to the high fees, as I will be classified as a foreign student. I've been told that GCSE English will be good for me.'

Theme 4: Being independent and less dependency on others

Independence was a key theme in the Year 1 research and it is evidently a key issue for the Year 2 participants in Bangladesh. We live our lives as part of social networks so any consideration of actual independence and dependency is complex. Participants had a range of ideas about how living in the UK would impact on their independence and these appear to be underpinned by a range of ideas about what independence is. The notion of 'independence' seems to mean different things to different people; it is likely that people's beliefs about independence are structured by what they value. Some anticipated more independence, underpinned by the belief that they would have access to greater opportunities. Others were concerned they would have less independence, underpinned by the belief that they would not be able to go out on their own and would be dependent on others.

At the beginning of the Year 2 workshop programme several participants, like some of the Year 1 participants, signalled that being able to go out on their own is very important for them and they were concerned that life in the UK may result in less independence and freedom, for example:

'I will depend on others. Here (in Bangladesh) we have freedoms, we can go out on our own, and over there (UK) there is no freedom. However, there are a lot of opportunities for children. I have to depend on my husband always.'

'Relatives tell me women are stuck at home, cooking and cleaning all day long. They can't go anywhere without their husbands.'

It appears that these participants aspire for independence and this structures their interpretations of what they have heard about the UK. It indicates that they anticipate that they will not feel independent unless they can go out on their own, and are not dependent on others.

However, concerns about reduced independence in the UK were less common, and more often responses linked to independence were more positive. They tended to focus on potentially increased opportunities to study, get a job, and shop. For these participants, it is evident that opportunities are significant in structuring their notions of independence. Year 1 participants,

now in the UK, also described increased economic opportunities as a valuable aspect of life in the UK and one said that women in the UK are more independent.

Some year 2 participants identified support that they would need to become more independent, for example:

'I need to know how to go out independently.'

After the PLUK workshop programme, less concern was expressed about their new lives in the UK having a negative impact on their independence, for example:

'I will also be on my own but I think it will be better for me because I can lead my life and manage as I see fit. I will also have my freedom and independence.'

'Even if husband is busy I can go anywhere on my own... I can consult the doctor easily now.'

'I always heard ladies are stuck in the house with nothing to do but now I know I don't think that because I can learn English and be independent.'

To explain why the PLUK workshops reduced some women's concerns about moving to the UK leading to a loss of independence, it is important to take account of how the women's sources of information and interpretations about life in the UK changed as a result of the PLUK workshops. Prior to attending the workshops, the women's information and interpretations about living in the UK would have been filtered through their personal involvement in social networks across the Bangladeshi communities in Sylhet and the UK. The PLUK workshops introduced a new source of information through direct contact with the bilingual volunteers, trainers from the UK and a range of resources, activities and other sources of information, such as the internet. This supplemented the information that the women already had, regardless of whether they had access to the internet and opportunities to talk to people who have been to the UK.

Women were able to ask about the accuracy of information they have heard. For example, one participant asked whether it was true that from April 2012 you had to have £18,000 deposited in the bank account before you can apply for a visa.

Significantly, this new source of information was not filtered through their families. The volunteers running the workshops were part of both UK and Bangladeshi networks and it is evident from the positive feedback about the workshops, that the women trusted them as sources of information about the UK. This trust was clearly a key factor in the success of PLUK workshops and the positive experience it provided for participants.

In addition to providing access to more information and interpretations about the UK through new sources, the PLUK workshops also provided a space in which the women could discuss and reflect on their interpretations of this new information. In this way, it provided a space where women could change, as well as add to, their interpretations of what their lives in the UK would be like, including the issue of independence. Accessing new sources of information and interpretations offered the women the possibility of taking more ownership of 'the imagining' of what their new life world would be like. One of the workshop teachers from Bangladesh discusses this issue:

'They have learnt some very basic matters about using transport, important road signs, going to the physician (GP), timetable, culture, expressing ideas, asking for information etc. Before the training participants were in dark about the life in the UK. Actually they were mentally dependent on their relatives in the UK. After the training they are trying to think in their own way...'

