

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre's



PROGRAM EVALUATION

December 2020



LEARNING QUEST
STRONGER THROUGH CHANGE

Evaluation research partner

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Acknowledgements

I am thrilled that our Newtopian Outreach Project has been able to expand into the Sydney CBD, and I particularly want to acknowledge the grant funding from the City of Sydney which made this possible. We could never be sure if the project would work in the CBD context, or if the volunteers would be out there, wanting to connect with people sleeping rough, and we were overwhelmed by the interest and commitment shown by the 40 volunteers who were recruited and trained in 2020. I was also incredibly impressed by the way they stayed connected to NNC and to the project despite all the delays, uncertainty and health risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to acknowledge the excellent work of the Project Co-ordinator, Carlos Robles, who was key to keeping the project alive through 2020, and who ensured the volunteers knew what was happening and felt well supported throughout the training and the outreach when it was eventually able to start. I also want to thank Elaine Macnish, NNC's Manager of Community Strengthening Programs, who played a key role in the delivery of the training for the CBD Newtopian Outreachers, and Dougie Wells who made a great contribution as an outreach facilitator bringing many years of experience in the homelessness sector to this role.

I wish to thank all the members of the Newtopian Outreach Advisory Board, in particular Jon Swain from City of Sydney, the staff from Neami - Fiona Murray, Shannon Huber and Gemma Cameron, Eddie Doherty from SGCH, Robert Samway from Westpac and Sarah Benson from PwC. Their guidance and input was invaluable for the project.

Finally, a huge thanks to Connie Henson, CEO of Learning Quest, who for the second time has undertaken this evaluation of the volunteers' experience on a pro bono basis. We so value this contribution to the project, and I am sure you will enjoy reading the fantastic insights Connie's work provides in this report.

Liz Yeo
CEO Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

Introduction

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) is an organisation that is innovative: constantly experimenting, adapting and discovering new ways to best utilise community resources to address complex challenges. Building on the original Newtopian Outreach project, this CBD-based program represents another iteration of a unique volunteer-based model for community engagement.

NNC's strengths-based approach underpins this program. This evaluation documents how the program leverages community volunteers, an often 'untapped community resource', to provide a unique service for people experiencing homelessness while simultaneously building community connection. Moreover, this program has demonstrated the power of collaborative partnerships to affect change more broadly.

I would like to thank NNC for inviting Learning Quest to be part of this innovative program. From a personal perspective, I thoroughly enjoyed working closely with the NNC team (staff and volunteers). I would specifically like to acknowledge and thank Carlos Robles for his contributions to this report which includes providing background information, writing several appendices and providing feedback.

It is an honour and delight to have been involved.

Connie D. Henson, PhD
CEO Learning Quest

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to examine the impact of the Newtopian Outreacher - Sydney program on:

- the volunteers (Outreachers) in relation to learning and growth, community connection and volunteering,
- the conditions that lead to learning and growth for Outreachers.

The report also explores the conditions that contributed to the successful partnership between private citizens and commercial, government and not-for-profit organisations involved in delivering this program.

This report forms part of the overall program evaluation. It is not a complete program evaluation and contains only minimal data or analysis related to the impact on rough sleepers and other community stakeholders which is documented separately.

Executive Summary

Building on the success of the Newtopian Outreacher program launched in 2018, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) implemented the Newtopian Outreachers – Sydney in 2020. This program is based on the original Newtopian Outreacher volunteer model, but was customised to address the unique challenges and leverage the resources available within Sydney CBD.

The program aimed to build upon a model of volunteering that would harness goodwill and increase Sydney's capacity to more effectively assist people experiencing homelessness. The project involved recruiting, training, supervising and supporting a network of volunteers, "Newtopian Outreachers", in the City of Sydney LGA, to meaningfully engage with rough sleepers and assist them in connecting with housing related services within the city.

Key Findings

Volunteers

Volunteers were called Newtopian Outreachers. The Outreachers gained knowledge about homelessness, experienced personal insights and increased their empathy which resulted in increased confidence and competence to apply their new learning by engaging with people sleeping rough. This prosocial behaviour also coincided with a reduction in avoidance behaviours such as averted eye contact.

Outreacher quotes

"The program has equipped me with the knowledge and understanding to be confident in interacting with someone who appears to be homeless or sleeping rough."

"I now know how hard it is to access services and how negative their experience have been – that was an eyeopener."

Outreacher Response	Skills in relations to homelessness			Behaviour When encountering a person experiencing homelessness		Emotion When encountering a person experiencing homelessness			Community	
	Knowledge	Confidence	Advocacy	Proactive	Avoidance	Sadness	Guilt	Helplessness	Importance	Engagement
91% - 100%				POST						
81% - 90%										
71% - 80%									POST	PRE
61% - 70%				PRE						
51% - 60%	POST	POST	POST			PRE				
41/5 - 50%										
31% - 40%						POST		PRE		POST
21% - 30%			PRE		PRE		PRE			PRE
11% - 20%	PRE	PRE						POST		
0% - 10%					POST		POST			
% rated a great deal or a lot										

The table above summarises key findings from the quantitative Online Surveys in relation to the volunteers' skills, behaviours, emotions and community connection pre/post project. The "blue" represents pre-project and "purple" represents the post-program results.

In addition to shifts in their competence to interact and provide information to people who were homeless, Outreachers described themselves as having more willingness and confidence to advocate for an 'inclusive and just community'.

"I want my friends to see rough sleepers differently – talking to friends about it – they are curious and they ask what people talk about, or how they act.."

Upon completion of the program Outreachers described a reduction in 'unpleasant' emotions such as sadness, guilt and helplessness when interacting with rough sleepers. Likewise, volunteers perceived more 'pleasant' emotions such as empowerment and a sense of contribution at the conclusion of the program.

"I feel confident and committed to interacting with them, should they wish to. I feel I have the competency to make a real connection with them and make them feel acknowledged."

"I feel compassion but also a greater sense of understanding than I had prior to the Outreach training."

The Outreachers growth and development was analysed through the lens of Safety and the three conditions that research has shown to contribute to learning, development and adaptation/innovation (Control, Connection and Contribution). The Outreachers credited their growth and learning to a combination of program elements which embodied these conditions, such as formal training, trusting relationships with NNC staff and the structure/safety of the protocols provided by the team.

Control

"They know their stuff, but more than that – they made it the kind of thing you wanted to be involved in and attracted – because it was run so well."

"In the corporate world you get egos, lots of noise and people talking for the sake of talking, taking themselves up. There was none of that here. It relies on the audience to some degree, but I would still say this was the best run training event I have been to for a long time."

"I was blown away by the professionalism of the program and the education Very well organised and well delivered. Particularly impressed in light of COVID."

Connection

"Not to be too philosophical but I realised 'We are each other's responsibility'"

"It is positive when you see so many people helping out. Especially this year it is easy to be negative about how bad things are."

Contribution

"I felt I held beliefs that I could not act on - This provided the opportunity to participate in aspects of social justice- It was a huge thing to be involved with social justice."

"I joined to understand and to avoid skipping those people I see at the station, but to be comfortable to have a chat and ask how they are doing."

Even before participating in the program most Outreachers rated community as important and they valued the opportunity to strengthen their connection to the community.

"I don't do it for the status and recognition but for the connection. "

"In the past when going through extremely difficult times it was the random acts of kindness by strangers and community members that got me by. I have never forgotten those people. "

The Outreachers, Advisory group members and the NNC team all described positive impacts of the program. The Outreachers were more aware of the impact the program had on themselves, while the Advisory group and the NNC team were cognisant of the multiple layers of impact including the rough sleepers, the volunteers, the partner organisations and the broader community. The Team and Advisory group emphasised the potential for a ripple effect as Outreachers became advocates and influenced their networks.

"I knew barely anything about homelessness prior to commencing the program. I now feel I know more, I have a solid launching point to pursue further interactions with homeless people and educate my family/friends."

"I want the program to build a sense of community. I don't know where they (the volunteers) might have those conversations – could be high level business meetings – when someone asks what could our business do?"

"When lots of people are asking the same questions in different ways – you can get a lot done."

The Outreachers were enthusiastic volunteers, most having significant volunteer experience and all indicating a desire to volunteer in the future.

Impressions and Recommendations

The Newtownian Outreacher - Sydney program achieved its stated aim which was for "community members to feel more equipped to respond constructively to people who are rough sleeping rather than reactively. And, that volunteers will feel more inclined to advocate in an informed way for more social and affordable housing". The two specific primary project outcomes were also achieved.

1. Diverse community members gain knowledge, confidence and skills in relation to homelessness.
2. Increase in number of people feeling a strong sense of social wellbeing and community connection across Sydney LGA.

In addition to documenting the achievement of stated goals, the data from this evaluation highlights the potential for the program to achieve an even broader community impact.

One theme that stood out in the data was the Outreachers strong desire to contribute to their community. Many expressed discomfort or hesitancy to act before the program, brought on by a conflict between 'wanting to assist' but 'not knowing how'. The Outreachers perceived participation in the program as having given them the skills and confidence to 'put their values into action'. Potentially, this basic human need to 'make a valuable contribution' could be further leveraged in this program.

The data from this evaluation suggests that the program has the potential for 'ripple effects' concerning advocacy, thus expanding the community impact beyond the current volunteers.

A number of the Outreachers indicated they heard about the program from people who had previously volunteered with the Newtown Newtopian program, suggesting the previous volunteers had become influencers within their networks. By the end of this program, current Outreachers described actively sharing their newly acquired knowledge and insights related to homelessness with friends and family. Nearly all Outreachers indicated they had shared at least some of their knowledge with others, and a few had become strong advocates. Many expressed a wish to educate the broader community about the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness. Moreover, understanding the complexity and inadequacy of the current housing system inspired some Outreachers to want to advocate formally and informally for reform.

Some Outreachers described attempts to share their learnings more broadly but expressed the desire to be better equipped to effectively refute misperceptions and misinformation as they encountered it in both live interactions and through social media. These findings shed light on the potential for program enhancement. The addition of an interactive training module on 'Advocacy', perhaps towards the end of the program, could provide Outreachers with the information and skills to shift from having a *desire to advocate* and casual advocacy to becoming proactive advocates for eradicating homelessness.

