

# LIGHTHOUSE

EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity 1107551

# COMMUNITY LEVELLING UP

ANNUAL

IMPACT REPORT **2024/2025**

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# Trustee's Message

Hello,

My name is Gulhan Karali Balci, and I am a trustee of Lighthouse Educational Society. I would like to share my reflections on the Community Levelling Up in Croydon project, which is generously funded by the Community Fund.

This project has various components, including ESOL courses, digital skills training, literacy and numeracy support, and cookery clubs. The participants are primarily from low-income backgrounds, including asylum seekers, refugees, and other disadvantaged groups. It's truly inspiring to see how much they benefit from the opportunities this project offers, helping them gain skills, build confidence, and connect more deeply with the wider community.

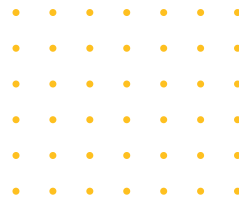
I am particularly involved in the Cookery Club, which creates a warm and welcoming environment where people can come together, get to know one another, and discuss issues related to well-being. These sessions not only support the development of healthy habits and relationships, but also provide concrete routes into society and foster a strong sense of mutual support.

I'm genuinely amazed by the success of this project and deeply appreciate the dedication of my colleagues and the commitment of all participants who give their time to attend the sessions. I also want to extend my sincere thanks to the Community Fund for enabling us to deliver this impactful work and serve the public in such meaningful ways.

Thank you.

*Gulhan Karali Balci*

# Lighthouse Educational Society Empowering individuals through education and community involvement.



## Executive Summary

The second year of the Community Levelling Up Project marked a period of deepened engagement, growing partnerships, and increased demand for community-based educational and wellbeing services. Through Lighthouse Educational Society's ongoing commitment to inclusivity, access, and empowerment, the project continued to meet the evolving needs of Croydon's diverse communities.

With over 600 individuals benefiting from targeted support, the project successfully addressed pressing barriers to education, employability, and community integration. We expanded services, adapted delivery models to meet rising demand, and cultivated stronger relationships with local organisations. From language classes and digital skills to emotional wellbeing and intergenerational social connection, every aspect of our programming worked toward reducing inequality and fostering community resilience.

# Lighthouse at the Community Spotlight Event, Whitgift Centre



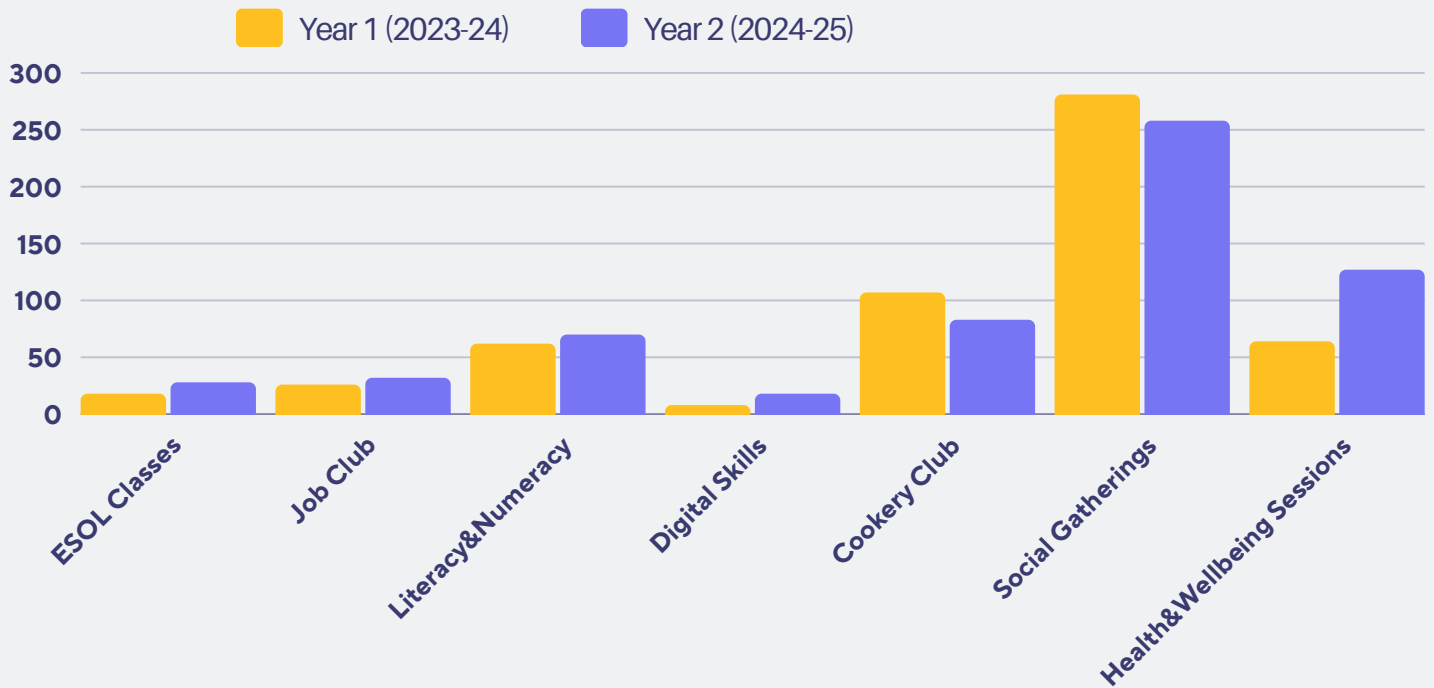
Lighthouse Educational Society was proud to take part in the Community Spotlight Event hosted by Croydon Voluntary Action at the Whitgift Centre. We had the opportunity to connect with local residents, share our project leaflets, and talk about the services we offer.