Theme 5: Participants' feelings about their new life: more confidence, less fear

At the beginning of the workshop programme, participants pinned a lot of expectations on the PLUK workshops in relation to supporting them to manage their feelings about their new life. They hoped the workshops would increase their confidence and reduce their fears, as the following quotes indicate:

'I think it will help me be more confident in everyday life in the UK. It will help with English as well.'

'..make me understand about life, practice English, learn about doctors, A&E.'

'These workshops would give us confidence and not feel so scared.'

'Give us the information we need to be able to live there.'

'I imagine once I start living in the UK I'll be very grateful for these workshops.'

In the questionnaire, 91% of participants (20 out of 22 responses) indicated an increase in confidence, and this figure, alongside statements from participants, such as those below, indicate that their expectations and hopes were generally met:

'After attending the workshops I feel more confident. The things that made me worried, now clear on these points.'

'I was very worried and scared before I came to the workshops not now I feel confident.'

‘These workshops make me feel very confident about life in the UK. I know how to call the police in emergency cases, know how to find a job, know how to consult a doctor and know how or what to do in the case of dealing with a G.P. surgery’ The workshops provided an opportunity for the women to develop and extend their frameworks for thinking strategically about preparing for living in the UK, as one of the teachers pointed out:

‘After the training they are trying to think in their own way. This appears to have led to increased confidence and less fear.’

All of the Bangladeshi teachers thought the PLUK programme had a positive impact on the women participants’ knowledge, skills and confidence, for example:

‘I think there was a great progression seen in the participants after the PLUK training programme. PLUK training has helped them a lot in case of improving their language skill, their confidence level.’

‘I think the PLUK training programme has increased the confidence level of participants, and enrich their knowledge.’

The volunteers also noted the participants’ increased confidence, for example:

‘I have no doubt that workshops have made a positive attribution to the participants. In that it has given them more knowledge and skills... they generally feel more confident about everyday aspects of living in the UK after attending the workshops.’

Theme 6: Aspirations and expectations

It is significant that the participants made more statements about their aspirations and expectations after the workshop PLUK programme. It seemed that they were more able to imagine and consider their aspirations when they had more of a feel of what life in the UK might be like. Some of the aspirations expressed after the workshops are:

‘I definitely want to work and will try all my best. I got lots of information about different fields...such a jobs, libraries, hospitals, schools etc.’

‘I want to be a nurse.’

‘I want to work.’

Another key aspect of the PLUK programme identified in Year 2 is the way it supported participants to manage their expectations about their new lives in the UK. A Year 1 PLUK

participant now living in the UK spoke about differences between expectations and the reality of settling in the UK:

'Now coming here I can feel the difference. It feels different from how I thought it would be... Like the reality of England. I remember relatives telling me you will realise when you go to live in the UK how life can be...Now I know it is not so easy. For example everyone is busy here, have less time.'

Theme 7: The value of collaborative working across the project

The PLUK project successes are underpinned by successful collaboration between the UK project team, the Bangladeshi teachers, the volunteers and UKBET, who between them have contributed a range of knowledge and skills. There are several elements to this collaboration.

Firstly, the volunteers' contributions to the project, which are shaped by and filtered through their own experience, knowledge and understanding relating to migration and integration. One of the volunteers explained the meanings that she attaches to the notions of migration and integration, as a British Bangladeshi. She reported on the impact of several moves between Bangladesh and Britain and explained that on each occasion she experienced the feelings of being an outsider, as initially she was not fluent in Bengali and English. She noted that gradually, as her knowledge, skills and confidence increased, she felt at home in both countries. She relates this feeling of 'being at home' to integration:

'For me, the term 'Integration' resonates with this feeling at home, whereby I am able to feel safe and secure and make a positive contribution to the wider community by realising and reaching my own potentials. This idea ties in with the social understanding of integration. The other aspect of integration is that I experience it as a journey where skills, knowledge about the new society play a crucial role. Personally, the term integration is also related to Independence and Identity.'

