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Liverpool Community Radio

Impact Report
by Institute of
Cultural Capital

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *

The following report presents the findings of a scoping study which assessed the impact of Liverpool Community Radio's training programme and continuing involvement in the station's broadcasts on 6 voluntary trainees. The research was conducted by the Institute of Cultural Capital, Liverpool John Moores University / University of Liverpool with the support of OpenLabs, LJMU. The research took place during May 2012 and its primary objectives were to ascertain how voluntary participation affects employability prospects and how hyper local media can assist in developing social capital.

The study focused upon the following key areas:

- * Hard and Soft Skill development
- * Personal benefits and community impact



2. METHODOLOGY *

As the primary objectives of this study were to investigate the intangible effects of the project on trainees such as increased confidence, transferable skills and community impact, a purely qualitative approach was taken.

Interviews were held with 6 participants and were semi-structured in format. Interviewees were asked to comment upon motivations for getting involved in the radio station, expectations, learning experiences, confidence levels and personal impact. Questions drew upon the developmental aspect of the training programme, experiential benefits and significance to individuals. Further discussed were social processes, local context and by what methods the programme works.



3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS *

* Employability

Responses from the interview transcripts were compared to the Top Ten Employability skills required by a range of employers including Microsoft and BBC (www.kent.ac.uk/careers).

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Interviewees' communication skills have greatly improved since completing LCR training and being part of the broadcast team. The LCR experience had extensively improved speech, vocabulary, diction, pronunciation and conversation skills. Interviewees are actively engaged in studying effective communication and employing professional journalist skills.

COMMERCIAL AWARENESS

LCR participants could describe the operational aspects of running a radio station, a social enterprise and a voluntary organisation. Furthermore, they are involved in business decisions, commercial and fund-raising activities. They are very aware of the realities of operating as a not for profit organisation. They could also describe the deep, community based impacts made by the organisation.

ANALYSING AND INVESTIGATING

All interviewees demonstrated a high level of critical analysis skills in relation to planning, organising and producing their weekly show. They actively seek informative content that is pertinent to their local area and listenership. This entails researching news worthy guests, examining the local and national political landscape and getting to grips with complex data or difficult subject matters. The researcher must emphasise that the most complex skill within this analytical process is the subsequent distilling and formatting of this information into a journalistic format which is easily consumed by the listener.

ORGANISATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Broadcast media requires a commitment and an aptitude for deadline driven tasks, roles and responsibilities. LCR participants have embraced this working practice and demonstrated high levels of persistence and self-motivation.

The interviewees have a voluntary role, sometimes juggled with other work commitments, home and family life and personal difficulties. There was a strong bond evident within broadcast teams, who work collectively to ensure a structured and professional weekly show.

* Personal and Social Benefits

Findings in this area are divided into two themes:

- * Belonging and Purpose
- * Increased confidence

BELONGING AND PURPOSE

Overwhelmingly the participants highlighted how important LCR is to their state of wellbeing. All described finding a renewed or new sense of belonging and a purpose in life. The organisation fills a gap by providing interactions with like-minded people, a collective ethos and a feeling of solidarity. All felt that they were part of something very important, which is striving for change in society.

CONFIDENCE

The journey to the first live broadcast was described by participants as overcoming a fear or a perceived difficulty. Confidence levels had grown significantly and furthermore, interviewees were enthusiastic about sharing this element with others. There were significant comments about the encouragement of other trainees and elation in seeing them also succeed and grow in confidence.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The interviewees expressed a wide range of community benefits arising from both involvement in the station and the information it produces. They felt that the organisation works actively to change perceptions of Kensington, Liverpool and to involve local residents and the wider community in being producers of information. The impacts and outcomes described by interviewees aligned closely with social capital and civic agenda theories discussed in more detail later in this report.

4. INTRODUCTION *

The following report presents the findings of a scoping study which assessed the impact of Liverpool Community Radio's training programme and continuing involvement in the station's broadcasts on 6 voluntary trainees. The research was conducted by the Institute of Cultural Capital, Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) / University of Liverpool with the support of OpenLabs, LJMU. The research took place during May 2012 and its primary objectives were to ascertain how voluntary participation affects employment prospects and how hyper local media can assist in the developing social capital.