It was inspiring to engage with so many community members and strengthen our ties in Croydon. We're grateful to have been part of such a positive and inclusive event.



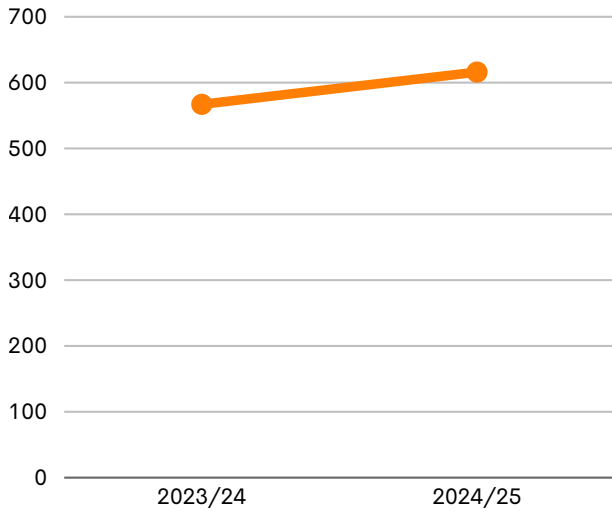


## OVERVIEW OF PROJECT'S SECOND YEAR GROWTH



Activity	Year 1 (2023–24)	Year 2 (2024–25)	Change (%)
ESOL Classes	18 participants	28 participants	55.60%
Job Club / CV Support	26 job seekers	32 job seekers	23.10%
Literacy & Numeracy	62 students	70 students	12.90%
Digital Skills	8 participants	18 participants	125.00%
Cookery Club	107 participants	83 participants	-22.40%
Social Gatherings	281 attendees	258 attendees	-8.20%
Health & Wellbeing	64 participants	127 participants	98.40%

## Overall Project Growth



### Total Reach

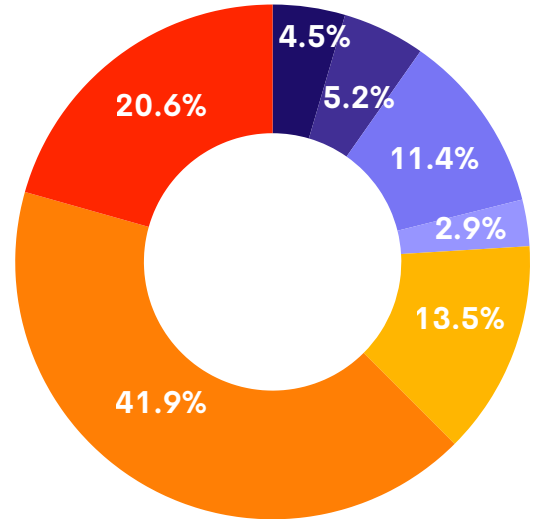
**567**

2023-2024

**616**

2024-2025

## Participation by Programme (Year 2)



- ESOL Classes
- Cookery Club
- Job Club
- Social Gatherings
- Literacy & Numeracy
- Health & Wellbeing
- Digital Skills