Volunteers' personal experiences relating to migration and integration is crucial for the support they have provided to the participants, whose own lives are in transition, prior to their own migration to the UK. This personal experience underpins volunteers' own reasons for becoming involved in the PLUK project and their understanding of its processes and impact, as they explain:

'It [PLUK] supports the encouraging independency and empowerment of migrant women.'

It is encouraging women to take up the opportunities available to them in the UK to integrate faster and give better life chances for the future generation.'

'I enjoy learning from participants. It gives me a sense of gratitude to be involved in other people's journey in life.'

'I could engage myself in a research session and know lots of real things related with life and I could realised that UK life of all Bangladeshi women's is not a bed of roses.'

'With each group that I worked with I identified ways of noting individual progress, this was done through observing: how interactive they were in class, checking they (the women participants) were feeling more comfortable with new vocabulary and checking their understanding after each new topic was introduced.'

Secondly, joint training of Bangladeshi teachers and volunteers has fostered collaborative working. The joint training was in response to the lack of confidence on the part of the Bangladeshi teachers in delivering workshops alongside the UK volunteers during Year 1. Although the volunteers are not qualified teachers, the teachers tended to defer to the volunteers in Year 1, partly because of their perceived expert status as UK citizens. Therefore a priority for the training in Year 2 was to build the teachers' skills and confidence further so they felt able to take a more equal role in planning and delivering workshops and recognise the value of their own input. To this end, the joint training included microteaching and observation and feedback of some of the early PLUK workshops by the project manager, and received very positive feedback, for example, one of the Bangladeshi teachers reported:

'Group work helped me more to the growth in confidence. Secondly, in this training a micro-tech session was planned and delivered.'

The joint training appears to have increased the understanding between the teachers and volunteers, helped to clarify roles and approaches, and build skills and confidence for planning and delivering workshops together. One of the Bangladeshi teachers reported:

'Volunteers were creative, supportive and always ready to help me to make the workshops successful.'

In Year 3, further joint training will be delivered along with more observations and feedback of workshops.

Thirdly, collaborative working provided continuing professional development for the Bangladeshi teachers all of whom reported enhanced skills, knowledge and confidence in the second year of the project, for example:

'...level of confidence has grown really well in year 2. The things which were not enough clear in year 1; they came out easy to handle in year 2.'

'My level of confidence has grown enough from year 1 to 2 in planning and delivering PLUK workshops. Moreover we are trying our best level to improve our knowledge for the PLUK workshops.'

'The volunteers provided a clear idea about the life style of UK because they were the citizen of UK.'

The teachers also pointed out that the content of the PLUK programme was valuable for them as well as the participants, particularly topics such as women's health, shopping and transport, and this supported that their professional development. One teacher pointed out that she now has more confidence to:

'... search-out new things for PLUK programme ... make the packs ready for the participants ... deal with new people of different place.'

The teachers also explained that the PLUK programme has provided them with new teaching approaches that they will draw on for their work in schools in Bangladesh:

'Yes, PLUK workshops were really helpful to my profession. It has undoubtedly compelled me to learn lots and lots of things relating to my teaching profession. Now, I think of using those very new techniques in my school and which really coming helpful.'

'delivering speech relating to the topics of PLUK programme has been done more confidently.'

Fourthly, the teachers identified UKBET's role as pivotal to the success and impact of the PLUK programme:

'They organised this programme in different places. Participants enjoyed this programme and they got help from UKBET.'

'UKBET management was successful. We got help about preparing lesson plan and

managing teaching aids.'

