



Link to Learn

End of Project Evaluation



OVERVIEW

Link to Learn was a home learning support project launched in January 2021 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and impact on education, to support families from sanctuary seeking backgrounds with their children's learning. With the announcement of the prolonged school closures at the beginning of January, the value-added of Link to Learn and its potential to support families in need became particularly pronounced.

Link to Learn was made possible owing to the generous funding of the Barrow Cadbury Trust, enabling City of Sanctuary UK to fund a dedicated part-time member of staff to develop and coordinate the project. Ultimately, Link to Learn included two components: Homework Club and the Storybook Sessions.

Homework Club consisted of weekly one-hour virtual sessions which ran on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between January and March. In Homework Club, families received individualised support from a matched tutor in different breakout rooms. Prior to their first session, tutors received basic training on tutoring online and were given information on Homework Club's child protection and safeguarding policies.

The Storybook Sessions were developed in partnership with Pilot Theatre and aimed to be an English language learning resource that was free and easily accessible to New to English families. The Sessions included an engaging pre-recorded storytelling from an actor from Pilot Theatre which was embedded between videos that first provided language scaffolding to enable families to access the story and then activities to extend and personalise the language content.

BACKGROUND TO THIS EVALUATION

This evaluation has been conducted to be able to share information on the project with interested stakeholders: donors, City of Sanctuary staff, volunteers and families who participated in the project. It has also been used to form the basis for recommendations should the project be renewed in the future.

Data has been collected from project records of registered tutors, families and viewers of Storybook Sessions. This has been supplemented with the responses to surveys given to tutors (N=34) and families (N=26). Whilst all surveys were only available in English, efforts were made to keep questions as simple as possible and information detailing the purpose of the survey and the use of feedback was also translated into the three languages considered the priority for families with low levels of English.



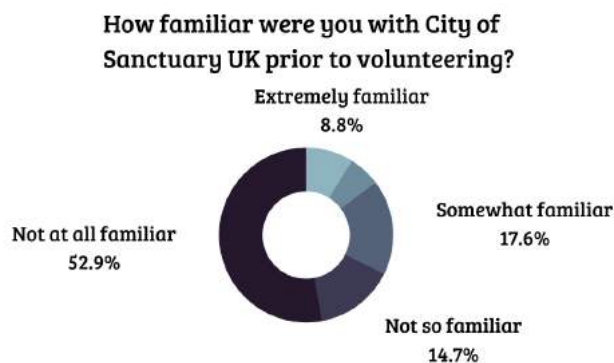
Link to Learn

End of Project Evaluation



FEEDBACK FROM TUTORS FAMILIARITY WITH CITY OF SANCTUARY UK

Most tutors reported being "not at all familiar" with City of Sanctuary UK prior to their volunteering (N=18) with only three saying they were 'extremely familiar' and two "very familiar".



MOTIVATION FOR VOLUNTEERING

Many tutors outlined prior experience working with people from sanctuary-seeking backgrounds and/or children and explained they wanted to continue this during lockdown:

"I am a retired ESOL tutor and miss the ESOL side of my life."

"[I wanted] to use my 30 years of teaching experience to support families who may be finding school closures particularly difficult. Also I just love teaching!"

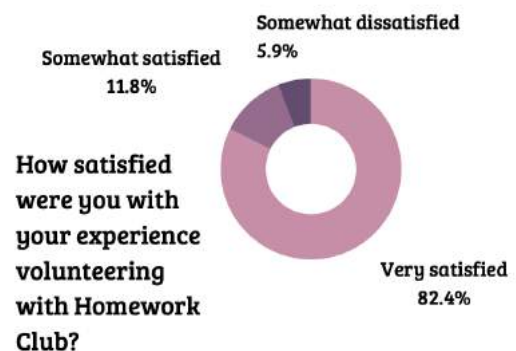
Others mentioned their realisation of the inequality and disadvantage facing students from sanctuary-seeking backgrounds and this being the motivation for their involvement.

"As a private tutor, I don't like to see myself as only for the privileged ones and I am happy to offer my help to those, who also need it but wouldn't be able to afford it otherwise."

"I kept ... reading articles about the disparity in education that children were getting during this pandemic. These articles were mainly focussing on children who had been born in England let alone children whose first language was not English."