This program enhancement would leverage the power of peer-educators and well informed influencers to provide accurate information and integrate rational arguments into the day-to-day conversations and social media streams of their networks. Homelessness is an issue that is not often discussed in most social circles and when it is, it is rarely informed with fact based data. The diversity of the Outreachers provides an excellent avenue for influence in the broader community.

Methods & Findings

Methods

Survey data was collected from the volunteers (n=41 pre-program, n=27 post-program). Post-program interviews were conducted with volunteers (n=20) and key NNC staff (n=2) and advisory board members (n=3), trainer (n=1).

Surveys

The volunteers completed an online 69 question survey prior to and online 52 question survey upon completion of the project. This provided quantitative and qualitative data. Unless otherwise noted, the quantitative questions were rated on a 5-point scale:

- a great deal,
- a lot,
- a moderate amount,
- a little or
- none at all.

To simplify reporting, the above categories were collapsed combining 'a great deal' and 'a lot' and 'a little and none at all' for most analyses.

Interviews

The volunteers, NNC staff and advisory board members completed semi-structured interviews at the end of the program. These interviews also provided an opportunity to record unanticipated insights and experiences that were not otherwise captured in the structured component of the evaluation. A thematic analysis of this qualitative data has been integrated into this report.

Key Findings

This program had a positive and significant impact on the Outreachers. Rough sleepers were provided a new unique service, and partnerships between commercial, government and not-for-profit organisations were formed and strengthened.

Outreachers

Learning and personal development was significant for the Outreachers. They gained increased knowledge about homelessness and developed a deeper understanding of rough sleepers who often go unnoticed by the broader community. The Outreachers reported changes in their confidence and willingness to pro-actively engage with rough sleepers as well as developing insights about the 'lived experience' of sleeping rough through participation in the program.

Outreachers described shifts in their emotional responding with decreases in unpleasant emotions such as feelings of sadness, helplessness and guilt. They reported feeling empowered to enact their values in the community by engaging with rough sleepers.

The Outreachers credited the NNC team with providing excellent training and facilitated outreaches which enabled their learning and development. Despite the program being disrupted by COVID and the plethora of uncertainties that came with those changes, the Outreachers felt physically and psychologically safe throughout the program.

In keeping with the current research on learning and high performance, the Outreachers felt a sense of control, including a good balance between novelty and predictability which contributed to their ability to learn new information and apply it. The professionalism and authenticity of the staff were cited as fundamental to this outcome. Likewise, the NNC team was seen as trustworthy and supportive which contributed to the Outreachers feeling connected. The NNC team's approach provided a role model for how to engage with rough sleepers.

The opportunity to contribute to their community was highlighted by the Outreachers as one of the most important benefits of participation. This finding is consistent with recent research that demonstrates many physical and psychological benefits for people when they have the chance to make a valuable and valued contribution.

Community was described as very important by the Outreachers, and they derived meaning from learning ways to contribute to the community. They also felt better able to advocate for an 'inclusive and just community' as a result of having participated in the program.

In addition to more frequent engagement with rough sleepers in their day-to-day lives, the Outreachers indicated a desire and intention to volunteer in the future. Some had already begun working in new volunteer roles within the NNC, and most expressed a desire to continue with formal outreaches if the option was available.

The only real critique of the experience was that because of COVID, the compressed schedule meant there were less frequent outreaches and there was less opportunity to engage with rough sleepers during the outreaches. The Outreachers understood why the circumstances changed and were grateful that the program happened at all during a pandemic. Some Outreachers suggested that ultimately the inconvenience likely served to further enhance their motivation to volunteer in the future.

Advisory Group

The Advisory group described their experience with the program in very positive terms. They appreciated the collaborative approach from NNC and recognised the value of this new service for the CBD. The group assessed the formal training and the facilitated outreaches as valuable and as having created a learning environment for the volunteers. Moreover, they perceived the possibility for ripple effects on the sector, as the Outreachers incorporate what they have experienced into their businesses.

NNC Team

The NNC team were in the position to see the impact of the program on the Outreachers and the rough sleepers. They reported changes in the Outreachers confidence and competency to engage responsibly and sensitively with rough sleepers. Similar to the Advisory group, they saw the added value that non-professional Outreachers can provide for rough sleepers and the potential for broader community impact.

Background

Following the successful implementation of a pilot in 2017 and subsequent roll out of the Newtopian Outreachers program in 2018 and 2019, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre sought to replicate and expand the model in Sydney's CBD. A detailed description of the program is included in project updates completed by Carlos Robles in August 2020 and December 2020 and are contained as Appendices of this report.

In brief, the Newtopian Outreachers – Sydney program aimed to harness goodwill and increase Sydney's capacity to more effectively assist people experiencing homelessness. The project involved recruiting, training, supervising and supporting a network of volunteer "Newtopian Outreachers" in the City of Sydney, to meaningfully engage with rough sleepers and assist them in connecting with housing related services.

Similar to NNC's original *Community Homelessness Outreach Project*, the purpose of Newtopian Outreachers - Sydney was to build and sustain a stronger, more just community through local volunteers who, once trained, would take action. Specifically, community members in their daily lives were equipped to provide housing related information and social connection to rough sleepers who were open to such assistance and connection. And in return, community members would gain a greater sense of wellbeing and connection to their community. Additionally, the project aimed to strengthen NNC's relationships with partners operating in the CBD, assisting all partners to better deliver on their purpose.

A key element for the success of the program was collaboration with other organisations such as Wayside, Neami and City of Sydney Homelessness Service who have extensive expertise in working with homeless communities and residents in the City of Sydney LGA.

Project expectations

Two primary and one secondary project outcomes were identified at the outset.

By engaging and involving corporates and residents in the CBD more deeply around homelessness this program aimed to increase the CBD community's knowledge about the reasons why people may be homeless, why they may or may not be open to assistance, and why some people may even choose to stay on the street. The primary intended outcome is that community members will feel more equipped to respond constructively to people who are rough sleeping rather than reactively. Also, based on the evaluation of the Newtopian Outreach project, people will feel more inclined to advocate in an informed way for more social and affordable housing.

Primary project outcomes

Project outcome or goal	Performance measure	Types of evidence
1. Diverse community members gain knowledge, confidence and skills in relation to homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of volunteers recruited • Diversity of backgrounds of volunteers • Number of volunteers reporting an increase in knowledge and skills in relation to housing and homelessness 	# and backgrounds of volunteers pre and post survey
2. Increase in number of people feeling a strong sense of social wellbeing and community connection across Sydney LGA	Number of people reporting a stronger sense of community connection as result of their involvement in the project	Pre and post volunteer survey, City of Sydney wellbeing indicators

Secondary program outcome

Project outcome or goal	Performance measure	Types of evidence
1. People at risk for homelessness receive initial support, information and referrals which improve their situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people at risk of homelessness who interact with volunteers • Number and percentage of people experiencing homelessness who report an improvement in their situation • Number and percentage of people seen and (able to be reached) who report in follow up contact that they are living in more appropriate, more stable accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of contacts reported during outreaches • Number of people engaged who report an improvement in their situation • Number of people housed

Brief Program Outline

(full description in program update in Appendix)

October 2019	Key stakeholders invited to learn about the proposed program.
December 2019	Participating stakeholders were invited to join an advisory group
February 2020	Recruitment of volunteers 53 EOI's, 20 registered and 34 attended information session
March 2020	Applications opened for volunteers, interviews conducted and volunteers selected
March 2020	Two sites for Outreach briefing secured through partner organisations
March 2020	Recruitment of professional staff to facilitate outreaches
April 2020	Program postponed due to COVID
April – June 2020	Ongoing virtual engagement of volunteers
June 2020	Virtual Kickoff with 42 Volunteers, pre-program survey completed
July 2020	4 weeks interactive classroom training for 42 volunteers
August 2020	Training evaluation
September – November 2020	Facilitated outreaches
December 2020	Post program surveys and interviews

Outreach Results

Outreaches were conducted twice weekly (Tuesday and Thursday) between September and November. Each outreach including two groups (following separate pre-determined routes) of Outreachers and was lead/facilitated by NNC professional staff. (Three weeks required adaptation due to staff absences).

The team documented 37 in-depth engagements and described multiple briefer undocumented engagements (average 3 per outreach). Of the documented engagements, there were four people who the team engaged with over multiple occasions (these are included as case studies in the Appendix).

In addition to engagements with people experiencing homelessness, the team also strengthened the NNC relationship with other service providers in the CBD, and were seen to provide a complimentary service.

Detailed Report

Part 1: Volunteers

Volunteers learning and growth as a result of participation in the program

Learning and personal growth for Outreachers was a valuable outcome for the program and went far beyond the program objective to acquire knowledge and information related to homelessness.

In addition to learning about homelessness, the Outreachers increased their self-awareness, gained personal insights, increased confidence and built on their ability to empathise as a result of participating in the program. Likewise, there were positive changes in the volunteers' behavioural responses from pre to post-program. Behavioural changes included higher quality and more frequent engagement with people who were sleeping rough, as well as, reductions in 'avoidance behaviour' when encountering people who appeared to be experiencing homelessness.

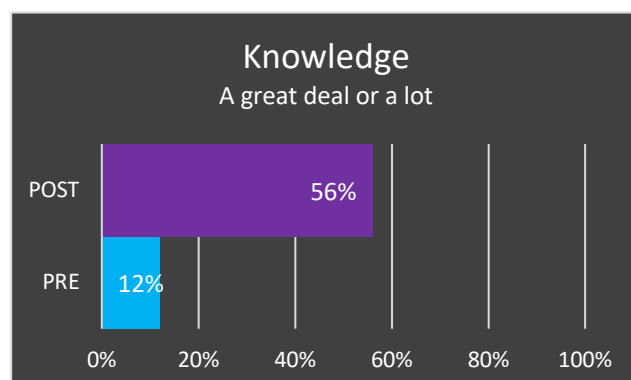
Development also included shifts in emotional responding. Outreachers experienced reductions in unpleasant emotions (such as sadness, guilt, and helplessness) and increases in their experience of positive emotions (such as empowerment and satisfaction) when encountering a person experiencing homelessness.