In conclusion, it is evident that the second year of delivery of programme was well organised, with more training, and that the team of teachers, UKBET management and the volunteers had all worked well together in year 2. One teacher reports:

'Year 1 was the first time for me to teach at PLUK workshops. After every workshop I noted the success and failures of my performance and consulted with UKBET manager and other teachers and volunteers. We also got more training in planning and delivering the workshops before year 2.'

4.2.3 Participants' evaluations of the PLUK programme content

This section explores the women's responses to questions about the content of PLUK programme itself. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires ('confident/not confident topic sheets) which asked participants to indicate how confident they felt about each topic included in the workshop programme relating to life in the UK; not confident at all, a little confident, confident or very confident.

Data reliability issues

The reliability of this method of data collection, which incorporates participants' self perceptions of confidence in relation to topics, includes a range of variables, such as the research subject's interpretation of the notion of confidence, whether teachers introduce the topics in a similar way for each class, and the process for data collection. The sample size is also relatively small. Given the number of variables, the results are interesting in that they generally indicate an overall positive response in relation to an increase in confidence. Nevertheless there are also a minority of cases where the level of confidence appears to have actually reduced. This decrease in confidence may be due to individuals becoming more consciously aware of what they do not know or need to find out, as a direct result of gaining some awareness of a topic.

The researchers recognise that the notion of 'confidence' is likely to be interpreted differently by each person who completed the questionnaires and therefore the results need to be read with an understanding that although the notion of 'confidence' is not a singular thing, it is generally agreed to be associated with a positive change. The results are therefore about the extent to which the participants consider the workshops to have resulted in positive change, in relation to tackling life in the UK.

Participants' evaluation of the programme content, including teaching and learning approaches

The topics negotiated with participants were all covered in the workshops. As noted above, the majority of the participants (91%; 20 out of 22 completed questionnaires) stated they had greater confidence about more topics after the programme. The participants listed a wide range of topics that had met or exceeded their expectations. These included information on accessing a variety of services in the UK, discussions on the journey to the UK and women's health:

'I especially liked the information about diseases that affect women... women's health. I think this is very important for everyone to know.'

'I liked learning about employment and how to learn English. Information is good, like GP and shopping.'

'Journey was also good particularly the different steps. Before I used to think all I had to do is get on a plane and arrive at the UK now I realize I have to take preparation.'

'Domestic violence, now I know what to do if a women is abused by her husband.'

'We liked them, we enjoyed them, offered much more than I expected, explained so many things... valuable information that I would not have known about life in the UK.'

The quantitative data about confidence reflects a normal curve in statistical data collection (see Appendix 4 for a sample of the results breakdown). The few individuals who indicate a decrease in confidence should be further researched in Year 3 in order to establish the reasons, and whether any decrease in confidence is due to a greater awareness of what they do not know or need to find out more about, such as immigration regulations, transport, accessing ESOL classes and Family Planning.

The topic of healthcare was generally well received and the PLUK resource pack on this topic has been developed in response to participants' requests. It now includes more health terms and more about accessing different services in the UK. The volunteers also utilised other resources from the UK and the internet, with the support of the project lead. Questions from the participants were often linked to broader issues such as domestic violence and accessing social services.

The new approaches to teaching and learning that the participants experienced were described as an *'easy way to remember things properly'*. One participant commented:

'I liked how we played pelmanism and matching... pelmanism is an easy way to remember.'

Participants' evaluation of the programme as preparation for settling in the UK

This section notes the women's responses to a specific question about how they thought the workshops would help them settle in the UK and reconfirms the value that the women placed on the programme for this purpose. Again, responses were mainly positive:

'These workshops are very helpful. I imagine once I start living in the UK I'll be very grateful for these workshops.'

'I will not feel like a burden on anyone if I finish all of the workshops.'

'After doing the workshop it seems things will be easier, we will understand things better when we get there.'