SATISFACTION WITH VOLUNTEERING

Most tutors found volunteering as a tutor with Homework Club very satisfying (N=28), with four reporting being 'somewhat satisfied' and two 'somewhat dissatisfied'.



Some tutors outlined how enriching the experience was:

"I initially assumed this programme would be fun or entertaining as a hobby for an hour a week. Little did I know at the time, this would be a truly memorable experience."

"My experience has been overall positive, a smooth experience and it runs so smoothly. When there are hiccups they are easily solved."

Whilst others mentioned that they experience has made them realise the extend of the challenges some students face and therefore the value of the project:

"The HW club has generally been really positive although it raises wider concerns for me about the lack of support many children seem to have from their schools at the moment."

"I think this is a really great initiative ... but I do however see this is a systemic issue which needs huge investment and scaling up and out to have the most impact."

Some reasons for dissatisfaction were technical issues (including a lack of confidence using Zoom) and the irregular attendance of some families. Another common issue was that families often did not know what the homework was from schools and so tutors were required to develop their own material, which was particularly challenging for people with less teaching experience:

"I am not a teacher and have no experience of tutoring; I had to find ideas myself (supported by [the coordinator]) of what topics to cover - my kids had no homework and limited English."



Link to Learn

End of Project Evaluation



HOMEWORK CLUB: SUMMARY

Overall, both families and tutors felt that Homework Club was very valuable and enjoyable. Whilst families spoke overwhelmingly positively about their tutors and how beneficial they felt the sessions were for their children, tutors outlined how the experience volunteering with Homework Club was rewarding. Whilst all but one family that responded are keen for Homework Club to continue, the majority of tutors would be interested in volunteering as a tutor again.

FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

VALUE

As shown in the graph below and to the right, families were largely 'very happy' with their children attending Homework Club (92.31%, N=23) with only two respondents (7.69%) stating they were 'quite happy'. No respondents said that were "not so happy" or "not at all happy".

Families explained that during lockdown Homework Club was very helpful given language barriers hindering their children's understanding of the tasks and the parents' ability to support them:

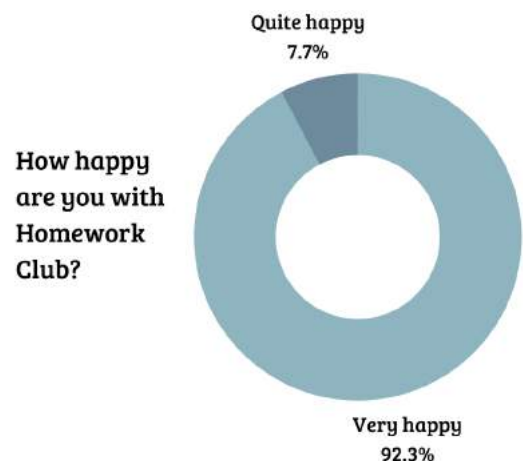
"As a french speaker it was very difficult for me helping my daughter for her homework but true your support it was easy for me."

"It was very helpful for my kids, because my children don't speak English properly so [the tutor] helped them a lot."

Families also explained that the support tutors offered helped give their children confidence in completing home learning activities:

"I am really happy to find the homework club my friend introduced me and I can't thank her enough because during the lockdown my daughter struggled with her homework and since we started the homework club she has been more confident doing her homework."

"Homework club has helped my daughters not struggle with their homework."



HOMEWORK CLUB IN NUMBERS....

20

Homework Club
Sessions

250+

Hours of Tutoring

41

Volunteer tutors

42

Families

78

Students



Link to Learn

End of Project Evaluation



SATISFACTION WITH TUTORS

Families were mostly really happy with their tutors and felt that the support they offered was helpful to their children. 25 respondents stated they were 'very happy' with their tutor and that the tutor was 'very good' at helping their children learn. One respondent said they were 'quite happy' with their tutor and one respondent also said their tutor was 'quite good' at helping their children learn.

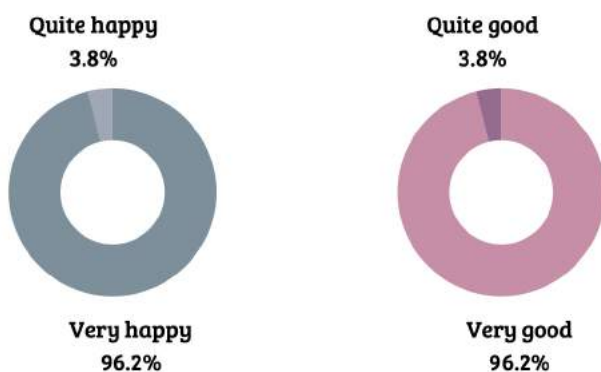
Many families reported that their tutors were kind and friendly and that their children liked them:

"The teacher is very kind and helpful."

