

MARSH FARM ORGANISATION WORKSHOP

EVALUATION REPORT



*"What gets things moving is not money. What gets things done is not technology.
What makes things happen is not project planning and management.
But things do get done by men and women who are adequately organised.
Once organised, they will find the money, they will find the technology,
they will find the projects."*

Clodomir Santos de Morais

*"We were thrown in at the deep end.....but even though it sometimes
felt like none of us knew what we were doing, it still worked.
I was dumbstruck, seeing all these people working together
to achieve the same thing."*

Marsh Farm Organisation Workshop participant (60yrs)

*"The farm project was interesting – I felt physically better
– I had a feeling of freedom and my spirits lifted
– I didn't realise I had so much stamina!"*

Marsh Farm Outreach participant (40yrs)

*"The Organisation Workshop has made a huge difference to me
– without it, I think I would probably be in jail by now.
The OW has been a lifeline."*

Marsh Farm Organisation Workshop participant (25yrs)

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Glossary:

OW	Organisation Workshop
MFO	Marsh Farm Outreach
FE	Facilitators Enterprise
PE	Participants Enterprise
BUD	Bottom Up Development course
CIO	Community Interest Organisation
CIC	Community Interest Company
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
WP	Work Programme
NEA	New Enterprise Allowance
OCS	Cabinet Office, Office for Civil Society
NDC	New Deal for Communities
COP	Community Organisers Programme
COSAF	Community Organisers Social Action Fund
SROI	Social Return on Investment
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis

NOTE: In 2014, the Office for Civil Society established a one-off funding programme to support grass-roots initiatives linked to the national 'Community Organisers Programme'. 'Imagine' was commissioned to assess this fund - the 'Community Organisers Social Action Fund' (COSAF) - including the Marsh Farm OW, one of the funded projects. The evaluation, published in May 2015, includes an early case study of the MFOW pilot project. The case study can be accessed via Locality: <http://locality.org.uk/>
See also: <http://www.corganisers.org.uk/news/co-social-action-fund-results>

SUMMARY

In March 2015, residents on Marsh Farm estate, Luton, set up an innovative project to engage with some of the most marginalized, long-term unemployed people in their community. They piloted an 'Organisation Workshop' (OW), based on a Brazilian method that has been adopted across South America and in many parts of Africa over the past 40 years, but never before used in the UK. It was also the first OW ever to be initiated and led by local residents. Marsh Farm Outreach (MFO)¹ had worked for many years to strengthen community involvement in the improvement of their estate and they had been trying to pilot the OW approach, without success, for more than fifteen years. In November 2014, Cabinet Office, Office for Civil Society, (OCS) funding finally made it possible.

An OW brings together large groups of people to develop the 'organisational awareness and skills' necessary to change the participants' lives, their livelihoods and their communities. It is based on 'large-group psychology' and principles of self-organising, self-discovery and learning by doing. Participants form what is known as the 'Participants Enterprise' (PE)² and are tasked with delivering a project that is of benefit to the community. They are supported in a non-directive manner by a small team, the 'Facilitators Enterprise' (FE)³. The PE is provided with the tools and materials needed to undertake the project, which they must deliver on time (usually within 4-6 weeks) and within budget. The OW creates a sort-of 'pressure cooker' in which participants must determine how to go about the task and organise themselves to deliver it. At its core, an OW aims to trigger a profound change in the participants, in terms of their confidence, their relationships, their organisational and other skills, and their capacity to change their lives for the better.

The MFO was structured in three phases:

- the core Workshop during which 45 participants transformed a derelict field into a community farm/educational /recreational resource – 3 months;
- a transition phase when a smaller group of 13 participants developed business plans for enterprises they hoped to establish – 1 month (though in reality it has been much longer);
- an implementation phase when they established these enterprises and began trading prior to launching them – 6 months (ongoing).

Initially all three phases were expected to be complete by November 2015. But this was never realistic. At the time of writing this report, seven new enterprises were in the process of development.

The aims of the Marsh Farm project were to:

¹ Marsh Farm Outreach was formed in 2001 in order to ensure the community had a strong voice in the development of the estate and in particular the New Deal for Communities programme which ran from 2000-2010.

² The 'Participants Enterprise' refers to the people brought together by the OW, who form the work-team that self-organises to form a mini-enterprise in order to deliver the OW project.

³ The Facilitators Enterprise is the core team of 6/8 people who lead the project

- transform the lives of the participants in terms of their ability to access jobs and their overall wellbeing;
- improve the local environment and strengthen the community;
- impact on the local economy by developing community-based enterprises and services as a direct outcome of the OW.

The OW has been a major learning experience for everyone involved – participants, facilitators (MFO), and other agencies.

Key features of the project include:

- The OW recruited 45 people, most of whom felt ‘excluded’ from society and had been unemployed for long periods. Many were struggling with complex problems relating to physical and mental health, housing and other family crises. The fact that they were motivated to join the OW and to stay the course was in itself an important achievement. Sixteen participants left early – most of them, because they found work.
- The OW method required this large group of people, who did not already know one another, to deliver the core task - transforming a derelict field into a community resource - within twelve weeks. They were provided with the tools and materials but had to self-organise in relation to every aspect of the project – including support services like catering and health & safety. It proved to be a ‘roller-coaster’ experience but, incrementally, leaders emerged, people divided into work teams, decisions were made, conflicts were resolved and ultimately the OW task was delivered on time.
- After about ten weeks, most of the participants transferred from the farm site to Marsh House, a previously derelict building which MFO had partly restored, where they worked on renovating the building and developed their plans to establish community enterprises through the New Enterprise Allowances (NEA) programme.

Outcomes:

- By summer 2015, 44% of participants had been able to find mainstream jobs and (*as far as we know*) all were still in employment eight months later. This compares well with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) national figures, where around 30% of unemployed ‘clients’ find work after spending two years on the Work Programme⁴.
- The cost per job outcome was £7,000. This is higher than for other programmes that focus solely on employment outcomes, but the OW was a much broader and more ambitious undertaking. Also, if the participants currently working towards employment via new community enterprises are included, the cost per job outcome reduces to £4,000.
- At the start of the OW, 44% struggled with depression, lack of confidence, low self-esteem. Even though many still face significant barriers, feedback from participants shows that the OW gave most participants a new lease of life – more

⁴ The Work Programme was launched in June 2011, as part of the Government’s programme of welfare reform. It aims to help more people into lasting employment and replaces previous programmes such as the New Deals, Employment Zones etc

confidence, new friendships, more skills, better life-style, greater capacity to cope, greater resilience.

- Some formal training was provided within the OW and 13 people, who had few if any prior qualifications, undertook and passed a total of 42 courses on topics like health and safety, hygiene, employment rights, customer services, finance and administration.
- By September 2015, 13 people (28%) had opted to set up new enterprises based on their skills and interests including: bee-keeping, a community farm, a building co-operative, a catering business, music related and IT services. It is too early to say what the outcomes of these will be, but all these businesses are currently either in development or starting to trade.
- MFO has plans to establish a Community Interest Organisation (CIO) by May 2016 that will act as an umbrella organisation to support and nurture these new businesses over a longer period of time.
- Through the OW, a 5 acre abandoned field has been transformed into a community resource complete with paths, orchard, flower-beds, vegetable garden, bee-hives and 'iron-age replica round house'. Also Marsh House has new outside decking, toilets and music workshops, and, with a bit more work, it will have a new kitchen and café area.
- Although a Social Return on Investment (SROI) assessment was not undertaken, it is possible to make a reasonable estimate as to the added social value of the OW, by applying proxy wellbeing values used by housing providers in relation to non-housing benefits. This suggests a total social value from the OW of around £1,300,000.

Lessons:

The MFOW represented a steep learning curve for everyone involved in the project. Even though MFO had dreamt of running an OW for many years, when the funding became available, they had to move very quickly with only three months to plan and prepare for what was a very ambitious undertaking. They had to find additional resources, negotiate the involvement of partner agencies, recruit the right mix of participants, establish a project structure, navigate a complex regulatory system, find expert advisors and plan the development of new enterprises, while dealing with the day-to-day management of the Workshop itself. Although they had the support and guidance of Ivan Labra⁵ from Chile, this was the first time an OW had been tried in the UK, so it was difficult to predict what would be required. Despite the difficulties, the outcomes of the MFOW are significant and encouraging. But the insights gained from this project are also important and should inform the implementation of any future OW project in the UK.

Recommendations:

It is difficult to make specific recommendations on the basis of a single pilot project. One recommendation from this research, therefore, is that more pilots are needed, ideally in different settings, including rural as well as urban communities. But future pilots are more likely to succeed if:

⁵ Ivan Labra is the lead international expert on OWs having managed and evaluated them in S America and Africa for more than 30 years.

- more time is allowed for planning and preparation, and if budgets are set at more realistic levels than was the case for the MFOW;
- a local, trusted community organisation ‘hosts’ the OW, with a management structure that combines community leadership with a clear role for key stakeholders such as the Local Authority and the Job Centre;
- financial incentives are built into the way the OW operates, in a way that does not jeopardise participants’ core income;
- fledgling enterprises have intensive business development support and, as they begin to find their feet, are given access to local public and private sector contract opportunities;
- sustainable local investment is identified to support future OWs, e.g. through local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, local businesses and social enterprises that prioritise social value;
- Government departments encourage local services to exercise greater flexibility in the funding and regulatory systems that affect an OW.

A national ‘incubator organisation’, bringing together people with relevant expertise, could help to share learning and provide support for future OWs – setting standards, providing training, protecting the integrity of the OW method. It could be linked to an existing national NGO or function as a ‘virtual organisation’. It could also gather together the data needed to deepen our understanding of the OW model and enable further comparative analysis of the impact of the OW on employment, community enterprise and well-being.

See **Section Four** for a full analysis of the lessons from MFOW and recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In March 2015, residents of Marsh Farm estate in Luton, set up the first Organisation Workshop (OW) ever to be run in the UK. This was also the first OW to be established and run by local residents, rather than by outside ‘experts’ and in this respect could be considered a ground-breaking initiative.

As one of the most deprived areas in the country, Marsh Farm estate had been part of the ‘New Deal for Communities’ (NDC) programme, established by the UK government in 1998. Around 9,000 people live on the estate in a mix of low-rise housing and tower blocks. The main legacy of the NDC, which came to an end in 2010, is a purpose-built community centre, Futures House, which provides a local base for a range of statutory services and other community facilities. Further improvement work is planned including demolition and rebuilding of the central shopping area. But levels of poverty and unemployment on the estate remain high.

Marsh Farm Outreach (MFO) was set up by a group of residents who wanted the community to have a strong voice and play an active part in the NDC. Around 2001, they heard about the OW concept. It captured their imagination and they tried over many years to develop it as part of the NDC, but without success. Finally, in November 2014, funding from central government⁶, via Locality⁷, made it possible to establish an OW pilot project in Luton.

The OW aimed to help long-term unemployed people, many of whom felt ‘excluded’ and alienated from society, to develop the organisational skills, confidence and capacity that would transform their lives and improve the local community. MFO also hoped the OW would provide a launch-pad for a range of community enterprises that would have a major impact on the local economy. The workshop itself ran from March until June 2015. From the summer onwards, the project extended into a transition phase, in which a smaller group of participants worked towards establishing a number of new community-based enterprises. At the time of writing this report (April 2016), that work is still ongoing.

What is an OW?

The OW is based on a Brazilian model of community organising that enables people in poverty to regain control over their lives and their livelihoods. Originally developed in the 1960s, it has been adopted extensively across South America and Africa over the past four decades. Each OW brings together a large group of people, often 100 or more, most of whom are unemployed, disadvantaged and marginalized from society, in order to deliver a specific project that will benefit the local community and in the process transform the lives of those involved.

⁶ The OW was part funded by the Cabinet Office, through the Community Organising Social Action Fund (COSAF), linked to the national Community Organiser Programme (COP), and run by Locality on behalf of the Government from 2011 – 2015.

⁷ Locality is the national network of community-led enterprises and other projects that aim to help neighbourhoods thrive: <http://locality.org.uk/>

The approach is rooted in 'large group psychology' and the importance of 'learning by doing'. Rather than a process of 'capacity building', whereby people acquire a range of skills and knowledge through training, usually defined and delivered by others, the OW is based on the concept of 'capacitation'. This emphasizes the development of 'organisational consciousness' through an intense process self-discovery and learning with others. The process builds on the collective capacity of the large group, and community members take responsibility for their own learning. Participants form what is known as the 'Participants Enterprise' (PE), and they are supported in a non-directive manner by a small team, the 'Facilitators Enterprise' (FE). Mentors are also made available to provide expert advice, but only if the PE members seek it.

The PE is provided with the 'means of production' (tools and materials) needed to undertake the project. The overall task is divided into small, discreet work contracts and the PE is required to self-organise in order to deliver each one. In most OWs they are priced and the 'earned income' is paid to the PE on completion of each work contract. The PE is then responsible for managing the income, which belongs to all the participants.

Crucially, the participants have the freedom to organise themselves, with the expectation that they will complete the project within a relatively short timeframe (usually 4-6 weeks) and within budget. Thus the OW creates a sort-of 'pressure cooker' in which, by struggling to work collaboratively and become 'an organisation' that can deliver results, the OW provides participants with learning opportunities and personal development way beyond the task itself. If successful, the OW creates new assets for the community, but its core purpose is to trigger a profound change in the participants, in terms of their confidence, their relationships, their organisational and other skills, and their capacity to change their lives for the better. Often an OW can lead to further enterprise and economic developments beyond the initial project.⁸

Scope of Evaluation

Over recent years there has been growing interest in the OW model as an innovative way to tackle entrenched problems relating to poverty and unemployment. The Marsh Farm Organisation Workshop (MFOW) is the first attempt to apply the model in a UK context. In May 2015, a case study⁹, describing the initial phase of the project, identified early outcomes that seemed very positive. If this was not to be simply an interesting one-off experiment, it was felt important that the impact of the OW was better understood and the wider lessons identified. So the Cabinet Office, which originally sponsored the OW, contracted with 'Imagine' to do a further evaluation covering the period up to March 2016.

⁸ See Annex A for background information on the OW method as conceived and developed by Clodomir Santos de Moraes.

⁹ 'COSAF final evaluation' – Imagine, May 2015.

This evaluation looks in more detail at the design and implementation of the OW and the impact on participants, in order to understand the model better and help determine whether and how potential future OWs might be best supported.

The aims of this evaluation were:

- To understand how the OW model worked in practice; how it was adapted to a UK context; and whether it has something important to offer in terms of tackling long-term unemployment and worklessness;
- To understand the impact on participants, in terms of their capacity to move into work and their wellbeing more broadly;
- To understand the implications for other stakeholders such as Jobcentre Plus (JCP), the local authority et al;
- To begin to assess the costs and benefits of the approach – without undertaking a full Cost Benefit Analysis;
- To understand what lessons can be drawn for potential future OWs in the UK and to identify key lessons for policy and practice.

Theory of Change

Marsh Farm Outreach's vision for the OW was very ambitious. They hoped to use the project not only to help long-term unemployed people into work, but also to kick start a number of community-based, co-operative enterprises that would radically transform the local economy, generating jobs and other benefits for the whole community. They were taking on a real challenge, especially given the limited funding available, the tight timeframe for completion, the agendas of other stakeholders, as well as the inherent difficulty in working with so-called 'hard-to-reach' people.

In December 2014, while preparing for the start of the OW, MFO set out their Theory of Change¹⁰. They have used this as a framework to assess progress over the course of the year and it also informs this evaluation.

The Theory of Change identified the following **issues** facing the local community, the changes that MFO hoped to achieve and the way these would be evidenced:

- Lack of **organisational skills and capacity** in the community:
Changes would be evidenced by teamwork and ability to deliver the OW contracts; self-determined division of labour; emergence of effective leaders; capacity to solve problems; better communications and positive relationships.
- Lack of an **effective model and process** for building the capacity and life skills of local people:
The OW would provide evidence of successful recruitment and establishment of the PE; effective support and management by the FE; input from mentors; successful adaptation of the OW model to fit the UK context.
- Lack of **personal and professional skills** due to long-term unemployment affecting residents of Marsh Farm and others in the community:
Individual participants would provide evidence of increased levels of self-confidence and sense of 'self-worth'; ability to move into employment; ambition

¹⁰ see Annex B - Marsh Farm, Theory of Change, January 2015

to progress e.g. through community enterprise; new qualifications and capabilities; better lifestyle and 'can do' attitudes.

- **Social and economic exclusion** of residents of Marsh Farm:
Progress against this would be evidenced by recruitment of vulnerable residents; involvement of volunteers from the community; positive outcomes for most vulnerable; attitudes towards 'excluded' people; levels of social activity; commitment to 'community values' – collective as well as personal goals.