The study focused upon the following key areas:

- * Hard and Soft Skill development
- * Personal benefits and community impact

Following an initial brief from Open Labs, a qualitative scoping study was designed to measure and assess the tangible and intangible effects of the station's training programme and continued involvement in the station's production team upon voluntary participants. Questions were designed to investigate personal motivations and pathways to involvement, increased levels of confidence and participation, association of the project objectives to personal goals, skill development and employment opportunities.

The study took a purely qualitative approach which involved 6 semi-structured interviews with project participants and a further interview with Liverpool Community Radio's management team. All participants' interviews were transcribed and then analysed using NVivo software which identified the following key themes and sub-themes:

TABLE 1. ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

THEME	SUB-THEME
Employability	Hard Skills Soft Skills
Personal Benefits	Sense of Belonging Increased Confidence
Community Benefits	Civic Society Local Content

The findings are reported under theme headings and include direct quotes from the interview transcripts. The report also includes recommendations for taking the project forward and for further research. Relevant supporting documents are supplied as appendices, including research instruments, key contacts and literature references.

★ Project Background

Liverpool Community Radio (LCR) formerly KVFM is a social enterprise based in Holt Road, Kensington, Liverpool. The organisation is a legacy from the Kensington Vision Interactive Television project developed and undertaken by the International Centre for Digital Content (ICDC) LJMU.

KVFM was initially operated under a time limited Restricted Service Licence. Firstly it broadcast from the local MacDonald's in Kensington and subsequently from St Francis of Assisi school. Following 3 successful RSL projects and assisting a RSL in Alt Valley KVFM were considering an application to Ofcom under their FM Community Licence programme. Unfortunately, it became evident that Ofcom would not be offering a FM Licence to a Liverpool project under the 2013 round. Undeterred, KVFM began an online station and widened its remit to the whole of Liverpool. LCR can now track their listenership to over 60 countries including: USA Germany Canada and Australia NZ, and remarkably Nepal, the Faroes islands and Iran

The station broadcasts over the internet and involves the local community in producing radio shows about local, national and international issues. Community members undertake an 8 week training programme which takes the novice presenter to professional broadcaster. The organisation operates with no core funding which has an effect on longer term planning and strategy. Although successful in a number of small applications to Awards for All, Ofcom RSL and Primary Care Trust, LCR receives still no core funding and operates on a yearly budget of below £45K.

Councillor Louise Baldock, Kensington and Fairfield ward, Liverpool City Council highlights the following positive aspects:



It is a constant challenge for an elected representative in an area where engagement with politics and democracy is not high, to find new ways to engage with people in ways that they will find accessible. By taking part in programmes on LCR, and its predecessor KVFM, I have been able to talk about interesting local projects – such as the restoration of Deane Road Jewish Cemetery, or describe how we are tackling people's priorities such as street drinking for instance. We have a good partnership with LCR who support our efforts to tackle dog fouling for instance by distributing dog poo bags free through local shops. LCR helps us to reach parts of the community that can traditionally be very difficult. We also enjoy their active involvement in our decision making groups, for the benefit of the whole community. They are much more than a simple radio station. ”

WHAT IS COMMUNITY RADIO?

Community Radio is described as 'being a not for profit radio station run primarily by volunteers drawn from the community it is serving as its audience' (Gordon, 2009). It is characterised by a social agenda and operates 'in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community' (Tabing, 2002). Therefore, community radio represents a community interest and subsequently has coherent political-cultural, communication and business objectives (Villamayor & Lamas, 1998).

Tabing (2002) presents the following characteristics which underpin a community radio station:

- ★ It serves a recognisable community.
- ★ It encourages participatory democracy.
- ★ It offers the opportunity to any member of the community to initiate communication and participate in program making, management and ownership of the station.
- ★ It uses technology appropriate to the economic capability of the people, not that which leads to dependence on external sources.
- ★ It is motivated by community well-being, not commercial considerations.
- ★ It promotes and improves problem solving.

In the United Kingdom Community Radio stations have 3 main mediums of broadcasting:

★ Restricted Service Licences (RSLs)

RSLs are granted by Ofcom (2012) for a period of 4 weeks and allow a temporary community based broadcast over analogue using FM. RSLs can be long or short term. Short term RSLs are granted under the following conditions:

- ★ coverage of special events
- ★ other special projects (e.g. training)
- ★ trial services (e.g. in preparation for applying for a community radio licence)

Long term RSLs are granted to specific projects such as hospital radio, student led university based stations and stations for the armed forces.