Changes in thinking, behaviour and emotional responding

Knowledge

Outreachers described changes in not only the knowledge they acquired in the program but also in *how* they think about homelessness and those people experiencing rough sleeping.

Pre-program only 12% of the Outreachers rated themselves as having a great deal or a lot of understanding/knowledge about homelessness. That percentage increased to 56% post-program, and a further 37% rated themselves as having a moderate amount of knowledge. The increase in knowledge included information and facts about homelessness, and also a visceral sense of the difficulty and complexity of the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness.



Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"I would be comfortable interacting/approaching or chatting with anyone. What I'm less confident in is whether I am interacting in the most appropriate or most effective way that is best for the person."	"The program has equipped me with the knowledge and understanding to be confident in interacting with someone who appears to be homeless or sleeping rough."
"I would like to find the best way to approach someone sleeping rough."	"Far more so than at the beginning of this!"
"In my work roles at CEO level in the charity sector I was used to dealing with people at all levels."	"Previous to the program I would not be able to interact."

In the individual interviews post-program, Outreachers described having learned a great deal of information about homelessness including gaining significant knowledge associated with the legal issues, policing practices that affect people experiencing homelessness and social justice issues as well as learning about the impact of mental health/illness and drugs/alcohol. They also indicated a shift in their awareness of the systemic issues that impact homelessness and the complexities associated with obtaining services. The Outreachers described having gained insight into how frustrating and dispiriting it can be to deal with the often disconnected and unsympathetic systems and processes required to obtain services.

Post program interviews
"Once you understand it is complicated and that makes it hard to ignore "
"It was an eyeopener – there is so much more that we need to do "
"Anybody can end up on the streets – no matter the background you come from – it can happen to you"
"I am more educated about the world I live in"
"I now know how hard it is to access services and how negative their experience have been – that was an eyeopener"
"It's really enlightening to know how fragile our lives' are – it only takes only two things to go wrong - lose a job and lease expires and you are homeless"
"I don't have experience in case work or social work, but realising that the desire to learn and initiative to actually try to help or just having a chat and realising that what people often need is really simple."
"In the training I think we learned about the struggle for them to get help and it is like going around in a circle – there is a blockage"

Outreachers descriptions of their thoughts pre and post-program suggest that they gained an ability to apply learning in the moment. For example, pre-program Outreachers thoughts were often associated with wondering or contemplating what lead to this situation or what they should do when they encountered a person sleeping rough. Upon completion of the program their thoughts were

characterised by integrating their knowledge about homelessness with the current situation which included assessing how the person was doing and how best to approach or even suspend 'wondering' in favour of actual interaction.

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"I think about the situation that could have possibly led the person to this circumstance, think about how easily many people could find themselves here, wonder why no-one has done anything to help, and then realise that I haven't either and don't know the first thing about how to even begin helping."	"I am considerate of external factors and the background of someone, understanding we all are shaped from different life experiences."
"I think about whether they are lonely."	"I think about how hard it is to get off the streets and how the system can be very hard if not impossible to navigate."
"I often wonder how long they've been sleeping rough or if they do desire help if it's offered."	"I think do they look like they are OK."
"I think about what the reasons could be that resulted in the person sleeping rough and that it should be possible to avoid people having to end up on the streets."	"I think about how I might approach them for a chat or just at least acknowledge their presence any way I can."
"I wonder how they will access basic necessities such as food and amenities in order to maintain hygiene. I wonder how long they have been homeless and the circumstances that led to their current situation."	"Whether or not they are working, if they want to interact, if they are under the influence of something, if it is safe to do so, if I recognise them."
"Sometimes I've also thought about how I should behave - like whether or not to engage or make eye contact, particularly when someone addresses me directly. Those interactions make me feel very conflicted, because I don't have money to give but I feel bad and very odd about ignoring them."	"I don't think anything much until I chat to them these days. " "I just acknowledge them, and treat them like anybody else. I think we as a society need to do better for these people."

Insight and self-awareness

In addition to deepening their understanding of the environment and the 'world of a person experiencing homelessness', Outreachers described having gained personal insights including understanding the impact of their approach to engagement.

Post program interviews
"I learned about being present and not intrusive."
"I thought I knew a lot but was surprised by what I did not know."
"I came in comfortable and confident and I learned to step back for the benefit of people who it is their home. I may be selfish because I want to engage and I learned about restraint."

“It was a wake-up call for me that there are different ways of approaching being useful. Not just shoving pamphlets at people. “

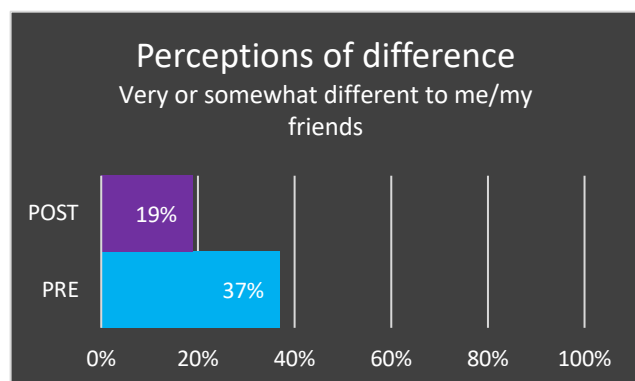
“On one of the outreaches it was really cold weather and we were only there for 2 hours, and we were tired and I imagined if I was already tired and uncomfortable how must it be for those sleeping rough. “

“Now I exclude all the quick judgements and I am more empathetic and compassionate because I know there are so many things behind the story. “

Perspective

Outreachers also described a change in how they perceived their relationship to rough sleepers.

Pre-program 37% of the Outreachers perceived people experiencing homelessness as very or somewhat different from themselves or their friends, in terms of character and values. That reduced to 19% post-program. Likewise, in the post-program interviews, the Outreachers described how they experienced shifts in how they saw themselves in relation to rough sleepers.



Post program interviews

“I know now to think about their comfort as well before approaching. They may be eating or taking to someone else – so I make sure they are comfortable before engaging them.”

“Before, there was an invisible gap with me on this side and they were on that side but now that gap has been erased.”

“It is subtle – I feel comfort and compassion for people around me and have a reverence for peoples stories and growing in understanding that you can never assume something about anyone.”

“When I saw someone on the streets before – I was nervous and felt guilty, I put my head down and walked away because I did not know what to do. Now I am more confident to talk to someone and at least smile. I know we all need human interaction, smile and say hello and it could make their day.”

“Before I was thinking there are lots of services available – I thought there was laziness and now see how this hard it is.”

“The program changed me. I now stop before judging and making conclusions about people I see on the streets. We see the external attributes but not the story behind what we see on the outside. “

"Just have a chat with them you don't have to have a degree – it is just about having a conversation."

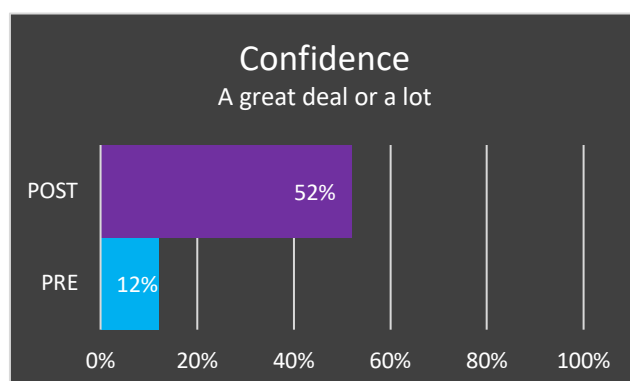
Another way we assessed Outreachers thinking was by asking them what is the one question they would like to ask a person who is experiencing homelessness. The types of questions Outreachers wanted to ask pre and post-program demonstrated compassion and desire to help. Pre-program the questions they wanted to ask were often associated with understanding what lead to the person becoming homeless and were in some ways more abstract, philosophical and potentially intrusive. Post-program, there was still a strong element of 'checking in' as well as questions that were more concrete and specific, often related to what the person needed or wanted.

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"How did you become homeless?"	"Do you have a social worker helping you?"
"What is frustrating about your lifestyle?"	"How can I best assist you? Is it stopping for a chat? Is it doing advocacy work?"
"If the person wanted to engage with me and did not take offence from this question*** I would ask them about their story, their experiences in life to get to know them better."	"In what ways do you need support or do you think you could be provided with support more effectively."
"What is your current life goal?"	"What do you see as the most helpful thing we could do in helping you find permanent and safe shelter?"
"What was the tipping point that led you to be homeless?"	"How are you? Are you ok?"
"Hmm. That's hard. What is the pain and trauma that troubles you? How can it be healed? Are you sleeping rough by choice, or do you wish that XYZ hadn't happened for you to be on the streets?"	"How are you? What can I do to help you right now?"

Confidence

Pre-program, many Outreachers expressed uncertainty about the best way to engage. Many described their confidence as low in the pre-program survey. Post-program all had gained confidence to speak with rough sleepers.

Outreachers described increases in their confidence to interact with someone who is experiencing homelessness: up from 12% rating themselves as having a great deal or a lot of confidence pre-program to 52% post-program.



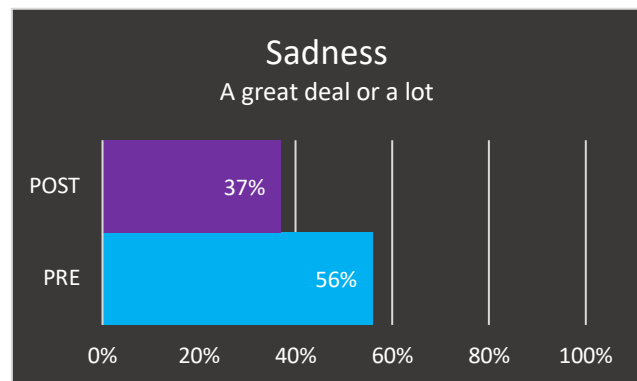
Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"Desire to help/speak with them but unsure how to do so correctly/respectfully."	"I feel much more confident after receiving training from Newtown Neighbourhood Centre."
"Sometimes I've felt afraid when interacting with a homeless person, while other times I don't feel concerned at all. "	"I would say my confidence to engage has grown. I still feel like I'm growing in understanding of what is most useful, case to case."
"I have communicated with a few who are sleeping rough around the Newtown area and am confident enough to strike up a conversation, or give them an ear to talk to."	"The intensive training has allowed me to be more confident in my interactions and less fearful."