Methodology

In assessing the impact of the OW, the following evidence has been used:

- Internal MFO reports, photos, reviews, evaluation material and interviews to understand how the OW evolved in practice over the period;
- An analysis of the background of all 45 participants, using information from MFO's records, in order to get a more detailed profile of who the OW worked with, who benefited and how;
- An analysis of outcomes for all participants in order to assess practical impacts in terms of work and business development.
- Information has been cross-checked with JCP and Avanta¹¹ in order to make sure it is as accurate and up-to-date as possible;
- In depth interviews with 12 participants who are either still involved in phase 3 (New Enterprise Allowance¹²) or who hope to become involved;
- Telephone interviews with 4 people who left the OW early;
- Meetings and/or telephone interviews with key stakeholders including the Council, Luton JCP, Avanta;
- Interviews with MFO team members;
- Interviews with Ivan Labra¹³ and related documentation;
- An analysis of the outcomes, costs and benefits of the OW;
- One internal workshop with MFO, plus the Council, to review progress against the Theory of Change, as set out at the beginning of the project, and to reflect on the main lessons.

To inform a future Cost Benefit Analysis we tried to find ways to compare the outcomes for the OW with other similar programmes run by Luton JCP and nationally, bearing in mind that the scale of the OW and its unique features make direct comparisons difficult. Last year, Luton JCP ran a number of schemes, managed by their 'social justice team', that were targeted at 'hard-to-reach' groups. They treated the OW as one of these schemes. JCP saw the OW as an interesting, innovative and experimental approach – but probably something that would be a one-off, rather than a pilot that might be scaled up in future. As it was part of a wider portfolio of projects they did not put in place any specific monitoring of Marsh Farm and the various approaches being used, so it has not been possible for us to make comparisons against robust, local benchmarks. However we have made tentative comparisons with pilot projects run as part of a 'Worklessness Co-Design

¹¹ Avanta: contractors to JCP, providing business development support and managing NEA funding

¹² New Enterprise Allowance (NEA):

¹³ Ivan Labra is the lead international expert on OWs having managed and evaluated them in S America and Africa for more than 30 years

project' (2011), run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and a number of Local Authorities, which trialled innovative approaches to tackling worklessness. We also used data from a housing study¹⁴ to provide an insight as to the potential social value created by the OW.

Since this study began, community organisations in Hasting have started to plan a second OW with residents in Ore Valley. The Workshop is due to take place in 2017 and enterprise development programmes will run until 2019. The Ore Valley OW is part of a major regeneration programme which includes a potential £3million area investment budget. It is therefore a much larger undertaking than Marsh Farm. But it will draw heavily on the MFOW and will eventually provide further evidence to help assess the value of the OW approach.



¹⁴ 'The Social Impact of Housing Providers': Daniel Fujiwara, HACT 2013

SECTION ONE

MFLOW – THE MODEL

This section describes the MFLOW model and outlines key developments over the past year. The project was designed in three phases: the Workshop which involved all participants working together on the farm project; a short transition phase during which a smaller group would develop business plans for a number of community-based enterprises; an implementation phase during which they would start trading and begin to generate income.

The lead-up:

Unlike other OWs in other countries, the MFLOW was initiated and led by local residents – i.e. MFO, a team of about eight long-term residents who have worked together informally for many years, to improve conditions on the estate and to ensure that residents have an effective voice in anything that affects the community. In 2007, they invited Ivan Labra and his wife, Isabel, to come to the UK to train them to run an OW. Ivan and Isabel lived on the estate for three months while they trained the team to be an effective FE so that they could lead the project once it happened¹⁵. Over the following years MFO tried on many occasions to get funding for an OW, but without success. By 2014 however, when funding finally became available, many of the individuals who had trained in 2007 had moved away, so most (though not all) of the core team had to learn about the OW process as they went along.



Preparation:

The Cabinet Office, Office for Civil Society (OCS) decided to fund the OW as part of the COSAF programme, which aimed to support community initiatives linked to the national Community Organisers Programme. Funding was confirmed in November 2014, after which work started. The grant had to be spent by March 2015, so there were financial pressures that required the MFO team to move quickly. MFO had already identified a project – a 5-acre derelict field on the edge of the estate, which they planned to transform into a community farm. The idea was to turn the field into a project that could be used for educational as well as recreational purposes, and also, on a small scale, for food production. They negotiated with the Council for access to the land and got their support for the overall aims of the project. They got JCP on board - to help with recruitment and to provide a training allowance to participants for the duration of the project. They began to acquire the tools and materials needed for the task and identified experts who could provide advice and

¹⁵ The OW structure consists of a small team of facilitators who guide and support the participants and a much larger group of participants. They are called the 'facilitators enterprise' (FE) and the 'participants enterprise' (PE)

mentoring support to participants. They arranged for Luton Adult Learning to provide a range of courses during the OW. They also made arrangements for Ivan Labra to return to Luton for four months, as overall director of the OW, and they set up a steering group that involved MFO and people from the main external partner agencies. However, four months was simply not long enough to prepare for an OW, and even though the start date was put back twice, there were a lot of loose ends that had to be dealt with before the OW progressed.

The workshop:

The OW was finally launched at the end of March 2015. Forty-five people had been recruited either by word of mouth around the estate or via the Job Centre. In the week prior to the launch, these participants took part in a 'Bottom Up Development' (BUD) course – a training package created by MFO¹⁶ – in which MFO outlined their vision for the OW. So even the people, who were not already familiar with MFO's vision for the OW, could be in little doubt about the wider aims and that the project was about more than simply getting people into employment.

Feedback indicates that the first four weeks of the OW were a roller-coaster for the participants (PE) and for MFO (FE) as both groups figured out how to make things



work. At the outset, participants looked to MFO and the mentors for direction, and much of the early work, including the speedy construction of a 'Round House',¹⁷ was achieved through top-down relationships based on instructions from 'mentor/expert' to 'participant/worker'. The PE was given very little 'freedom to organise', despite this being one of the core principles of an OW. Some people resented the dependency this situation created; others were content to stay within their comfort zone. But

that was precisely what the OW was supposed to challenge. Despite these contradictions, the 'Round House' had a positive impact. It was something tangible, marking progress and giving participants a real sense of pride and achievement. It provided a gathering place and became a focal point for the project with high symbolic importance.

There were a number of times, during those first few weeks, when the whole project threatened to unravel. The Easter break created a hiatus just as momentum was beginning to build up. Under pressure to earn income for the project, most MFO members left the OW for a week, in order to run another 'Bottom Up Development' (BUD) course for Locality. This left no one to properly supervise the work or negotiate contracts with the PE. But the most significant crisis resulted from a freak storm that blew down the marquee – the project's operational hub – and caused extensive damage to the site. The project was forced to move to Futures House, the estate community centre, and work on the farm stalled. But this catastrophe turned out to be a catalyst, provoking key members of the PE to step forward and take

¹⁶ see Annex C for outline of the BUD programme

¹⁷ A replica construction of an Iron Age community meeting space

responsibility for re-erecting the marquee and repairing the site. Shortly after that, on Ivan's advice, the FE team withdrew for a while (again), in order to reinforce the capacity of participants to figure out their own solutions, rather than constantly looking to MFO for leadership. Some participants resented this, but it put responsibility for organizing site activities firmly in their hands, which is where it needed to be. As the weeks passed, a sense of collective responsibility and teamwork developed and real progress was made.

Throughout April and May 2015, participants were required to figure out a sensible division of labour and determine what they needed to do to deliver the tasks involved in the farm project. These were outlined by MFO in the form of a series of work contracts, which different groups would take on, in agreement with the FE. The contracts covered: clearing the field of refuse, removing clumps of earth and flattening out the land, erecting the marquee, constructing the 'round house', setting out paths, building raised beds, preparing a section of the field for planting, creating poly-tunnels, clearing woodland (and using the timber to build the round house) and planting a fruit orchard. They also had to organise catering for the whole group on a daily basis; manage the use, maintenance and security of the tools and equipment; monitor attendance; maintain health and safety standards and provide IT support services. They were

required to attend fifteen lectures by Ivan Labra on the 'theory of organisation', which put the OW into a broader social and political context and also encouraged them to reflect on their own experience in life and in the OW itself as the project progressed. And they had to do all this while getting to know each other, developing trust, finding ways to collaborate, dealing with disagreements and conflict, figuring out how to use each other's skills and establishing mutually agreed rules as to what was and wasn't acceptable behaviour.



Overall attendance levels remained high throughout. Two people left early because they wanted more structure. Two people were asked to leave because they were abusive towards other participants, and two went to prison for pre-OW offences. Apart from these, the main reason people left was because they found a job.¹⁸

Enterprise development - transition phase:

By early June 2015, about 30 participants were still involved in the project. Although there was still a lot of work to be done on the farm, the field had been transformed and at this point the OW split into two separate projects. A small group continued to work on the farm and bee-keeping had been added to the activities. The rest of the PE moved to Marsh House – a formerly derelict building at the other end of the estate. MFO had been slowly converting the building into a community base for

¹⁸ Outcomes for the OW are analysed in section 3. See also Annex D

many years but it was still unfinished. It provided basic office space for the IT group, a kitchen for the catering group, and huge scope for the builders. Two music enterprises were already based there. It also provided a place for people to meet informally and it was almost as important for socializing as for work experience.

This move marked a shift in the OW from the large group activity focused on one project, the farm, to a number of smaller groups, each focusing on a different enterprise idea. After the excitement of working together, many people felt the momentum of the OW flagged at this point. Some of the camaraderie was lost; there was more confusion about roles and responsibilities; people were focused on their own separate project, and although MFO intended to set up an umbrella organisation to provide a collective support structure for the new enterprises, as yet nothing was in place. Also over the summer, the funding for the OW began to run out which meant the end of free meals, so a few people stopped coming to Marsh House. The Training Allowances came to an end and anyone who had not already found employment had to go back onto JSA, or a similar benefit,¹⁹ which meant signing on regularly in town. To many people, after months of not having to attend the Jobcentre, this felt like a backward step.

However it had been clear from the start of the OW that developing enterprises would mark the next stage of the project. People had developed new skills and interests or they had strengthened their existing skills, so those who remained with the OW divided into small groups to develop what they hoped would be seven small-scale co-operative enterprises.

The propositions included:

- the farm itself
- bee-keeping and honey production
- two music teaching and recording businesses
- a building co-operative
- a catering enterprise and
- an IT services enterprise.



MFO began to explore opportunities for some of these emerging enterprises to immediately start generating income – in particular the farm and the building co-op.

Farm: The experience of working on the farm had had a marked impact on some of the more vulnerable OW participants, and the idea of offering ‘social prescription’ placements to GPs and other learning support agencies seemed like a real possibility. In September 2015, Luton Adult Learning agreed to pilot ‘social prescriptions’ on a limited basis. They contracted with MFO, on behalf of the farm, to provide 20

¹⁹ People intending to transition onto NEA were eligible for what was called a ‘limited claimant commitment’ payment, which operated much like JSA.

placements that could have generated £5,000 income. A further contract worth around £15,000 per annum was being considered, pending the outcome of the pilot. However, in the end only about four people completed the required 20 sessions on the farm, generating about £1,000 income - a lot less than had been intended. The paperwork and procedures involved in monitoring and recording the placements had made demands on MFO that they could not handle. It was a hard lesson to learn and the business idea had to be put on hold until the farm team could resolve how to handle such contracts in future. Also, as the weather got colder, it became more difficult to make the farm a pleasant place to be, so progressing this project as a business was put on hold until the spring.

Builders: MFO is also negotiating with 'BTS', Luton Council's main building contractor, to see whether they could channel small-scale maintenance work to the building co-operative, with a view to involving them in larger contracts in the future. In addition to routine maintenance, there are currently plans to redevelop the shopping centre in the middle of the estate and to construct a significant number of new homes over the next few years. This investment offers potential opportunities for community enterprise. The new co-operative could potentially work as a sub-contractor or as a partner with BTS and other private contractors, helping them to meet local labour targets and giving the building co-operative a chance to slowly build up their business.

Move to the New Enterprise Allowance – phase three:

The main purpose of the transition phase was to help those who wanted to form a community enterprise to submit business plans to Avanta for approval. If approved each person would be eligible for six months financial support via the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) and they could also apply for a loan of up to £2,500, to help get their business off the ground, if they could demonstrate that they would be able to repay it. This was new territory for MFO and for the participants, so developing the business plans took a lot longer than had originally been intended.



By November 2015, 9 business plans had been submitted to Avanta and 8 had been approved. Four people had taken up the NEA funding option, which meant they would be expected to get their business up and running within 6 months. None had opted to apply for a loan – there was a real fear of getting into debt before their business idea had even begun to generate income. Four had decided to delay the start of the NEA process for various reasons – e.g. both the farm and the bee-keeping projects were seasonal and would have a better chance of succeeding if they started in the spring; another person needed to sort out childcare first. The others were either revising plans that had not been approved in the hope they could still access NEA (5 people); or trying to proceed without NEA funding; or working part-time with the intention of being part of one of the businesses once established; or back on JSA but still interested in the community enterprise possibility.

Benefits implications:

While transitioning to NEA, participants received 'limited claimant commitment' benefit payments and had to comply with the same rules that applied to JSA recipients. This required them to sign on every week, meet with their coach/adviser, and undertake regular job searches. Even though the OW plan was for them to move into enterprise development, JCP assumptions were that if they found a job in the meantime, that would take precedence and they would be required to take it. There was some concern that people would be referred to the Work Programme, thus making them ineligible for NEA for 2 years. One person, who was leading on the IT work, had been on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) when he joined the OW because he was not in good health and found it hard to leave the house. But by the end of the OW, he was so much better that he was declared fit for work - and therefore eligible for the Work Programme. But he was also working to set up the IT enterprise, with a partner whose business plan had been approved for NEA and who was already 3 months into the programme. So if he were obliged to take another work placement, it could have jeopardised the whole enterprise. There was a great deal of confusion between MFO and JCP at this stage of the OW process, and it illustrates the need for closer liaison, considerable flexibility and a personalised approach in order to help people make what was often a difficult transition from benefits into community enterprise.

In fact, some JCP advisers bent over backwards to be helpful. They understood the OW and could see that the person they were supporting was serious about their business idea. In these circumstances they tried to be as flexible as possible, extending the 'limited claimant commitment' payments for much longer than would normally have been allowed. But the apparent lack of consistency in the way advisers dealt with OW participants at this stage led to confusion and some resentment.

Funding crisis:

By November 2015, as the funding ran out, work on Marsh House had to stop, so the new kitchen remained unfinished and unusable, making it impossible for the catering business to take off. The team could not pursue a mobile catering option either - the catering van needed repair work and the team needed a driver. The music workshop had been broken into and expensive recording equipment had been stolen, and even though it was eventually returned, it was badly damaged and needed to be replaced. Although Marsh House was now in much better condition, the building still needed a lot of work before it could be opened up to the public and start to function as the community hub it was intended to be.

The core OCS funding, which paid for MFO itself, had been stretched to the limit.²⁰ By paying themselves at minimum wage rates, MFO made the grant last until October 2015, but after that some of the team had to sign on to make ends meet. The team was operating under great personal and financial pressure just at the time when they needed extra support to build on the positive outcomes of the previous

²⁰ See Annex E – MFOW breakdown of costs

few months. Despite the setbacks, MFO, remained determined to achieve their ultimate goal and they continued to instil in participants a sense of confidence that the project would eventually work out.

Future plans:

Meanwhile they were seeking new funding in order to follow up the OW and in February 2016 they were awarded a grant from the Tudor Trust. This will enable MFO to finish the work to Marsh House and then open it to the public with a launch event in April. At the same time, they intend to register a new Community Interest Organisation (CIO), called 'RevoLuton', as the umbrella company holding the new enterprises together. It will be controlled by the member co-operatives – initially the building co-op, the catering co-op, the farm, IT and music enterprises – and will provide them with a range of support services, including: personnel and HR, finance management and accounting, fund-raising, access to skilled mentors, help with contract negotiation and management, marketing support, IT and communications – in fact any back-up support that fledgling enterprises might need as they find their feet. The timing is also helpful in terms of the farm site, which has deteriorated over the winter months and needs a new injection of energy to restore it and develop its potential as an enterprise and an educational project.



SECTION TWO

IMPACT ON the PARTICIPANTS

In this section, we look at the OW experience from the participants' perspective in order to better understand the barriers they had to overcome and how the project affected them. It draws on direct testimony from participants who were interviewed face-to-face and by phone, as well as feedback from MFO.

Target group:

The OW was aimed at people from Marsh Farm estate and the surrounding area who had been unemployed for more than 2 years or who had had little or no work experience since they left school. In agreement with the Jobcentre, MFO was able to recruit by word of mouth on the estate as well as via the Jobcentre, where advisers could refer 'customers' to the OW if they felt they would benefit. Most of those referred were people who were struggling to cope with complex problems. They had already been through 2 years intensive support through the Work Programme but, despite this, were still unable to find work.