Abolanle Ogundiru  
Parent



My daughter has been attending Lighthouse for about a year, and it's made a big difference. Before, she couldn't sit down and study, but now she can focus and has improved a lot — she's even writing now! As a parent, I really appreciate the support. I can't afford private lessons, but here the help is free and the teachers are amazing. The environment is welcoming and feels like a family. There's no discrimination — just one community helping each other. I hope more funds can be raised so this great project continues and supports more families like mine. Thank you so much.

## TESTIMONIES FROM BENEFICIARIES



Ahmed, Age 14, Student

Lighthouse is a very nice place to be. It helps you revise really well and learn new things you haven't covered yet. It's also helped me improve at school – to be honest, my performance has gotten much better since I started coming here.



Hafsa, Age 11, Student

I really enjoy coming here. It's a fun and friendly community where I've made lots of friends. I used to feel anxious asking teachers questions, but here I feel safe and free to ask, which has helped me learn and improve at school. Break times are fun too – we can eat snacks, use our phones, play table tennis, and even chess. I really like this tuition. Thank you!



Husna, Age 8, Student

I like coming here because we do English and Maths lessons, and we get a fun break time where I can play ping pong. Maths is my favourite subject, and being here has helped me get better at school. I'm also learning more in English, like punctuation. My teacher is very nice and even lets us use her stationery. I really enjoy it here!



Sahel, Age 12, Student

I've been attending this tuition for a while, and I really enjoy it. They provide free Maths and English lessons that have helped improve my studies and build my confidence. I also like the break times, especially playing table tennis with the equipment provided. It's a great place, and I think adding more clubs like football and chess would make it even better!





Ersin, Volunteer

**Volunteering at Lighthouse Educational Society has been a truly meaningful experience for me. Seeing children learn, smile and thrive in a nurturing environment means a lot to me. I'd like to thank Lighthouse and Community Fund for allowing me to be a part of something that makes a real difference in the community.**



Yusra, Tutor

**This has been done by the support of our great teachers, classrooms and managers. I've personally had the great privilege of seeing each of my students grow their sense of community and confidence. They engage with each other during games and learning activities, and it's become clearly evident that the Lighthouse Educational Society has been greatly impactful in these children's lives.**



Omar, Community Member

**Given the variety of services on offer, Lighthouse has become a beacon in the Croydon area and has quickly established itself as a pivotal asset and a place where all are welcomed, encouraging the community to thrive. Thank you Lighthouse.**



