

# EMBED COMMUNITY LEARNING PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

2008/2011



**East Durham Trust**  
*Moving our community forward*

Prepared by:  
East Durham Trust  
Community House  
Yoden Road  
Peterlee  
County Durham  
SR8 5DP

Tel: 0191 5693511

Email: [info@eastdurhamtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@eastdurhamtrust.org.uk)  
[www.eastdurhamtrust.org.uk](http://www.eastdurhamtrust.org.uk)



**the coalfields**  
regeneration trust



## 1.INTRODUCTION

From September 2008 to February 2011 a Community Education project known as “EMBED” was delivered in the former district of Easington in the East of County Durham.

The project was managed by East Durham Trust, the flagship Third sector organisation for the area, and was funded by Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

This evaluation report is intended to reflect:

- The background of the project (why it was done).
- The methods of delivery (how it was done).
- The impact (what was achieved).
- The added value (what were the spin offs).
- The legacy (what was/is the impact beyond the lifespan of the project).
- Some retrospective analysis (what was learned).

The methodology for this report is largely based on desk research of documentation including monitoring information and correspondence and is supported by telephone interviews with those involved in project delivery.



## 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is irrefutable evidence to suggest that the most effective Community interventions are the result of collaborative activity. The EMBED project was certainly no exception.

Only by individuals and organisations coming together in the interests of the common good was the full potential of the project realized. With this in mind it should be noted that without the support and contribution of the following the achievements highlighted elsewhere in this document would not have been possible.

Anna White	Regional Programme Manager, Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Sheila Smith	Project Co-ordinator, East Durham Trust
Julie Swaidan	Eastlea Community Centre
Alison Paterson	Blackhall Community Association
Rona Hardy	Shotton Partnership
Ann Attey	New Thornley Partnership
Joyce Collins	Wingate Community Centre
Lena Devine	The WISH Partnership
Doreen Liversidge	Haswell and Haswell Plough Regeneration Partnership
Hilary Jamieson	Wheatley Hill Community Association
Hayley Hood	Haswell Mencap
John Barnett	Horden Colliery Residents Association
Derek Bradley	Trimdon Community Association
Barbara Dunn	Horden Youth and Community Centre
Christine Stokoe	Horden and Easington Regeneration Partnership
Peter McNestry	Chairman Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Ken Greenfield	Vice Chairman Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Jenny Smith	Grant Worker Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Michael O'Brien	Grant Worker Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Roberta Lane	Grant Worker Coalfields Regeneration Trust



### 3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

East Durham Trust was established in February 2007 as a registered charity charged with carrying out activities to counteract the social and economic problems exacerbated by pit closures in the District of Easington.

In the arena of Social and Economic Regeneration it is impossible to overestimate the potential role of education. In early 2008 it was noticeable that a number of major indicators in terms of educational achievement and training showed the area to be in significant need, such indicators ranged from the number of school leavers achieving 5 GCSE at grades A\* - C (where one of the six local secondary schools was performing at over 20 percentage points below the national average) to the proportion of the working age population with no qualifications (22% against a national average of 14% - significantly worse when drilled down to local level in terms of disadvantage wards).

As East Durham Trust continued to consider potential strategies around thematic areas, (which naturally included Community Safety, Health, Social Inclusion etc) Education was an obvious focus of attention.

Another significant factor around this time was decline of Community based education locally. A number of public sector providers - notably the local college – had systematically reduced the number of community venues utilised for the delivery of courses. In 2001 East Durham and Houghall College funded courses in some 56 venues but for reasons associated with quality and funding had chosen to reduce this figure by more than half by 2008.

Of course the paradox here was that the very people whose educational needs were necessitating investment were those who would be most likely to be attracted to local provision as opposed to the more formal establishments of a college, which is often perceived as academically daunting for those who have been away from the learning environment for a significant period of time.

After a number of meetings between East Durham Trust and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) Regional Management, a proposed model of delivery was arrived at which represented a major community education programme.

From the outset it was decided that sustainability was the key and in order to establish and ensure a degree of “legacy” outcome it was felt that, as well as simply educating and teaching people, it would be important to develop people and organisations in the process (hence the name EMBED). Specifically it was felt that the project should train local people in delivering educational sessions and that the local organisation involved would establish an infrastructure and culture of learning which would go beyond the lifespan of the project.