Their personal stories indicate that life had not been kind. Many had been bullied and misunderstood at school. *"I didn't like school but I was passionate about computers. When the teachers caught me messing with some of the computers, I was banned from taking IT as an option. So I have had to teach myself everything."*

Some had been made homeless. *"I spent three years in a homeless hostel – it was terrible – so many hyper-active or crazy people. Everyone had to do 'life skills training' which involved rubbish collection. If you didn't do it you got kicked out of the hostel."*

Some had difficult family situations: *"I was brought up by my nan and my granddad – they were my best friends. I was my nan's carer until she died, but the Jobcentre wouldn't accept that and kept sanctioning me."*
"From 2005-2010 I was caring for my children – I needed help from Social Services but got none. Since then I have applied for loads of jobs, but if you have no work history, no one is interested. It makes you feel worthless."

For some unemployment had led them into a dangerous downward spiral: *"I got 9 GCSE's and started college, but there were family problems, I got into bad company and didn't finish. I didn't sign on for 18 months – just relied on my parents. It was a terrible time – I never had a reason to get up. I smoked weed all day, got into arguments - just went into a downward spiral – it was scary."*

Some people who had worked for many years had developed health problems: *"I was unwell for 8 years before the OW. I had worked at Vauxhall for years but my body was wrecked. I was just trying to stay alive – I was in a bad way – very depressed and suffering physically."*

Many felt they were getting no help from JCP: *“My experience at the Jobcentre was terrible – it was humiliatingit got so bad I was ready to lash out – I felt trapped – I had nowhere to turn – I thought I was going to end up mentally ill.”*

Recruitment:

Initially, potential participants were wary of the OW idea. In order to encourage people to sign up, members of the MFO team spent time in the JCP reception area, talking to people informally – i.e. not from behind a desk - and then doing the paperwork with them if they agreed to join the project. This introduction to the OW made a big impact on many people. Some already knew of MFO, either directly or by reputation, and felt able to identify with them as ‘people like us’, operating ‘outside the system’. *“I liked what the guys from MFO they were doing and immediately felt I could trust them. I realised the negative stuff²¹ I had heard about them was wrong – they really do care about their community.”*

People were primarily motivated by the idea of the OW as something different – *“a chance to do something for yourself.”* The prospect of receiving a Training Allowance (paid at the same rate as JSA) and not having to sign on in person at the Job Centre for 8-12 weeks was very appealing, but it was not the only motivation. *“I could tell this was a genuinely local thing and that appealed to me – plus not having to sign on every week – though that wasn’t the main thing.”* *“I mainly wanted to get away from the Jobcentre, but I was curious about the project too.”* *“At first I thought it would get me in good books with my supervisor – but then it grew on me as I found out more about it.”*

Some saw it simply as a chance to work: *“what motivated me was that I really wanted to work – in fact from the start I wanted to run my own business, so that part of the OW really appealed.”*

Others wanted to get their life in order: *“personally my expectations were to sort myself out – to find myself – get a clearer sense of purpose in life.”*

Those who felt most alienated and angry with ‘the system’ were attracted by the vision of the OW and the underlying political philosophy: *“The OW felt like a paradigm shift – it was looking to turn the system round from top to bottom – that felt exciting – it really inspired me.”*

“The vision of the end result was the most encouraging thing for me.....and even if we failed, we would still have done something good for the community as well as ourselves.”

This early contact between MFO and the participants established a rapport and enough trust for some extremely vulnerable people to be prepared to take a risk and sign up. Some surprised themselves! They were amazed that they had agreed!

“It felt risky – but worth it.”

²¹ MFO had a reputation for speaking out strongly on behalf of the community – to the extent that some people in authority saw them as ‘trouble-makers’. Often within a community some residents will also mistrust those in a leadership role.

Profile of participants:

The possibility of recruiting 60 or more participants had been mooted at the planning stage, but in the end 45 people joined the OW, including 3 local volunteers who were not eligible for the training allowance. Of these 19 (42%) lived on Marsh farm and 26 came from the surrounding Luton area. Fourteen people (31%) were recruited directly by MFO, but the majority were referred by the Job Centre – 31 people (69%).

Most of the participants were men (37). Only 8 were women, 4 of whom were under 25. Nineteen individuals (40%) were from a BME background, reflecting the wider community on Marsh Farm – British Caribbean (11), Asian (7) and one African. The group ranged in age from under 25 to over 60. 15 (33%) were between 26-40 (including 2 women) and significantly, 20 (44%) were between 41-60, an age group who find it particularly difficult to move back into work.

Analysis by age:

Participants:	Under 25	26-40	41-60	Over 60		Referred by MFO:	Referred by JCP:
Males - 37	4	13	18	2		10	28
Females - 8	4	2	2	-		4	3
Total - 45	8	15	20	2		14	31
	18%	33%	44%	4%		31%	69%

Employment: All 8 young people had had very little, if any, work experience since leaving school. Six people had been unemployed for less than a year and 4 were not working for personal reasons – this included the 3 volunteers. The rest, 26 people, had been unemployed for more than 2 years – 3 for 10 years, one for 17 years. Approximately 8 people were on ESA, the rest were on JSA. Most had already been through the Work Programme.

Employment history prior to joining the OW:

Age groups	Little or no work experience	Long-term unemployed		Unemployed for less than a year	Other
		Years where known	other		
Under 25	8				
26 – 40		1x 2 yrs 1 x 17 yrs	5	4	2 <i>(volunteers)</i> 3 <i>(unknown)</i>
41 – 60		1x 2yrs 1x 7yrs 1x 8ys 3x 10 yrs	10 <i>Plus 2 in prison</i>	2	
over 60			1		
Sub totals:	8	26		6	5
Total:		34		6	5

Skills: Based on interviews and MFO records, it is clear that there were a number of skilled people (12) within the group and some (11) with basic qualifications. Two people had degrees and both found jobs before the end of the programme.

Skills/qualifications: (based on interviews and MFO records)

Level 1/2	3	6%	
GCSEs	8	18%	One person had 9 GCSE's but dropped out of college, the others had between 1 and 5 GCSE's
Trade skills/experience	12	27%	Including carpentry, heating engineer, music, IT, graphic artist, plasterer, bricklayer
Degree or other higher education qualification	2	4%	
Total	25	56%	

Wellbeing: Its clear from observations by the facilitators and from participants' own reflections, that the journey they have made through the OW has been significant in terms of improving their overall physical and mental health and also their 'wellbeing'²² – whether or not they ended up with a job. For some the change has been dramatic, even 'life-changing': *"The OW has made a huge difference to me – without it I think I would probably be in jail by now – it was partly the people and partly the task."*

It is obviously hard to measure these impacts (see Section 3). But in assessing the outcomes from the OW, it is important to recognize the barriers that most participants faced at the start of the project and the journey they have made.

An analysis of the information MFO gathered from participants shows that at least 20 people (44%) were struggling with serious health or other personal crises before joining the OW. In addition to specific issues like alcohol or drug abuse, homelessness, criminal convictions, MFO noted that a number of people showed a severe lack of self-confidence, were withdrawn and initially unable to communicate or socialize easily, and others had problems with anger management. Many were not used to collaborating, especially with people they did not already know and trust, and found it difficult to work in a team. Many had experienced difficult family relationships and some felt let down and brow-beaten by 'the system'.

Significant health and other problems: (evidenced at the start of the OW):

Depression/stress/anxiety	16	Some people suffered from multiple problems. Overall 20 participants struggled with serious health and/or other personal crises prior to joining the OW le: 44%
Mental health problems	4	
Physical health problems	8	
Drug abuse	7	
Alcohol abuse	6	
Criminal record	4	
Serious housing problems	6	

²² By 'wellbeing' we mean: sense of self-worth; ability to socialize, form friendships; confidence; capacity to communicate and work with others; anger management; reliability; trust in 'the system'; sense of purpose in life; happiness; positive about the future.

First impressions:

Overall, participants liked the BUD course that was held during the week prior to the OW proper starting. *"It gave us a lot of information – showed us what the opportunities were and gave us some choices so you felt that you could decide where you wanted to get to."*

It gave them a sense of the OW being part of something bigger than 'simply another work experience project' and enabled people to get to know one another a little before they started working together. *"It was like going back to school – videos about Africa, learning about the OW concept, doing spider diagrams.....it was helpful and brought us all together – gave us space to form relationships before we got stuck into the farm project."*

Once the focus moved to the field and work began in earnest many participants did not know what to make of things. The apparent lack of any imposed organisation was disconcerting: *"we were thrown in at the deep end – we felt we had been left high and dry – though it seems the sink or swim approach is deliberate."*

But somehow it seemed to work and most people felt they were part of something positive: *"even though it sometimes felt like none of us knew what we were doing, it still worked..... I was dumbstruck – seeing all these people working together trying to do the same thing."*



And despite the unpredictability of bringing together such a large group, most of whom were strangers, it worked: *"Initially I thought the group was a bit random – there was a big fight at one point and I thought it might all collapse. I did wonder 'what the hell have I got myself into?' But once people got stuck in,*

they started working in a more focused way. There were outbursts of craziness – the silliness lasted about a month, but then things settled down."

Early exits:

A few people could not cope with the lack of structure and left the project early: *"MFO need to sort themselves – there was no structure – people with drug and alcohol problems need structure. MFO imposed their values – e.g. that money isn't important – but it's fundamental to enterprise. They tended to promise the earth – it wasn't realistic."*

"I hated the lack of organisation – the lack of transparency/accountability – the internal bickering. I love what they were trying to do, but it did my head in."

Others were more positive about their experience, even if they found work and left the OW early: *"I did learn a lot about people – dealing with difficult situations – new business ideas and I met lots of people."* *"Most importantly, it helped me emotionally at a very difficult time."*

"It developed my confidence – helped me to handle conflict – got me out of my shell."

Impact on participants:

When asked how the overall experience had affected them, interviewees identified the following impacts:

- A real sense of achievement: *“the accomplishment of each piece of work was a high point for me – like the round house – that was really important.”*
“I overcame the cold and aches and pains and in the end felt proud of what we achieved.....there was a real sense of ‘we did it!’”
- New energy and strength, as well as a better state of mind: *“I had a repetitive injury from a previous job, but still got involved with the farm and even though I felt physically drained by the weekends, it worked out fine.”*
“The farm project was interesting – I was feeling physically fitter – I had a feeling of freedom and my spirits lifted – I didn’t realize I had so much stamina – it broadened my horizons – it was all very practical.”
“The work helped clear my head – it brought back a spiritual thing in me – the bad thoughts I had at the Job Centre disappeared.”
“Luckily, working on the farm didn’t aggravate my back problems – I ache but the exercise is good for me. It has helped me become mentally and spiritually healthier. I sleep well when I go home and I dream better. I am disciplined and always get myself to the project on time.”
- Mutual recognition of what the group had to offer: *“I was amazed at the level of skill within the group – if more of this was done, people would find their bearings.”*
- A sense being part of something worthwhile and of value to the community: *“I was outside my comfort zone, but I was helping MY community, so it wasn’t just for me – plus it was on my doorstep, so it was easy to keep coming.”*
“I had seen the site for years – abandoned, useless, an eyesore – it felt good to be bringing it back into use.”
- Some people remained uneasy about the lack of planning. They felt the group made too many unnecessary mistakes in the first few weeks. But there was a strong sense that people had a stake in the OW: *“everyone on the project planted a tree – I planted a pear tree.”* And very few people chose to leave, unless they got a job: *“You got the clear sense that people really wanted to be there.”*

What they learned:

On reflection, participants said they had learned lots about themselves and other people, in addition to the practical skills they gained.

- Even though at times they had felt like ‘headless chickens’, most people appreciated the value of being forced to think for themselves and work collectively: *“In some ways not having so much structure and guidance has forced me to learn things for myself.”* *“The wellbeing of the group was put into our hands – we were supposed to self-organise.”*
But for many, ‘being told what to do’ was still more comfortable than taking responsibility. This was challenged by others, especially those who resented being given instructions when building the round house, and who valued the fact

that everyone was equal. *"I had to tell people this is about what YOU want to do – you don't have to ask for permission all the time....."*

- By working together, they learned life skills such as team work and problem-solving, and they also found new confidence: *"I felt very nervous at first – I had no confidence – working in a big group was very difficult. At times I couldn't cope and wanted to leave. MFO kept encouraging me."*
"It took me 2 months to really find my confidence – then I thoroughly enjoyed myself – working in a team, all mucking in together, getting things done, feeling like you had achieved something."

- Participants were expected to bring issues to general meetings where problems could be aired, decisions made and achievements shared. Learning to participate in that context was challenging for many: *"general meetings were a problem – people tend to moan – they expect someone else to solve their problems... ..but to expect everyone to get on board and sort things out in a non- confrontational way was asking a lot."*

- The OW process is designed to enable leaders to emerge but, as expected, this was not straightforward. The people who put themselves forward as leaders initially were not necessarily the best ones and this generated a lot of conflict – but that was all part of the learning: *"the conflict was important – we learned by having to deal with it."* Even by the summer, when others had stepped up, taken responsibility and demonstrated real leadership skills, there was great reluctance to accept the label – no one wanted to identify as 'a leader'.



- The practical skills were also of value: *"I learned to drive a tractor – build a round house – construct poly-tunnels.....I never thought I would ever be on a farm in England and enjoying it!"*
- The strong community ethos had a big impact on participants' sense of self-worth and sense of priorities: *"I really want to help other people – this is something new that has opened up for me through the OW – so many people are willing to help me – I want to give something back."*
"MFO made it very clear from the beginning that this was for the benefit of the community, not just for ourselves."
"After 7 years unemployed, I feel like I can now give something back to society."
"In the past I have always wanted to know when I was going to be paid – but here I was working for free! I've never done that before – it felt good."
- They also developed a new political awareness. To some extent this was due to the lectures, delivered by Ivan, which put the OW into a global perspective and provoked some interesting debates, but it was also because of the experiences

they shared informally on a day-to-day basis: *“I could see a political outlook emerging – the bigger picture had an impact on most people in some way. These were people who had been rejected by society – they were looking for an alternative. There were political, cultural, social conversations going on all the time A lot of awareness-raising happened informally as people chatted about their lives.”*

“The concept of being part of my community was very positive – and the stories of OWs in Africa made you feel part of something bigger – that was inspiring. It showed you what was possible. It made me want to put something back into the community.”

Relationships:

The OW brought together 45 people, most of whom did not know one another, yet they were expected to form a coherent organisation from scratch very quickly.

- Dealing with so many new people was challenging, especially for some people who had been extremely reclusive until the OW: *“Initially working with 40 people, some of whom were not likeable and did your head in, made me wonder at times – how did I get through the day?”*
“The OW was the most social interaction I have ever had – I had been pretty isolated for a long time.”
- But MFO made everyone feel accepted, emphasizing that there was no hierarchy, that everyone was on the same level and for many this was very reassuring. Strong friendships quickly formed:
“At first I felt very shy and found it hard to mix, but then realized others felt the same way, so we helped each other. The OW became like a family – it gave me a safety net, a sense of purpose – I made new friends.”
“I have kept friends since the OW – I never thought that would happen.”
“You learned who you could trust and how to build relationships with lots of different people.”
- Low self-worth was a significant issue for OW participants, so not feeling judged was liberating and meant that participants tended to be more tolerant of each other as a result: *“over time it felt safer- there was more bonding – no one was looking down at anyone or being judgmental.”*
“You had to form new relationships and learn to get on with people you wouldn’t normally expect, or even want, to have anything to do with. At face value you might dismiss someone, but then you get to know them – hear their story and it changes how you view them – people surprise you!”
- Some of the more confident participants took people ‘under their wing’, showed them what to do and kept them going when they might otherwise have given up: *“In the OW people really care about each other and make a huge effort to ensure you are getting the most out of it. There’s constant support, a shoulder to cry on – a lot different from other work situations where no-one really cares.”*
“I was in a bad place this time last year – the OW has helped reduce my stress and helped me to open up. I have made friends and become a better person.”

- Not that any of this was easy. Conflict was often close to the surface and at times things blew up, but then had to be dealt with: *“I found people’s attitudes quite challenging – even though mine weren’t great either!”*
“There were conflicts and I didn’t handle them well.....I tend to blow up when I run out of patience.....the OW did help me to deal with this up to a point.”
“There was a lot of childish behaviour in the group – I just ignored it and did my own thing. At times it was disruptive.”
- The OW attracted people from a wide age range and this caused some problems: *“Some of the older lads expressed the view that younger people didn’t have enough experience to be taken seriously.”* But that did change – later on.....: *“the OW was good – communicating within a team, working with older people, having people I respected and being respected in return.....”*
And the women also struggled at times to be taken seriously, especially given that they were significantly outnumbered.