"She was very patient with my daughter."

"My daughter, she look forward to Tuesday to see [her teacher]."

How happy are your child/children's tutor? **How good is your tutor at helping your child/children learn?**



Several families also commented that their tutors tutoring-styles were effective and engaging:

"My kids teacher... is very amazing and my kids really love the way she taught them very well, they really understand her teaching."

"It makes my son understand the lesson and also presents it in an interesting way that generates agratitude in my son."

"The teacher was really, great - student focused, simple communication and effective teaching method."

THE RUNNING OF HOMEWORK CLUB

All respondents (N=26) felt that Homework Club was well-organised and communication between the Homework Club coordinator and families was clear:

"There is very good communication and preparation of classes, as well as excellent punctuality at the beginning of classes."

"Every week the day before the homework club [the coordinator] always reminds me to send her the homework my daughter needs help with."

Whilst most families felt that one hour was a sufficient length for Homework Club, those with more than one child and particularly those with two felt it could be longer or extended over two days:

"1 hour is prefect for us to cover all the help my daughter needs."

"I hope to be one hour for each child because 30 minutes not enough."

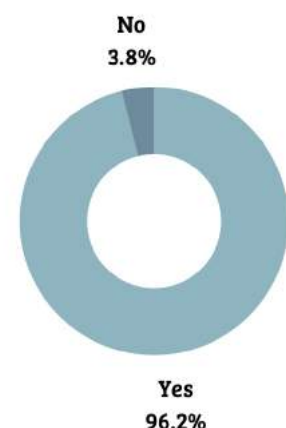
HOMEWORK CLUB IN THE FUTURE

Most families felt that Homework Club would be helpful in the future and they would continue to attend (Yes N=25, No N=1, Maybe N=0)..

"Me and my daughter are very sad that the homework club is going to finish and we would like thank you for the all help you providing for us."

"Thank you for taking my son into account, I know that what he has learned is serving him a lot. It would be great if this project continues."

Do you want to continue to attend Homework Club in the future?





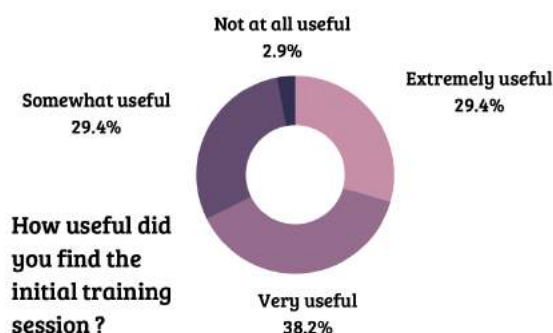
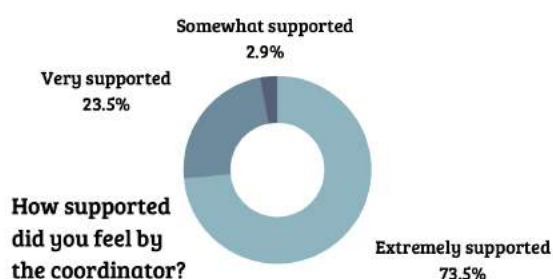
Link to Learn

End of Project Evaluation



RUNNING OF HOMEWORK CLUB

'Overall, most tutors felt 'extremely supported' by the coordinator (N=25) with some feeling 'very supported' (N=8) and one person somewhat supported. Many tutors also felt that the initial training session was useful.



Generally, people gave positive feedback about the support and communication given by the coordinator:

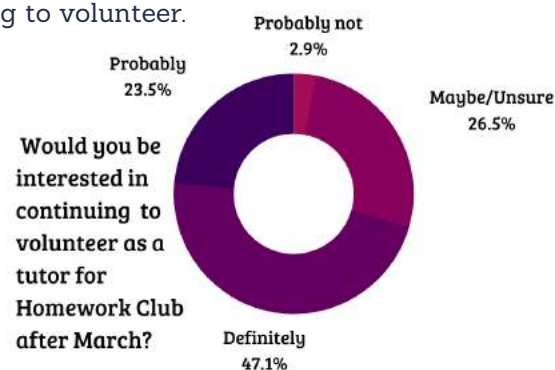
"I have quite a lot of experience in volunteering, especially with refugees, and this has been my best experience in terms of the amount of support given and the training at the start."