'I am not very worried either; I feel much more able to go to the UK and live there and learn English as well. I will just like more ideas about public transport. I also think it was helpful to see what my expectations were with attending the workshops. I now have a clearer idea about how to travel to the UK and live independently.'

The participants also indicated that the workshops had given them ideas for other things they might do in the UK, suggesting that there had been an impact on aspirations, for example:

'Improve my speaking skills and that will help me a lot to gain employment. I'll also be able to help teach my children, there is no age (limit) to learning.'

'I want to be a police woman. ...At first I was not interested to work but now I think I really can.'

In addition, the women indicated a variety of aspects of life that they thought they would need help with on arrival. This suggests that after PLUK, the women could see how the workshops fitted into the wider picture of support needed by people who settle in another country.

Participants' suggestions for year 3

When asked if they had any questions, fears or concerns about living in the UK that the workshops did not cover, most indicated that they were generally very happy with the content of

the workshops. Many of the suggested topics for year 3 are concerned with women and children's health care, linked to welfare:

- children's vaccinations
- opticians and dentists
- family planning.
- how the electricity works
- writing letters and e-mails
- applying for a provisional driving license
- global warming
- NI numbers
- immigration regulations
- more information about transport
- more information on access to ESOL classes

Participants also said they would like to watch videos to see what the UK looks like, including roads, public transport, airports, and to see what the journey would be like.

4.2.4 Conclusions and recommendations

There is evidence that the second year of the PLUK program in Bangladesh had a positive impact on the women's knowledge, skills and confidence in relation to their imminent move to the UK and the processes of integration that they are about to embark on.

The research has identified a range of issues and concerns related to: knowledge about life in the UK, social aspects about life in the UK, the role of learning English, dependency and independence, and feelings about their new life.

The programme has built on the successful partnerships and programme content developed in Year 1, and has included new developments, such as the video production.

The positive impact of the PLUK programme has reached beyond the participants, to the teachers in Bangladesh, and the volunteers from the UK who worked with the teachers.

Recommendations

1. Develop the programme content and materials to include additional topics such as women's health and family planning
2. Ensure the project team has resources and capacity to undertake in-depth interviews with PLUK participants, particularly in cases where learners indicate a decrease in their confidence after the workshops
3. Explore funding opportunities to continue the PLUK workshops and to provide ESOL/language courses linked to PLUK and more language development in Bangladesh
4. Explore the possibility of establishing stronger links with the WUK programme in the UK, e.g. matching participants with befrienders or learners through Facebook, telephone or email
5. Continue to make follow up contact with Year 1 and 2 PLUK participants in order to further investigate the impact of the PLUK workshops for women now living in the UK, for example, to find out which aspects of life were different to how they expected, and to establish what PLUK programme content could be added or changed.
6. Seek funding to provide more training in Bangladesh for the Bangladeshi teachers of English, along with more observations and feedback of workshops.
7. Continue to disseminate the programme and plan further dissemination after the project funding has finished, in order to:
 - support and develop the roll out of more pre-departure programmes in Bangladesh and other countries
 - develop links with support programmes across the UK.

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Appendix 1

Welcome to the UK project overview



This exciting 3 year project, led by Learning Unlimited (formerly LLU+) and delivered in partnership with London Borough of Southwark, the NRDC at the Institute of Education, Morley College and the UK Bangladesh Education Trust (UKBET), aims to use a range of innovative approaches to teaching and learning to support the successful integration of third country national women (TCN)* to the UK.

This project has 2 main strands of activity: **Welcome to the UK** and **Preparing for life in the UK**.

