



Reaching Communities Mid-project Review

Supporting Somali Children's Education in Leicester

About the project

The project is a tutoring support service for up to 150 disadvantaged children who are at risk of falling behind in their core educational subjects, as a result of inequalities which have been exacerbated by COVID-19. The service plan was to provide up to 4 hours per week over a period of one term each (8 weeks) per child.

The project's beneficiaries are newly arrived children and young people (last five years) from Key Stage 1 & 2, not achieving attainment standards at school in the Highfields and surrounding neighbourhoods. They are also:

- Not be eligible for statutory support,
- Have behaviour issues at school and/or in the community,
- Have language and communications needs,
- Be struggling with mental and emotional wellbeing.

We expected the following outcomes from the tutor support:

- Improved language and communication skills,
- Increased social interactions and networks,
- Improved educational attainment,
- Increased self-esteem,
- Reduced school exclusions,
- Improve behaviour at school,
- Reduce the likelihood of young people taking part in both criminal and risky behaviours.

This project is part of a wider tutoring service project that aims to also target schools to deliver tutoring opportunities to children that are falling behind and that are eligible for statutory support. The aim was to generate a new trading income from the tutoring service, paid for with school pupil premiums and covid catch up grants. This was so that SDS can reduce its business risks by diversifying its income sources.

Our story so far

The project started in the Summer of 2022 with preliminary pre-project launch activities – a new brand and logo was created, and the service was launched – we called it Himilo Tutoring – Himilo means positive aspirations in Somali. The marketing materials were designed and developed (fliers and posters).

Meetings were held with headteachers at schools, tutors were recruited, and the tutoring systems were set up – registration systems, and outputs and outcomes data collection systems.

We recruited four tutors, but this took longer than anticipated due to the summer holidays and the need to ensure that the tutors had the right mix of skills and experience for our service-users. This impacted on the projected start date – which was changed to the Autumn term 2022.

About us
Somali Development Services (SDS) was set up in 2001 to support the Somali community, new arrivals and black, minority and ethnic (BAME) people to ensure that they are able to participate and thrive in Leicester city's economic, social and community life. We help BAME children to achieve and prevent them from falling behind by being a welcoming, supportive, learning community.

LEARN with SDS

Himilo LEARNING
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

Helping young children from minority ethnic backgrounds catch up and preventing them from falling behind

Why is this needed?

- Children from BAME backgrounds can struggle with language and communication and become frustrated and isolated leading to a loss in confidence, mental health issues and behaviour problems which leads to lower attainment
- Children not yet competent in English as a second language can be 60% less likely to achieve the expected standard in KS2 in Maths and 72% less likely in Science
- A third less children who are classified as 'gaining competence' in English as a second language achieve English or Maths GCSE at grade 9-4 than those considered competent
- Disadvantaged children are at risk of being excluded and not achieving their full potential

Our impact

- Improved language & communication skills
- Improved behaviour & attainment
- Reduced need for statutory support
- Improved parenting skills
- Reduced stress in the household
- Improved mental and emotional well-being

Our wider support for children and families

- Family support
- Nursery and childcare
- Young people/ adult education & employment
- Domestic violence support
- Information, advice & guidance

Why work with us

- We ensure that anyone who feels uprooted or excluded is welcomed and can belong
- Our approach & unique skills supports children from ethnic minority backgrounds especially with language and communication
- We can subsidise places that do not meet premium requirements
- Welcoming, accessible, respectful

Evidence that this will work

- Social and emotional support has an impact on attainment for disadvantaged pupils
- Parental involvement is associated with pupils' success at school
- Head, Hands, Heart model offers a holistic experience that improves learning

How we can help you

We provide one to one and small group tutoring with a focus on addressing language and communication barriers. Ours is a holistic approach including physical and creative activities. We develop the wider skills in children such as entrepreneurship and parent and community involvement. Our tutors speak a wide range of languages and can support children with their wider communication skills.

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SDS
Somali Development Services

COMMUNITY FUND

The flier was given to families that use our service, especially the Information, Advice and Guidance Service. This is important. SDS is uniquely placed in the heart of the community where families drop in to access our IAG service – many of whom are refugees or asylum seekers. This means that were able to reach local people that are experiencing troubles and that need extra help and support to resettle and reintegrate into the local area.

To date, 26 secondary school students and 41 primary school students have enrolled and are receiving tutoring support every Saturday at our centre from 11-3pm. These are group sessions – one session is for primary school students and the other is for secondary school students. The classes are made up of mixed ability and mixed age groups – this is a key to success as the older children or more able children help the younger/ less able. This also contributes to a sense of community and mutual support and positive outcomes such as new friendships, confidence, a sense of belonging, motivation (see later).