★ FM Community Radio

In the UK Community Radio became legal under the Communications Act 2003. Following this act a further modification of the law was introduced in the Community Radio Order 2004, modified further in 2010. Under this law Ofcom must invite applications for FM Community Radio licences for a period of 5 years who meet the following conditions:

- ★ Provision of sound broadcasting services to individuals who are otherwise underserved
- ★ The facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion
- ★ The provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service
- ★ The better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it

★ Internet Radio

Internet radio uses streaming technology or 'webcasting' to broadcast live programmes over the web, mobile applications and DAB or Wifi radios. It is a relatively cheap solution needing limited software and hardware. Some solutions are easily obtained freely over the internet.

A number of UK based community radio stations use this broadcast method including:

- ★ Gala shields Community Radio
- ★ Ipswich Community Radio
- ★ Two Lochs Radio
- ★ Brooklands Community Radio
- ★ Penwith Radio

★ Community Radio outside the UK

Community Radio has a worldwide presence and a heritage in grassroots and collective action. The first instance of community radio under the aforementioned common definition was initiated by Bolivian tin miners. Radio Sucre began in 1948 and was based in the mining town of Cananiri. The station was supported by union subscriptions, was worker-controlled and signified 'an extension of literally centuries of struggle by workers against the exploitative oligarchy' (Huezca, 1995, 151).

In the United States of America a community radio genre known as 'free radio' is considered to have begun in 1987 in the John Jay Homes public housing project in Spring-field, Los Angeles. The station, WTRA was originally used by the local tenants' rights activist group in response to negative media coverage (Brinson, 2006).

Australia has a large collection of community radio stations which began with a lobbying movement in 1972 and aimed to change the two tier broadcasting system consisting of publically owned and commercial stations. Lobbying groups such as music enthusiasts, educators, ethnic groups, religious groups, trade unionists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders campaigned for community access to the airwaves, resulting in a community radio sector which represents a diversity of interests (Foxwell, 2001).

The value of community broadcasting in developing countries is widely recognised. A study by Buckley et al (2008) found that community radio enables governments and international donors to convey public health information concerning health and education to remote and rural areas. This study also found that access to community media could promote local collective action.



★ Why is Community Radio Important?

UNESCO actively promotes community radio as an agent for change (UNESCO, 2011). It provides a platform for public dialogue whilst dealing with local issues in a cultural context and succeeds when it grows out of the community's sense of internal cohesion and consciousness (Fraser & Estradas 2002). As programming is produced for and by different local communities it 'connects together diverse, cultural, ethnic and social groups' (Cape UK, 2007).

Brinson (2006) argues that it is integral for social movements who campaign for social change or raise issues of a public agenda to have access to communication tools alongside the ability to communicate. He further suggests that 'if a movement is unable to communicate information and viewpoints effectively, it loses a critical resource in its struggle'. Access to alternative media removes the need for grassroots organisations to rely upon journalists to relay their message or interpret their actions; they are empowered to produce media in a format that frames their story in a meaningful way.

Howley (2009) describes community media, including community radio as a 'range of community-based activities intended to supplement, challenge, or change the operating principles, structures, financing, and cultural forms and practices associated with dominant media'. This method of broadcast is becoming increasingly important as a way of democratising broadcast information and as argued by Bowman & Willis (2003) it involves community members in 'playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information'. Porter (2011) further claims that community based or citizen journalism builds diverse

participatory bases on which to add 'broad, multi-perspectival analysis and commentary on news events to the narrow range of perspectives expressed in mainstream news reporting'.

Kurpui et al (2010) contend that traditional media is now struggling to find a 'footing' and new forms of media are growing, with media innovators exploring new ways to identify, collect and to disseminate news. This phenomenon has been defined as hyper local journalism whose actors are described by Goode (2009) as the heroes of 'authentic' citizen journalism who capture events on their cameras and break stories about events in their locales. Every citizen with a mobile phone or computer with an internet connection now has the capability to become a citizen journalist, create advocacy groups, organize and connect with people (Mandarano et al 2010).