Emotion

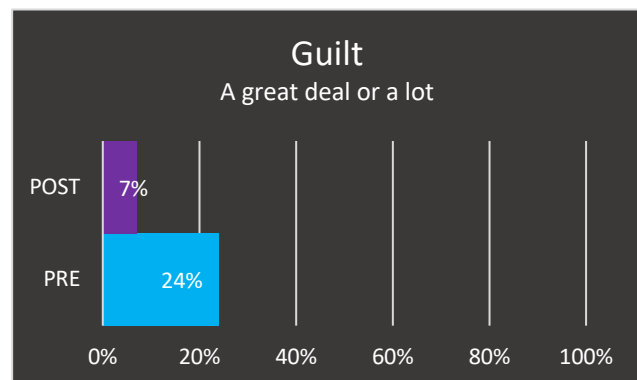
The Outreachers described a range of emotions when seeing someone sleeping rough. Sadness, helplessness and guilt reduced from pre to post-program. Post-program emotional responding was characterised by empathy and positivity following engagement.

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"If I'm looking from a distance (which I usually am particularly in the CBD) I often feel sad or conflicted or uncomfortable."	"I feel confident and committed to interacting with them, should they wish to. I feel I have the competency to make a real connection with them and make them feel acknowledged."
"A range of emotions—pity as well as everything from a desire to help to a sense of hopelessness."	"I feel like they are human and not that different. I don't have feelings of sorrow but rather a feeling to want to help any way I can."
"I find it hard to see. I know I have a privileged life."	"I feel compassion but also a greater sense of understanding than I had prior to the Outreach training."
"Quite sad, I feel more should be done to stop it. "	"I can't necessarily help them but I can try be a friendly face."
"I feel very bad. I wish I could help. I think everyone should have a safe, affordable home."	"I've felt quite positive and happy after chatting with people experiencing homelessness. However, sometimes I feel conflicted, guilty or sad if I can't give someone money or buy them something when they're asking for it."

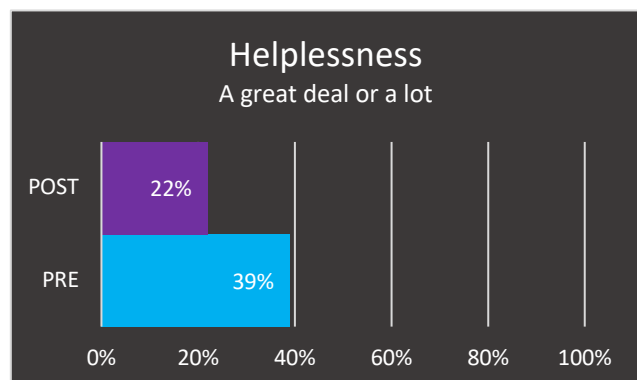
These descriptions were consistent with the quantitative data where 56% of Outreachers rated their sadness as a great deal or a lot pre-program compared with 37% post-program.



There were also reductions in guilt with 24% of Outreachers describing a great deal or a lot of guilt pre-program, which reduced to 7% post-program.



Similarly, feelings of helplessness reduced from 39% of Outreachers experiencing a great deal or a lot of guilt pre-program to 22% post program.



Otherwise, Outreachers did not rate specific emotions differently from pre to post-program.

Another way we evaluated emotional responding was to ask the Outreachers about their 'wishes'.

Outreachers were asked if they could grant a single wish for all people experiencing homelessness, what would it be? Pre and Post-program, their wishes reflected a combination of solving instrumental needs such as safe housing as well as social needs of being cared for and connected.

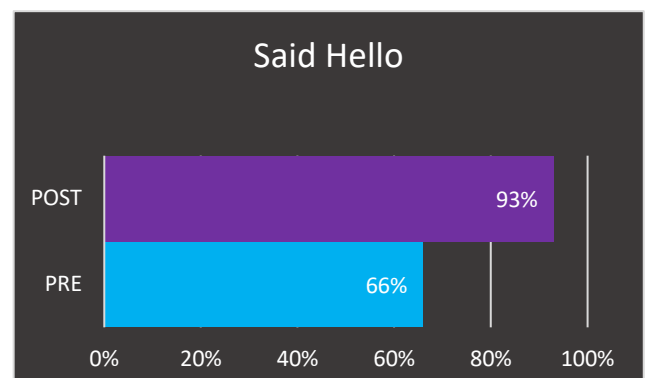
Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"That they felt cared for and valued as an individual."	"For them to not feel alone, to feel supported."

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"Government support: psychological, monetary and motivational. Create a centre where people can stay for a period of time until they recover and find job and be able to sustain themselves."	"That the system which is supposed to ensure that the process of going from sleeping rough to ending up in a secure accommodation (not a boarding house) could support everyone easily and efficiently."
"That they have the option of a safe, comfortable and private place to sleep each night."	"A home first with adequate social support to support the person in their adjustment and other needs."
"To have safe shelter, sufficient food and opportunity for income and purpose."	"A safe home."
"A home of their choice."	"A home with wrap around support to sustain them in their home."
"This is tough. Part of the problem is housing, however, their problems did not emanate from not having a home singularly. I would say that each rough sleeper and person who is homeless would have a social worker or a trusted support person to support them in whatever way they deem to be important and relevant."	"That there would be no one sleeping rough and that everyone would have a safe place to live, no housing waiting lists, no limits to days in TA, access to private rentals, access to Centrelink, higher Centrelink payments."
"Showers and food and clean clothes whenever they need. But otherwise they can maintain their "freedom"."	"Accommodation and ongoing physical and psychological support."

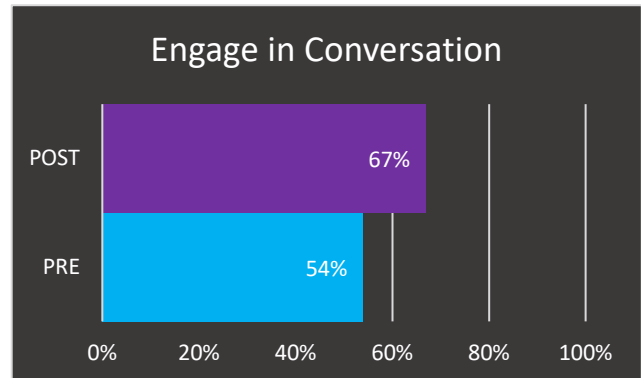
Behaviour

In addition to changes in what Outreachers think and feel, they also described what they do when they encounter a person sleeping rough on the street. Pre and post-program, Outreachers typically at least acknowledged the person (pre-program 80% and post-program 70%) with a smile or nod.

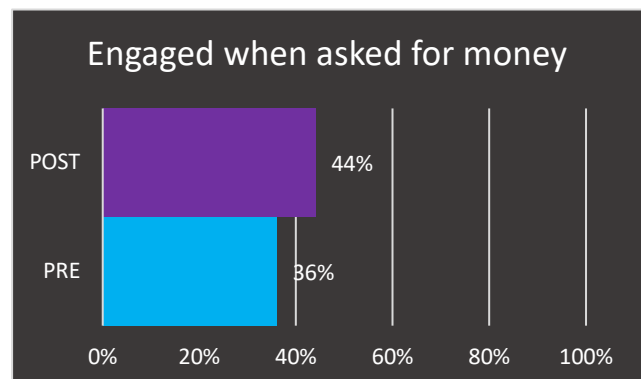
Post-program Outreachers were more likely to actually say hello (pre-program 66% compared to post-program 93%).



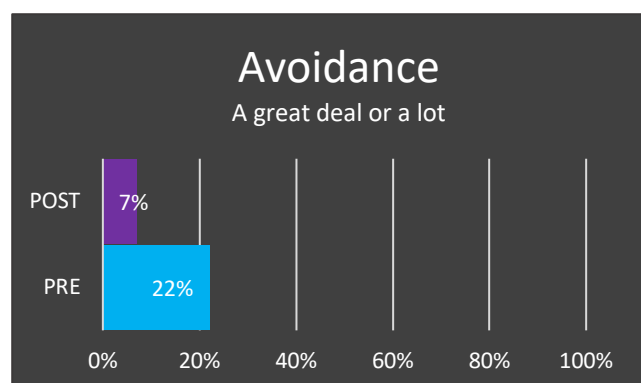
Likewise, post-program Outreachers were more likely to engage in a conversation (pre-program 54% compared to post-program 67%).



Similarly, post-program Outreachers were more likely to stop and chat rather than just giving money post-program (44%) compared to pre-program (36%).



In addition to these pro-social behaviours, Outreachers were less likely to avoid rough sleepers by avoiding eye contact or moving to the other footpath (pre-program 22% compared to post-program 7%).



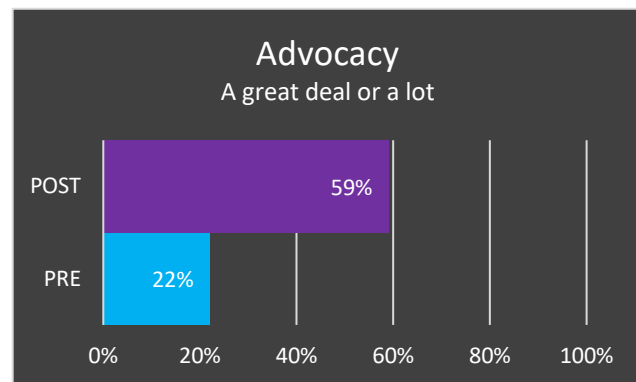
Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"I try to smile and notice them. However, I find myself wanting to look away I suppose due to embarrassment or guilt at their situation."	"Before the program, I didn't really know what to do, now I have the confidence to talk to someone sleeping rough."