In order to ensure this local development it was agreed that the model would require the recruitment and involvement of a number of local organisations as opposed to simply “airlifting” short term provision into centres along the lines of the previously experienced “imposition” model.

Other significant features of what was now developing into a CRT round four application included:

- The project should add to the sustainability of Community Buildings.
- There should be a significant degree of celebration of success.
- The participating groups should meet regularly and be encouraged to collaborate and share good practice.
- There should be an understanding that first step education – often of a recreational nature – can be valuable in terms of initial engagement for certain individuals.

In July 2008 East Durham Trust was informed that the submitted application had been successful and the EMBED project was born!



***Leaflet to promote EMBED project utilised by East Durham Trust and the Community partners.***



## 4. PROJECT NARRATIVE (How it worked)

The initial Grant agreement signed by East Durham Trust on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2008 included the following outputs for the period of just over two years.

Number of jobs created/safeguarded	1
Number of people assisted into skills development	1,152
Number of adults gaining NVQ level 2 or above	768
Number of people gaining basic skills	30

In order to achieve this it was forecast that East Durham Trust would receive the sum of £296,214. The breakdown of predicted expenditure highlighted that the greater majority of this expenditure (almost £200,000) would be spent on teaching, room hire, certification and accreditation, the next highest cost being salary of the Project Co-ordinator.

Initially, there were two major tasks running in parallel which were the pulling together of the partner organisations into identifiable consortium and the appointment of a Project Co-ordinator.

The methodology adopted in pulling together the initial consortium involved raising awareness of the project via the communications mechanisms employed by East Durham Trust, designed at maintaining contact with the 300 plus VCS organisations within its membership. Obviously only a specific 'segment' of this membership was positioned to take advantage of this project. In the event the following organisations formed the initial EMBED consortium:

- Shotton Partnership
- Wheatley Hill Community Partnership
- Haswell Regeneration Partnership
- Murton Partnership
- Horden Colliery Regeneration Partnership
- Blackhall and Hesleden Regeneration Partnership
- The WISH (Wingate, Station Town and Hutton Henry Partnership)
- New Thornley Partnership

Interestingly, as the project progressed the membership shifted with some organisations not ultimately taking an active role in delivering (e.g. Murton) and others being engaged at a later date (e.g. Eastlea Community Centre, Seaham ). In other cases the actual delivery remained in the same community but the partner organisations changed (e.g. Blackhall)

Another interesting development concerned the levels of involvement in terms of courses and learner numbers, some organisations ran scores of courses with literally hundreds of learners, where the involvement levels of others was limited to only a handful of courses (see section 5 'Impact').

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 2008 Sheila Smith was appointed on a 0.75 fractional contract as project co-ordinator. Sheila was to remain with the project for the full duration of over two years. Significantly, once it was known that CRT funding had been secured East Durham Trust sought to enhance the project by attempting to 'lever' further resources from other sources, a strategy commonly adopted by Third Sector organisations seeking to maximize impact with a view to economies of scale. This strategy proved successful when a proposal to the Local Strategic Partnership (i.e. East Durham LSP) secured a further £83,293 (see section 6 'Added Value/Additionality')

Given the later than anticipated start of the project (and indeed the employment of the project co-ordinator) it was necessary after the first monitoring period for East Durham Trust to request a variation to the grant agreement. In March 2009 CRT confirmed their acceptance of most of the virement suggested by East Durham Trust although both parties agreed that the outputs would remain as originally agreed.

One of the earliest developments for the project was the constant dialogue between East Durham Trust and CRT over specific qualifications and whether the constituted inclusion as targeted outputs. For example, in May 2009 Michael O'Brien confirmed that five qualifications were indeed acceptable as level 2 qualifications in relation to the overall project target of 160. Central to such debate was the inclusion or otherwise on the NDAQ list of approved qualifications.

CRT carried out the first monitoring visit of the project on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009 where progress was duly noted and agreement reached on continued dialogue being crucial in relation to eligible qualifications and eligible wards.

In late 2009 a new output concerning people assisted into self employment was added to the original project outputs.