Highlights:

When asked what they were most proud of participants highlighted:

- Learning: *“I did quite a few courses and really enjoyed them – even though I didn’t pass them all.....I feel proud of myself for the stuff I have done but I do feel bad that I didn’t pass the last course I took.”*
- The Round House: *“The whole round house experience was good – we were all in it together. I didn’t like the instructor – but for the participants it was a bonding experience more than a training exercise.”*
- The quality of work: *“Also I’ve enjoyed working on the decking at Marsh House – we began to transform the place. I ended up acting like a kind of foreman for the work, dealing with the materials and organising the workload.”*
- The farm and Marsh House: *“Turning an empty wasteland into something that will help people improve their lives - and transforming Marsh House.”*
- Helping others: *“Some people started out with no confidence, low self-esteem, no skills – some couldn’t even use a tape measure! Some were curled in on themselves – but within the OW they began to relax and through peer support, you could see them open up – smiling, chatting, getting stuck into the work.”*
“When ‘x’ began to feel good about himself, that made me feel good about myself - a lot of people came out of their shell.”
“I also realized there were people there who were worse off than me.”
- Creating a positive future: *“I feel proud of the whole group – so many positive things – people who found work, even after 17 years unemployed for example!”*



- Local respect and recognition: *“Sometimes the kids ride their bikes on the farm – but if I ask them to stop they do – they respect me – I haven’t had any trouble from kids on the estate.”*
“People stop and ask me all the time about what we are doing.”

One young participant was so lacking in confidence when he joined the OW that he could barely speak or make eye contact with others. But some of the older guys took him under their wing and slowly he began to relax and even smile. By the end of the OW he was able to chat to anyone who came to Marsh House. He applied for and got a job – his first ever. And although it’s zero hours, it seems regular and marks a huge achievement. At some point in the future though, he would like to return to the OW and join the building enterprise.

The challenges:

The things they found most difficult included:

- Practical problems relating to the site: *“..... like getting water to the catering van on the field.”* They were trying to turn what had been a derelict field full of rubbish into an operational hub for 45 people – without any electricity, water, sanitation, so at a practical level there were many challenges.
- Progress was slow – too slow for some people who had financial pressures: *“Things didn’t move as fast as people needed them to – personal circumstances were difficult for many - eg. debts, bills, childcare and other pressures.”*
- Speaking up: *“Talking in the group was a challenge – eventually I managed to speak up and got lots of praise – so it felt good.”*
- Management structures and communication: *“I’m not sure the flat management scenario works – if someone doesn’t tell others what to do things don’t get done!”* *“Even when we formed an elected committee that still didn’t function well – communication was an issue.”*
- For some the lack of any financial incentives was a problem: *“We had no payments for the contract work we delivered – that would have created a massive incentive within the OW.”*
- The behaviour of some participants and alcohol abuse in particular had to be dealt with: *“Alcohol was a problem – in other circumstances it would have resulted in disciplinary proceedings. But MFO gave people another chance and in the end the participants themselves decided to draft a ‘code of conduct’ that prohibited drinking or being drunk on the site.”*
“Some people had annoying habits.....but you had to let small things go.”
- The move to Marsh House led to: *“A loss of that sense of camaraderie we had on the farm, more arguments, more conflict over roles and leadership, no sense of decisions being made – things fell apart a bit at that point.”*

"I felt if we were operating in the real world we would be making a loss – I got disheartened.....I don't feel like things have really got back together since then."

"At the farm we all seemed to gel. When we started to separate problems began to emerge – it had felt like we were all one big group. People behave differently in a large group – in smaller groups they argue more."

Role of FE/MFO:

When asked about the role of MFO as the FE, participants were generally very positive.

- They liked MFO's wider vision, including the aspiration to create community businesses. They understood that the OW was something different and that MFO were also learning, like them. This sense of everyone being *'in the same boat'*, *'all at the same level'*, *'no them and us'* was important. And although some did expect more guidance, direction, even instructions from MFO, most appreciated the way they worked alongside participants.

"They were learning as well – it was the first OW for them too.....it was like we were all testing the waters together."

"When I realized they were learning themselves, it made me feel like we were equals."



However their role was not always clear: *"I didn't understand - they were supposed to be facilitators but we had to do everything ourselves!!"*

- In terms of relationships, MFO were good role models: *"I never saw MFO people argue - they set a good example. They never showed any animosity."*
"I felt like I was working with intelligent, motivated people – the MFO team was reassuring."
- They were always helpful and reassuring: *"MFO would answer your questions and if they didn't know the answer they would find out and let you know...."*
"Marsh House is like a base for me – I come and use the computer to do my job searches; I help some of the others with theirs; I keep the place clean..... while trying to figure out how to get the catering off the ground."
- They provided inspiration, though some people felt their ideas were unrealistic: *"The OW had some big ideas but there wasn't enough follow through – problems included: lack of funding, equipment not being available when we needed it, a steep learning curve in a short time, the need for qualifications and documents to progress."*
- MFO brought a clear set of values and ethos: *"Much of the success of the OW is about the aura that MFO created around the project – compared with a traditional business environment, where you have a boss, no control, targets set for you, and you're only spoken to if you're in trouble! The OW was really nice – relaxed, people were kind, MFO genuinely cared about you."*

Jobcentre Plus:

Inevitably many participants felt they had had a tough time in dealing with JCP over the years.

- Some people talked about their bad experiences in contrast to the OW:
“Unemployment is very depressing – even though I had ideas about what I wanted to do, JCP left me feeling disenchanted – they gave me disjointed advice on how I should move forwards – the OW gave you choices – different options.”
“JCP didn’t understand what MFO were trying to do – that caused lots of problems – I had to keep signing on for 3 weeks before the Training Allowance was sorted.”
“The Job Centre makes you feel worthless and not in control of your life or your destiny – the OW is the polar opposite – it makes you feel empowered.”
- But it clearly all depended on the individual adviser:
“Getting the Training Allowance was straight forward once I sorted out signing on – I was lucky – I had a good adviser.”
“Some of the advisers at the JC are ok, but some can be quite rude – mine is very supportive.”
- Participants who were transferring to NEA did not always get support from JCP workers: *“JCP were fine while I was on the training allowance, but when I told my adviser I wanted to move onto NEA, she went berserk and said I should forget all that and just get a job – I resisted – MFO had to get involved to sort it out.”*
“They kept telling me the OW wouldn’t work – it had been tried before and went pear-shaped.....but I kept insisting they take me seriously - and eventually they changed their tune.”
Whereas other participants were supported: *“I have a good adviser who understands that I’m part of something – even though she doesn’t fully understand what it is. But she’s accepted that I am trying to put something together and she is being very flexible and helpful.....others are not being listened to and are struggling.”*
- Participants acknowledged the pressures that JCP staff were under: *“Advisers are anxious about the NEA rules – they have targets and deadlines to meet.”*
“My current adviser is completely different – very encouraging and helpful. She’s bending over backwards to help me make the NEA scheme work – she can see how much this matters to me. Her neck is on the line – but she really wants to help. She’s trying to be flexible but the rules don’t help.”
- The need for a closer working relationship between the OW and JCP was raised by many: *“JCP needs to install a liaison person to work with the OW and avoid unnecessary misinformation and sanctions – this sort of problem causes a lot of stress for people.”*

Developing new enterprises:

When interviewed, participants were still in the middle of the enterprise development process, but they made the following comments:

- The business planning process was a real challenge for some: *“I still don’t really understand business planning – the process didn’t make you feel confident that*

you knew what you were doing. MFO talked me through it and that helped a lot."

Others relished the opportunity: "The process of developing my own idea into a reality has been fun, although it is challenging. On my own it was hard – now I have a partner, it's easier. I have done a lot of my own research.....with lots of discussion and support from MFO and Avanta.....but the help must be tailored to our individual needs."

"It would be helpful to talk to people who have started their own business already."

"I am excited about this – I will be the first person in my family to create something instead of just getting a job!"

- In general people appreciated the support they received: *"I always wanted to run my own business, so that part of the OW vision really appealed. I had to read up on business planning by myself before – I never had any guidance or support until now."*

"Things aren't going too smoothly – but Avanta and JCP are trying to help. I am having to keep myself going with part-time work as well as try to develop the business."

- People found that setting up a new business can be complicated. They faced problems such as vandalism to the catering van; not having a driver; delays in completing the kitchen renovation at Marsh House; child-care problems that limited their availability; music equipment stolen... And for some, the prospect of operating outside the familiar context of the OW group itself presented another challenge. So the process of getting the businesses up and running was far from straight forward.

"There's not a lot we can do until the kitchen is finished at Marsh House. I do want to be part of the catering team – it will be harder, serving the public not just the OW participants, but I am up for it."

- Financial issues also worried people: *"We decided not to go for the NEA loan – we didn't want to end up with a debt we might have to pay back, even if the business didn't take off like we hoped. It was too much of a risk. We decided there would be a better time for this later."*

And some were nervous about being able to get up and running in time: "We were one of the first businesses to get NEA approval – but I held off from starting. I was worried about establishing a customer base."

- Most of the enterprises were being set up by people who had only recently got to know one another, but going into business together requires a lot more trust than simply being on the same work team: *"Around this time I got into conflict with the person I was supposed to be developing the enterprise with – that can't work." "Three of us are going into business together – we didn't know each other before the OW."*

- But participants were quite modest about what they hoped to achieve and also optimistic about making things work: *"We need to keep (the building enterprise) simple to start with – mainly work on Marsh Farm – anything we can't do, we can sub-contract out. It would be nice to take apprentices eventually."*

“At the moment I’m putting together a tutoring course for bass guitar – DJ Academy will assess this and help me – working with them means I don’t need a teaching qualification to start tutoring. I do need to do more market research to test local demand.”

“It’s a leap of faith – but I only need to earn £120 per month during the NEA period.....my eventual target is £1K per month.”

“We need to finish the tunnels, build the chicken run, and the potter’s kiln. We could have a little café on the farm – I feel stronger knowing that I am coming off the JC books and onto NEA.”

Many were aware that they needed more external support to get their business established, including access to ‘the market’: *“Initially we’ll work under the wing of BTS²³ – they will provide structure and governance.”* *“We don’t need a lot to be viable – we’re confident there’s work out there but we’re prepared to do a job for nothing if we have to.”* *“BTS are going to provide us with sub-contracts for work to suit our purpose.”*

- And they still had aspirations to become a source of training and employment for others, as well as generate income for themselves: *“I’m interested in the social side – otherwise it’s just another building company. As long as I have enough for a humble existence I’m happy.”*

“My idea is to create a building agency, rather than employ lots of people directly – this gives us more flexibility and eventually, when the workload is consistent, we may be able to take on apprentices.”

- Many talked about the idea of forming an umbrella company that would enable them to keep the collective identity of the OW and provide each other with mutual support: *“The CIO still needs developing - we need some consensus on what it would look like.”*

“I think you would have the main company, which would help small companies get off the ground, and they would pay back once established – each co-op would have a stake in the central company.”

“My vision is that everyone creates their own work and we all contribute to the umbrella company.”

“I had my business idea from the beginning – not as a personal thing but for people to do together – later it became more personal. I’d like to see it operating as part of the central umbrella company.”

But, because of where the participants were starting from, there was also a gap between these aspirations and the reality for them of forming a business within the current regulatory systems. JCP was talking about referring some of them to the Work Programme, which would have made them ineligible for NEA for two years. Many were anxious about what would happen if their enterprise plans failed or were rejected: *“I have been moved onto the WP – I don’t have to declare any work until I start advertising.....even then I can do up to 16 hours and still access other benefits.”*

“I don’t know that I could cope with working in a normal work environment.”

²³ Luton Borough Council’s main building contractors

One young man, who was passionate about setting up a honey-making enterprise, and who had researched it thoroughly, described his hopes and his fears.

'Beehive Yourself'

".....the complication with this business is that it is seasonal – but by the end of a good summer I would hope to make at least £5K on the honey, plus I want to hire out hives and do pest control work. In the winter I can build hives and do work in schools....."

"The Avanta adviser has been very helpful but his boss rejected my NEA application. I had included use of a van, but I didn't have my driving license, and my partner, who did drive, had found a job. I can do it without a van, but they told me I had to start again from scratch – they wouldn't let me tweak the application. It was so demoralizing after all the work I had done. I felt they were rude and unprofessional – it felt like they were trying to make me fail"

"They said to get my driving license and then come back – but I can't afford that – I'm in a Catch 22"

".....now I am being threatened with having to go on the Work Programme which would scupper any chance of NEA for 2 years..... all the work I've done would have been for nothing..... I'm still hoping to avoid that – I will have a new application in by March - but it's very worrying and stressful – it's affecting my health. My JCP adviser has been very supportive, but she is retiring next month and I'm worried that the new one won't understand. I know I could make a success of this – I really want to achieve something, but no-one makes it easy!!"



SECTION THREE

OUTCOMES, COSTS AND BENEFITS

This section looks at the impact the OW has had on the lives of the participants and to some extent on the wider community. It is based on an analysis of all 45 participants taken from data held by MFO, feedback from the FE team and also on the interviews with 16 participants. It also uses data from projects that are tackling worklessness in different ways around the country in order to make some broad comparisons, recognizing that it is very difficult to make direct comparisons relating to the OW itself.

We also look at the costs of the OW in relation to job creation and, using a set of proxy wellbeing valuations, we provide an indication of the sort of social value that the OW might offer in relation to its wider impact on the lives and wellbeing of the participants and the community. This is not intended to be a full Social Return on Investment (SROI) assessment – but rather an indication of the sorts of benefits that would need to be assessed in any further research work and the potential value that could be created.

The OW aimed to change lives and impact on the community in a range of ways:

- to help people back into employment
- to improve the health and wellbeing of participants
- to create an alternative local economy – in terms of encouraging community enterprise and community-based services
- to improve the environment and create a community asset

The outcomes are considered under these headings.

In assessing the significance of these outcomes, it is important to recognize the position of most of the participants at the start of the OW. As described in the section above, most of the people who signed up to the OW were severely disadvantaged in terms of their chances of gaining employment. The Jobcentre referred people who had already been through the Work Programme, so they were considered 'hard-to-reach'. Others got involved through informal contacts on the estate. Some of them were not even signing on, but were either living with parents or surviving, hand-to-mouth, through occasional, part-time, casual work. Many were trying to cope with complex personal and financial problems. At the outset, 34 out of the 45 participants either had no work experience at all or had been unemployed for more than 2 years before they joined the OW. Some had been unemployed for more than 7 years – one for 17 years. Although half were under the age of 40, 44% were between 40-50 years old, a group that is particularly difficult to help move back into work. At the start of the project, almost half of the participants struggled with depression, anxiety and stress related illness. A couple had serious mental health problems. Some had recently had to deal with personal crises such as homelessness, family breakup, drug or alcohol problems. Very few had any formal educational qualifications, although 27% had a trade-based skill.

So the distance travelled by OW participants is as important as the achievements they made. Many of the outcomes were evident by the summer 2015, as the first phase of the OW came to an end. However the information below is based on the situation in February 2016. This means that (*as far as we know*) those who found employment after the OW were still in work 8 months later.²⁴

MFOW – summary of participants’ outcomes - February 2016

	Participants	Found employment	Progressing to NEA		
			In transition	Bus plans approved	NEA 6 months started
Completed 12 weeks OW	29	10	5 (i)	4	4
Part - completion	16	10			
Total:	45	20	13		
	100%	44%	28%		

Continued:

	Back on JSA but hoping to re-join NEA	Back on benefits	Other outcomes	Unknown
Completed 12 weeks OW	3 (ii)	1		2
Part - completion		3	2 (iii)	1
Total :	3	4	2	3
	7%	9%	5%	6%

- i) All 5 are serious about applying for NEA but 4 are delaying their application until they have the money they need for the equipment they need before they can start trading. One is ready to submit a revised business plan. According to Avanta, all 5 are likely to be approved. NOTE: all 9 people who have not yet taken up the NEA scheme are receiving benefits on an interim basis.
- ii) Two people have been put back on the Work Programme, despite being keen to progress NEA options. Another is combining benefits with part-time work, but also hopes to transfer into NEA at some point.
- iii) Two people were sent to prison during the OW – for pre-OW offences. At least one hopes to re-join the OW extended programme on release.

Helping people back into employment:

Twenty participants (44%) found employment either during or shortly after the OW. This compares favourably with national DWP figures, where around 30% of ‘clients’ find work after 2 years participation in the Work Programme. DWP data released in September 2015 shows that 28% of people who had been with the Work Programme for at least 12 months accessed between 3-6 month’s work.²⁵ If the OW participants

²⁴ The information is based primarily on MFO’s personal knowledge of the individuals concerned. It was passed to JCP for verification in February 2016

²⁵ DWP: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/work-programme-statistical-summary-data-to-30-september-2015>

who were on benefits, but in the process of setting up new enterprises, are added to those who found work, the number in work or en route to employment rises to 33 (73%).

As far as we know, all 20 participants were still in work **8 months later** (February 2016). Certainly, all those who found work after they had completed the OW were still in employment at that time. This included some participants who had the biggest hurdles to overcome. Thus, the impact of the OW on employment went beyond simply helping those who were most 'job-ready'.

Among those who found work was the young man who had not worked for 17 years. Despite struggling with learning difficulties and living a very sheltered life with his mother, at the end of the OW he managed to get a cleaning job. In February 2016, he was still there, although he was finding it a struggle. In the OW he had been treated with respect, cared for and valued for being a reliable and steady worker. He had made good friends, some of whom were half disappointed, as well as thrilled for him, when he found work and left the OW! In the mainstream workplace it was much more difficult for someone like him to fit in and feel comfortable. Ideally, he would like to come back to Marsh Farm at some point and be part of a cleaning co-operative – should that get off the ground.