However, quality of life and access to such resources varies amongst geographic communities because of differing levels of social capital and civic engagement (Putnam, 1993). Social organisation including trust, norms and networks which facilitate coordinated actions can improve the efficiency of society (ibid, p167). Place based institutions such as community media organisations play an important role in the revitalisation of effective relationships, resources of solidarity and act as repositories (Evan & Boyte, 2000). In particular, community radio endeavours to build a strong relationship between the station and the community it is serving (Gordon, 2009). Therefore, the networks and provision of opportunity apparent in community radio arguably offer a social structure, possibilities for interaction and repository for Adler & Kwoon's (2002) three suggested sources of social capital: opportunity, motivation and ability.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS*

Findings are reported under the following themes which were identified when collecting and analysing data:

- * Employability
- * Personal and Social Benefits
- * Community Benefits

EMPLOYABILITY

The interviewees commented upon the varying new skill sets they had developed throughout the training process and their continued involvement. For purpose of analysis the responses were compared to the core skill sets required by the employment market using the Top Ten Employability Skills suggested by the University of Kent and based on a number of surveys on the skills undertaken by Microsoft, Target Jobs, the BBC, Prospects, NACE and AGR and other organisations.

TABLE 2. TOP TEN EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Adapted from
(www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/skillsmenu.htm)

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS	DESCRIPTOR
Verbal Communication	Being able to express your ideas clearly and confidently in speech.
Teamwork	Work confidently within a group.
Commercial Awareness	Understand the commercial realities affecting the organisation.
Analysing and Investigating	Gather information systematically to establish facts & principles. Problem solving.
Self-Motivation and Initiative	Able to act on initiative, identify opportunities & proactive in putting forward ideas & solutions.
Drive	Determination to get things done. Make things happen & constantly looking for better ways of doing things.
Written Communication	Able to express yourself clearly in writing.
Planning and Organising	Able to plan activities & carry them through effectively.
Flexibility	Adapt successfully to changing situations & environments.
Time Management	Manage time effectively, prioritising tasks and able to work to deadlines.

* Results

1. VERBAL COMMUNICATION

All interviewees produce and broadcast their own weekly radio shows. This involves researching background information, sourcing guests; planning a show and delivering the show live on air. This process not only involves the development of effective verbal communication skills it also necessitates the studying of other broadcasters in order to perfect a style and approach.

“
When I’m at home, I’m mostly listening to BBC 4 and watching BBC 2. So there’s a lot of reflection on, kind of, you know, the past and the present and what they are saying at the moment”

“
Yeah, it’s speaking out loud, I think it changes your way you speak to people”

Oral skills are also highly evident in the live broadcasts. This can involve the explanation of complex issues or interviewing people from other countries and backgrounds which, in turn requires researching the correct pronunciation and articulation. The interviewees have also developed skills in projecting their voice, timing and speed, when to stress particular issues, choosing the correct descriptors and also noticeably improved diction and vocabulary.

Most interviewees commented upon overcoming their fears of speaking in public, especially when delivering a live show in front of a microphone. Additionally, the development of interviewing skills and ‘how to talk to people’ was a competence that most felt they had needed to perfect in order to ensure their shows ran smoothly and to ensure their guest was made comfortable.

“
It teaches you to communicate on a level that, probably, you have never thought of before”

“
It makes you open your eyes. It makes you open your ears. You learn how to listen, as well as speak”

“
It’s nothing now for me to pick up the phone and call the Echo, ‘Can I talk to the Political Editor of the Echo?’ Dave Bartlett comes on ‘I’ll meet you in town and we’re doing an interview’ I couldn’t have done that, once”

2. TEAMWORK

The participants in Liverpool Community Radio work within team structures on varying levels. Firstly, all are members of the LCR Forum and are involved in discussion concerning the direction of the project. Secondly, the production schedule is organised by teams who are responsible for a particular day’s programming. Some of the interviewees are team leaders which brings a higher level of responsibility including: planning and organising the two hour show, co-ordinating the other team members and ensuring a coherent approach to programming. This role requires a commitment to embracing a higher level of duty and ensuring that team members are clear concerning their tasks, roles and responsibilities for producing the weekly show.

“
I’m in charge of the Friday team, so basically, it’s my responsibility to book guests in and make sure that two-hour show every Friday is a success”

“
I'm basically letting them know that you don't just turn up and do a show. There's work behind the scenes. So I'm like a Producer as well”

Other interviewees expressed a high level of accountability and regard to ensuring others were not let down. The working team was often compared to a family unit which was very tight knit, bringing a sense of conscientiousness and obligation.

“
It was just the friendships that you made, and the impact they had on you.. I don't want to not go next week, because I'll let someone down.”