By this time a clear model of delivery was emerging. A standard rate of room hire and teaching costs was established and it was the understanding that this placed a degree of onus on the Community partner in question to actively recruit to a course to a previously agreed level. This

process appeared to be the effective and successful model and ultimately proved to be a self selecting process in terms of partner involvement, i.e. the more adept partners were at applying this practice the more involved in the project they became, others who perhaps lacked the resources, established practices, or the inherent skills-set to recruit, took a less active role. Others developed those skills as a response to the project.

In early 2009 the teaching element of the project began in earnest with the first PTLLS Teaching Course commencing and one of the parties, Eastlea Community Centre began the process of becoming a recognised approved centre. Most of the project partners were able to nominate partners for the course which saw over 20 individuals successfully qualifying in two phases and ultimately the centre receive full accreditation.



*The first PTLLS Teaching course*

As the project drew to a close there was a degree of confusion around the acceptance of certain qualifications in relation to project outputs which took some time to resolve. It appeared that assurances provided by certain CRT staff during the early stages of the project in relation to the NDAQ database were not necessarily acceptable to others, indeed the issue became a discussion point at a strategic level within CRT. However, what was universally agreed was that the individual beneficiaries were engaged in training and education, often after decades away from the structured learning environment, and that the benefits and positive outcomes in terms of improved employability were in many cases immeasurable.

*“Some people who attended basic courses on the EMBED programme have gone on to access other higher level courses in the centre.”*

*Hayley Hood, Haswell Mencap*

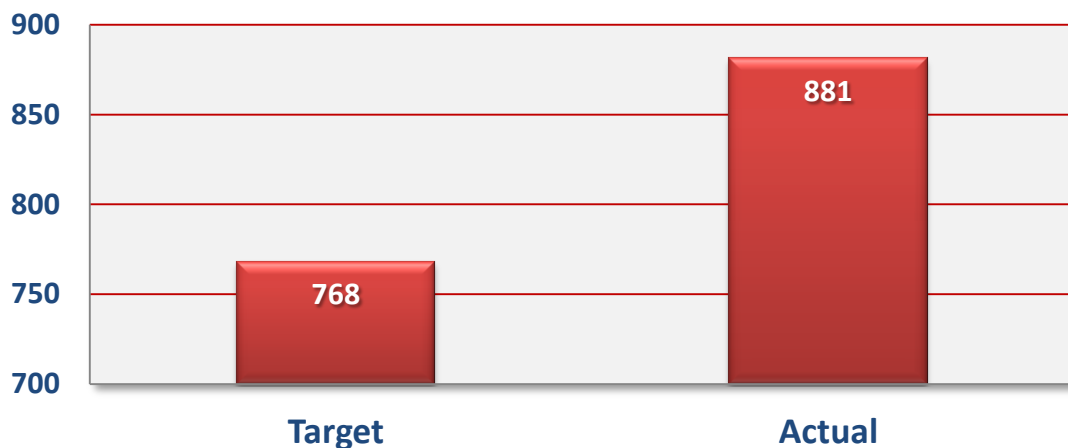
Such inspirational outcomes became apparent at the two EMBED Awards evenings held during the lifespan of the project which highlighted individual achievements alongside illustrating the genuine embedding of a learning infrastructure within the affected communities.



## 5. IMPACT (what the Project achieved).

The most obvious indicators of impact is the achievement of the project outputs in terms of the original outputs against the actual targets, what would normally be referred to as hard data. In relation to the number of people gaining NVQ Level 2 and above a total of 113 additional learners were achieved within the expenditure and timescale envelopes of the project. This was mainly due to larger than anticipated group sizes or better targeting of resources.

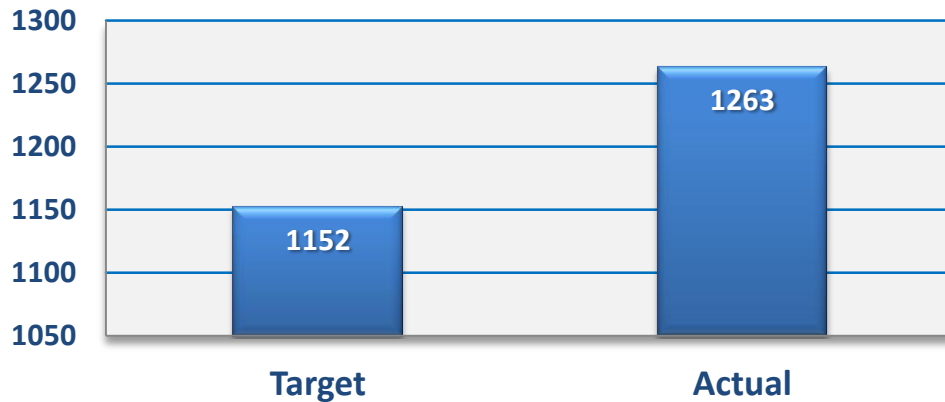
### Number of people gaining a NVQ Level 2 and above