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"I give money if they are begging and I have any, otherwise an awkward smile."	"Assess if they look like they need help or if they want to talk. And act accordingly."
"I usually just observe or walk by but always have some strange feeling inside that I could have done something."	"I find I have mixed approaches. While I feel like I want to reach out sometimes and have a chat, ask how they are going, at other times, depending on the day I have had at work or outside in life I am more reserved and closed off to talk to anyone, not just people experiencing homelessness. I try to always acknowledge them and say hi though. "
"If I have coins on me I will give them to them. If not and there's a store close by I will offer to buy them something. If neither of those options are available I just apologise and say I can't help at the moment."	"I will acknowledge them with a hello or a nod and if they're asking for money I will give them whatever I have. Sometimes I will stop and talk to them if they are up to it."
"If I am approached and asked for help in some way, I do what I can to help them, but unfortunately I am reluctant to approach others in most situations as I don't know what to do, or what to say."	"It depends on the situation, I will offer them money if they're begging but tend to stay out of there way as they're usually sleeping or not interested in conversation."
"In the CBD, nothing, I keep walking. I wish I could answer differently."	"When I have time I try to stop and chat. Say hello if I know them, grab them a coffee or sometimes just have a conversation if they seem approachable."
"Stop and listen but I would feel unsure and uncomfortable. I would like to help. "	"I will smile as I walk past, give a nod (when not on outreach)."

Advocacy

In addition to pro-social behaviour related to one-on-one engagement with rough sleepers, the shifts in knowledge, insight and confidence resulted in an increased willingness and competence to advocate formally and informally for people experiencing homelessness.

Outreachers described increased feelings of competence to advocate for an 'inclusive and just community' both formally and informally post-program 59% compared to 22% pre-program. Moreover, they easily described instances of advocacy with friends and colleagues that were already taking place and their desire to advocate to the greater public understand about the needs and complexity of the challenges faced by people who are experiencing homelessness.



Data from the post-program interviews supported these findings. Outreachers reported engaging in advocacy through multiple mediums including face-to-face, virtually and through social media. Moreover, many Outreachers described having the knowledge and confidence to advocate a benefit of the program for themselves as well as the community. Outreachers expressed a desire to further build their advocacy skills.

Post program interviews

"It puts you in a position where through the training you have some assumptions challenged and later challenge others. I thought I was empathic and I think I am and I do not judge them but when share with other I get surprised for example I shared with one person and she was concerned that she could not ask the police to move someone one. "

"One time I was in the city with my daughter and we saw someone who was homeless, and I could not answer her question about them. My initial thoughts were also to shy away, but I said I don't know – lets go ask them what they need."

"I am more vocal in talking to people around me. What I put on social media – I will say to my friends what I learned – I speak out more."

"It has help me in opening a dialog and I feel like I can contribute even a little more to society. "

"I feel when with friends I can share insights with them or even if it comes up in conversation. They have been surprised with how many rough sleepers and they gain more empathy ."

"I have learned enough to teach others.

"People at work have gone from saying what are you doing that for to asking how to get involved."

"I want my friends to see rough sleepers differently – talking to friends about it – they are curious and they ask what people talk about, or how they act.

"Get one professional to talk to 30 people then those 30 will advocate . Everyone should learn – even in the schools. "

"Doing a social media campaign – about interacting with homeless is better than doing nothing."

"I have the statistics in Australia and it reinforced what I knew about why homeless comes about – this gives me the data, not just my opinion – I can say now this is how people fall through and it has been reinforced."

"It is something I speak about with many friends – at a party – Now I always bring it up and I am saying how incredible the experience was for me. Lots of people want to get involved and don't know how to do it. "

Contributions to volunteers learning and growth

Research related to personal growth has demonstrated that successfully negotiating new challenges builds competence, confidence and contributes to greater resilience. Neurobehavioural science has highlighted several conditions that contribute to an individual's ability to use new challenges as a catalyst for growth. These conditions include: Safety, Control, Connection and Contribution.

Examining the Outreachers perceptions of what aspects of the program facilitated their growth in light of these conditions provides support for a number of program elements as well as a variety of intangible factors that are integral to the vision, values and purpose of the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre and are integrated into day-to-day operations of the Centre and this program.

Safety

Significant neurobehavioral research in the last decade has demonstrated the importance of feeling safe as a foundation for learning, growth and innovation. Feeling safe involves balancing novelty/stimulation with familiarity and adherence to known protocols. Feeling safe was very likely both more difficult to achieve and more vital than anticipated due to the impact of COVID. The program was interrupted during the recruitment and onboarding stage, with lockdown causing a postponement of the active program for several months. The combination of many unknowns related to the disease at the beginning, the uncertainty of the impact on the economy and the necessity to endure weeks of social isolation and lockdown likely created additional stress for participants.

Outreachers uniformly praised the professionalism and care provided by the NNC and specifically the proactive engagement with them and their needs by the program coordinator, Carlos Robles. They specifically cited the regular communication through multiple mediums, the solicitation of their input and feedback and the sense of being 'cared about' as vitally contributing to their sense of safety and confidence in the program. The Outreachers described Carlos, the other program facilitator, Dougie Wells and other NNC staff as available physically and emotionally throughout the program.

Post program interviews

"I was blown away by the professionalism of the program and the education. "

"Very well organised and well delivered. Particularly impressed in light of COVID."

"Carlos kept us informed and engaged. We always knew what was happening."

"You knew you could trust them."

Once safety is assured, the other conditions of control, connection and contribution rise to the surface and, if present, can contribute to learning, growth and high performance, including adaptation and innovation.

Control

Outreachers described the program as professional, compassionate, authentic and impressive. Despite venturing into the new and, for some, challenging activity of assertive outreach, Outreachers felt a sense of control and comfort. The formal training and the facilitated outreaches were described as predictable, provided the right balance of autonomy and guidance and the team was perceived as trustworthy. Outreachers indicated feeling high levels of trust quickly, which contributed to their willingness to be vulnerable themselves further accelerating their learning.

Post program interviews

"The tone of the organisation – very impressive. The whole thing was clearly well put together – very professional."

"They know their stuff, but more than that – they made it the kind of thing you wanted to be involved in and attracted – because it was run so well."

"The tone and sincerity of the whole team was evident."

"In the corporate world you get egos, lots of noise and people talking for the sake of talking, taking themselves up. There was none of that here. It relies on the audience to some degree, but I would still say this was the best run training event I have been to for a long time."

"Having the booklet we were given helped a lot – I was worried about not knowing the answers they are asking. If we are offering help, we need to know how to answer the questions we are asked. Going back to booklet before the outreach helped me know that I knew what to say if asked about different services."

"Training helped a lot – hearing the lived experience. It changed my perspective I know they see the world differently and it might be very different from what I see. I felt comfortable trying on these different perspectives. "

"Even sharing and being open in group I where I did not know everyone. This part of the training made us take that leap into trusting others."

"I am very private and guarded but something about that training that make it an organic and safe environment – there was so much respect and sensitivity."

"I have to say the training was quite significant, we got a lot of knowledge – very beneficial for the first 4 weeks to increase my knowledge."

Connection

Social connection is one of the most basic of human needs. Our brains are designed to connect and to learn from others within a social context. The training included didactic components with lots of information but was typically delivered in a way that encouraged interaction and deep personal engagement. Relationships formed quickly between the Outreachers and the team, and in many cases between the Outreachers. This culture of authenticity, trust and respect provided the 'model' for how Outreachers would ultimately engage with rough sleepers. Moreover, NNC's vision ('a just community which includes and acts') and values ('social justice and belonging') came through, were absorbed by the Outreachers and finally incorporated into their outreaches. Outreachers praised the initiative of the NNC to provide this opportunity for connection.

Post program interviews
"I was impressed by the NNC to invite in community members for NNC to want to take care of the community."
"The team supported us to learn and try out."
"The idea of taking care of rough sleepers as a community responsibility came across."
"Community connections are at the base of it. "
"I did this for me – for my connection - I was not sure if that was okay to say, maybe you should say it is for others but I benefited. It is hard to get out of the house every night but I always came away feeling better."
"I gained the knowledge that there are good people doing good things – that changed my perspective. It is positive when you see so many people helping out. Especially this year it is easy to be negative about how bad things are."
"The outreach was interesting. Seeing how Carlos interacted with rough sleepers helped."
"It gets passed on, it changed how I interact with the public."
"When others were with me -- they would notice it and I tell them I am doing outreach and what has stuck with me is just acknowledging people."

Given the impact of COVID lockdowns and the isolation experienced by many people during that time, we assessed Outreachers feelings of loneliness pre and post-program. Outreachers described very little loneliness either before or after the program. As a whole, the group reported feeling connected with friends and family. They also described feeling understood, that their ideas and interests are shared by others and they had someone they could turn to when needed.

Contribution

Human beings want to make a valuable contribution and to be valued for their contribution. Our social nature means that we are intrinsically inclined to contribute to the good of our 'group/tribe' and will do so, as long as no ill-advised hindrances are put in our way. Recent research has

demonstrated that the parts of the brain related to feeling pleasure are active when we are aware of making a valuable and valued contribution. Outreachers described feeling privileged to have been offered the opportunity and support to contribute to their community. They described the program as a chance to put their personal values into action.

Post program interviews
"I feel very privileged to be supported to have made a difference – I wanted to know how to give a personal contribution."
"For NNC to be able to give this opportunity to contribute – for those of us that don't have the background is amazing."
"I felt I held beliefs that I could not act on: this provided the opportunity to participate into aspects of social justice. It was a huge thing to be involved with social justice."
"I joined to understand and to avoid skipping those people I see at the station, but to be comfortable to have a chat and ask how they are doing. I feel more comfortable doing that now."
"The knowledge I've contributed in some way to a person's success or improved outcome."
"I hope this outreach will help me on more volunteering opportunities to contribute to positive social outcomes, to help people."
"I have spoken to a lot of people in my community about what I have learnt through volunteering which has I turn made them more aware and engaged."