“
There's people relying on me to do ABC. They rely on me, like you would a family member or a work colleague”

3. COMMERCIAL AWARENESS

LCR is a Social Enterprise and the participants were all very much aware of the non-commercial remit and also a not for profit ethos. However, all could also discuss the problems associated with limited funding and sustainability. Differing business models were suggested and all agreed that an ideal scenario would be a FM station with a community licence. They were aware of the limitations and benefits of operating as an online station and also about the future viability of the project. For example they understood that FM is very expensive to operate with running costs of around £240,000 per annum and could compare the viability of online broadcasting by making a comparison to the BBC having a digital listenership of about 30%.

“
Yeah, but if we had that opportunity to go live, on FM, all the time, that would be great. That would be my dream job, you know”

“
you know, it's online and a lot of people are digitally compromised”

“
I think if more people were able to access the internet, you know, it would take off, you know, a hundredfold”

“
it doesn't matter what you do people will always say, "Well, how do you take part? How do you listen? You know, what's it on?"

And you say

“
It's on the internet.”

Interviewees were also able to offer suggestions concerning income streams. They highlighted the external training provision and local advertising as possible methods of raising funds. They were all very excited about the future health related soap opera The Streets of Kenny which has been funded by the PCT. All saw this as an excellent approach to producing community information whilst also diversifying their income stream and programming methodology.

“
It's rather like our own small business. We've started this from scratch, and look at us now. We've got premises on Kensington High Street...”

Furthermore, interviewees commented about the business decision to rebrand the station to Liverpool Community Radio from KVFM and agreed it was a positive move. All thought this would widen listenership and further raise the profile of the station. Additionally, the interviewees thought the move to the Holt Road premises was also a good business decision.

“
Rebranding it, and also having a much more professional schedule and, you know, programming, and the website's really good”

“
Since it's moved to Holt Road, a lot more people can see it. You're walking past it. People stop; they're having a look in the window as you're presenting your show. You know, it's a total interaction. It's bringing the public in, which is brilliant”

4. ANALYSING AND INVESTIGATING

The production schedule of the station relies upon informative content which is relevant to the listenership. Each team is required to create sufficient content to fill a two hour broadcast. This involves sourcing guests, learning about their subject matter, constructing questions and maintaining a balanced view. Additionally, team members take on particular roles in the programming schedule. For example, there is a weekly political show which involves the analysis of events both locally and nationally, then bringing them together in a coherent format for a two hour show. A production of this manner encompasses a range of high level critical skills. In particular, producers must have the ability to scan information, to read more deeply, discard irrelevant data and construct a rationale for the inclusion and exclusion of news items and then, most importantly, produce a format which is appropriate to the listener.

“
Every single person you come across when you start doing it is a potential guest”

“
As soon as you're talking to somebody at a bus stop, if they work say the for the RSPCA, you're like " Oh, Really?" You know I do this thing on the radio”

“
Being the producer, I just have to find guests and I'll research them”

“
A trainee wanted to talk about dyslexia to that got me involved in going onto the internet and researching dyslexia, which we all know the name but actually it's knowing enough to be able to ask questions. I could then formulate my interview questions, and have a little bit of nous, which is so important”

“
We look at what has happened in the last seven days, politically? So we three come up with the stuff and discuss it in the show”

“
She went out, and she did a load of interviews, and the theme was, "Play then and now." In other words, from the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, split into the decades, 'cause you could draw a line actually, between those different decades and how we played”

5. SELF-MOTIVATION AND INITIATIVE

In order to meet programming deadlines there needs to be high levels of motivation, creativity and resourcefulness within the production team. A considerable amount of personal input and inventiveness was discussed throughout interviews arising from differing reasons and incentives. The sense of belonging to something important and worthwhile was held by all interviewees and contributed to overall levels of motivation. Furthermore, a renewed or new awareness of self-belief was also a contributing factor to self-motivation which has spread to other parts of their lives leading to involvement in tenant associations, local football teams and volunteering with healthy eating initiatives.