All of the children and young people that are using the service have language barriers. The tutors reported that poor levels of English are a big barrier for the students that are attending the sessions.

We also bought 15 computers and 20 chairs for the students with additional Reaching Communities grant funding.

How we involved people from our community

We undertook intensive research to develop a database of schools of all of the schools in our local area. We have 49 schools on our database with contact details. We identified the schools that have a high number of children where English was a second language and where there were attendance and attainment issues. From this we identified a target list of schools to work with, we emailed them with our flier and met with four of the high priority schools.

We also did a mailshot to the rest of the schools. Unfortunately, we have not received any direct referrals from the schools (see lessons learned later).

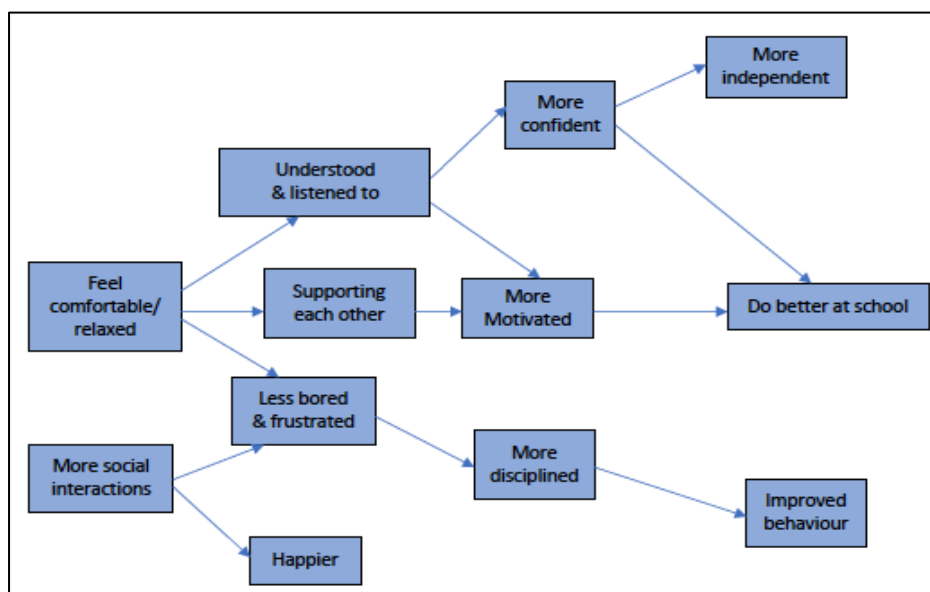
We have partnerships with local voluntary and community sector organisations, Leicester City Council children's social care and the local Police – all of which were sent promotional materials.

As mentioned, our community centre is based in the heart of the community, one of the most deprived wards in Leicester and we have more than 2000 users drop in to use our IAG service throughout the year. Through our IAG service families are made aware of the project and we are able to reach the most disadvantaged families. Parents feel a sense of trust and safety using our service as for many they are not aware of local services and do not know where else to go for help.

Our impact so far

We commissioned an expert evaluator (local Accredited Social Value Practitioner - Social Value UK) to undertake qualitative and quantitative research to evidence our impact. She undertook one-to-one consultations with parents, tutors, and children and young children to identify what outcomes they had experienced, and she observed the group tutoring sessions. From this a Theory of Change was developed, and a survey was then designed to identify how many children, young people and parents experienced the outcomes. The results are set out below:

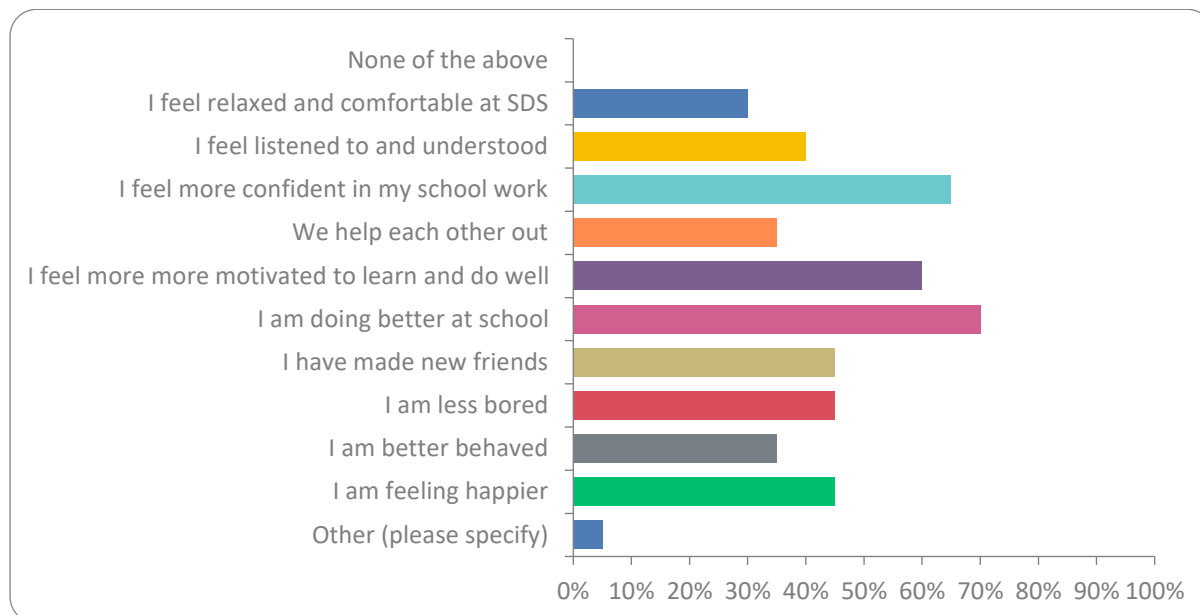
Theory of Change



Quantitative research

21 children and young people, and 5 parents completed the survey. 11 children were aged 5-10 years and 9 were aged 11-15 years old.

We asked the children and young people how the tutoring project helped them. The responses are set out below.



Outcomes	Quantity	Percent
Feel relaxed and comfortable at SDS	6	30%
Feel listened to and understood	8	40%
More confident in school work	13	65%
Help each other out	7	35%
More motivated	12	60%
Doing better at school	14	70%
Made new friends	9	45%
Less bored	9	45%
Better behaved	7	35%
Feel happier	9	45%

Our original theory of change and outcomes identified attainment as a key outcome, and we were pleased to see that 70% of children and young people felt that they were doing better at school due to the additional tutoring support that they are receiving from SDS.

45% of the children reported that they made new friends at the tutoring activities. At this stage we were unable to confirm if their interactions at school improved – none of the children reported that this outcome improved for them at school.

Nine children reported that they felt happier – we can assume that this has led to improved mental health. However, this needs further investigation when fully evaluating the project

so that we can determine whether the children were struggling with their mental health before attending the tutoring service.

Seven children reported that they were being better behaved, which is one of our main outcomes. This is a difficult outcome to collect data on from children themselves – we need to ascertain the levels of behaviour at school before and after our intervention. We need to collect data from the schools to identify any observed behaviour changes.

In the same way we want to investigate if being better behaved impacted on anti-social behaviour both at school and in the community. Nine children reported that they were less bored – and we already know that being bored and frustrated is one of the main reasons that children and young people misbehave and engage in anti-social behaviour. We need to investigate this further.

Parent outcomes

Four out of five of the parents that completed the survey reported that they felt less stressed as a result of their child attending the tutoring service, and two reported that they felt happier. Interestingly two parents reported that they also learnt something new as a result of the service. Our consultations with the parents identified that they learnt computer skills or English language as a result of their children's gaining new skills and knowledge. We would like to follow up on this in the future.

What we have learned

At this stage in the project, we consulted with the tutors, community development staff, parents and children to identify what went well, lessons learnt and how we could improve the service.

1. Timing

The summer holidays impacted on the timing of the project and the recruitment of the tutors took longer than anticipated.

This has impacted on the output numbers – take up, and how the service is delivered: We wanted to offer a mix of one to one and group sessions, targeting children and young people with specific needs. However, we are now starting to gain some momentum as group sizes are large and we are building relationships with the students to identify their strength and weaknesses for more targeted one to one support.

2. Partnerships

This project was part of a wider project plan that involved our first attempt at developing the tutoring service as a traded service that schools could also pay for with the government catch up grants and/ or pupil premium funding (funded with the Enterprise Development Fund). The Reaching Communities funded aspect of the project aimed to meet a real need/ gap – to pay for pupils that are falling behind but that are not eligible for statutory funding. Whilst the paid for tutoring service was targeted at pupils eligible for statutory funding.

We did presentations to four local schools all of which expressed an interest in the paid for element of tutoring service. However, when we followed up with them, they advised that their pupil premium and catch-up grants were already allocated to pay for their own tutors but that they would like to refer eligible pupils for the grant funded aspect of the project.

We have further struggled with our capacity to 'sell' the service to schools – in terms of time and skills/ capacity. We have learnt that to unlock school resources we need to allocate time and resource to engagement and partnership work and to nurturing those relationships.

This is disappointing as we feel that we have missed an important opportunity. We know that with resource for marketing and engagement we will generate leads and a good pipeline especially as we have the Reaching Communities funded aspect of the project and some good testimonials.

We feel that this is important – because children and young people are missing out on using our centre and accessing our support. This needs a solution, and we hope to address this during this next year.