A similar degree of over achievement was experienced in relation to the number of people assisted in skills development with 111 more individuals than anticipated successfully completing courses. Although these courses were generally less formal and less likely to have tangible effect on participants' level of employability it was always envisaged that this first step engagement would lead to more formal progression routes. Certainly anecdotal evidence would suggest that this was indeed the case in many instances.

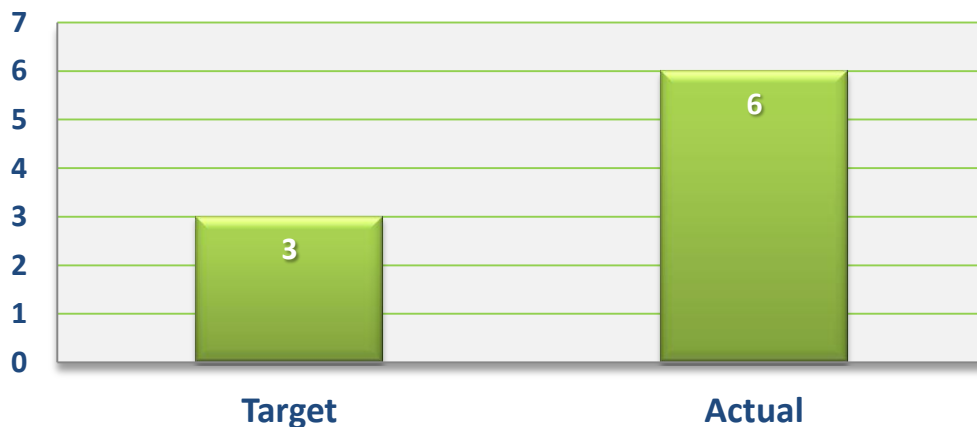
One young lady from Wingate decided to set up her own mobile catering business having completed a Food Hygiene course through EMBED.

## Number of people assisted in skills development



The numbers of individuals assisted into work was always a low target numerically due to the fact that this is traditionally a difficult output to evidence, often the timescale between completion of a course to taking up employment is too long to allow the instance to be captured and sometimes the link between the qualification gained and the job secured is tenuous. Despite this the EMBED project successfully recorded twice as many individuals progressing into employment than targeted.

## Number of people assisted into work





In reality it is highly likely that this figure of 6 is significantly higher. Many of the individuals who signed up for Level 2 courses were looking to increase their chances of gaining employment as a view of the most popular courses would testify – qualifications for Food Hygiene and Health and Safety being prerequisites for many job vacancies. Similarly the most popular non-accredited courses have links to those in the accredited category.

Dennis, an ex-miner in his early fifties, enrolled on a basic computing course in his local community centre in Wingate. From there he progressed onto a programme at New College Durham and eventually secured full time employment as a porter at the local university. He recognises that the EMBED project gave him his first step opportunity.

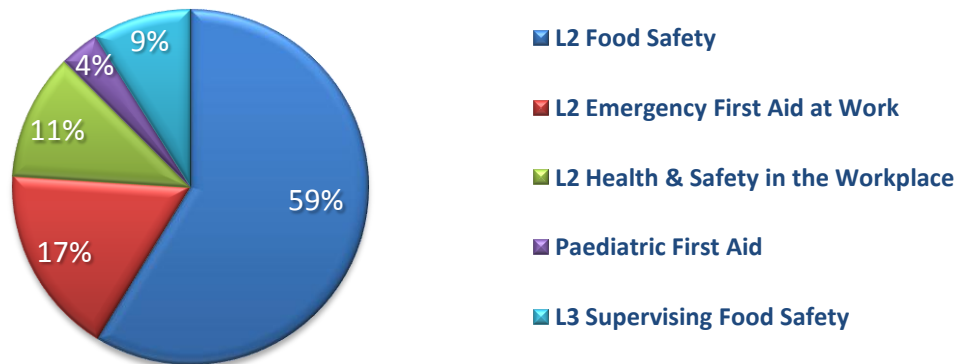


The most obvious example of this would be the 'beginners IT' course which would be seen as a natural progression route into a more structured IT course of often the necessary addition to a CV which would, in turn, enhance employment prospects in vocational opportunities where a small degree of familiarity with computers was a prerequisite.