“
If people have belief in you, so then you tend to have belief in yourself. If you've got belief in yourself, you've got a hell of a lot”

“
it pushed you to go and do things that perhaps you might have shied from or avoided somehow”

“
I was just doing a normal, day-to-day job and then, I got the opportunity. It worked out well on me days off, so that the more days I was having off, I was going and doing the radio or researching all the stuff about radio, 'cause I was really interested”

6. DRIVE

Interviewees expressed strong levels of commitment, enthusiasm and passion for LCR in terms of the necessity for such an organisation in the local area and also for its furtherance. Also strongly highlighted was the need for persistence during training which assists in overcoming barriers and fears. The interviewees were passionate about the station which impacted upon their determination to assist it

to succeed. This determination was evidenced in the commitment to their roles in producing a weekly broadcast and also the understanding of organisational pressures and demands. All had an understanding of what would be lost if LCR came off air and as such could offer suggestions to improve the service mainly by going for a FM licence or by sourcing other funding streams. In particular the journey of one participant stood out, over a 4 year period he had become a volunteer trainer and a paid freelance trainer and also was responsible for single-handedly raising £20k of funding from Ofcom and Liverpool City Council.

“
I quickly sussed out that if you're keen and you're serious about wanting to be on the radio, by definition, you'll turn up every week for the training course”

“
cause I applied me self very much, but in the end, it was more the getting to the training session, because that was the bit where I was a person”

“
It pushed me feet over the edge of the box, you know, to have a go”

“
the mere process of turning up tells people at LCR, the established people, that you're serious about doing it”

“
I want to be doing the radio and all that all the time, and I always go round advertising it, for people to listen to it”

“
I landed at the time when they were starting to expand, so I was able to take part with the team and start to feel like part of the team”

7. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Radio programming focuses mainly upon oral communication skills. However, such skills are underpinned by effective storyboarding, scripting and editing. All LCR shows have a schedule which is created by a team and includes formulating questions and developing scripts in order to ensure a smooth journey throughout the broadcast. The ability to distil information from structured and bureaucratic formats was also evident, particularly when researching complex issues such as dyslexia, welfare benefits and the recent local mayoral elections. One interviewee is now a director and as such is involved in fund raising for LCR. He was successful in a £25k grant from a Registered Social Landlord which had a major effect on his confidence and realisation of his capabilities.

“
I look at it like we're a newsroom. It's like a newspaper, only we do it verbally”

“
I never dreamt I'd be a director of a community interest company, chairman of a community group, does funding bids, I can't believe, really”

8. PLANNING AND ORGANISING

The weekly schedule requires thorough planning and scheduling. This involves designing a format for the show, sourcing a guest and researching their area or subject. From this initial planning stage a script and a running order is produced. However, this is possibly the easiest part of planning a live broadcast. Prior to having secured a guest the broadcaster has to keep an eye on the news both locally and nationally, approach guests and also have a backup plan. This part of production is extremely pressurised. The broadcast team have to take a logical and reasoned approach which involves planning ahead for future shows, sometimes a month or two in advance.

“
I'm just thinking about putting the show together and then producing the show, and then going on air. For people who are less confident, it is all about the process, the planning and putting it together”

“
You learn editing skills, presenting skills, interviewing techniques and using the equipment”

“
I'm in charge of the Friday team. The Big Lunch, that's our flagship show. It's my responsibility to book guests in and to make sure the two hour show every Friday is a success”
"I've learnt more organisational skills"

9. FLEXIBILITY

LCR participants take part in the station's activities on a voluntary basis. The interviewees fit their voluntary commitments around home and work responsibilities and other obligations. Although the programming schedule is fixed, ensuring a regular listenership, the nature of the organisation is to encourage a non-pressurised and trusting environment which actually fosters a flexible ethos in the volunteer workforce.

“

You go that little bit more – you know, it just gave me a world to exist in again, cause when you are not well and when you are isolated, your mind, your actual state is not always what you'd want it to be ”

10. TIME MANAGEMENT

Broadcast media is deadline driven. Without punctuality and commitment to deadlines the station's programme schedule would fail. The interviewees had embraced the responsibility of meeting the station's objectives and were committed to a trusting relationship without the pressure of financial targets. The collective ethos throughout the interview process was working together as a community for the community.

“

We've got on with it and it's obviously come to fruition ”

“

I look at it like we're a newsroom. It's a newspaper, only we do it verbally ”

“

I think that we're usually the receivers of information, but it's turned over. We are now the producers of information ”



★ Personal and Social Benefits

1. BELONGING AND PURPOSE

Hagerty et al (1992) defined two important features attributed to a sense of belonging:

- * The experience of being valued, needed or important to other people, groups or environments
- * The experience of fitting in or being congruent to other people, groups or environments

In the same study the precursors for seeking a sense of belonging are described as: having energy for involvement; holding the potential and desire to be involved and also the potential for shared or complementary characteristics, i.e. like seeking like. Furthermore, the benefits of finding a sense of belonging and purpose include: social, psychological and spiritual wellbeing, finding and attributing meaning and the establishment or fortification of positive emotional, cognitive and behavioural reactions.