Not everyone had such barriers to overcome. Some people joined the OW with the express intention of finding a job as soon as possible. For them the OW was something to add to their CV. But even though they left the programme early, many said that the experience had helped them to find work and move on:

“.....the experience helped me with interviews. It broadened my business skills and helped me with networking.”

About 8-10 participants were already relatively well-placed to find employment.

Putting these **outcomes into perspective** is not easy since it is difficult to find projects that can be compared with the OW. Prior to the OW, Luton JCP had established a 'social justice programme' for 'hard-to-reach customers' which included a number of special initiatives targeting people who had completed the Work Programme but who had failed to find employment. The OW was treated by JCP as one of these initiatives. So it would have been useful to compare these special initiatives, since there are likely to be many similarities between the groups they were supporting. Unfortunately accessing comparative data has proved difficult. It is recommended that, for any future OW projects, the JCP establishes a basis for comparison at the start of the project. To support this, future OWs, like the one currently being developed in Hastings,²⁶ might wish to introduce randomised recruitment to the OW, and identify a control group within a statutory scheme that is also tackling worklessness, in order to allow for robust comparisons.

²⁶ Ore Valley OW in Hastings is due to take place in 2017 and will be part of a land reclamation and major redevelopment programme that will run at least until 2019.

An alternative point of comparison is provided by the pilot projects involved in DWP's national 'Worklessness Co-design programme'. This was developed with Jobcentre Plus and Local Authorities, to find new ways of working together to address the most difficult aspects of worklessness.²⁷ These pilots differed from each other as well as from the OW, so it is difficult to make direct comparisons. But they were all addressing the problem of long-term unemployment and, although the OW's remit was wider, they offer a useful, if limited, point of comparison.

The DWP Co-design programme found that people remaining on JSA after 12 months are likely to have serious and multiple challenges that will need to be overcome before they can move into work. However, it is difficult to identify the most disadvantaged jobseekers, or those jobseekers who are most likely to become long-term unemployed, at the start of their claims. So targeting those clients from day one is difficult. In terms of employment generally, the more disadvantages an individual has, the lower the likelihood of that individual being in employment. It is clear that the OW has recruited and worked with a cohort of people that mainstream services have been unable to engage with effectively.

Comparison with the pilot projects below shows how successful the OW approach has been at recruiting people onto the programme and getting them into employment. Whilst the cost per job outcome may appear high, we must take into account that this was a community development project and only one of its objectives was to get people into employment, unlike other programmes that were purely employment focused. Moreover, 13 people (28%) have not yet exited the OW and have the potential to create jobs through new enterprises. This would reduce the cost to £4,000 per job outcome.

Employment Initiative	Cost of programme	Employment success rate %	Average cost per job Outcome
Marsh Farm Organisation Workshop	140,000	44	£7,000 (will reduce to 4,000 if NEA cohort included)
North Tyneside: Working Homes Outreach Team	Not known	21	Not known
Gateshead: Work Programme	Not known	28	Not known
Haringey: Jobs For Haringey	Not known	28	£5,000
Southampton: Offender Skills and Employment	654,000	24	£5,700
Liverpool: Streets Ahead Plus	98,000	10	£4,630

²⁷ Worklessness Co-design – final report 2011
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214612/dwp-worklessness-codesign-final-report.pdf

Improved health and wellbeing:

There are also indications that the OW has significantly increased the personal capacity, resilience and wellbeing of participants. At the start of the project, at least 20 participants (44%) struggled with problems of depression, lack of confidence, anxiety, a sense of worthlessness. Seven had experienced serious housing problems including periods of homelessness. Many either had been or were dealing with problems relating to alcohol and/or drug abuse.

Interviews with participants and feedback from MFO, indicates that the OW had a very positive effect on most participants. Not all responded well. Some could not handle the ethos and apparent lack of structure – either because they preferred a more conventional workplace or because they were too chaotic in themselves – and they left. Those who stayed seem to have got a great deal from the experience.

A single parent who hadn't worked for over ten years and who found it very difficult to go out of the house and socialize, let alone function in a regular work environment, eventually found her voice and her confidence – although it took about 2 months. She is now hoping to be part of a catering enterprise. In the meantime she is volunteering at Marsh House, helping with cleaning, using the base to do her own on-line job searches (she had never used a computer before the OW) and even assisting others to do their job searches. She also took and passed a number of training courses during the OW, which boosted her confidence and self-esteem.

Some of the participants who had been living 'below the radar', and not even signing on, even though they were entitled to claim benefits, were now more aware of where to go for support and more confident about seeking help. Even though many still faced significant personal barriers, the OW seems to have given them a new lease of life – more information, better relationships, skills, practical experience, discipline, positive values, a better life-style and increased resilience to cope with difficulties in life and wider society. Some of these gains might be fragile, and not everyone benefited to the same degree. But there is a clear theme running through the feedback from interviewees that suggests the OW has had a profound effect on the way they see themselves and their future.

Training outcomes also indicate some of the progress made. Although about half (56%) the OW participants had some basic skills or qualifications at the start of the programme, many had none, and for them the courses that were offered, via Luton Adult Learning and other training providers, were a valuable part of the OW. A total of 13 participants enrolled for 70 courses. Between them they completed and passed 42 courses. This experience boosted their self-confidence. It added to the skills base needed to deliver the OW itself. It also enhanced people's CV's and had a direct impact on the ability of some to find work.

During the OW, the following training was undertaken:

<i>Topic</i>	<i>enrolled</i>	<i>completed</i>	<i>passed</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Health and Safety	12	12	8	Logic for Training
Emergency 1st Aid at work	13	13	13	EFAW courses are HSE compliant and valid for 3 years
Health and Hygiene L2	3	3	3	Level 2 qualification
<i>Courses provided by LAL:</i>				
Working in a customer services environment	13	8	7	Assessment: On line multiple choice
Employee Rights & Responsibilities	12	5	3	Assessment: 1 hour long written workbook
Develop working relationships with colleagues	10	5	5	Assessment: Portfolio of evidence
Administer finance	7	3	3	Assessment: Portfolio of evidence
Total number of courses:	70	49	42	

Impact on the local economy:

MFO's ultimate vision for the OW was to have an impact on the local economy of Marsh Farm estate. They hoped that a range of community enterprises would emerge from the OW, based around the skills and interests of participants. The idea was that, over the months following the initial phase of the OW, these potential enterprises would be developed into fully-fledged, financially viable businesses, that would not only enable people to become self-employed in a project of their own making, but would also provide additional services, offer training and apprenticeships and eventually be in a position to re-invest surplus back into the community. The intention was that, rather than stand alone, these enterprises would be part of a broad-based co-operative, supported by a single infrastructure or umbrella organisation based at Marsh House.

This was a much more ambitious objective than simply getting people into work – which was challenging enough in itself. But by September 2015, 13 participants (28%) had opted to be part of the business development phase. This involved a transition period while they prepared business plans with a view to getting NEA approval. Once approved they could access 6 months funding to build up and then launch their business. The problems involved in achieving outcomes for this phase of the OW are discussed in Section 4. But by February 2016, some progress had been made.

Four people, whose business plans had been approved in November 2015, were already receiving NEA funding. They were expected to get their businesses up and running within 6 months – i.e. by May 2016, at which point the businesses are

expected to be self-financing. Another 4 had had their plans approved but were waiting to start claiming the allowance for a variety of reasons, some of them to do with the seasonal nature of the business itself. Five were still at the planning stage. In the meantime, they were either working part-time or signing-on and in receipt of JSA, which also meant they had to do job searches and be prepared to take a mainstream job if they could find one. Some were encouraged by JCP advisers, who understood the situation and were supportive and as flexible as possible. Others felt insecure and were afraid that they might be referred to the Work Programme and therefore rendered ineligible for NEA for 2 years.

It is too early to be able to say what the eventual outcomes will be – whether the new enterprises will become established, whether they will flourish and whether they will contribute positively to the local economy. Realistically this sort of outcome cannot be achieved in such a short timeframe (March 2015- March 2016). Although progress has been made, it will take much longer than the few months that have elapsed since people embarked on this journey, to create any viable businesses. But the confidence, ambition, determination and vision to even attempt to set up these enterprises, is an outcome in itself. 28% of the OW participants are now at some stage in that process. And if MFO succeeds in establishing a CIO, as planned, it could develop more businesses in future which, together, might begin to have a noticeable impact on the local economy.

Improved environment and community impact:

Before the OW, the field, which became known as Henge Farm, was an eyesore and a health hazard. It had been neglected for years and used as a dumping ground, ending up covered with old mattresses, broken furniture and refuse of all kinds. Located at the edge of the estate, adjacent to a very beautiful bluebell wood and open farmland, its potential as a community farm/garden/allotment had been noted by MFO over many years. The OW provided an opportunity to transform this neglected piece of land into a community resource.

The short-term outcome was impressive. Despite all the difficulties, over a period of 12 weeks, the OW participants managed to transform the site by:

- clearing the 5 acre site and laying pathways around the field
- constructing a (beautiful) wooden round house using sustainable materials and traditional building methods
- building raised beds for small-scale food production and flowers
- cultivating a large area and constructing poly-tunnels
- planting vegetables
- clearing adjacent woodland and planting (over 100) fruit trees.

At the height of the OW activity, many people from the local community noticed the activity, came to find out what was going on – some of them were initially very suspicious - and many commented on the improvement to the area. The local school was interested in using the site for educational purposes and began discussions with MFO.

In addition, participants had organised the following support functions:

- a catering team to provide meals for participants
- a 'health and safety' team – which involved training and accreditation
- a group to manage the allocation of tools, ordering of supplies and oversee site management
- a team to provide IT and other back-up services, including attendance records and time-keeping, budget management and accounts, contract management, development of a web-site.

Over the summer improvements were also made to Marsh House and, although not yet completed, the building now has new toilets, improved office space, a sound-proof recording studio and a new outdoor patio/seating area adjacent to what will become a new community café, once the kitchen is completed. MFO successfully negotiated a 15-year lease on the property from the Council, but were disappointed that they would not agree to lease the GoKart track, even though OW members had cleared and repaired it. Ideally they would like this to be one of the income generating projects that is run in future from Marsh House.

Although the impact of these two sites on the whole community is limited compared for example to a major regeneration scheme, they do have the potential to make a significant improvement to the quality of life of residents, add to local facilities and enhance the reputation of the estate. But more work is needed to complete and sustain the improvements. The farm began to deteriorate when it ceased to be the hub of the OW activity and it has not been easy to keep momentum over the winter. As the OW funding ran out, the renovation work to Marsh House stopped and until that is completed the café cannot open and the building cannot be made available to the general public. This has had a knock-on effect on some of the other enterprises as well.

However there are plans to re-launch the project in the spring. Funding from the Tudor Trust should make this possible. Also MFO plan to establish a CIO, as the umbrella co-operative to support and nurture the other emerging enterprises. But until all that is achieved, the environmental improvements to the community, while significant, will remain fragile.

Cost Benefit analysis

This evaluation has not attempted to do a Social Return on Investment (SROI) assessment, even though this would clearly be of value, given the broad objectives of the OW. However we have identified a range of benefits and, by using other research studies, have been able to assign proxy values to these outcomes that give some indication of the potential social value that the project could be adding.

The basic cost of the OW was £140,000, which represents an investment of £3,111 per participant or £7,000 per participant into employment. As stated above, this may seem high compared to schemes that have access to a job as their only, or primary, objective, but it would reduce to £4,000 per job outcome if the NEA cohort were included. Below we look at a range of wellbeing factors that relate to the OW and estimate the added value they bring.

Research outlined in ‘The Social Impact of Housing Providers’²⁸ provides an insight into the social value created by different types of intervention. In essence, the ‘wellbeing value’ approach derives monetary values for different goods and services, like health, housing and social relationships, by estimating the amount of money required to keep individuals just as happy or satisfied with life in the absence of the good - i.e. to keep their wellbeing constant. It uses an estimate of the amount of extra income people would need in order to compensate them (exactly) for a given problem(s) and uses life satisfaction as a measure of wellbeing. This produces a range of wellbeing values or proxies (alternative means of producing benefit) that are used here to calculate the potential impact of the MFOW.

	<i>Wellbeing Value</i>	<i>Number of people reporting</i>	<i>Total Value</i>
Participation in at least one adult learning course	£654	13	£ 8,502
Move from unemployment to employment	£18,700	20	£ 374,000
Reduction in depression, anxiety	£43,453	16	£ 695,248
Relief from health problems that limit amount/ type of work	£2,354	8	£ 18,832
Helped people to feel more confident	£690	21	£ 14,490
People socialise more	£3,000	27	£ 81,000
Regeneration of the local area²⁹	£6,500	19	£ 123,500
Total Social Value:			£ 1,315,572

In a full SROI calculation, these figures would be adjusted to allow for ‘deadweight’ – what would have happened to people anyway, without the intervention of the OW – and ‘attribution’ – the likelihood of other factors also having an impact on people and influencing these outcomes. However it is worth noting that many of the OW participants were not engaged with mainstream services – indeed their alienation from such services was a factor in their recruitment to the OW. So it is reasonable to assume that for the most part, the changes in their lives since March 2015 are primarily due to the OW experience.³⁰

²⁸ The social Impact of Housing Providers: Daniel Fujiwara HACT: 2013 <http://www.hact.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Archives/2013/02/The%20Social%20Impact%20of%20Housing%20Providers%20report2013.pdf> Daniel Fujiwara is an economist at LSE - previously head of CBA at DWP and senior economist in the Government Economic Service. Guidance from his research has been used to make this social value assessment.

²⁹ The number benefitting is based simply on OW participants who live on Marsh Farm. It doesn’t take into account residents who live adjacent to the project or local school children who are likely to use the farm. As such it represents a cautious estimate of the future social value.

³⁰ See Annex D for ‘Theory of Change’ diagram relating to social values analysis.

SECTION FOUR

LESSONS LEARNT, IMPLICATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications for OW model

This section looks at the design and implementation of the OW, exploring what did and did not work and making comparisons with the model as developed in the global south. One of the questions we need to ask is how does the OW work in a UK context, in what ways does it need to be adapted, and what might we need to change in order to adopt the model most effectively?

Unrealistic timeframe:

The timeframe for the OW was too optimistic. The challenge that MFO had set themselves was to get 45 people, most of them dealing with multiple problems in addition to lack of work, either back into work within 3 months of the OW starting, or ready to become self-employed, managing their own enterprises, within 9 months. This was never a realistic proposition, especially for a group that included people with very little work experience or long, debilitating periods of unemployment.

But these deadlines were determined, at least in part, by external factors. Government funding was made available in November 2014, but had to be spent (or committed) by the end of March 2015 – leaving barely 4 months for preparation work. MFO chose to run the core workshop over 12 weeks, rather than the 4-6 weeks that was customary in other OWs – and this length of time has clearly been beneficial. The transition to NEA would normally be expected to take one month followed by 6 months trading. In fact, it lasted at least 3 months, with some people taking even longer – which meant that JCP and Avanta had to be flexible in order to enable those participants who had opted for NEA to avoid being put back on JSA and potentially referred to the Work Programme. As a result, most of those who were eventually approved for NEA funding only started their 6 months initial trading period around November 2015, which means they will not finish until May 2016.

Actual timeframe:

Phase 1		Phase 2	Phase 3		Phase 4
Nov '14-Mar '15	End Mar - June	July onwards	Nov '15	Feb '16	April/May '16 onwards
OW preparations (4.5 months)	OW workshop (12 wks)	Transition - preparation for NEA	NEA phase – 6 months		Plans to launch new enterprises in the spring, register umbrella organisation - RevOLuton - as a CIC and open Marsh House to the public
			Some (4) participants start Phase 1	Some (2) move into Phase 2	
		5 Participants still trying to finalise their business plans and get NEA approval	Others (4), having been approved, are waiting for a suitable NEA start date e.g. if their enterprise is seasonal		

Avanta have argued that, with the 'right level of support' there is no reason why these enterprises could not have been up and running much sooner. Even though it is taking much longer than anticipated, the community enterprise vision still motivates participants. But the pressure of impossible deadlines and the consequences of failing to meet them are very demoralizing. This raises the question of where the 'right kind of support' would come from, how it might be designed into the project from the outset and whether the timeframe for NEA should be more flexible, especially for people like the OW participants. (*see below*)

Target group and recruitment:

The MFOW aimed to target the most excluded and marginalized people from their own and the wider local community. Although all OWs involve people who are 'excluded' and often operating outside the formal economy, other OWs have tended to bring together people with a wider range of skills and experience than was the case on Marsh Farm. In the global south, OWs are likely to have a greater mix of participants, some with financial management and small business experience, possibly labour organisers, sometimes students. It is debatable whether and how that sort of mix could work in a UK setting. One of the strengths of the MFOW was the overwhelming sense of 'all being equal', of there being no hierarchy, no-one in a position of authority or superiority. In particular, people who had been bruised by their dealings with officialdom felt the OW was a safe-space. They felt comfortable, accepted, not judged – and this enabled them to relax, build relationships and become part of what many of them described as 'one big family'. The value of that ethos, that sense of identity and belonging, needs to be recognized as a crucial factor in the impact the OW has had on many participants.