"I think that the pilot was very well organised. The coordinators reply quickly and are very willing to help out which is quite a feat given we are not able to meet in person at the moment."

To improve the project, respondents suggested having more information about their student prior to the first session and being able to connect with their student's teacher to ensure the work being done in Homework Club aligned with the work of the school and was of most benefit to the student.

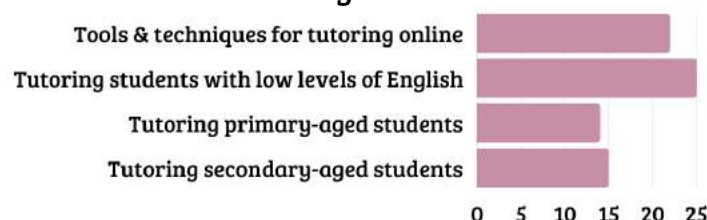
VOLUNTEERING IN THE FUTURE

Many tutors expressed their interest in continuing to volunteer as a Homework Club tutor in the future, with 47.1% (N=17) stated they 'definitely' would, and 23.5% (N=8) said they 'probably' would. Whilst one person said they would 'probably not', 26.47% (N=9) said they were 'unsure' with many citing the planned easing of restrictions and return to normal work/study/life routines as stopping them from continuing to volunteer.



If Homework Club were extended, there is significant interest in attending training sessions if available, with 70.5% (N=24) of respondents stating that they would be interested in training sessions and only 5.88% (N=2) saying they wouldn't be interested. 8 respondents (23.53%) said they were unsure whether they would be interested in attending.

Please select all training sessions you would be interested in attending.



Training related to tutoring students with low levels of English was most popular with many people also interested in learning about different tools for tutoring online. Outside of the given option, one person also requested training on tutoring people with special educational needs.



Link to Learn

End of Project Evaluation



FEEDBACK FROM THE COORDINATOR

TIME DEMANDS

The short project timeframe meant that the initial recruitment of tutors and launch of Homework Club overlapped, surpassing the 16 hours a week set aside for coordination of the project. Following the launch of Homework Club, as the intermediary between tutors and families, a lot of time was spent individually communicating with all involved to check that everyone was able to attend each week, homework was sent prior to the session, and that tutors were comfortable supporting families with the materials sent. With time, this became more manageable as families and tutors settled into a routine, suggesting a long-term project would be less resource intensive.

COMMUNICATION

Being able to speak French, Arabic and some Spanish was invaluable given that many families were new to English. We were subsequently able to translate key documents into the most common languages of families which will prove very helpful if the project is run again in future.

In terms of means of communication, WhatsApp was found to be most commonly used by families, and the regular contact and familiarity between families and the coordinator meant that some families often turned to the coordinator for support with non-Homework Club related issues. Usually this then involved signposting to relevant service providers or sources of information and/or translating documents families had received.

THE STORYBOOK SESSIONS

For the Storybook Sessions, City of Sanctuary UK collaborated with Pilot Theatre to combine engaging storytelling with effective language scaffolding to facilitate families who are 'New to English' ongoing learning of English during the UK lockdown.

Through their involvement, Pilot Theatre recruited and paid six freelance actors with which they have worked previously, who - like many others in the art sector - have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. They also ensured the storytelling was fully subtitled and shared alongside images from the original book to offer visual clues to the narration.

The language scaffolding components were developed by City of Sanctuary UK and aimed to ensure the storytelling was accessible to families who are 'New to English' and facilitate English language acquisition.

Whilst the stories selected were aimed at young children and selected for their being representative and conveying positive messages, parents also enjoyed the videos and found them useful;

"Thanks a lot for the story I like it. It's very interesting, especially for me... I learnt a new vocabulary."

"Me and my kids really like the stories. They help their English."

STORYBOOK SESSIONS IN NUMBERS....



6

Videos

2

Partners

35

Registered
Viewers

160

Viewings of videos



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End of Project Evaluation



We asked our tutors and students:
**WHAT DOES HOMEWORK CLUB
MEAN TO YOU?**





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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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