Jayla, Age 17, Volunteer

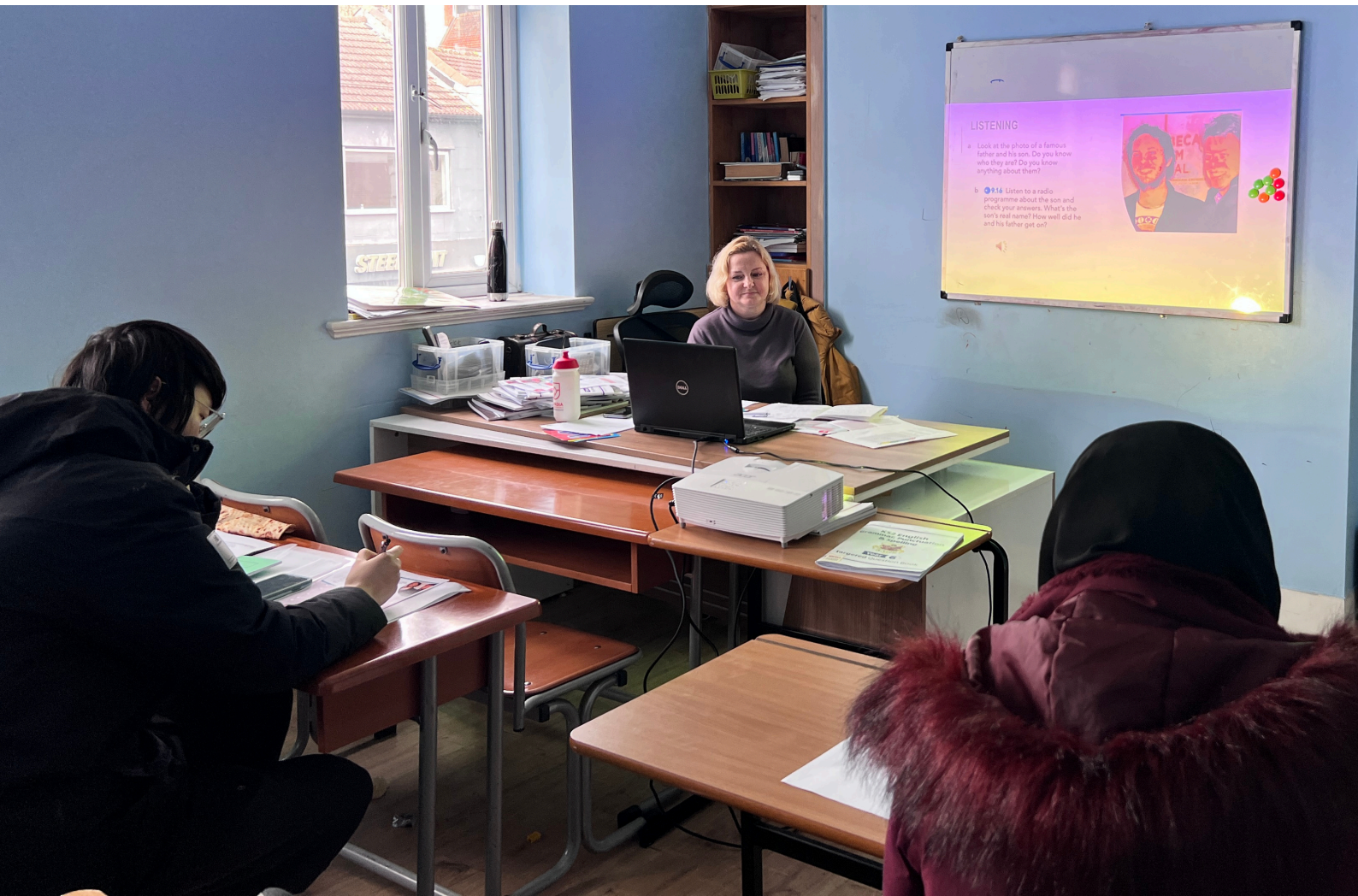
**The kids I teach are really lively, and I've seen a huge improvement in their skills since I first started. The classes are a mix of boys and girls, and we welcome everyone. The students seem genuinely happy to be here, and honestly, I'm really happy to be teaching them. I hope I can keep doing this for a long time.**



Omer, Participant

**I am an asylum seeker, and I've been here for two years. Lighthouse Educational Society helped with almost everything. I feel so lucky that I meet them here in Croydon. They help me most of with finding the jobs, writing CV, and looking around, especially volunteering in different positions, and getting used to the culture here. And it's been a great chance for me, and I think I am grateful. I would like to thank everyone who made this possible. Thank you.**





# IMPACT OVERVIEW: TOTAL REACH AND OUTCOMES OF PROJECT SERVICES

total reach:  
**616**



**28 ESOL Students**  
**64 hours English**

**70 Students**  
**116 hours Tuition (English-Maths)**

**6 Sessions Cookery Club**  
**83 Participants**

**6 Social Gatherings**  
**258 Participants**

**13 Health and Wellbeing Sessions**  
**127 Participants**

**19 Digital Skills Sessions**  
**18 Participants**

**9 Job Club Sessions, 24 one-to-one**  
**32 Participants**



85% of ESOL learners improved their English speaking



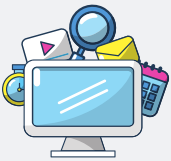
80% of students improved their English and Maths learning.