On the other hand, the relatively narrow experience of most participants did have implications for the way in which the group self-organised. Many people were reluctant to take on leadership roles, and even those who clearly were leaders would not describe themselves in that way, so it took longer than in other OWs for the group to take the reins. During the workshop, the FE handled the money, so the PE did not require finance and accountancy skills (*see below*), but these skills certainly would have helped later with the enterprise development phase.

Many programmes designed to tackle worklessness have targets that push them towards 'grabbing the low hanging fruit', rather than working with those who are hardest to get into work. In this context, the distinctive focus of the MFOW is important, especially in light of the outcomes it delivered. But the level of support required by such a group in order to succeed should not be underestimated.

Constraints of funding:

Most OWs in the global south are not Government funded, but tend to rely on grants from national and international NGOs specifically earmarked for an OW. Without independent funding, the MFOW had to rely on Government funding that was not specifically tailored to support an OW and this inevitably created constraints – e.g. the timeframe for spending budgets and limitations regarding eligible costs. It meant that MFO had to raise additional funding to cover some of the capital investment needed for the OW. Moreover, the overall amount, £140,000, was only sufficient to cover the costs into the transition phase because MFO paid themselves

at minimum wage rates, thus stretching it as much as possible. It cannot be assumed that other FEs would be prepared to work on that basis. The OW eventually ran out of money for the capital investment needed to renovate Marsh House, with significant consequences for the fledgling enterprises that needed to be based there.

Project management structures:

Another distinction between MFOW and other OWs relates to the management structure of the project. In other OWs, a local co-operative or NGO acts as 'host' and is responsible for the overall management including the budget which covers: staff costs (FE, mentors, trainers, support personnel), equipment/tools/materials, transport, food, cost of infrastructure, stationery, and the Development Fund which is equivalent to the cost of labour. The overall budget is usually handled and accounted for by the host, not by the FE. In Marsh Farm, both the 'host' and the FE roles were the combined responsibility of MFO and there were no clear structures for formal accountability, review, decision-making or external communication. The FE handled everything in a fairly informal way on the basis of mutual trust within the team – and this worked at one level. But they were not formally accountable to anyone externally, nor did they have a wider support structure or advisory body to help steer the project. A loose steering group was set up, that included representatives of external stakeholders, but it only met a couple of times. While MFO rightly took great pride in the fact that this was the only OW ever to be initiated and led by local residents, it did leave them somewhat isolated, and lacking access to the sort of external support that could potentially have helped break down some of the barriers and helped them to plan ahead.

Funding participants through the benefits system:

In other OWs, an integral part of the self-organising process is the way the Development Fund, which is equivalent to the cost of the labour,³¹ is paid not to individual participants, but to the PE on delivery of the team-work contracts. So the PE has to operate as if it were a contractor, and a direct relationship is established between the work done and income generated. The PE leadership (not the FE) would then decide how to manage this income – in terms of wages, equipment, food, other running costs – and account for their decisions to the wider OW membership. Replication of these 'co-operative business structures' would have been a very helpful learning experience for OW participants, especially for those who planned to develop enterprises.

In the UK, however, participants who had been in receipt of welfare benefits were given a Training Allowance by JCP, equivalent to JSA, for the duration of the OW. So the OW 'wage element' was handled separately and it was impossible to replicate the link between labour and wages that people would experience in the real world. This meant there was much less of a financial incentive for participants than would be the case in other OWs. In some ways this was positive – putting more emphasis on personal wellbeing, and on social and community values. But it also meant that participants were never really free from a dependence on benefits, nor was the PE

³¹ In other OWs, because funding is provided by local or international NGOs or through co-operatives – not through Governments, there is greater freedom of use over resources and a direct link between work and income.

able to take control of the group's finances – although in principle, MFO could have chosen to devolve the budget for other OW running costs to the PE, rather than manage this expenditure themselves.

As it was, participants had the security of knowing their basic income was covered, but without the freedom to generate additional income - since this would have reduced their benefits. Nor did they need to carry any risk, if for example, the PE failed to deliver on any of the contracts. It is difficult to see how this can be resolved without a bespoke funding programme that enables an OW to operate outside the benefits system, with much greater flexibility and risk built into it. Recruiting vulnerable people into such a programme could of course be much more difficult. But it would be worth considering whether other options are possible. For example, could the PE, as an entity in its own right, accumulate income, even at the level of a nominal bonus payment for completion of contracts, and use that as an investment fund for future enterprise development? This would represent a collective rather than an individual financial incentive – but it could be a powerful motivator as well as being of real value in the later stages of the OW.

Facilitators Enterprise (FE):

As has already been said, one significant aspect of the MFOW is the fact that it was the first one ever to be initiated and led by local residents, rather than by people from outside a community. MFO had trained with Ivan Labra in 2007 and the team was deeply committed to the OW concept. But by 2014, 7 years had passed since that initial training, and there was no time in the run-up to the OW for the team to revisit the key principles, disciplines and functions of their role as an FE. As a result, just like the participants, the FE team was learning as they went along. On the one hand, this was reassuring for participants, who valued the lack of distinction between facilitators and participants, the fact that they were 'one of us'. But it put a great deal of pressure on MFO. Because they had to do so many things 'on the hoof', it was difficult for the FE to model the level of organisation that was expected of the PE. They also felt under pressure to raise additional income through the BUD courses, and therefore were not able to give the OW their undivided attention in the critical first few weeks. The lack of an appropriate project management structure or any structured external support was also problematic.

MFO were asked to summarise what they felt were the most significant achievements of the OW and their role as the FE. They highlighted the following:

- simply making it happen after fifteen years of disappointment and frustration
- finding key allies in the Council and in particular getting JCP on board
- the strength, loyalty and commitment within the team and their persistence and tenacity in holding the whole project together
- the pastoral role, acting as an intermediary between participants and other agencies, supporting very depressed people and keeping them going
- working with a core of people who were self-less and really cared about others – seeing the same qualities in participants – making the OW feel like 'a family' – creating a 'level playing field'
- seeing vulnerable people blossom and change dramatically
- making the budget work by generating additional income and making it stretch

- experiencing how the 'large group dynamic' worked in practice, e.g. when the storm damaged the site, the FE withdrew and the participants took over.

But, in taking on the role of FE for the first time, MFO also faced some real challenges including:

- the lack of a separate host organisation, which weakened the management structure and meant that lines of accountability were unclear
- lack of adequate preparation which meant too little was committed to paper in advance of the OW starting
- mentors who had not received any induction and did not understand their role and what was expected of them
- limited and disjointed financial support, given the scale of the task, and personal financial insecurity affecting FE members as well as participants
- lack of direct help from other agencies – though that was possibly because no-one had figured out what would be helpful, rather than a lack of willingness to be helpful on the part of the agencies
- the need for more direct, day-to-day contact with JCP in order to iron out benefit problems quickly
- the failure to transfer some budget responsibilities to the PE – a gap that mattered more because these skills were needed by participants who intended to progress to enterprise development
- the implications of managing contacts with statutory bodies and the FE's lack of capacity to deal with this – e.g. the 'social prescription' contract
- resistance, within the team, to forward planning and co-ordination, relying instead on strong relationships and trust to get things done.

The OW represented a steep learning curve for MFO as well as for the participants. If that learning is to benefit them in future, and also other potential OWs, they need to allow themselves more space and time to reflect on the experience. One outcome that has not yet been met is the proposal to produce a manual, based on the MFOW experience. This would capture the learning and set out the MF approach to running an OW in the UK context.

Pastoral care:

One of the FE members was responsible for 'pastoral care' and there is general agreement that without this crucial role, many people, participants and staff, would not have survived the OW. FE members reported that it was a very full-on, intense experience, working with people who needed a lot of support and within a benefit system that was not always helpful. JCP felt that MFO had under-estimated how challenging the OW would be, and MFO admitted that they too had not fully taken on board the implications of working with such vulnerable people. During the workshop, four people faced eviction, two went to prison, one had a child taken into foster care and some young adults were 'stuck at home' but also afraid to move out because their parents would be hit by the 'spare room supplement'.³² MFO don't regret this focus – that was the whole point of the OW – to demonstrate that people who tend to be 'written-off' by society can create their own solutions. And the impact the OW has had on participants reinforces this message. But the FE carried a

³² Also known as the 'bedroom tax'.

significant burden, mostly acting alone, and it is likely that more direct and frequent engagement with statutory support services would have been helpful. Many of the problems related to benefits, and the FE had to intervene frequently on behalf of participants. Although the main JCP liaison officers were helpful, they were not based on the estate and the computer systems could only be accessed in the main town centre office. The FE felt like they were expected to be social workers as well as OW facilitators and on reflection they have suggested that access to Social Services might have been helpful.

“We are doing care in the community for these people – social services are just not picking up on some of them. They have fallen through the net – the system has failed them.” FE member

Mentors:

Having access to expertise, as and when participants want it, is an important feature of an OW. But on Marsh Farm this proved problematic. Two mentors were brought in with a specific brief – one to help build the ‘round house’ and the other to support the catering team. But both assumed traditional instructor/trainer roles – even to the extent of using a bell to gather people together. There were no written plans outlining how to construct the round house - everything was in the expert’s head. So participants were entirely dependent on his instructions in order to do the work. Also his contract with MFO was for one week, so he wanted to get the job done – for him the objective was to complete the task, the process was not important, whereas it was the essence of the OW. Despite this, two positive things emerged. Some of the participants began to resent being treated simply as ‘the workers’, by someone who assumed he was ‘the boss’, and they rebelled. This reinforced the self-organising ethos of the OW and helped them to bond as a group. Ironically, they also managed to create a beautiful ‘round-house’ in a very short space of time, which generated a sense of ‘we can do this’ and real pride in the achievement, not only for the building team, but also for the whole OW for whom it became an iconic symbol of what they were seeking to achieve.

The need for appropriate mentors became even more apparent during the transition to NEA. At this stage people needed financial and business support and they would have benefited from being able to shadow someone already working in the area they were interested in. So having access to people with relevant skills is clearly helpful, but they need to understand the philosophy and methods of working within an OW if their role is to be complementary and genuinely helpful. Induction and training need to be built into the OW preparations.

Moving into enterprise development:

Although enterprise development is one of the potential outcomes for all OWs, international experience has usually focused on the workshop itself, with much less investment in the follow up. In Marsh Farm, the objective had always been to use the OW as a launch-pad for community enterprise. In this way, MFO hoped to influence the local economy and make it work better for the community.³³ So as

³³ Many years before the OW, with the help of ‘nef’, MFO had used the ‘Leaky Bucket’ tool to analyse the flow of money into and out of the estate and were determined to stem the outward flow and harness local resources to create local jobs and services.

well as developing the organisational skills and consciousness of participants, MFO were clear from the start about their ambition to develop a range of new community businesses through the OW. This affected the workshop itself because there were two processes happening in parallel. Whether they were complementary, or at odds with each other, is debatable. But the 'round house' construction, for example, was treated as both an opportunity for organisational learning (though it proved to be not a good one) and at the same time the starting point for a building enterprise. Similarly, responsibility for the provision of food during the OW was not presented as a problem for the PE to resolve, but instead a catering team was created, with the explicit intention that they would form one of the new enterprises. In both cases this affected the ability of the PE to figure out how to organise and manage these functions for themselves. These two objectives, organisational learning and enterprise development, are not necessarily in conflict, but getting the balance right in a way that does not dilute the impact of the OW learning process is something that needs careful consideration.

On the other hand, the potential to develop their own business at the end of the OW was what attracted many of the participants to the project. It was a powerful motivator, but it was always going to be a bigger challenge than was acknowledged at the time and a lot more preparation and planning was needed in order to make the transition work smoothly.

Benefits Rules: Some of the problems related to benefits and the confusion that occurred when the training allowances came to an end and participants who wanted to develop enterprises had to revert back to JSA. In fact, JCP agreed to put those who hoped to transition into NEA on what was called a 'limited claimant commitment'. This was equivalent to JSA but subject to a different set of rules. To be approved for it, people had to attend a group meeting with Avanta and sign up for future NEA support. JCP coaches then had to do a 40-minute interview with each person to work out a personal progression strategy. These participants still had to sign on fortnightly, demonstrate they were doing job searches and provide evidence that things were progressing with their enterprise plans. And the assumption was that if they found work, this would take precedence over the NEA process. This caused a lot of aggravation. It was not brokered properly in advance with JCP nor with Avanta, so at the last minute staff suddenly found themselves with a large unexpected workload. The implications were not explained clearly to MFO or to the participants, so neither fully understood what was happening. Many participants resented having to sign on again. They felt they were moving backwards rather than progressing towards greater independence.

Business support services: Avanta's role was to provide the support, advice and scrutiny needed to get NEA approval. Their input was helpful and they agreed to extend the transition period beyond the usual 4 weeks in order to allow people more time to plan.

"I have to see 'the Avanta adviser' every 2 months – he is in touch by email as well and can meet us any time – so we get lots of support"

MFO were also heavily involved, helping people to work out personal financial statements and write their business plans. Even so, many participants struggled with the process. In retrospect, MFO felt they needed to have more external expertise at

this point. Some participants suggested that the opportunity to shadow a similar enterprise would have been helpful. Despite this, JCP staff acknowledged that the additional help from MFO meant that in many cases real progress was made. *“One client had been trying for ages to get a business off the ground without success. Now he has signed off and has the personal support and confidence that he needs to move forward. JCP could never provide the level of hand-holding needed, or accompany people on their journey, helping them tackle all sorts of personal and practical barriers, in such an intensive way.” JCP*

New Enterprise Allowance: NEA itself was assessed and awarded on an individual basis, based on each person’s financial projection. But most of the enterprises relied on a small group working together. So by November 2015, some people had been approved for NEA, but not others from the same enterprise, even though they needed their partners’ involvement to get the enterprise off the ground. Although the two are clearly connected, the processes of assessing whether an individual has a realistic personal financial plan and working out how a business idea might become a viable enterprise are not quite the same thing. The OW calls for a group strategy, whereas most programmes to encourage people back into work or enterprise are based on the individual.

Prospects: Avanta are optimistic about the future of the enterprises, even though they are all taking a long time to make progress. They agree that more support and technical advice would have been helpful, even though their contract meant they did not have capacity to provide it. And they argue that, with a bit more support, the enterprises could have been established within the 6 month NEA period.

Another factor was the shift from the single OW project, where large group dynamics dominated, to a number of smaller group projects and individual business plans, without any mechanism to hold them all together and retain the collective ethos, peer pressure and practical support that people had experienced and valued while working on the farm. The OW (in the broadest sense) had shifted from one large-group activity on the farm, to a number of small-group projects clustered around Marsh House, and then to individual ‘survival plans’ supported by NEA. Without an umbrella structure, to hold people and enterprises together, it was difficult to preserve the collective identity and the mutual support of the OW’s first phase. MFO and participants recognize this – hence the decision to register a new CIO as soon as possible³⁴. The CIO will fill a gap, but it would have been helpful if it (or a host organisation) had been there earlier.

³⁴ ‘RevoLuton’ will be registered as a CIO in April 2016. Its founding members will be MFO and the emerging enterprises

Implications for participants

The impact on participants is set out in Section two and suggests that the OW has had a very positive affect on their lives and life chances. The following insights are significant:

- Participants were motivated more by the vision of the OW and the possibility of doing something worthwhile for the community, than by financial considerations. And although the prospect of not having to sign-on with JCP in the usual way was appealing, it was not the main determining factor for most people.
- The freedom to self-organise, the possibility of choices, and the aspirations offered through the OW gave participants a sense of ‘agency’, of personal responsibility and control. Even though at many times during the workshop things seemed to be unstructured and out of control, many developed a strong sense of ownership and belonging. They did not see themselves as ‘clients’, ‘customers’, ‘beneficiaries’, or even simply as ‘workers’ – and this had a profound impact on many participants.
- Much of this was due to the values and ethos of MFO. They were trusted by participants as ‘one of us’; they were non-judgmental and encouraged that in others; they made people feel accepted; they reinforced the idea that this was a collective effort and that participants were mutually responsible for each other’s wellbeing and for the success of the project. They created a safe-space where everyone felt on equal terms.
- The level of pastoral care required to support a group of people who were, for the most part, struggling with lots of personal, financial, mental and physical health issues, as well as long-term unemployment, should not be underestimated. MFO were able to relate to and support participants in a way that would have been impossible for statutory agencies. But it put important pressure on the project and on the FE members. Some were utterly exhausted by the experience. *“MFO took on people that other trainers would not touch” JCP*
- Participants who decided to stay on and establish community enterprises needed a lot more technical support than was actually available. They also needed more time to build the sort of relationships and trust between themselves that is needed to work together in business – bearing in mind that most people did not know one another before the OW.