Welcome to the UK programme

Welcome to the UK is a multi-strand programme working with partners in the UK to support the successful integration of TCN women. This programme includes a range of free courses, training programmes and materials toolkits:

1. **Welcome to the UK** - a modular programme for TCN women which includes:

- A thorough skills check, initial assessment and 1:1 interview
- **Welcome to the UK** courses
- Wider family learning programmes including *Family health*, *Best start for toddlers* and *Helping my child with reading and writing*
- Support from a volunteer befriender
- Half term workshops, class trips and events
- Free Oyster cards and childcare (crèche or childminders)

2. **Training programmes for volunteers:**

Volunteer befrienders (UK)

- Recruitment of adult volunteers wanting to become befrienders
- An 18 hour **Volunteer befriender training programme**
- Free full CRB checks
- Befriender/learner matching
- Termly workshops, regular visits, phone calls and outings with 1-3 *Welcome to the UK* learners

Volunteers for Preparing for life in the UK project (Bangladesh)

- Recruitment of British Bangladeshi volunteers wishing to volunteer on the project in Bangladesh
- A 5 day **Preparing for life in the UK Volunteer training programme**
- 6 – 12 week placement in Bangladesh with free full CRB checks, air fares, accommodation, health insurance, visas, basic subsistence and volunteer's allowance
- In country and UK support

**To be eligible to join the programme TCN women must either be in a third country and be complying with specific pre-departure measures leading to migration and settlement in the UK OR be newly arrived in the UK (i.e. under 10 years) and in a category which may lead to settlement*

3. **Capacity building** for FE colleges, Local Authorities and community and voluntary organisations which includes:
- Free *Welcome to the UK* dissemination events and materials toolkits to promote support for TCN women who are planning to settle in the UK
 - Free capacity building training, including training for providers wanting to run *Welcome to the UK* and *Volunteer befriender* programmes, and *Teaching Basic Literacy to ESOL learners* training for ESOL teachers working with TCN women in community settings
4. **Toolkits** - the development, piloting and production of 3 toolkits:
Welcome to the UK; Preparing for life in the UK ; Befriender training.

Preparing for life in the UK

Preparing for life in the UK is delivered in Bangladesh in partnership with UKBET. It aims to support women who are planning to settle in the UK to prepare for migration and successful integration in the UK.

Preparing for life in the UK offers:

- A training programme in Bangladesh for local secondary school teachers, on working with trained UK volunteers in the delivery of *Preparing for life in the UK* workshops in Bangladesh
- *Preparing for life in the UK* workshops, including 1:1 initial assessments and interviews, for Bangladeshi women planning to settle in the UK

Summary of annual project objectives

Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and pilot <i>Welcome to the UK</i> programme at LLU+ • Develop, pilot and produce <i>Welcome to the UK, Preparing for life in the UK</i> and <i>Befriender training</i> materials toolkits • Develop and pilot training programmes and materials for volunteers and befrienders • Develop and pilot <i>Preparing for life in the UK</i> teacher training, workshops and toolkit materials in Sylhet, Bangladesh • Run capacity building training and dissemination events
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the <i>Welcome to the UK</i> learner programme at Morley College and <i>Preparing for life in the UK</i> workshops in Sylhet, Bangladesh • Continue training programmes volunteers and befrienders in the UK and for teachers in Bangladesh • Second group of UK volunteers placed in Bangladesh • Run <i>Preparing for life in the UK</i> in additional districts in Sylhet • Distribute the <i>Welcome to the UK, Preparing for life in the UK</i> and <i>Befriender training</i> materials toolkits • Run capacity building training and dissemination events
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run <i>Welcome to the UK</i> programme in the UK and <i>Preparing for life in the UK</i> workshops In Bangladesh • Continue training programmes volunteers and befrienders in the UK and for teachers in Bangladesh • Cascade all strands of the <i>Preparing for life in the UK</i> and <i>Welcome to the UK</i> to providers in UK and EU countries.