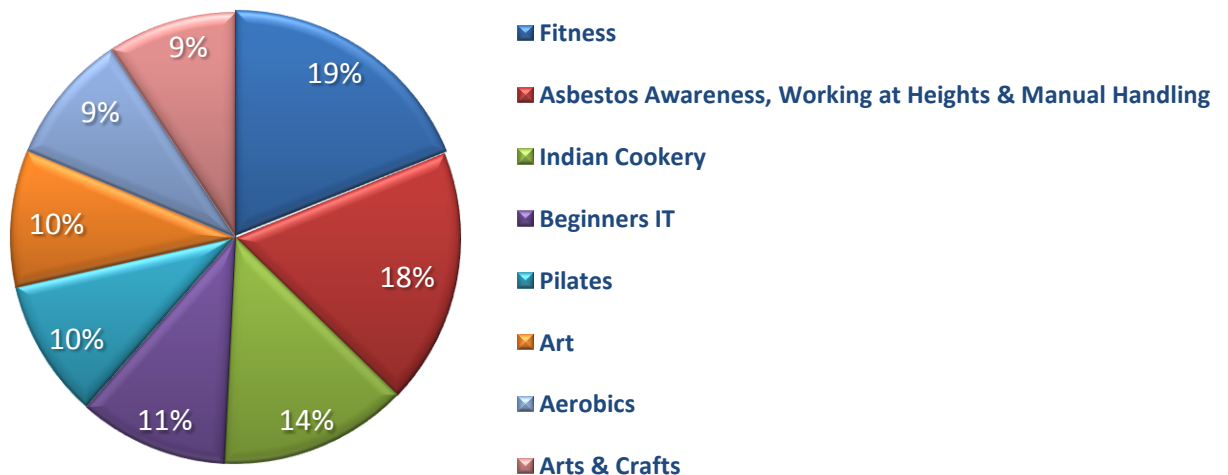


Prior to attending her EMBED course Clare from Shotton never had access to a computer. Now she has embarked on a range of other academic qualifications. Her initial enquiry at Shotton IT centre was a request for help with English and Maths

## Accredited Courses with more than 50 people attending



## Non accredited courses with more than 50 people attending





Although it would initially appear to be a recreational course, the face painting class at Shotton had regeneration outcomes: firstly, some of the participants were able to generate income at Community events and secondly, one of the learners used it as a stepping stone towards moving on to a Teaching Assistant qualification.



In terms of hard outputs it should also be noted that the targeted intention of achieving a single 'job created' outcome (i.e. The Project Co-ordinator) was indeed achieved.

In summary, it is clear to see that the project surpassed all expectations in relation to target achievements. However, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the true impact of the EMBED initiative can only be fully recognised by considering the elements of additionality and added value which are covered in the next section of this report.



## 6. ADDED VALUE AND ADDITIONALITY.

Given that the EMBED project was always time bound and that it had a finite level of resource, it was important to use what time and finance was available to maximum effect. The East Durham Trust Management and the Steering group were always mindful of the need to consider how best to use the EMBED activity to potentially 'lever in' other resources and to always be aware of the potential the project had to influence and affect positive outcomes which were above and beyond those initially envisaged.

### 6.1 Additional Funding.

Shortly after securing the EMBED funding from CRT, East Durham Trust approached the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) with a proposal which would effectively enhance the project and provide a number of additional elements. The East Durham LSP had Worklessness as a priority and had a strong history of investing in Education with a well established and successful priority sub group known as the Learning and Skills Forum. In the event, East Durham Trust secured over £83,000 for the 'Bridging the Gap' project (a confusing title for Coalfields staff who had their own funding strand which shared the title).