The outcomes suggest that, despite the problems and the struggle at times to keep things on track, the OW had a profound effect on people. Despite their misgivings about the project, this was obvious to the Job Centre:

“We wouldn’t have put in all that effort if we hadn’t felt it was worth it. The OW had such good outcomes. You could see it working – see the difference it made in individual participants” JCP

Implications for stakeholders

The main external stakeholders were the Council, Jobcentre Plus, Luton Adult Learning (LAL) and Avanta – and at the initial stage, Locality and OCS as the main funders.

- Their role was primarily functional - they did not have a clear remit in relation to the governance or management of the OW. They were ‘partners’, but at arms-length. The MFO is unique in that it is the only OW to be initiated, led and managed by residents in and for their own local community. But an OW cannot stand in isolation. It needs the support and involvement of other stakeholders if it is to be taken seriously and become more than a one-off project. The interface between MFO and other stakeholders needed to be much more developed than it was.
- At a national level, a stronger support infrastructure could potentially have helped address some of the external barriers, regulatory and other problems that the OW came up against. For example, the OW outcomes impact on many Government departments, but there was no mechanism to engage them directly in the project and thereby influence local service providers. Locality handled the COSAF grant on behalf of OCS, and they also commissioned ‘Imagine’ to act as a ‘critical friend’ and sounding board. Ivan Labra provided expertise from an international perspective. But no external UK organisation was responsible for directly supporting MFO, providing expertise, setting standards, challenging and asking questions and helping them to shape the project in this context.
- Locally a broader management structure could have established a stronger sense of ‘ownership’ and a stake in the project by other interested parties. A steering group, that included MFO, the Council, JCP, Avanta and LAL, did meet a couple of times, but its role and make up was unclear, attendance was erratic and it didn’t have a clear purpose. A framework for mutual accountability would have enabled problems to be resolved more quickly rather than become a source of frustration.
- Regular dialogue between stakeholders and MFO could have helped in a number of ways. It could have challenged the prejudices that many agencies held in relation to Marsh Farm and MFO in particular; it could have enabled agencies to find common ground and work together better, given that each organisation had their own agenda, their own priorities and their own assumptions about what the OW was supposed to be achieving; it could have helped address the practical and bureaucratic problems that MFO had to deal with when entering into contracts with the statutory sector. The failure of the ‘social prescription pilot’ is a case in point.
- The OW was enthusiastically supported by a number of committed individual officers, representing their agencies. But that was not always enough. Some front-line staff at JCP, for example, did not seem to know about or understand what the OW was trying to do. They could make things difficult for participants, who were themselves easily discouraged, and this created unnecessary problems for the FE.

- Having a named liaison person was helpful, but they operated at arms-length from the project. For example, the JCP liaison officer was based in the town centre, not on-site, and anything to do with sorting out benefits had to be processed at the main office. If she had been based at the project (say) one day each week that would have made things much easier.
- The transition from OW to community enterprises was complex and the implications were underestimated by MFO and by stakeholders. The needs of the OW did not fit neatly into the support systems that already existed, and yet the agencies had to work within those regulatory and funding arrangements. For the most part, they bent over backwards to be flexible, but it made a challenging task even more difficult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined below relate to the MFOW and are not intended to offer a blueprint for all future OWs. They do however indicate what needs to happen to enable this approach to be replicated in a way that takes into account the lessons learnt from Marsh Farm.

- ***A longer timeframe is required for planning and preparation:*** a pre-preparation phase of at least 6-12 months is necessary, in order to put in place a comprehensive project plan. This will involve: negotiating access to land and other facilities for the project; getting a political commitment from the local authority and other key partners; negotiating clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders; putting in place an appropriate governance structure; securing the necessary funding; identifying a core team of facilitators and expert mentors and ensuring that they understand their brief; planning the enterprise development phase before the OW starts.
Once the project plan is agreed, it should be possible to set up an OW within 2-3 months, including: recruiting participants, establishing the FE and gathering the necessary tools and resources for the workshop itself.
- ***A robust governance structure is needed at the local level, which combines community-led management and control with a clear role for other stakeholders:*** ideally a local ‘host’ organisation will be the lead accountable body. It must be committed to the OW approach and have the capacity and capability to manage innovation and business development. The host organisation should establish a project board to oversee the running of the OW. It should be relatively small but ‘hands-on’, rather than operate at arm’s length. Members should come primarily from the local community – community leaders or local workers. Other stakeholders and key partners also need to have a clear role. In Hastings, this will be achieved through a separate ‘Enabling Panel’, made up of agency representatives who have a specific duty to help resolve problems, find new solutions, break down barriers and challenge any institutional culture and assumptions that might undermine the OW. Setting out these responsibilities in a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) would be helpful.
- ***Financial investment in an OW should be set at realistic levels:*** the cost of an OW will depend on the level of ambition and scale of each project. The MFOW costs were under-estimated and, as result not adequately funded – the FE paid themselves at minimum wage rates in order to stretch the budget (£140,000) over a nine-month period. Despite the fact that they were still able to achieve positive outcomes, a more realistic cost profile would be around £400,000³⁵. This would allow for a longer period of preparation, more sustainable salaries for the FE team and increased support for the enterprise development phase. In order to ensure value for money, the size of the OW could increase to between 80-100 participants – as in most other OWs – in line with this higher budget.

³⁵ see Annex E for budget breakdown

- ***Jobcentre staff need to be given a stronger steer and encouraged to exercise greater flexibility and freedom in supporting innovations like the OW:*** the interface between the OW and the benefits system is crucial, but needs to be made much easier to navigate – for the OW participants and for JCP staff. DWP guidance suggests that Jobcentres already have considerable freedom to be innovative and entrepreneurial when developing local schemes to tackle worklessness. But in practice local Jobcentre advisors may not always feel confident about doing so. So opportunities for flexibility should be explored and agreed before the OW starts, and then communicated to JCP staff throughout the office, so that they understand how the OW will help meet JCP targets, and have the confidence to be as flexible as possible. The introduction of Universal Credit may make this easier, but it is too early at this stage to say.
- ***Financial incentives are needed that relate to the delivery of the OW task, but do not jeopardise participants' core income:*** because participants receive a training allowance from JCP, it is difficult to build a financial incentive into an OW in the UK. Also, because wages are not part of the OW, the PE does not get the experience of managing a budget – which represents a lost opportunity in terms of developing participants' 'entrepreneurial literacy'. If the OW core budget were to include a 'bonus element' to be paid incrementally to the PE, on completion of each work contract, the PE could build up a reserve fund which could be used to invest in the new enterprises, or commission additional work, e.g. market research, as the OW progresses. This would provide a collective incentive to deliver the contracts, fill a training gap, and it might also help the OW retain some of the more skilled people who would otherwise leave to find work.
- ***Enterprise development needs more time and intensive business support:*** the NEA programme needs to be adapted to ensure that it is 'fit-for-purpose' and can adequately support OW participants in business development. People with little prior work experience, who are on a journey towards creating employment for themselves and others, have particular needs that must be addressed if they are not to be 'set-up-to-fail'. More intensive support is important in relation to: business planning, financial management, marketing and communications, risk management, team building, legal structures, personal finance, the regulatory environment. The budget should allow for the involvement of mentors, with specific business expertise, who can provide intensive support during the transition phase following the workshop.
- ***Fledgling community businesses need to be supported, where possible through access to public and private sector contract opportunities:*** opportunities to enable new enterprises to flourish within the local economy should be identified and they should be protected, to some extent, from having to compete for work in 'the marketplace', at least until they are fairly well established. Parallels can be drawn here with mutual buy-out schemes in the public sector, although the OW enterprises represent a higher risk since they have no track record. However they could operate initially on a small scale as sub-contractors, and they could be

given preferential access to contracts where there is a requirement to include local labour. Until the new enterprises are fairly well established, this support should be seen as a way of securing the added value that has been generated through an OW, for the long-term benefit of the community, and not simply as a business proposition.

- ***Better data collection and monitoring arrangements are needed to support impact evaluations and assess future pilots:*** there is still a lot to learn about how to run a successful OW in a UK context. The Hastings project will provide further valuable insights. But it is an unusually large and ambitious project and it will be difficult to assess outcomes before 2019. Ideally, other smaller OWs should be piloted in parallel with the Hastings project. Each one should have learning and evaluation built into the project design. It would also be helpful to be able to compare OWs with other schemes designed to tackle long-term unemployment. Partners, JCP in particular, should establish monitoring arrangements to enable that to happen. Future OWs should also consider recruiting in a way that made it possible to undertake a 'randomised control trial' by following participants involved in an OW alongside participants in other schemes with similar objectives.
- ***All the partners involved in an OW need to be open to change and should allow time and space for reflection and learning:*** the integrity of the OW approach depends on the people involved having relevant skills and a deep understanding of the philosophy, psychology and methods of working within an OW. This applies to the core team of facilitators and to the mentors, but it also applies to other stakeholders. An OW is likely to challenge the assumptions and possibly the practices of mainstream services, and opportunities need to be created to allow for reflection and learning from the OW experience to be shared by participants, facilitators, mentors, agencies and all those involved in the partnership.
- ***It is important to capture the learning from UK-based OWs:*** insights, lessons and best practice from the MFOW, Hastings and other potential OWs needs to be incorporated into a Manual which other communities could use in future. This would draw on international experience but put the OW into a specific UK context.
- ***Future OWs need funding from a range of sources that is more sustainable, streamlined and 'fit-for-purpose':*** if the OW model is to be repeated at scale, it will require sustainable local investment. Ideally funding would be designed to fit the needs of the OW, rather than, as in MFOW's case, the project having to bend to accommodate existing schemes. Given the range of outcomes that can be expected from an OW, funding could come from many different sources, including national programmes (*see below*), but it needs to be rooted locally in a commitment from local government, Local Enterprise Partnerships and also from local businesses and social enterprises that seek social value. Whatever the source of funding, future investment needs to be more secure, streamlined, comprehensive and less fragmented than in the case of Marsh Farm.

- ***In order to extend the OW approach in the UK, Government departments should also explore the scope to give local services, involved in future pilots, greater flexibility in funding and regulatory systems:*** Given the nature of OW outcomes, it should be possible to identify a range of existing Government programmes that could contribute to the core funding needed for an OW (e.g. mental health, welfare-to-work, family support, community education, environmental improvements and a range of other prevention programmes). Government departments should explore how the OW model could be further tested to support their outcomes. To succeed, there is a need for greater flexibility in the regulatory systems governing the use of funds, and for a level of commitment that would give local service providers permission, and therefore the confidence, to engage with an OW in a more creative way. This would enable a modest scaling up of the OW model, within existing resources. Given the potential outcomes, as evidenced by the MFOW, there are powerful arguments for Government departments and Local Authorities to give this serious consideration.
- ***A national ‘incubator organisation’ would help to extend the OW approach in the UK:*** In addition, if the OW approach is to succeed in the UK, some form of ‘incubator organisation’ is needed to set standards, protect the integrity of the OW method, provide expertise, support and monitor future pilots. A parallel can be drawn with the Seriti Institute³⁶ in South Africa which has pioneered more than fifteen OWs, led research into the model and helped refine and develop it to suit the South African context. If the OW is to be scaled up in the UK, something similar is needed here. It would also share learning and offer training in order to create a larger network of OW ‘experts’ in the UK. It could be rooted in an existing national organisation such as Locality or nef, or it could be a ‘virtual organisation’ – bringing together a network of people around the country with relevant expertise. Although it would need funding, this could be relatively modest, and may be something that an existing funding body interested in supporting and creating community businesses might be interested in taking forward

³⁶ The Seriti Institute uses large-scale participatory methods and forges partnerships with communities, government departments, NGOs, civil society and business, to strengthen community organisation for social health and economic development. Its programmes are designed to achieve social change at scale, based around the OW methodology – forging organisational literacy while creating enterprises and social cohesion. Seriti is one of the Implementing Agents for the South African Government’s Community Work Programme. <http://www.seriti.org.za/>

CONCLUSION and NEXT STEPS

The outcomes from the MFOW are significant and have been achieved despite all the limitations that impacted upon the project. In terms of 'what next', it is important to recognize that this was the first OW in the UK, with some unique features. For example, MFO had been trying to set up an OW for fifteen years, so their level of understanding and commitment to the concept was much deeper than had they come to the idea more recently. They have a long-standing role in the community – one that has at times led to conflict with people in authority, although fundamentally they have always maintained a good working relationship with statutory partners. But they are viewed by some people as 'mavericks', albeit inspired, ambitious, determined and genuinely committed to their community. This track record contributed to the success of the OW – their ability to recruit and hold onto participants who were disaffected and outside the mainstream; the values and ethos they brought to the project; the lengths they were prepared to go to, to make the OW work.

However this was only one project, and if the OW model is to be of wider relevance in the UK, more pilots are needed. The Ore Valley OW in Hastings will provide valuable insights, but it too is unique in its own way, and impact data will not be available until 2019. Two OWs are not enough to fully judge both processes and impacts. Given the potential of the OW approach to affect long-term worklessness, mental health and other social and economic issues facing the poorest communities in the UK, more trials are necessary in a range of different contexts – rural, urban etc.

There seem to be three options for taking the OW idea forward:

1. To establish a bespoke, Government funded OW programme, to pilot this approach in a number of locations in order to better understand how it works and evaluate its impact.

However, this would require new funding at a time when public sector budgets are being cut back, and even if there is a case for investment in the OW method, it may be too soon to expect this to be possible. More evidence would be needed in order to make the case.

2. To identify existing Government resources, linked to a range of preventative programmes that seek outcomes similar to those achievable via an OW, and negotiate a collaborative approach across Government departments that would support the launch of a number of new pilot OWs over the next 2-3 years. Identify local, sustainable funding to support pilots, e.g. through the Local Authority, a Local Enterprise Partnership or other sources. Identify funding to establish a national infrastructure or 'incubator' that would help negotiate, establish and support these pilots, provide training and ensure that learning was captured.

This option has the potential to scale up the OW approach incrementally. It also fills the gaps that have been identified through this pilot, at both local

and national levels and provides a basis for action-based, participative research that could be extremely valuable.³⁷

3. To promote the MFOW story and evidence, with the aim of raising awareness among Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and other interested parties, in the hope that they might commission MFO to run a BUD course and potentially negotiate to set up a local OW.

The danger here is that the OW method would be applied without anyone to maintain quality and the approach could be diluted and discredited as a result. Also MFO spent fifteen years trying to establish an OW locally, without success, until central Government intervened. It could prove to be a risky option that might eventually deliver results, but at a snails' pace. The evidence from this research is that the OW deserves to be taken more seriously.

Imagine's view is that the second option has the greatest potential to build on the Marsh Farm initiative and could generate the momentum needed to see many more OWs established over the coming years. Even though some might argue that a Government-led, bespoke programme would be the best way to put the OW model 'on the map', more evidence would be needed before this proposition could be persuasive, especially in a period of reduced Government spending. The other option, to simply promote the idea and see what happens, is both uncertain and risky. The MFOW experience provides a powerful argument for more OWs. The second option would enable pilots to be developed in a way that ensures the integrity and quality of the process and that also brings other national and local agencies and stakeholders into the frame, alongside local communities.

³⁷ See Annex F for diagram of the proposed approach

Annex A: Background to the Organisation Workshop

The **Organisation Workshop (OW)** was created by Clodomir Santos de Morais, a Brazilian sociologist who worked in the 1950s and '60's with peasant leaders, labour organisers and activists involved in land reform and other programmes to tackle poverty and unemployment. The politics of Brazil at that time meant that these activities were often seen by the state as subversive and training had to be done in secret. In 1954, de Morais attended a workshop in Recife, where "the cramped conditions of the house, combined with the need for secrecy, imposed on the group a strict organisational discipline in terms of division of labour and synchronization of all the tasks needed for such an event." Subsequently it became clear that, while little was learned about the event's topic, a great deal of learning was retained about how to organise. This became the inspiration and starting point for the design of what eventually was to become the Organisation Workshop.

The main elements of the OW are a large group of people (de Morais said "a minimum of 40, with no upper limit"); the freedom to organize themselves within the law; and the provision of all the necessary resources to deliver a project, placed in the hands of the group. The OW uses 'activity-based learning' which means that a real object or task has to be present - "to learn how to ride a bike, you need a bike to ride on". Thus, for a large group to learn how to manage a complex enterprise, they need an enterprise or project to manage. The OW's defining features not only require a cooperative large group and the creation of a complex, real enterprise, but they also involve a specific role for the trainer or facilitator. But in an OW, the trainer or facilitator's role is merely subsidiary (known as 'scaffolding' in Activity Theory). In other words, it is not the trainer/facilitator, but "*the object that teaches*".