75% of job seekers improved their CV writing and job search skills.



15% of participants successfully secured employment after support.

\*5 Employment and Supported 12 CVs, 3 Portfolios and 2 Cover letters



70% developed basic level digital skills (email, handling, web browsing, office tools)



90% of participants reported feeling more connected and culturally engaged after cookery sessions. Improvements in healthy cooking skills and nutrition awareness



88% of attendees reported increased social connection and reduced feelings of isolation.

Over 80% said the events helped improve their overall emotional wellbeing.



85% of participants showed improvements in their emotional wellbeing.

80% felt a stronger sense of community and support following workshops.

“

Aysoltan, Teacher

I enjoy working with young children from different backgrounds and witnessing the young kids learning new things makes me happy. And I am really pleased and happy to be part of this project. Thank you.



”

Jabastin, Parent

I'm truly grateful for my son's progress. He enjoys the English and Maths classes and has really improved — even his school teacher noticed and awarded him a merit certificate for his comprehension. Thank you to everyone at Lighthouse Education for making such a big difference in my child's learning.



”

My son has been coming to Lighthouse for about a year and a half now, and I've really seen a difference—especially in his English and Maths. He's doing much better at school, and it's helped with his confidence too. His teacher, Aysoltan, has been great at explaining things in a way he understands. I've also noticed other kids enjoying the sessions and learning a lot. I really appreciate how the team involves both kids and parents in events—it makes a big difference. A big thank you to everyone at Lighthouse and to those supporting this project.

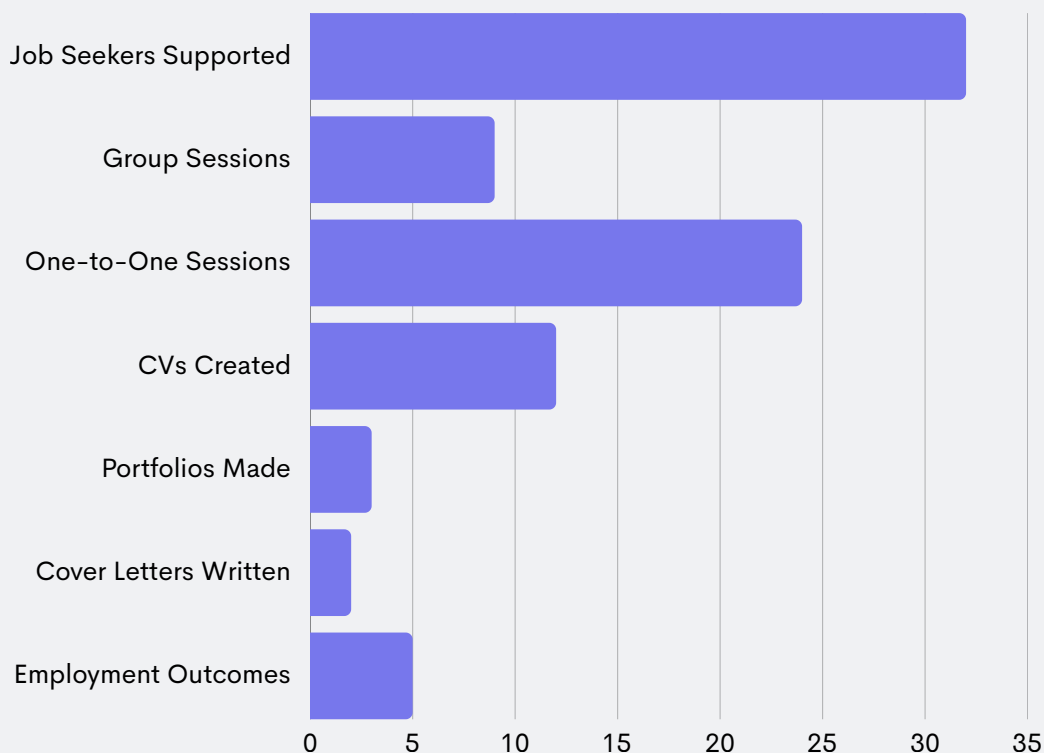
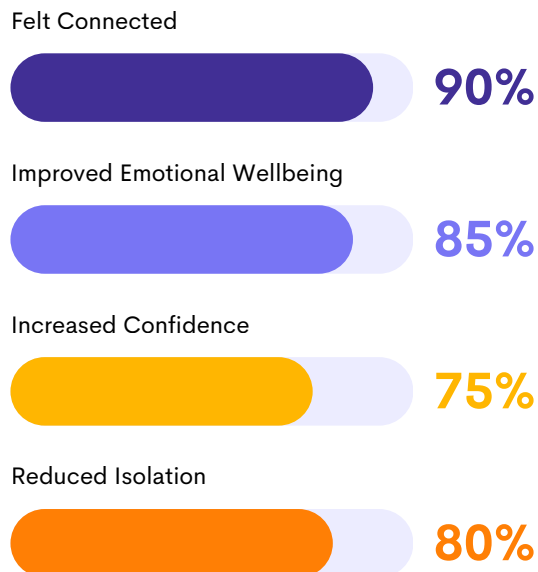