We need to rethink how we can best engage with the schools to deepen our partnerships with them and to enable us to collect data on the impact of the service on attainment, behaviour, mental health, and social interactions.

We originally planned to engage with/ influence the Leicester City Council Leicester Partnership School (LPS) – that works with young people who have social, emotional, mental health and behaviour needs and who find it difficult to access education within a mainstream school setting. Our goal was to engage with and influence this agency to offer culturally specific tutoring support as part of their alternative education provision. However, time, resources and internal skills/ capacity has impacted our ability to do this.

3. Eligibility

The project's beneficiaries are newly arrived children and young people (last five years) from Key Stage 1 & 2, not achieving attainment standards at school in the Highfields and surrounding neighbourhoods. They are also:

- Not eligible for statutory support,
- Have behaviour issues at school and/or in the community,
- Have language and communications needs.

To gain momentum and ensure that we met our targets we opened up the service to all newly arrived children that needed help to meet attainment standards and that had language and communication needs. We were unable to ascertain which children were eligible for statutory support and which ones had behaviour issues (except from the parents).

We need to take a more targeted approach to ensure that we are targeting pupils that are not eligible for pupil premium support. At present this is difficult to ascertain due to parents not understanding what pupil premium is or whether they are eligible. We have had to make some assumptions.

We will therefore ask all parents if they are in receipt of benefits to ascertain whether they are eligible for pupil premium funded support – for those that are, we will contact the school directly to determine whether the school can pay for additional tutoring.

4. Stakeholder project group

The project is gaining a good momentum with a good take up of pupils and increasing referrals. We have been listening to the families and ensuring that our service meets their needs through informal conversations – this is because we need to develop relationships and build their trust in us and confidence which takes some time.

Now that the children and families have settled into the project, we will formalise a process for parents and children to get more involved and have a say about the project.

Through our recent survey two children reported that they wanted to be involved in the project group, and six reported that they were not sure. Three parents reported that they wanted to get involved. We are currently following up with these stakeholders to support them to participate in the project development group, which will meet monthly after the tutoring sessions.

5. Facilities

The rooms are starting to get overcrowded as all spaces are taken up. We need to re-structure the programme timings so that we can accommodate more children and possibly offer some support online. We are currently in discussion internally about this and we will discuss this with the parents and children at the newly established project development group.

6. Data collection

All pupils' complete activities that are marked by the tutors and assessments after attending the tutoring. We have also collected outcomes data through qualitative and quantitative research. This is good evidence that shows the progress that pupils are making in reaching their learning goals.

However, we want to better understand progress made before and after our intervention as compared to a baseline – current attainment and behaviour at school, mental health, and anti-social behaviour. Collecting this data will support our business case for further investment – by schools, funders, the local authority and the police and crime commissioner. It is important that we get this right.

We have set up Lamplight, a database that collects output and outcomes data with the support of our evaluation consultant. This has measures to collect outcomes data for this project. However, this is currently not utilised to its full potential – we need this to be completed in collaboration with the schools, children's social care and the local police.

During this next year we need to work with our consultant to engage with stakeholders (schools, police, social care), so that we are able to measure progress against a baseline that includes the following measures:

- Attainment at school before and after – measured through Key Stage 1&2 tests,
- Behaviour at school before and after – measured through the number of behaviour incidents at school,
- Mental health before and after – measured through end of project survey.

How we are changing what we do

As mentioned, we need to increase and improve our engagement with schools – this is important as an opportunity for SDS as well as for the schools, pupils, and families. We need to develop a pipeline of schools that will buy the service so that we can sustain the service when the grant funding ends. We need to resolve this quickly so that we can achieve the goals of the project.

We also need to engage with the Leicester City Council Leicester Partnership School (LPS) – that works with young people who have social, emotional, mental health and behaviour needs and who find it difficult to access education within a mainstream school setting.

We are in discussion with a local business development consultant about this and we would welcome a discussion with NLCF about this.

Our capacity is limited, and demand is high. We need more tutors and volunteers to support delivery as class sizes are almost at a maximum. We already work with students on placements from De Montfort University and we plan to recruit for more placements from Leicester University Business School so that students can gain apprenticeships and become more employment ready. We have a good relationship with the universities, and we have previous success in developing apprenticeship schemes.

Our original project plan was to run trips for the whole family and to offer rewards to motivate the children and young people. We listened to families, and they reported that this would have a positive impact on the mindset of children and young people - especially those that are newly arrived with no recourse to public funding. We plan to do this in year two.

Spending this year

The budget was £45,000 for year one and we have spent £45,766. This is due to overspending on staffing costs, to which SDS is contributing to. We do not need to make any budget adjustments for year two, but we do need to invest time into engaging with the schools to develop partnerships and collect impact data. We will carry forward the social impact evaluation costs into year two to enable us to deliver these actions.