Thus running an OW requires what is called a Facilitators' Enterprise (FE) and also a Participants' Enterprise (PE), originally called 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Structures by de Morais, and sometimes called respectively the 'Crew' and the 'Team'. The FE is the framework set up for all organisational and learning activities before, during and after the Workshop. The participants' task is to set up a PE which, usually after a period of trial and error referred to as 'anomie' by de Morais, starts to organise, develops functional teams, negotiates 'contracts' with the FE, and is paid incrementally on delivery of the task or project. In this way, participants form a temporary enterprise, which they themselves manage, an enterprise which contracts to do work at market rates. Once the workshop-based temporary enterprise is over, organisational, management and vocational skills gained can be used to form new businesses or social enterprises.

Lectures on the 'Theory of Organisation' are an integral and compulsory part of the OW process. These lectures (1 ½ hours a day for two weeks) are meant to enable members of the PE to gain a perspective on their historical, social and economic context, on the working of the market economy, on current patterns and models of organisation, as well as insights in individual and collective behaviour. Skills acquired include practical enterprise organisation and management skills, including labour and time management, financial record-keeping and reporting, planning, quoting and tendering for work and also vocational skills such as building, welding, tailoring, farming, catering or IT skills, and literacy and numeracy development.

In 1964, after the coup d'état, de Morais went into a 23-year exile in Chile. From there, the OW spread to Costa Rica, Mexico, Panamá, Colombia, El Salvador, Venezuela, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Brazil, the Caribbean and a number of African countries. Sponsoring bodies since the 1960s have ranged from United Nations organisations to local and international development agencies and NGOs, among them [FAO](#),

[ILO](#), [UNDP](#), [terre des hommes](#), [Concern Worldwide](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#) and others. Recently the OW has been sponsored in South Africa by the Soul City Institute and government departments such as the Department of Social Development.

Assessing the overall impact of an OW is difficult. But research evidence suggests tentative, general estimates as follows: 13% of OW participants are estimated to subsequently start an enterprise of one kind or another; 30% subsequently find work. In the case of OWs run on a regional or national basis (as in Brazil, Honduras or Costa Rica) large numbers have been recorded in relation to employment and enterprise outcomes.

The OW is not without its critics – from the political left and from the right. In the context of Latin America, the political right saw peasant organising as a threat to the ‘established order’. The ‘institutional left’ never embraced de Morais’ autonomous job creation and income generation method, and some felt he failed to build into his approach a robust critique of exploitative capitalism. Others have criticised the OW approach for being too ‘rigid and dogmatic’, preferring the Freirean inspired ‘conscientisation and root cause’ approach to de Morais’ emphasis on ‘organisational consciousness’.

In fact Freire and de Morais were close friends and colleagues, having shared a prison cell at one time, and they developed many of their ideas together. They would have seen their different approaches as complementary rather than in competition.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_workshop

Annex B: Marsh Farm Theory of Change – January 2015

<i>What issues trying to address ?</i>	What change do you want to see within the life of the COSAF Programme? (Outcomes)	How do you plan to make that change happen? (Activities)	How will you know whether you are going in the right direction (Indicators)	What information do you already have/ will you already be collecting	What additional information will be needed	How will you gather this? (Evaluation methods)	Timescales
<p><i>Lack of organisational capacity/skills; Community organisation; organisational capacity; group communication</i></p>	<p>Participants will have increased :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication skills as a group - capacity to work as a team - capacity to solve problems together/ resolve conflicts - ability to deliver a contract under process of division of labour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 37 hours BUD course - Process of team building/group organisation/ through the achievements of the different contracts in group : 3 weeks common project / 2 weeks catering project - 15 hours of theory of organisation compulsory lectures 	<p><u>Work</u> : Ability to organize themselves as a group in an efficient way : ability to realize the tasks expected by the contracts / Forms of division of labour + <u>Leadership</u>: emergence of number and quality of the leaders who emerge, Number of general assemblies raised + <u>Problem solving</u>: evidence of skills to work things out together; evidence of knowing what support to ask for + <u>Communication and Relationships</u>: evidence of teamwork/ mutual support/ ability to challenge each other (constructive criticism)/ resolve conflicts</p>	<p>Farming / Catering / Childcare / Memorandum Contracts / Technical plans (list of activities and timescales)</p>	<p>Number of capacitation courses requested by the PE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social dynamics regarding problem solving and conflict resolution - Number of general assemblies raised (potential and unknown) - Estimation of effective tasks realized according to technical plans / Estimation of the quality and efficiency of the work done 	<p>FE : Observations / reports</p> <p>Video</p>	<p>Since the very beginning (catering contract starting week 3) until end of OW</p>

<p><i>OW method: i) The lack of an effective process for building on the capacity and life skills of local people to transform their own communities</i></p>	<p>MFO will have become a skilled Facilitators Enterprise (FE) in the context of preparation of the OW and delivery of the large-scale capacitation exercise of the OW method.</p>	<p>Following the roles and functions as laid out in the OW handbook section FE (Coordination, Capacitation, Theory of Organisation, Logistics, Infrastructure and Transports, Registration, Director) - UK adaptation of theory of organisation slides -Facilitation of the B.U.D course for up to 40 PE - Facilitation of the large-scale capacitation exercise (4 weeks) - Regular interactions with the OW expert assigned to the position of director in the Marsh Farm OW - Critical analysis realized 1 a week during the FE meeting</p>	<p>- MFO will have successfully recruited up to 40 participants, and run the part of the course that comes under the COSAF period (to March 2015) - Unity of methods within all the FE team (Technical plans, Budgets, critical reports..) unity of organisation process acquired during the design phase of the OW January/February - Capacitation courses available found and mentors identified, contacted, and inducted to the OW perspective - Beginning of March, MFO will have a documented Manual concerning the set-up phase of the OW adapted to the UK socio-economic context</p>	<p>Partial Expressions of interests filled by potential participants (33) - OW handbook - All Technical documents (Technical plans concerning the X professional areas, Budgets..) - Previous slides used in other OW countries (South Africa, Holland...) - Partial list of mentors contacted</p>	<p>Critical analysis realised once a week - Feed-back from Ivan, reinforced from 15/02 (his arrival in Luton) , and then specific critical analysis from 02/03 for 4 weeks</p>	<p>Minutes of the weekly meetings, Feed backs from experts</p>	<p>Already on-going + during 4 weeks of large scale exercise once a week - On-going</p>
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<p><i>OW method: ii) The lack of an effective process for building on the capacity and life skills of local people to transform their own communities</i></p>	<p>Opportunities to implement further OWs in the UK will have been identified</p>	<p>Establish contacts to potential organisations interested in supporting the implementation of an OW in their area - Creation of a video clip showing the assets and briefly describing the OW, useful for communication purposes - Seminar recruitment</p>	<p>Number of contacts established</p>	<p>Contacts already established with ... Locality, potential future visits from Community Organisers</p>	<p>Number of proper visits organised in MFO - Number of persons attending the seminar recruitment previous to the first OW</p>	<p>Reports</p>	
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<p>Lack of personal and professional basic skills due to long-term unemployment</p>	<p>50 Participants will have increased :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-confidence - capacity to solve problems - gained in entrepreneurial thinking - personal organisation - confidence in facing the future - critical thinking towards actual economic model - 40 participants with a certificate in health and safety 	<p>Large scale capacitation exercise :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common farming project during 4 weeks Common catering project during 4 weeks (6 persons) - 37 hours of BUD course - 15 hours of theory of organisation lectures - capacitation course health and safety 	<p>Number of participants recruited, participating, and staying the course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels of confidence within the group – whether participants have a positive sense of the potential/ Capacity within the community – a ‘can do’ attitude or not - Self-reported and/or observed and Evidence improvements in confidence and sense of Self-worth - Self-estimation of personal improvements resulting from this experience of being part of the OW / Self-estimation of ability to have more control upon its own life and ability to change its own environment in a better one 	<p>Baseline : Information provided by JCP (social background, unemployment history, criminal records...), MFO knowledge about certain participants, info from recruitment ...</p> <p>Baseline in order to get an initial overview of the “state of mind” of each participants in relation to personal aspects : (eg. expectations, hopes, projects...)</p>	<p>At the start of the OW : memorandum in place : role of daily reporting the on-going of the project the way they want : big board, articles, pictures, video, drawings...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FE observation of emotional reactions of the participants as the OW goes on : resistance, open-minded acceptance, doubts ... - Daily document with level of attendance to the activities / attendance of the compulsory modules (theory of organisation + certain capacitation courses) - number of health and safety documents delivered + other optional capacitation courses given to participants 	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Questionnaire</p> <p>Focus group : once a week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MFO observations notes, and recording / reports / pictures / video (daily) - FE meetings (weekly) - Daily diary kept by 1 or several FE’s - Memorandum realised by the PE (see appendix) 	<p>Before OW starts : Questionnaire and interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During OW : focus group, FE observations/ reports ... / Memorandum
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<p><i>Social exclusion, lack of social links among Marsh Farm residents, lack of community cohesion</i></p>	<p>50 participants - X number considered "vulnerable"(disabilities, mental issues, addictions...) + X volunteers, will have realized a 4 weeks farming project. Inclusive participants teams and enterprises reflecting the diversity of MF and working well together : sense of responsibility, for themselves and each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents across MF will identify positively with the OW and take collective pride in the project - increased cohesion and social links within MF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social club - Fridays in Future's house = X evenings (3?) : barbecue, concerts, games, inviting participants and residents of MF. - 4 weeks activities/ contracts: catering/ farming etc are open to all : every single person in the group has equal position - Encourage solidarity and support through joint activities - According to previous assessment and information gathered via Job Centre, the team will have specific approach knowing the state of the social composition in mind : enforce observations and support to "vulnerable people". + specific support from specialized organisations concerning 'vulnerable' persons : MIND, Disability resource centre et al 	<p>Number of volunteers involved (different positions possible)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of persons attending social club evenings, and 'quality' of these events (enthusiasm, initiatives, feed-backs of satisfaction...) - Residents dealing with long-term unemployment, physical and/or mental disabilities, drug or alcohol addictions will have been recruited to the OW and 70% at least will have completed the program. - Number of participants will have worked together to support and challenge team members' behaviour. - Common integration of values such as community / group working towards common goals 	<p>Information from different employment organisations in relations to each participant (addictions, disabilities, social need background...) + community / local knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific personal needs of participants are to be assessed before the beginning of the OW (learning difficulties, disabilities language barriers...) 	<p>Number of MF residents initially recruited to the OW and number of them having completed the large scale capacitation exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of the evolution of the relationships among the group : equality/ open-mindedness / rejection / conflict / democratic communication / consensus or not ? 	<p>Questionnaire, observations, reports, pictures and video concerning the common activities : farming, catering, and social club</p>
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Annex C: 'Bottom Up Development' – outline of BUD course

MFO developed the BUD course in order to help residents in communities like Marsh Farm come together to tackle poverty and unemployment, and to challenge the sense of powerlessness that so often left people feeling there was nothing they could do to change things.

The course was also a response to MFO's experience of estate regeneration over the years, that had been led by external 'experts' and statutory authorities and, too often, had encouraged community involvement on terms already determined by people in authority rather than by the local community.

MFO have been commissioned to deliver the BUD course to community groups around the country, mostly connected with the Community Organisers Programme. The key themes are:

- local economic analysis
- community asset and resource mapping
- exploring gaps and potential within the community
- power analysis – its uses and abuses
- community organising – the principles and approach
- tools and techniques for community organising.

The course is a week long programme structured around five modules:

Module 1: 'MFopoly' – a game for sustainable change:

Using an adapted Monopoly format, participants gain a deeper understanding of MFO's community economic development vision, including the sort of projects, social enterprises and community initiatives that could bring about significant change.

Module 2: Marsh Farm Urban Safari:

A guided tour of the estate to understand the issues, the potential and the history of resident involvement.....(or another community).

Module 3: Community Resource Mapping:

Fieldwork to map resources, talk to residents and develop a comprehensive picture of the potential, including: buildings/people/environment/financial resources and also a sense of the 'spiritual' resources or values that could shape a new approach to estate renewal.

Module 4: Plugging the Leaks:

Learning how to conduct a local economic survey in order to measure the amount of money flowing into and out of the estate/community – including the 'Leaky Bucket' exercise (*see nef*).

Module 5: Organisation – the key to unlocking community potential:

Understanding the need to develop community-wide organisational capacity and exploring how the Organisation Workshop might help achieve this.

Annex D: Theory of Change reflecting social values analysis

Our theory of change sets out how Marsh Farm Outreach used the Organisational Workshop approach to shift the future prospects of individuals and impact positively on the community as a whole.

	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
AS A FACILITATOR	Participants Enterprise	Individuals come together as a team to plan and organise their work	People with multiple disadvantage fully included	Improved confidence and self-esteem (21)	People have confidence, emotional balance and are resilient in the face of difficulties (Value £14k)
	Facilitator/ Mentor Resource	Mapping resources in the community	Wooden roundhouse constructed	Improved positive functioning (8)	People start to take control of their own lives, have more friends and improve wellbeing (Value £794k)
		Identifying potential community enterprise activities	5 acre site transformed	Regeneration of local area (19)	People have a pride in where they live (Value £123k)
	Shared Learning	Team-working and improved communication	Range of courses delivered	People develop new skills (13)	Improved job prospects (Value 8k)
				People into employment (20)	Improved economic wellbeing (Value 374k)
		Increased partnership working	People engage with mainstream services	People have less chaotic lives and improved wellbeing	Reduced need for long-term care and support services
			Total Social Value:	£1,315,572	

Annex E: Breakdown of MFOW costs and proposed budget

In order to support the MFOW pilot project, in November 2014, OCS provided a one-off grant of £100,000 to Marsh Farm Outreach. This money came from the COSAF budget, a small-scale funding programme, intended to support innovative community projects that had emerged from the national Community Organisers Programme (COP), which ran from 2010-2015. Although MFO's ambitions for an OW pre-dated the COP, OCS was keen to support an initiative that had the potential to help some of the most marginalised unemployed people in the community.

The budget had to be spent or committed by March 2015, and it could not be used for capital items over £500. In order to cover the additional costs, MFO members used income they had earned over the previous year, running the BUD training course, and contributed another £40,000 to the project specifically to cover capital equipment. They also contributed a number of large items including the marquee, the catering van, music equipment and use of a lorry. And they paid themselves at minimum wage levels in order to ensure that the budget could be stretched to cover their input beyond the Workshop itself. Most of the funding came to an end over the summer. MFO were able to be paid through September, but some members had to sign on after that in order to continue to support participants who were involved in enterprise development.

MFOW budget:

Category	Total	Notes
Capital Equipment	12,000	Kitchen 8850, Tractor 1850, Rotovator 1200
Consultancy	4,150	Ivan Labra
IT	1,500	Mobile phone bills, 4 desktop PC's, 2 Laptops, accessories
Rent	3,500	Ivan's accommodation (1180) & room hire at MF Futures
Staff costs (including NI and pensions)	44,900	MFO paid a minimum wage rates
Supplies and services	56,800	
Training	3,650	H&S / Catering mentor / roundhouse mentor / EFAW / H&H
Travel and subsistence	11,000	Ivan flights / taxis / subsistence 2000 + Participant food approx 7000 + Participant travel approx 8000 + mentor & other travel 1000
TOTAL	137,500	

The overall cost of the MFOW does not reflect what an OW is likely to cost if it were to be repeated elsewhere. Nor is it viable for an organisation like MFO in the long run.

Below we set out a hypothetical budget for an OW with around 80 participants. This number is more typical of other OWs. Also a larger PE should allow for a greater diversity of participants in terms of background and skills, without significantly increasing the level of support required.

Revised budget for a typical OW:

This budget is based on a hypothetical ‘field OW’ similar to the sort of project designed by MFO. The capital costs and supplies will inevitably vary depending on the community project itself. The assumptions in terms of revenue are relatively conservative, e.g. we have assumed £6 per day per participants for travel and subsistence. The figures are intended to be indicative only.

Staff costs:		
- 2 x f/t equivalent organisers @ £30k for 12 months:	60,000	
- 6 x f/t equivalent FE members @£24k for 6 months:	72,000	
- Office admin (p/t):	10,000	
- NI @10%:	14,000	
- Sub-total wages:		156,000
Travel and subsistence/food:		
- for FE team + 80 participants:		30,000
Equipment:		
- Capital equipment:	20,000	
- Supplies and materials:	150,000	
- Sub-Total:		170,000
Consultancy etc:		
- OW director/consultancy:	10,000	
- Mentors/expert advisers:	6,000	
- Training providers/courses:	5,000	
- Sub- total:		21,000
Contract-related bonus payments:		
- If based on 10% of hypothetical labour costs paid at minimum wage level (approx.):		25,000
<u>Total budget:</u>		<u>£ 402,000</u>

Value for Money:

Based on the outcomes from the MFOW, the returns on this investment could be expected to be:

Cost per participant:	£5,000
Cost per job outcome @ 45%:	£11,000
Cost per job+enterprise@ 77%:	£6,400

Annex F: Proposed structures for a 3 year Action Research project