Health and Wellbeing:  
Participation nearly doubled, from 64 in Year 1 to 127 in Year 2—a 98.4% increase.

Qualitative feedback highlighted that 85% of participants felt improvements in emotional wellbeing and 80% felt a stronger sense of community and support.

Popular activities included book reading sessions, embroidery workshops, and coffee mornings, with a strong emphasis on mental wellness and cultural expression.

### Emotional Outcomes for Participants



Job Club: Participant numbers grew from 26 to 32 job seekers, showing a 23.1% increase. Delivered 9 group sessions and 24 one-to-one support sessions. Supported the creation of 12 CVs, 3 portfolios, and 2 cover letters. 5 participants successfully gained employment. Despite mixed emotional evaluations regarding confidence, tangible career development outcomes significantly improved from Year 1.



## Finding Strength Through Community: Poona and Liza's Story



Poona and Liza are two long-time friends and active participants in the Community Levelling Up project, particularly the Cookery Club. For both women—now in their mid-80s—joining the sessions has provided more than just an opportunity to cook. It has become a vital part of their weekly routine and a key pillar of their emotional and physical well-being.

Originally attending a healthy cooking class recommended by doctors, they reconnected at Lighthouse's cookery sessions, which promote nutritious, low-cost cooking while bringing together people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The club offered them something deeper: friendship, routine, learning, and a sense of purpose.

"We always meet together and come to class. We help with the prep, wash our hands, and get involved. It's good for the brain. It keeps us active, and we enjoy it together."

In one session, Poona noticed a fellow participant, Isik, limping and mentioned she might want to check for diabetes. Her intuition proved right—after being encouraged to visit the GP, Isik was diagnosed with diabetes and is now receiving treatment. This simple, caring exchange between participants reflects the deep trust and peer support fostered by the project.

But the cookery club has also been a place of emotional support. Earlier this year, Poona and Liza learned that a close friend, whom they had met through another local project, had passed away suddenly at home. Living alone and with limited family support, this loss shook them both—bringing fears of their own isolation to the surface.

"We were heartbroken. It really hit us—what if something like that happened to us? We were very down. But coming here... the team noticed. They sat with us, comforted us, and made sure we didn't feel alone."

With the support of staff and peers at Lighthouse, they found comfort, care, and community. The sessions became not just about food but healing, reconnection, and resilience.

Now part of a trio—including a friend, Ganga—Poona and Liza continue to participate in sessions, attend health walks, and share updates with others. Their presence helps uplift newer members, creating a welcoming and supportive environment where everyone, regardless of age or background, feels they belong.

"It's not just about cooking. It's about company, well-being, and knowing someone is there."