Appendix 2 Befriender/befriende matching Year 2, term 3

Befriender / WUK class level	Country of origin	Languages spoken	Would like befriender to speak same first or other shared language	Happy to speak to befriender in English
Befriender 1	Algeria	Arabic /French/English		
Entry 2	Cameroon	French	✓	✓
Entry 2	Colombia	Spanish	✓	✓
Entry 1	Venezuela	Spanish	x	✓
Befriender 2	Algeria	Arabic /French/English		
Entry 3	Algeria	Arabic /French	✓	✓
Entry 3	Bolivia	Spanish	✓	✓
Entry 3	Algeria	Arabic	✓	✓
Befriender 3	Algeria	Arabic /French/English		
Entry 3	Algeria	Arabic	✓	✓
Entry 3	Bolivia	Spanish	✓	✓
Befriender 4	Bangladesh	Bengali /Hindi/English		
Entry 3	Bangladesh	Bengali	✓	✓
Entry 1	Bangladesh	Bengali	✓	✓
Befriender 5	Poland	Polish/English		
Entry 2	China	Cantonese	✓	✓
Entry 2	Bangladesh	Bengali	✓	✓
Entry 2	Bangladesh	Bengali	✓	x
Befriender 6	Bangladesh	Bengali/Sylheti / English		
Entry 2	Pakistan	Urdu	✓	✓

Entry 2	China	Mandarin	✓	✓
Befriender 7	Turkey	Turkish/English		
Entry 2	China	Cantonese	✓	✓
Entry 2	Somalia	Somali	x	✓
Befriender 8	Eritrea	Tigrinia/Amharic/English		
Entry 1	Iraq	Kurdish	x	✓
Entry 3	Ahwaz	Arabic /Farsi	✓	✓
Befriender 9	Ghana	Twi/English		
Entry 1	Iraq/Kurdistan	Kurdish	x	✓
Entry 3	Bolivia	Spanish	✓	✓
Entry 1	Guinea	Fulani	x	x
Befriender 10	Nigeria	Yoruba/Ibo/Hausa/English		
Entry 1	Somalia	Somali	✓	✓
Entry 3	Brazil	Portuguese	✓	✓
Befriender 11	Colombia	Spanish /English		
Entry 1	Venezuela	Spanish	✓	✓
Entry 2	Vietnam	Vietnamese	✓	✓

Appendix 3

Preparing for life in the UK questionnaire

Response: 1 /2/ 3

Name:.....

Date:.....

Venue:.....

How confident I feel about the following:

Issues	Very confident 	Confident 	A little bit confident 	Not at all confident 
Living in the UK				
Shopping and money				
Going to the doctor				
Using public transport				
Telling the time				
Going to school				
Going to the Post Office				
Getting a job				
Going to English class				
Using the Library				
Travelling to the UK				
Going on international flights				
Understanding symbols				
Asking simple questions				
Filling in simple forms				
Travelling in the UK to your new home				

Appendix 4 Sample results of PLUK questionnaires completed by participants

In **Beanibazar** there were a total of 8 learners but only 5 completed the before and after assessments.

Living in the UK content: 80% (4 out of 5) learners had greater confidence in more topics after the programme. (Comparing positive interval movements with zero and negative movements.)

Travelling to the UK content: 80% (4 out of 5) learners had greater confidence in more topics after the programme. (Comparing positive interval movements with zero and negative movements.)

In **Goalabazar** there were a total of 17 learners, 11 completed the before and after assessments.

Living in the UK content: 64% (7 out of 11) learners stated had greater confidence in more topics after the programme. (Comparing positive interval movements with zero and negative movements.)

Travelling to the UK content: 55% (6 out of 11) learners stated they had greater confidence in more topics after the programme. (Comparing positive interval movements with zero and negative movements.)

In **Moulvibazar** there were a total of 27 learners in two classes, 16 completed the before and after assessments.

Living in the UK content: 63% (10 out of 16) learners stated they had greater confidence in more topics after the programme. (Comparing positive interval movements with zero and negative movements.)

Travelling to the UK content: 56% (9/16) learners stated they had greater confidence in more topics after the programme. (Comparing positive interval movements with zero and negative movements.)