Sargent et al (2002) argued that a sense of belonging corresponds with positive psychosocial health and as such is an important part of the human experience. They attribute a lack of sense of belonging to loneliness, emotional distress and mental illness. After carrying out a wide scale study involving 443 people who were divided into two groups, depressed or not depressed they concluded that *“There is a direct inverse relationship between depressive symptoms and sense of belonging, interventions that enhance a person's sense of belonging would decrease the likelihood of the person to develop depression”*.

During interviews the LCR participants were candid and honest about their personal lives, stresses and situations. They could very clearly describe the positive benefits of belonging to the something they felt was worthwhile and how this affected their mental health and confidence. There was a feeling of solidarity, all striving to achieve and also belonging to something creative and cool.

“

So when I meet up with people like Steve and Wendy, or whoever else I meet there, they all seem to be pulling in the same direction and that was so important to me ”

“

I quickly slotted in, probably because they are all the same type or sort of the same ilk as me, in their way of thinking ”

“

I met groovy people, as well; when I say 'groovy people', positive people, who haven't got nothing ”

“

When I was a kid, I always used to see them kind of people walking here and there with their hippy scarves and their funny clothes and all that, I wanted to be one of them and now I am one of them and I'm in now ”

“

I've found something special here. It feels special to me and if anybody leaves I worry about that – 'come back to us man, come back home ”

The interviewees were asked what would be lost if the station ceased to exist. This question in particular prompted discussions concerning a newly found sense of belonging along with a sense of purpose. Some of the interviewees had previously held responsible jobs and were somewhat adrift prior to joining the LCR training programme. It was very important for the interviewees in this position to have a daily routine, somewhere to go and be active and also to have contact with people.

“
I'd got something back that was mine again, cause I'd had a career and a family and a house and I'd lost everything. This was something that I owned”

“
LCR is great because I can pop into the studios any time of the week, just to chill out, sort a few things out. So it gives me a sense of purpose every day”

“
All in all it's given me a reason to live, reason to believe”

“
People want to get involved with it because it does give you that sense of belonging”

“
For me, personally, hmmm, a sense of belonging”

“
It's my sense of belonging to something again”

“
It gave me a world to exist in again”

2. INCREASED CONFIDENCE

Interviewees commented upon how the training course and involvement in LCR has impacted upon their confidence levels and the confidence of other trainees/participants. The process of overcoming a fear or a perceived difficulty came across as attributing factor. There were strong views that after completing the training course and broadcasting their first show that they had reached a level of achievement they did not feel was possible.

“
I know a few people that have actually said they don't want to do it, and they've gone on to do it and they go, it's like a weight's been taken off their shoulders”

“
When you are starting something new, of course you are terrified and I think it's the combination of combating that and gaining new knowledge as well”

“
I hate the sound of my own voice” and all this palaver you get out of them and suddenly they love the sound of their voice, because they are producing good radio”

Improving self-confidence in other parts of participant's lives was also highly evident. The interviewees could relate how their experience could impact upon others and felt rewarded that they could also be part of making a positive contribution to the confidence of others.

“
It's so empowering for people and they think you know what? Yeah I'll go for that job, because you know what? I've conquered my fear of going on air and doing a live show in front of a microphone”

“
They're going to be happy. They might go to Home and Bargain after the show and say "Thank you" and the world's a better place because they are in a good mood. Why are they in a good mood? Because they've done what's expected of them”

“
It's all about empowering me and in the process of empowering me I've got more chance of being able to empower other people”

“
It's all about making people feel wanted, making people feel needed, giving them that confidence”

★ Community Benefits

In Wellman et al's (2001) study of the effect of the Internet on levels of social capital they describe 3 defining features:

- * Network capital: Relations with friends, neighbours, relatives, and workmates that significantly provide companionship, emotional aid, goods and services, information, and a sense of belonging
- * Participatory capital: Involvement in politics and voluntary organizations that affords opportunities for people to bond, create joint accomplishments, and aggregate and articulate their demands and desires
- * Community commitment: Social capital consists of more than going through the motions of interpersonal interaction and organizational involvement. When people have a strong attitude toward community—have a motivated, responsible sense of belonging—they will mobilize their social capital more willingly and effectively

The data collected at LCR shows considerable alignment with the above definitions of social capital. The station is community based, provides a network of companionship for participants and a strong sense of belonging. It offers a voice to organisations or sections of the local community who have limited ways of positively representing themselves in the media. The citizen led programming has enabled and encouraged local people to take notice and also take part in local politics. The recent programming around the mayoral elections is a prime example of how the station can break down information and political processes into easily digestible and understandable information and, also attract political actors to take part.