Rather than this LSP funding be simply a direct extension of the EMBED project in the 'more of the same' sense there were a number of differences: Significantly it was identified that the Bridging the Gap funding would support provision that would not fit the criteria for EMBED – either because of course type or geographical location – so the project would naturally provide an additional element in that sense. Also the Bridging the Gap project funded a 'Community Chest' element known as the Small Grants Fund. This £16,000 'pot' was to prove an invaluable resource in that it provided the co-incidentally EMBED partners with opportunity to purchase capital items which meant investment in learning resources that would have a legacy element and add to the overall embedding ethos of the project.

Similarly, as the project progressed East Durham Trust was able to secure further funding from the local Area Action Partnership. Although this funding was available to a range of beneficiaries' beyond EMBED partners over half of the groups did benefit. Again, this was a Community Chest funding arrangement and although it did focus specifically on Family Learning many of the individual 'village based' projects reflected the established infrastructure that the EMBED project had created. The total value of this project was £30,000.

Although East Durham has a high levels of deprivation and there is a limit to the potential for personal contributions for courses, there were examples of occasions when the recruitment process threw up courses or individuals which did not fit into the EMBED criteria; in such cases individuals did indeed subscribe to courses, (this is also a feature of sustainability observations – see section 7).

**“Now that the EMBED project has finished some of the new groups  
are happy to pay the tutor directly.”**

*Hilary, Wheatley Hill Community Association*

The final and most recent example of funding leverage can be found in the recent successful securing of Transition Funding that East Durham Trust has received. Although a relatively small amount of resource this will ensure that around 10 courses adopting the EMBED model will be run from September 2011.



***Customer Service  
Success course at  
Blackhall Resource  
Centre***

## **6.2 Added Value**

Perhaps the most obvious, and indeed important added value element of the EMBED project is the overall contribution that the initiative made to the viability of Community Buildings. Although not an overtly intended outcome of the project it became abundantly clear that the contribution of the room rental element of the project model had a significant positive impact on many of the centres such as Miners Welfare Halls.

**“The room rental was really important as we are always looking  
for contributions to our running costs.”**

*Rona, Shotton Partnership*

It should be note that at the time of EMBED project issues such as Local Government Review and impending Public Spending Cuts meant that many Community Organisations who had premises were finding financial survival increasingly harder. The EMBED project provided a

clear lifeline in terms of financial contribution from increased utilisation of the building. Often, this contribution came less directly in situations where a course taking place meant opening of the building which could then mean that it was an opportunity to run additional activities elsewhere in the building on the basis of economies of scale.

*“We were in a rocky period and without the EMBED project we might have closed down.”*

*Lena, Gully House Community Centre, Wingate*



***EMBED project  
promotion within  
Eastlea Community  
Centre***

It should also be noted that many of these Community Buildings have been subject to investment by CRT in the past so there was an element of protecting, enhancing and supporting that original investment.

*“One of the major positives from the project was that the vast majority of the funding found its way into the community”*

*Julie, Eastlea Community Centre, Seaham*

### **6.3 Added Value – Collaboration and Shared Practice.**

It was always envisaged that there would be a significant opportunity in terms of partners sharing positive working practices and it was also hoped that individual organisations would collaborate in delivery.

Representatives of the groups came together on a monthly basis in a forum known as the Steering Group which included update reports from each organisation as a standing agenda

item. This forum proved invaluable as the group clearly had wide ranging levels of experience and knowledge of delivering education ranging from well established (usually as a result of working with the local college or a training provider) through to those who had little or no experience of delivery.

In the former case this included Eastlea in Seaham, Blackhall and Shotton, in the latter respect Thornley and Haswell's Hazelwell Centre were at the other end of the scale. Invariably the more experienced groups would guide the others by recommending courses and the practical implications of running them. There was no doubt that organisations developed as a result of these forums.

There were also examples of collaborative working – particularly when course viability was an issue; an example being when Blackhall Community Association and Haswell's Hazelwell Centre came together to jointly deliver a cookery course. Both partners had failed to recruit a viable number of learners but the course could run in cost effective manner by bringing the two small groups together. In the event the course was run at Blackhall who had the larger kitchen, the Haswell participants were provided with free community transport in order to attend.

Similarly, the Haswell Mencap representative reported during telephone research that the project had made it easier to work with organisations that they previously had considered to be competitors.