Learning Mindset

Recent research has provided evidence that a 'learning mindset' contributes to learning, personal growth and resilience. The belief that people can change is core to this mindset. People who hold this core belief have been found to benefit from feedback, learn from their own and other's mistakes, adapt more quickly and have a more positive approach to assisting others to make changes. The research in this area is relatively new, and the factors that contribute to the development of a learning mindset are still being uncovered. Both pre and post-program Outreachers described themselves as believing that they and others can and do change. Moreover, they observed changes in themselves and others throughout the program. These observations informed their perception of program impact and desire to continue volunteering with the NNC.

Community Connection

The program sought to increase the volunteers' connection to their community.

Outreachers achieved enhanced community connection through their participation in the program. Most Outreachers described the community as very important to them and perceived themselves at least somewhat connected and engaged with their community prior to the program. Even so, importance, connection and engagement increased slightly for the volunteers following their participation in the program.

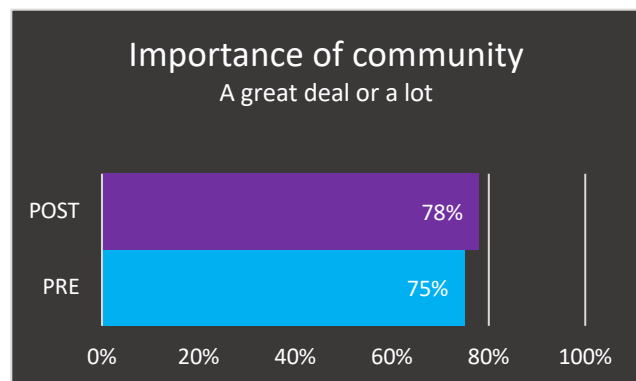
The predominate definition of community was one of safety, connection and ‘looking after each other’. The Outreachers described their local community members broadly in place-based terms and as including everyone who lives, works or passes through the neighbourhood. In addition, some Outreachers described community membership more conceptually such as ‘people identifying as LGBTI+’ or ‘my team members’.

The Outreachers set a high standard of behaviour for a ‘strong community’. The dominant theme in their definition of a ‘strong community’ was safety. Safety came up frequently in the pre and post-survey as well as in the post-program interviews. The Outreachers also highlighted inclusivity and the importance of helping each other and protecting the most vulnerable members.

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
“Protecting vulnerable members.”	“Collective goals, empathy, diversity, safety, fun.”
“A place where people are supported, equal, safe, and go out of their way to help one another.”	“Everyone looking out for each other, everyone interacting with each other, putting resources towards those who need them.”
“People who care about justice, inclusivity, who understand how to cultivate and maintain relationships, who care for the least and use privilege to serve each other.”	“A strong community is where everyone helps each other. Everyone included. Vibrant and accepting.”
“It feels like safety. A strong community allows for everyone to be themselves in a way that is safe for everyone. A strong community welcomes, and doesn't leave anyone behind. A strong community is inclusive of and celebrates difference.”	“I think a strong community is a group of people working together and making a difference. People recognise each other, and/or respect each other in interactions / transactions on day to day. People feel safe. The local area is respected i.e. people do not throw trash on the ground.”
“A strong community looks like a helping hand! A place where everyone is accepted and no one feels alone.”	“Safe spaces, obvious evidence of community initiatives, inclusive and supportive of the most vulnerable members.”
“It must be social and sharing. But in addition to this people must be willing to help with labour and even financially to assist others when a community member falls on hard times.”	“Support, a place where people look out for each other. People supporting others in the community and fighting for the rights of those who do not have a voice.”
“When people do better for their area, local clean up, fun days. Having a community centre where people can just drop in and socialize.”	“A strong community to me is a cohesive, safe and happy place. With people looking out for everyone's best interests and working together for a common goal.”

Importance

Volunteers described their community as having a 'great deal' or 'a lot' of importance in their lives both before (76%) with a slight shift upwards (78%) after participation in the program. Outreachers elaborated on why community was important to them pre and post-program.



Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"We are all vulnerable and need a helping hand at times. I would like to support those in my community who need it and in turn would hope my community could do the same for me when I need it."	"For me, human connection is key to a fulfilled and happy life. Life is hard for everyone, we need each other. "
"I know it is good for my mental health."	"It's what makes a house a home. "
"Because it affects my life, my interests and hobbies and ultimately the values."	"Because they support me, it's makes me feel like I belong to something bigger"
"I believe a society where all people have a sense of community is a place where people can feel safe and equal, and with everyone working towards common goals, with a common sense of values, everyone can feel supported."	"I think that we are shaped by who we do life with and where we do life. Good community is essential for thriving individuals and thriving individuals make great things happen. :) "
"We are social animals. Connection to others is essential for our well-being, our survival, our sense of self and our ability to have full lives. Community is important to me because I value my relationships and connections and find a lot of satisfaction in the time I spend with people, learning, sharing and just being."	"It is an important sphere of influence where you can connect with people and affect their day/they affect yours. You can actively and directly contribute to a positive and inclusive community on a daily basis by how you walk out the door."
"We can all make our neighbourhoods special by being a part of them and looking out for one another."	"My community has been especially important during 2020, with COVID restrictions etc more important than I initially realised - makes you feel connected to place and others."

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"I've never really had much of a community to be part of."	"Life can be hard enough at times. If people engaged with each other more and assisted each other our community would be a happier place. I love how inner west is so connected."

Meaning

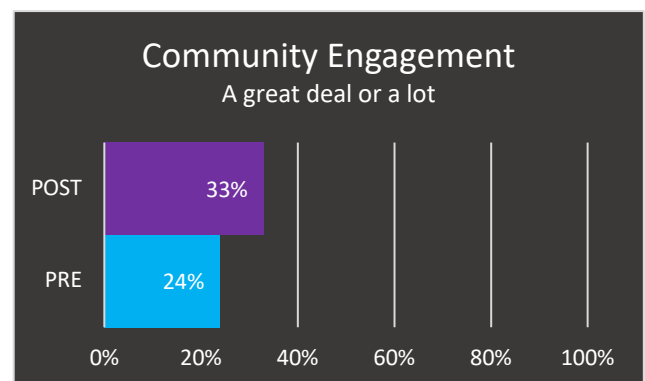
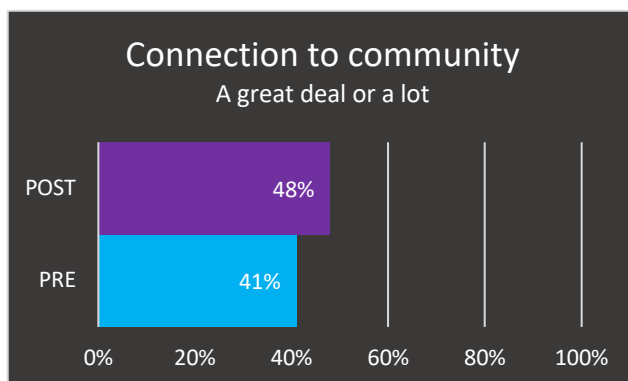
The Outreachers derived meaning through feeling safe, a sense belonging and a feeling of personal responsibility to contribute to the well-being of other community members.

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"Acceptance and support."	"Community means everyone looks out for each other and works together to support everyone."
"Community means a place to feel safe, included, comfortable and heard."	"Inclusivity for all, a voice for all and safe space for all to interact, connect and work towards a greater good."
"A sense of togetherness, a group of humans who see each other's well-being as their own well-being."	"Community is about looking out for each other."
"Community means being in service to those around me, whether it be a practical service or and emotional one."	"It's one of the most important parts of life. To have a community around you that supports you and cares about you is vital."
"Community means somewhere where I feel happy and connected with others, whether that is with family or with friends at the local pub. I hope to engage more with the community of Newtown after COVID."	"A group of people together having the same interest, working together making a difference."
"Community influences our everyday experiences. It provides me with a home that is larger and more colourful than my everyday four walls."	"A feeling of belonging in the area where you live. A feeling of safety and connection with the people who share the area - people living and working in the area."

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
“Community is one of the most important aspects of living. I think it's hugely important to be surrounded by people that want to help each other and talk to each other. I strongly believe that life is much better when you have people to share it with and living in a connected community (such as the inner west) makes this much easier.”	“A group of people with commonality in some way but who are also diverse. It means to me a gathering of people from different walks of life but can all live together as one.”

Connection and Engagement

Outreachers experienced a slight increase in their connection (pre 41% compared to 48% post program). Recognising that day-to-day obligations including family, work and other requirements impact if and how much a person engages in their community we asked a point-in-time question to assess engagement pre and post program ('At this point in time, my level of engagement in my community is'), The outreachers responses indicated that engagement increased from 24% pre-program to 33% post.



Outreachers described connections with neighbours and local businesses and even the local dogs pre and post-program. They indicated a desire to strengthen their connections and deepen engagement within their community and some highlighted the role of NNC in providing opportunities to connect and contribute to the community. It was more common for Outreachers who live in the inner-west to spontaneously elaborate on their personal connection and community engagement compared to those from other neighbourhoods.

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
“I live and work in the one community, I have relationships with my neighbours and spend money at the businesses in the area but I don't feel I have built a human connection with many people, even those I recognise.”	“I felt very connected to the community in the inner west. I had a local cafe and knew the local people and their dogs! I have just moved north of the bridge and miss the inner west.”