“
I look at it like we're a newsroom. It's a newspaper only we do it verbally”

6. CONCLUSION*

“

If I'm learning about that service or you know that charity or you know that person's experience and it's made me far, far more interested in politics”

“

The Big Lunches are really important, cause you have people from all different backgrounds coming on. You learn things about people with disabilities and learn a lot”

Interviewees expressed concerns that Kensington is a dumping ground for problems and is also a largely misrepresented area of the city. They felt strongly that LCR and their involvement actively assists in building a more positive image of the area.

“

Kensington has become a dumping ground for anything that Liverpool can't handle. It's like 'Okay where to we stick them. We stick them in Kenny”

“

The UK can learn from Kenny, because it's had that much pushed on it and shoved on it”

“

Kensington is dealing with it and it hasn't been taught how to”

“

They are invaluable in the community, within the country as a whole, because how is anybody going to know what Kensington is doing if we can't get it out there”

The interviews described the positive benefits of having a community remit opposed to a commercial licence in respect to programme content. For example the area has a Polish community who were able to broadcast in their native tongue to their listenership. This can happen on community radio as they are not bound to target audience figures or advertising revenue contractual arrangements. The interviewee who described this event felt that involving speakers of other languages and also members of the community with refugee status assists in breaking down barriers between residents.

“

It's the idea that people get their opinions and what they are doing out there and you know raises awareness. Generally I've found it's connected all sorts of people in the community”

“

It's helping to develop tolerance between people. We've had refugees, people with refugee status and they've been broadcasting. And really their main aim is to get people in Africa listening”

“

They all walked in and they were all speaking Polish and then they'd seen me and carried on. They turned round and like 'You don't speak Polish'. But I said to them 'I'll try to learn a few words”

A further example of promoting community cohesion is the intergenerational aspect of programming. The station actively encourages older residents to take part and also has a relationship with local schools.

“

You know to have all ranges in the community to take part and of course it invites young people to mix with old people and hopefully, you know gain something from their life experience.”

Liverpool Community Radio is an excellent example of a volunteer led social enterprise. It has a collective ethos and actively inspires local residents to take control of lives, to seize opportunity and to create and consume information for the betterment of society. The organisation achieves its objectives through active engagement of local people, working with residents and volunteers to create an atmosphere conducive for learning and fostering local ownership.

The broadcast medium has been proven to develop skills and proficiencies relevant to UK wide skill gaps and employability competences. The high level of communication, planning and organising and analytical skills demonstrated in both interviews and live broadcasts demonstrate a professional proficiency. These softer skills should not be considered less favourably than the more obvious hard technical skills needed to operate the radio equipment. These skills are transferable to other employment routes and are a valuable commodity in the employment market place.

LCR is a developmental agent that encourages personal growth and the taking of responsibility. The organisation is developing social capital whilst producing information, encouraging participation in the political process and promoting community cohesion. The underpinning collective philosophy of the organisation supports self-belief and fosters a 'can do' attitude. The findings of this report reinforce passion for the training programme and continued involvement espoused by the research participants.



7. RECOMMENDATIONS*

This study has found strong indicators of hard and soft skill development, in particular, valuable transferable skills relevant to the employment market place. The researcher makes the following recommendations in terms of evidencing employability through the LCR training programme and involvement in broadcasting:

- * Development of a skills framework congruent to the ethos of LCR
- * Mapping of skills observed and experienced by future trainees and participants
- * Development of a competence based achievement record which substantiates accomplishments if needed by a trainee as evidence of skills
- * Examine routes to qualifications such as Foundation Degrees and Access Courses to Journalism and Media Studies
- * Examine routes to accreditation of existing provision

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The researcher recommends a wider qualitative study which examines the impacts of a sense of place, belonging and self-belief within the context of citizen led journalism at LCR.

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