## Evaluation Framework – Specific Aims

Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Collection Methods	When and By Whom
ESOL participants improve English	55.6% increase in ESOL learners; verbal and written improvement	Pre/post self-assessment, assessments, tutor feedback	Tutors, ongoing
Literacy & Numeracy improved	12.9% increase in students; IXL and CGP engagement	IXL usage, tutor observation	Weekly by tutors
Job seekers build practical tools	12 CVs, 3 portfolios, 2 cover letters created	Session logs, 1:1 feedback	Job Club team, sessional
Participants secure employment	5 participants secured jobs (15.6%)	Employment follow-ups	Job Club lead, monthly
Emotional wellbeing improved	85% reported improved wellbeing	Feedback forms, mood charts	After sessions by staff
Reduced isolation & more connection	80% felt less isolated; 90% more connected	Feedback, questionnaires, observations	Per event by facilitators
Increased digital confidence	125% increase in participation; smartphone/online skills gained	Tutor notes, participant self-assessment	End of sessions by tutors
Low attendance vs high feedback	Equipment limits reduced engagement; positive feedback	Observations, participant comments	Termly by coordinator
Community bonding through events	258 attendees at gatherings; 83 cookery club participants	Sign-ins, feedback forms, quotes	Per session by event leads
Participants emotionally benefited	75% reported increased confidence	Surveys, verbal and written feedback	Post-event discussions

## Evaluation Framework – Objectives & Outputs

Objective	Outputs	Output Indicators
ESOL, Literacy & Numeracy	28 ESOL learners (64 hours English), 70 Literacy students (116 hours English and	CGP book use, IXL logins, assessments, student self-assessments
Job Club Support	32 seekers, 9 sessions, 24 one-to-ones, 5 employment	12 CVs, 3 portfolios, 2 cover letters
Health & Wellbeing	13 sessions, 127 participants	85% wellbeing increase, 90% increased social connection
Cookery & Social Activities	6 cookery sessions (83 participants), 6 gatherings (258 participants)	Attendance logs, feedback quotes, questionnaires
Digital Skills	19 sessions, 18 learners	Self-reported improvement, equipment challenges noted

# Lessons Learned

## **1.Children and Youth Need Dedicated Clubs**

Children and young people have repeatedly expressed their desire for more structured club activities like table tennis, chess, and football. Their enthusiasm taught us the value of youth-focused provision and the importance of play and social learning. We now realise the need for a youth-centred project that solely focuses on activities for this age group. Launching a Youth Club in the future is something we're seriously considering, pending sufficient staffing and budget.

## **2.One-to-One Support Is More Effective for Job Club**

This year showed us that personalised one-to-one support is more effective than group-based Job Club sessions. Participants felt better supported, and follow-up became easier. We plan to prioritise one-to-one sessions going forward.

## **3. Safe and Inclusive Environment Matters**

Feedback consistently mentioned that our services feel inclusive and free of discrimination. Participants valued the friendliness of our environment and the sense of safety they experienced here, reinforcing our commitment to inclusion and cultural sensitivity.

## **4. Collaboration Can Be Unpredictable**

While collaboration is often promoted as essential, our experience showed that even when we're ready and equipped, partnerships may falter due to lack of communication or external delays. We've learned to plan more independently while remaining open to realistic collaborative opportunities.

## **5. Digital Skills Service Needs Full Equipment to Succeed**

Although feedback on our Digital Skills sessions was positive, the format often felt more like a lecture due to limited computer access. Participants lacked the opportunity to practise hands-on, and we now realise that digital learning is ineffective without the proper infrastructure. Unless fully equipped, we will reconsider offering this service in future projects.

## **6. Special Education Needs Should Be Considered**

Some parents have inquired about support for children with special educational needs. While this is outside our current scope, it's clear we must be mindful of this in future staff recruitment and programme design, even if we don't become a specialist provider.

## **7. Gathering Feedback Needs Simpler Tools**

We faced challenges collecting feedback, especially from beneficiaries with asylum or refugee backgrounds. Many were uncomfortable due to language barriers and providing names, completing review forms, or being photographed—even accidentally. This meant we had to be extra cautious and attentive during activities and events, often avoiding image capture altogether. To adapt, we simplified our tools by using tick-box forms and encouraged verbal feedback where appropriate. These steps helped us gather insights while respecting participants' privacy and safeguarding concerns, but made the monitoring process more time-consuming and resource-heavy.