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"I mainly go out and engage with my local areas and access local services and businesses, however this is the extent of my community involvement."	"I have great neighbours, although there are not many local services (shops and businesses)."
"I have lived in my community for over 25 years. I know a number of my nearest neighbours and stop to chat with many in my day to day activities. It is a diverse community and one which offers many opportunities for connection."	"In terms of my local neighbourhood community: I work, live and now volunteer locally. I feel connected to the ethos of the people who live here, I feel they represent an aspect of who I am."
"Because its filled with incredible people! My geographic community is diverse and vibrant and filled with interesting, kind and generous people. My rainbow community is equally filled with diverse and inclusive people from different backgrounds and experiences, values respect, safety and being ones whole self."	"Growing in this. Would love to know and share more life with people in my area. Because I feel valued and supported."
"I work full time - work community is not very connected and I feel I haven't made the time to actively connect with my local community recently."	"Since joining NNC I finally feel I am contributing to my community."
"I can talk to my neighbours, I can have a conversation with the people working in the coffee shop or walking down the street. People are friendly and we all enjoy living in a beautiful place so we all work hard to make it pleasant for everyone! We even have a Facebook group for our street and we get together for little events and talk about how to improve our community."	"I have a number of spaces that I frequent where I know people as acquaintances and I have several close friends also with whom I can spend time in this place. Also, because I think by and large in the inner west one can connect easily with strangers."
"I know a few people and names of people in shops. But I don't really know the people who are homeless or sleeping rough, I recognise some though."	"I am confident in myself and am able to connect with community members, especially people who appear to be homeless or sleeping rough."
"I see people at work a lot and get involved in activities enthusiastically, I also make a point of seeing friends and family a lot."	"I feel like I have been a lot more engaged with my community since I began to outreach with Newtopians."

In the post-program interviews some Outreachers described having become aware of being less connected through COVID and their intention to increase their engagement in the coming months.

Post program interviews

"Going back to my home and realising that I was not connected and I am more so now: ongoing this will be a way to connect."

"I did not realise I was disconnected from community."

"I don't do it for the status and recognition but for the connection."

"I love volunteering so I can give back. In the past when going through extremely difficult times it was the random acts of kindness by strangers and community members that got me by. I have never forgotten those people."

"Giving back to the community and creating new friendships."

Volunteering

This evaluation sought to understand the role volunteering has played in the lives of Outreachers participating in this program. Likewise, Outreachers' perceptions of this volunteer experience and expectations for future volunteering were also gauged in the post-program survey.

The Outreachers are enthusiastic volunteers. Despite the COVID lockdown forcing a several months long pause in the program 90% (38 of 42) completed the program.

Ninety percent had volunteered in other programs in the past with most beginning their volunteer experiences in their teens or twenties. In the previous 12 months, Outreachers had volunteered from one day up to 50 weeks in one case.

Volunteering to assist with events was the most common type of previous volunteering (59%), followed by fundraising (46%).

Events	59%
Fundraising	46%
Service Delivery	39%
Pro Bono	22%
Other	41%

Most (66%) believe their previous volunteering made a difference, while 31% thought it was 'hard to say' and one did not believe it made a difference.

The reasons for previous volunteering were varied and included: connection with community, helping others, personal development and contribution to the broader community.

Feelings towards volunteering

Outreachers' descriptions of 'what volunteering meant to them' and how they 'felt about volunteering' were similar pre and post-program. Their descriptions clustered into several categories including the joy of helping others, feeling good about themselves, feeling like they are making a difference as well as fulfilling a social contract to 'give back' or contribute to the community that supports them.

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"I believe everyone should participate in volunteer work at some point in their lives in order to give back to their community."	"I love it, it makes me feel like I'm finally contributing something more to my community/society."
"I find a great deal of joy in being able to help meet needs and give to causes that I believe in."	"I am a full-time volunteer so I guess I should feel alright about it. And I do. It has its challenges but it's very refining in that you must understand why you are doing it in order to be sustained in it."
"I feel proud of myself when I find time to help less fortunate/more vulnerable people."	"I really enjoy it and am grateful for how much I've learned from it so far."

Online pre-program survey	Online post-program survey
"It genuinely makes me feel good about myself and being able to impact one person's day improves my whole year."	"I love volunteering, it makes me feel like I am making a difference."
"I feel it's essential for a healthy society, it's an important way to connect with and learn from others, and to give back to the village that cares for you."	"I feel it is a part of my life. It is a way of giving back, of extending myself, of learning new things. Helping out your community and giving up your time selflessly."
"An opportunity to do something positive for an issue that matters and learn."	"I thoroughly enjoyed both learning more about homelessness and being able to put into practise the skills I learned. It was very rewarding to give back to my community and help others in a meaningful way."
"It is about participating in making society better. Part of it is helping to improve a situation but also part of it is the satisfaction that helping provides me."	"A chance to connect with others and contribute. Offering service, time and commitment based on values not on payment."
"Volunteering is important to me because I believe it's important to give back to our community. Engaging and connecting people is very important and as a volunteer I am able to do this."	"It means a lot. It's a time to be acutely conscious of people other than myself (and my immediate friends/family), which I think is really important."
"It means being able to contribute to society, to my community, it means being able to do something nice (or beneficial) for someone else. It means not being selfish."	"It is crucial as is the backbone of community. I have been volunteering for years."

Outreachers perception of impact

Pre-program, Outreachers listed a variety of desired outcomes for their work as Outreachers including: self-improvement, making a positive change for the community, helping others, making new connections, becoming more aware of others needs/experiences and learning how to assist rough sleepers.

Post-program, 67% of Outreachers thought their work in the program had made a difference, while 33% indicated it was 'hard to say'. Post-program interviews suggested that the Outreachers were confident that the program had many positive outcomes for themselves but were less sure if it made a difference for the rough sleepers.

The Outreachers described having attained new learning and personal development which affected their ability to connect, engage and advocate. With regard to impact on people experiencing homelessness, some were able to point to specific instances that they felt their interactions with

rough sleepers made an immediate impact, while most saw the impact as more cumulative and their work as part of a larger intervention of awareness and trust building.

<p>"I knew barely anything about homelessness prior to commencing the program. I now feel I know more, I have a solid launching point to pursue further interactions with homeless people and educate my family/friends."</p>
<p>"To homeless people minimal. To me: knowledge about homelessness and more confidence to speak to homeless people."</p>
<p>"Of course! The bigger picture of being a single Outreach worker is that, there was an outreach. Playing my part, and many others playing theirs helped the whole outreach come together."</p>
<p>"My outreach was different as we only engaged with people sleeping rough on 1/3 outreach sessions. When I hadn't yet engaged with rough sleepers I felt like the training had benefit to ME but that I wasn't able to put it to good use (therefore not making a difference)."</p>
<p>"After engaging with rough sleepers I definitely feel the volunteering makes a difference."</p>
<p>"We have become a presence in the city and people are recognising us as someone they can talk to if needed."</p>
<p>"Regularly walking on the streets showed people the group wasn't a one off and was working to provide trust within the community."</p>
<p>"Connection, education of services."</p>
<p>"Hopefully a feeling of greater support, or a new kind of support to some extent. Engaged, they got to express their feelings and chat about life."</p>
<p>"I think it makes a difference in so far as even if I am unsure I've directly affected change in the life of a homeless person, I know the awareness raising that the program produces is effective. I understand the issues surrounding homelessness better which allows for more compassion."</p>
<p>"On my final patrol, we encountered a couple who were begging on the corner of Market street and Martin Place in the city. They were friendly, despite obviously working and engaged in conversation. It was a cold and windy evening, so we sat on our haunches and spoke to them for a long while. They had been sleeping rough for the last few months up behind the library. They had been married for some time, but had fallen on hard times after she was diagnosed with Cancer. Now living on the street, she hadn't been able to meet her nutritional needs and so was unable to undergo surgery and needed to put on more weight. They told us that they had had all their stuff stolen and had been told by Mission Beat to wait where they were to receive more blankets, they had been waiting for 3hrs. They had no way of contacting Mission Beat because they had had their phones stolen. We got in contact with Mission Beat and checked in, they said that they were half an hour away and they would swing by Martin Place. We gave them phone cards, told them of the services, but they were reluctant to call Link2Home. We talked more with them until Mission Beat arrived, they were given blankets, food packs and basic supplies including sleeping bags and gloves. I walked away that night proud of what we had accomplished. I learned a lot from that experience and know that we made a difference."</p>

"I could see the consistency of us walking around in the city. After a while the people were willing to engage with us they saw we were not selling another scheme."

Most Outreachers (92% on post-program survey, 100% when asked by facilitators) indicated a desired to continue volunteering with NNC in 2021. Outreachers identified lack of time as the factor that had most often prevented them from volunteering in the past and also as the factor most likely to hinder future volunteering.

All of those who were interviewed indicated an intention to continue volunteering with people experiencing homelessness. Some Outreachers had already begun other volunteer assignments with NNC and others indicated a desire to continue volunteering in some capacity. Their intended outcomes for future volunteering included helping others, particularly vulnerable people, as well as making new connections and contributing to the community in other ways.

General feedback

Volunteers offered a range of other feedback and suggestions for the program, including tweaks to the training. The desire to increase the frequency of outreaches was a consistent theme. Otherwise, it is important to note that unlike the thematic data presented above, these isolated comments do not necessarily represent the overall response or perceptions of the group but do merit reporting and are listed below.

Advice for future volunteer participants

Volunteers were asked for any advice they would offer for people considering participating in the next intake for the program. All indicated they would recommend the program to others and a few had specific suggestions for those considering volunteering.

"Keep an open mind."
"Connect with other volunteers more."
"Do it. Put your preconceptions aside. Be open and observe more around you."
"Fully engage in the training, ask questions, interact with the other volunteers, listen to people's stories and the work they do as you will learn the most from that."
"Have an open mind, and don't expect change in others."
"Ask questions in the training and make it personal so it sticks."
"Embrace the learning and the connection."
"Stay open and try to learn and understand how much as you can".
"Learn and take notes!"
"Be brave and open."
"A great experience! Participating was an opportunity to grow and learn about people, the centre, rough sleepers and others experiences. It is a dynamic outreach and a great opportunity to find yourself in situations and circumstances that are often not found in the regular day-to-day agenda."
"Take a bottle of water in case a homeless person asks for water."
"Stick with the training, even if there is another wave of covid!"
"Get involved, the program is amazing and you'll be well supported."
"Become involved. Learn as much as you can."

"Have confidence, take in all the information and just be a happy face for those having a rough time."

"It is worth being involved."

"Sign up it's a great experience."

"To take all the information on board."

"Definitely get involved."

"There is a lot to learn and can seem a hard problem to solve but every little action helps so stick with it."

"Don't over think things. It is a lot easier than you think."

