

Building Better Opportunities: Aspire Sussex

About BBO

Aspire Sussex is the lead partner for the BBO3 'Working Together for Work', and BBO8 'Local Learning Perspectives' projects, funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund. Both projects aim to support adults to gain employment or training to support entry into the job market. BBO3 is aimed at families as opposed to individuals, with the requirement for BBO3 is that all participants must have at least one dependent child.

The projects are delivered by a range of delivery partners, who provide different support across Sussex and Surrey. Both projects started in August 2016 and will end in July 2021, with the aim of engaging 336 participants each.

As at end June 2020 the projects have supported 535 participants. Partners have been successful at engaging people furthest from the job market, with participants being, on average, unemployed for 3.8 years, experiencing low levels of educational attainment, low levels of basic skills and a high proportion live in jobless households.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant changes to the way the projects were delivered. Support was adapted to telephone or virtual delivery, with all delivery partners continuing to support participants.

The BBO projects are playing an essential role in supporting vulnerable people during these challenging times; ensuring that people are safe and well and are accessing appropriate support as required. BBO is also providing more than just crisis management and survival support. It is also helping people to think about a future post lockdown, by providing participants with structure, support with setting goals and a focus on celebrating

achievements and moving forwards with their lives.

Impact

To date, the two projects have successfully exited 122 people, 90 into employment and 32 into education. Participants report that the biggest impact has been on helping to improve confidence and motivation levels. Data collected is demonstrating the difference the projects are making;

- * BBO3 participants report that relationships with their families have improved as a result of support for the whole family unit, for example home-schooling during lockdown
- * Participants feel more confident overall, they feel more confident asking for help and with accessing support. Partners are finding that group work is particularly useful for building confidence by providing peer support and the opportunity to discuss issues in a safe environment
- * The projects are helping to improve aspirations and participants' resilience, the support provided before the COVID-19 pandemic has helped participants to better cope with the challenges they faced during lockdown. And during lockdown, the support has been a balance of crisis management alongside goal setting, in order to continue to help participants find a sense of direction.
- * Participants also report improvements to their health and wellbeing, with much of the support during lockdown helping them maintain positive mindsets
- * Participants feel less lonely and more connected to their communities. Partners have helped to ensure that participants can stay connected and still benefit from peer support, by using tools such as Zoom or WhatsApp.

About Aspire Sussex

As well as providing the project management function for the BBO3 and BBO8 projects, Aspire Sussex also provide direct support to participants. Aspire Sussex delivers adult education across West Sussex whilst the BBO has a focus on the coastal communities of West Sussex delivering predominantly between Worthing and Bognor Regis.

The project delivers a series of 6-week courses for people who face common needs, including managing work and family life, money management, rights as a parent and childcare rules, communication and teamwork and planning their learning journey after the course. Following the course, participants receive 1-1 support to achieve their goals. In year 4 the courses became more flexible than in previous years, with participants able to 'pick and mix' which sessions from the core programme they took part in. Aspire Sussex have also started to support BBO8 participants in addition to BBO3.

Delivery

Between August 2016 and June 2020, Aspire Sussex have supported 62 participants across the two BBO projects. 10 participants have successfully moved into employment and 2 have moved into education.

Satisfaction levels with the support received are high:

- * 100% are very or quite satisfied overall
- * 86% are very that the support is tailored to meet their individual needs
- * 93% are very or quite satisfied with the choice of support available
- * 93% are very satisfied with timing and frequency of the support
- * 100% are very satisfied with the friendliness and approachability of the key workers
- * 93% are very satisfied with the quality of the support

Impact

Outcome data for Aspire Sussex participants shows:

- * Relationships with families have improved for 50% of participants
- * 86% feel their quality of life has improved
- * 93% feel more confident
- * 71% feel happier
- * 93% feel more optimistic about the future
- * 69% report improved skills
- * 85% feel less lonely/isolated
- * 93% feel more confident asking for help
- * 93% feel more confident accessing support to find employment
- * 86% feel better able to deal with setbacks
- * 43% feel healthier
- * 64% feel more connected to their local community

" I have very low confidence and self esteem. The team have been so encouraging and supportive in helping me realise and understand that my goals can be achieved. Really can't thank them enough in helping me on my journey." (participant)

" I feel that I had lost myself quite a lot after the birth of my child and raising her for the last 4 years as a full time mum. But now I feel like I have more direction now."(participant)

" This programme has helped me with my self confidence and has lessened my anxiety" (participant)

Case Study: BBO8

I wasn't happy and I left my job, but now I wonder if it was the right thing to do, as I was earning money. I've been really up and down. I'm not working so I have a lot of free time, there's only so much time you can spend job searching. I'm keen to gain experience in the fields I'm interested in and speaking to people who work in those fields. I want to get more knowledge about what suits me and what I need to have in place. And I need to have more confidence in myself.

Before the course I had trouble directing myself, it's given me hope to get where I want to be and confident in myself.

Lockdown gave me a weird time to think for myself and think about what I wanted to do with my life – the course has been immensely beneficial. I feel it's given me direction. I had zero confidence before and now I feel more confident about achieving my goals.

Case Study: BBO3

My week is full of children! Teaching and entertaining them, and I have no time to do research looking at qualifications. I'm looking at doing English and Maths GCSE. I'm interested in bookkeeping - I like working with numbers. And I also like the idea of working with people, so social services also appeals. But I have a young family, so I can do the qualifications now and I have a plan for when the children go back to school. I will start GCSEs in September and find volunteering work one day a week – maybe in social services

I'm ready to take anything, I want a path I can follow and I'm desperate to get any education or experience to improve, better myself. I'm just not good enough at English – if I get stressed I start speaking in my own language. I was working in admin and my boss was stressed on my second day, and I just started talking in my own language, so I thought I had to leave. That was 4 years ago. I want a proper career but I feel no one will accept me because of my English.

I was lost, I didn't know if I could get a job, I saw the course on Facebook and thought it is too good to be true.

I never thought or imagined I could go to university – but talking to my Key Worker has given me a future and a plan – I could go to university! I now see myself getting a career – before I didn't know what I would be doing. Now I have a road map