There is strong evidence to suggest that the collaborative relationships between the individual representatives and the partner organisations will continue well in to the future and many of the partners have become involved in other projects alongside each other once again.

## 7. SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY.

There are a number of ways in which the EMBED project has clearly led to activity which will occur beyond the lifespan of the project.

To begin with, the very fact that thousands of learners have taken part in education and training in around ten community venues will naturally help create a learning culture and a degree of expectation in the eyes of the local community. Proof of this can be found in the simple observation that in the majority of cases, courses have indeed continued in some shape or form in most of the venues, such provision has been funded by:

- *Personal subscription* – three of the respondents to the telephone survey stated that individuals pay for courses. Of course this raises two questions; firstly, mindful of the fact that East Durham is an area of high deprivation there is a question of what happens to those who are not in a position to pay (and the answer to this would require further research). Secondly, there is an obvious question of why did we need CRT funding if people are willing to pay course fees? The answer here is that the EMBED project provided tangible evidence of what could be gained through engaging in Community Education and created a learning environment, very much in a pilot sense. People have now responded to this.
- *Other funding* – Having seen the benefits to individuals and organisations most of the partners have sought other sources of funding in order to feed the demand that their success had created. Partners have had success in securing funding from Local Authority, Skills Funding Agency, East Durham LEADER and the Area Action partnership.
- EDT are aware of three instances where individuals who completed the PTLLS teaching qualifications have gone on to provide free services in the community.

8 of the 10 partners who responded to the telephone survey reported some form of education taking place in their centres, three months after the project completion date.

Another significant contributor to ensuring that some form of provision continued was the purchase of the material either directly (from the Bridging the Gap fund or the provision of laptops to the partners) or indirectly (via investment stimulated by EMBED provision). Such



equipment and materials included books, whiteboards, visual aids etc which continue to be used for current delivery.



***The Computer Build course was funded by the EMBED project and received support from Bridging the Gap for the purchase of equipment.***

***“The resources that the project brought to our IT room will continue to be used long into the future, it’s a great legacy”.***

***Derek, Trimdon Grange Community Association***

Finally it is impossible to overestimate the potential of having trained staff at large in the community the 21 individuals who qualified on the EMBED PTLLS courses are all exercising their skills in the local community, causing a continued ripple effect which will no doubt last long into the future. As previously mentioned, there is evidence of some providing services on a voluntary basis within the community.

***"I am now a Teaching Assistant thanks to taking part in the project."***

***Kelly - Seaham***



## 8. LESSONS LEARNED.

### 8.1 Partners.

As part of the evaluation process the partners were asked if they had any negative reflections of their involvement.

Much of the response here centred on issues that could not necessarily be improved by any action, even in retrospect, this included:

*“People should have been allowed to take part in more than one course”.*

*“It wasn’t fair that some people weren’t eligible because where they lived”.*

Obviously such reflections were dictated by the funding criteria.

Some partners mentioned the time lag on payments and how it adversely affected their cash flow given that they had paid teaching staff on occasions. This wasn’t apparent at the time and would be something East Durham Trust would be more sympathetic to in the future.

### 8.2 Management.

East Durham Trust would with hindsight perhaps sought to engage different partners from the outset. Two of the partners made minimal contribution and one originally engaged partner chose not to participate in the project. On the other hand, two who were recruited to the project at a later stage flourished from the start and should have been involved from the outset.

A post project analysis from East Durham Trust also led to agreement in retrospect that more telephone and possibly face to face liaison with CRT Grant workers would have led to a much more productive working relationship, too often East Durham Trust staff used formal, written communication methods when a less formal approach was called for.

### 8.3 General.

- Overall the model was extremely well.
- The project changed people lives in a positive way.
- The awards evening element was particularly successful from a motivational point of view.
- The project helped to support community activity and social inclusion in a general sense.



## Appendices.

Appendix 1	News cuttings
Appendix 2	Project outcomes profile















## Project outcomes profile

	Target Outputs	Actual Outputs
Number of jobs created/safeguarded	1	1
Number of people assisted in work	3	6
Number of people assisted in skills development	1,152	1,263
Number of adults gaining NVQ2 of above	768	881
Number of people gaining basic skills	30	11
Number of transport/access schemes	1	1
Number of people assisted into self employment	7	5