# Key Challenges

## **1. Overwhelming Demand and Waiting Lists**

English and Maths sessions and ESOL Classes remain in high demand, with five students for English and Maths and four students for ESOL currently on a waiting list. Class sizes are too small to meet the volume of interest, and this forces us to prioritise based on need and location.

## **2. Limited Capacity in Facilities**

Our classrooms are regularly at full capacity, meaning we often have to pause new registrations. This restricts growth and puts pressure on our waiting list system.

## **3. Rising Costs of Learning Materials**

Resources such as CGP books have become increasingly expensive due to inflation. This makes it harder to sustain quality learning materials across all students.

## **4. Teacher Recruitment and Cost Pressures**

Inflation and rising living costs have made it difficult to find and retain qualified tutors—especially for ESOL and senior students (Years 6–11). Two-hour sessions are often unattractive to teachers. This year, we managed by recruiting a young tutor, but we understand that we must increase our hourly rates in the future to ensure sustainability.

## **5. Cookery Club Staffing Is Unsustainable**

Hiring a chef for the Cookery Club has proven very difficult. Our offered rate does not reflect true market costs. Volunteer-based cooking has helped but is not sustainable. We responded by reducing the number of sessions and increasing the chef's hourly rate.

## **6. Unexpected Community Pressures**

Due to our location (near the Home Office and with access to a prayer room), many asylum seekers have visited our site seeking emergency support, accommodation, or even a place to hide temporarily. These encounters, while understandable, have placed emotional and logistical pressure on our team. We do not have an emergency or safeguarding budget for such situations. Our staff have had to respond sensitively while maintaining clear boundaries. We've managed these situations by signposting to relevant services and offering inclusion in our existing support sessions like ESOL, Cookery Club, and Health and Wellbeing.

## **7. Demand for Broader Tuition**

Parents have asked for more tuition hours and broader subject coverage, including science and chemistry. This exceeds our current capacity but flags a clear need for academic programme expansion.

## **8. Lack of Resources for Support Needs (e.g. transport or food vouchers)**

Some low-income participants and asylum seekers have asked about help with travel or meals. We currently don't have the funds for this type of assistance, but we plan to explore partnerships or external funding sources to meet these essential needs.

## **9. Difficulty Finding External Evaluators**

As we approach the final year of the project, we are seeking an external evaluator. However, our budget has not matched the market rate, and we're struggling to secure someone with the right qualifications.

# Future Focus

## **1. Launch of a Youth Club**

We're exploring the feasibility of launching a Youth Club to address rising demand for structured play and youth engagement. This will depend on future funding and staff availability.

## **2. Expand Tuition Subjects and Hours**

We aim to include science-based lessons like chemistry, and possibly increase the number of hours offered for core subjects. This will require hiring more staff and securing more space.

## **3. Renting Space for Yoga Sessions**

After receiving repeated requests for yoga, and being unable to deliver due to space constraints, we plan to rent an external venue in Year 3 to offer these sessions.

## **4. Brigstock Community Hub Delivery**

We have finalised our agreement to run Health and Wellbeing sessions at Brigstock Community Hub in Thornton Heath, bringing services closer to more local residents.

## **5. Home Office Collaboration for Job Club**

We are in talks with a community engagement lead at the Home Office to run a session about "How to Get a Job in Civil Service" as part of the Job Club workshops in Year 3.

## **6. Secure Long-Term Funding**

We are actively pursuing grants and other funding sources to support the long-term sustainability and expansion of this project.

## **7. Stronger Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy**

Given the feedback difficulties faced in Year 2, we plan to build a clearer evaluation framework for Year 3 that includes better incentives for feedback and possibly staff-led data collection.

## **8. Inclusive Hiring and Training**

In light of feedback from parents regarding special education needs, future recruitment will take inclusion more seriously, ensuring we have diverse skillsets on our team.

## Conclusion

The second year of the CLU project showed clear gains in both quality and scale. Despite some reductions in attendance for a few activities due to external constraints, Lighthouse Educational Society has strengthened its infrastructure and community presence. As we look ahead to Year 3, the focus will be on sustainability, inclusivity, and responding to community feedback to shape services that matter most.





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