Suggestions related to training or program design

The feedback related to the formal training and the facilitated outreaches was overwhelmingly positive, even exuberant. Speakers and outreach facilitators were praised for their knowledge and down-to-earth approach. Outreachers were especially complimentary of Carlos including the overall organisation and management of the day-to-day aspects of the project as well as his compassion and caring for the Outreachers and the rough sleepers.

Outreachers recognised the program was somewhat compressed due to COVID, but nevertheless indicated a desire for more frequent outreaches. This was a fairly consistent theme. Some also made suggestions for encouraging engagement with people in Martin Place or other locations as well as a few ideas for new services. A couple of Outreachers indicated they would like to be able to access materials before sessions and one felt uncomfortable with not knowing exactly what they would be doing on outreach until later in the training. It is important to note that these critiques were a minority and that the program design and delivery exceeded expectations for the majority of Outreachers.

A separate detailed assessment of the formal training was conducted by the NNC team following the last formal training session. This report is included in the Appendix.

"I wanted more exposure."
"I think that it feels like we did all this training and we had a little taste."
"I think it needs to be progressed."
"I would be disappointed if it did not continue in some way."
"I would continue with it if given the opportunity."
I was not clear what we were doing until the 4 th week. I wanted to know up front what I had to do."
"The other thing is to expand the program – we have only one activity (outreach), maybe there is another thing you could do – work in NNC, doing posters and add them to hot spots and so they (rough sleepers) can see what is on offer and come to the centre."
"If there are a range of activities – different volunteers will want to do different things to help."
"It would be good to have the content ahead of time."
"When out on outreach – we stood back from people at the food trucks and I think we were maybe too far back and it was intimidating for them to come to us."
"Maybe we could use time to be a little closer to the people. Often people said hi and leaders pulled us away a little bit. I know we have to be away from food truck."
"But even just walking with Carlos and Dougie – we got more aware of the ecology of the space."

"Definitely want to be involved next year."
"I will help with coordination if they need more vols."
"Communication through Covid was great – handled really well. Carlos kept us informed and engaged."
"I have to say the training was quite significant, we got a lot of knowledge – Very beneficial for the first 4 weeks to increase my knowledge."
"Some of the presentation could have just been handed out – one gentleman's slides had too much content and it can put people to sleep – I think it would have been more useful to have reading and the session more interactive. The interactive component was really good."
"Training helped a lot – hearing the lived experience. It changed my perspective I know they see the world differently and it might be very different from what I see."
"Training was amazing – guest speakers were stand out – some shared personal stories "
"I think having the lead on outreach very helpful – even if we did not see someone they shared experiences and we learned a lot."
"Big shout out to Carlos – really professional but very human way of drawing us in."
"Some training was confronting but beautifully handled. Witnessing the courage and the raw experiences. Makes you think a bit – shake out of your comfort zone."
"Lots in the training that enlightened me. People sharing their personal experiences was powerful. I always thought there but for the... go I – but this really brought that home."
"Actually the whole experience was great."
"There were two speakers that stood out. They shared their knowledge. And experience -- one talked about drug & alcohol and the other talked about advocacy. I found that really interesting – that was really clicked."
"The team was great. I loved the training – all the speakers, especially the ones that shared personal experiences."
"Carlos was amazing!"
"The NNC, the whole team everyone was super professional. They were authentic, knowledgeable and honest and they made a great experience."
"I would, well I already have recommended this to all my friends!"

Overall comments on the program

"Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. You have all done a fantastic job, particularly with Covid thrown in. I was disappointed that I have already finished outreach as I am still building confidence. I would love the program to continue next year and believe it can be highly valuable. "
"Thanks so much for such an amazing opportunity!"
"Great job Carlos and others. Appreciate the sincere program."
"This program has been inspirational and I commend the hard work put in by all staff, facilitators, guest speakers and volunteers. It is incredibly impressive that this program was still run through one of the hardest years the world has faced and something we can all be proud of."
"Thanks for pulling this all together. It has been a wonderful experience."
"Thanks so much for including me."
"Thank you for the opportunity to volunteer."
"Love this outreach. Thank you for your time, effort, thoughtfulness, and care for the volunteers. Was a great experience and felt valued and inquired of in the process."
"I'd like to praise Carlos for his support, dedication to ensuring the success of the program, friendly chats and shepherding of volunteers over the past months. He is a great guy and clearly an asset to NNC."
"A massive thankyou - this has been a great experience."
"Thank you :-)"
"Thank you!!"
"Good luck with the program for 2021."
"I really enjoyed the experience and built confidence around engaging with homeless and would like to participate next year."
"Good to talk to kids about what I was doing. With little kids your life goes out the window – you cannot live your values. Would like to involve my kids somehow – just to understand about the experience of rough sleepers."
"I'm still learning!"
"It has given me an avenue to volunteer as well as giving me the training and tools and confidence I needed to volunteer."
"The program changed me in the way to consider that before judging and making conclusions about people I see on the streets."

<p>“Not to be too philosophical but I realised ‘We are each other’s responsibility’ – looking around and seeing our neighbours that are sleeping rough, and saying how can I connect and help.”</p>

Summary: Volunteer Experience

The Outreachers overwhelmingly found the program high value. They described learning a great deal including in-depth information about homelessness as well as how to apply that new knowledge in a practical way by engaging with rough sleepers. Many described having gained personal insights that changed their perceptions and assumptions about people experiencing homelessness and the way they see themselves.

They all gained some degree of confidence to engage with rough sleepers, some acknowledging a large increase in their confidence and willingness to connect. They also experienced reductions in unpleasant emotions such as guilt, helplessness and sadness. Many expressing an increased sense of empowerment to put their values into action.

The didactic and facilitated aspects of the program were well received. Outreachers were especially impressed with the authenticity, knowledge and professionalism of the NNC team and guest speakers. Carlos was uniformly admired for his consistency, caring and willingness to do whatever it took to keep the program running despite COVID. The Outreachers were appreciative of the opportunity provide by NNC and saw this program as an opportunity to make a contribution to their community.

Outreachers described valuing community and finding meaning in the relationships a strong community affords its members. They were enthusiastic volunteers, most having significant volunteer experience and all indicating a desire to volunteer in the future.

Part 2: Advisory Group

Advisory group experiences, feedback and recommendations

Three of the advisory group members were interviewed as part of the program evaluation. All had been active participants throughout the program and all had significant experience in the sector.

Advisory group members indicated they became involved with the program because their organisations were either funders or partners. Strengthening the relationship with NNC was cited as one of the factors that caused their organisations to become involved with the program. All members indicated that they were personally interested in and strongly invested in seeing the program succeed. Members also specified that they had been asked to participate but would have sought out involvement if that had not been the case.

Value of the advisory panel

The members felt the advisory group had added value to the program, cited the diversity of experience of the members and the collaborative approach. They provided positive feedback about the way NNC had engaged them.

Post program interviews with advisory members
"The feedback is so thorough and it is transparent and helpful."
"Sometimes there is territorial issues in the sector which can create tension, but Liz and Carlos reached out and connected – they did it really well."
"NNC were respectful of existing knowledge and practice and build on strengths that were already there. This program has strengthened the partnerships."
"I have nothing but positive feedback for Liz and Carlos."
"The diversity on the group was helpful – I was able to bring the housing aspect to the group as well."
"We ended up developing a partnership in one our programs-- after participating on the Advisory group I could see there was a gap and NNC could fill that gap."
"The group worked well – unfortunately with COVID things changed the program – but that it still has happened despite COVID is important."

Advisory group expectations for the program

The advisory group members described the program as successfully meeting expectations at this point in the program. They based their assessment on having attended the training sessions, interacted with the Outreachers and engaged deeply with Liz Yeo and Carlos Robles throughout the program. They expressed an eagerness to understand the impact of the program on the Outreachers as well as the rough sleepers, when that data became available.

Liz Yeo and the NNC were perceived to be strong collaborators and innovators in the sector. The program coordinator, Carlos Robles, was described as a ‘legend’ who had ‘all the right ingredients’. The advisory members cited the combination of strong project management, collaboration, engagement, thoroughness of training and relationship building as underpinning the success.

Post program interviews with advisory members
“Training was great – ‘I spent time with the volunteers after the training and hearing their questions was enlightening.”
“They learned a lot even if did nothing with a single person on the street.”
“The training enabled them to step into the world of homelessness – they take off the blinders, we unconsciously step over homeless people but when those unconscious blind spots are removed there is this whole other world laid bare”. “
“I was struck by how through the training was, they dove deep into trauma, and police profiling, drug and alcohol, aboriginal legal clinic. It was not dry and boring. I was impressed by what I saw. The participants really hanging on their word.”
“The speakers were very practical, some also had a real political take on it.”
“At first I thought it was taking up a lot of time, but once I looked back I could see why they did what they did. They had done it before and knew what was necessary.”
“Really impressed, the consistency of turning up was good and well attended. Everyone was very interested and good mix and lots of passion.”
“It was a very hands-on project – I liked the interaction there were lots of questions and practical discussion.”

Advisory groups perceptions of the service in the context of the CBD

The advisory members described the program as providing a new and unique service rather than replicating services that were already provided in the CBD.

Post program interviews with advisory members
“Professional outreach does something different. This program broke down barriers and spread awareness to the broader community.”
“It is beneficial for rough sleepers to be engaged in a different way. “
“Some volunteers may have just walked past in the past. Now they see the homeless person on the street has a name and they get to know them and they become part of the community.”
“A lot of homeless people are wary of professionals and more likely to engage with a community volunteer – they are disenchanted with the system.”

"This is about getting to know the person – an individual not a statistic. Different way of thinking – from professional outreach."

"The biggest strength is the community members knowing that the community knows the name of people – it is so vital, for example there is rough sleeper we know, he deteriorated a lot, a community member called and asked about him."

"Give people the skills to engage in community."

Advisory Group's observed and desired outcomes for the program

The panel members described the outcomes and hopes for the future impact of the program, which included greater community awareness of issues related to homelessness, community member engagement with rough sleepers and deeper private sector involvement.

Post program interviews with advisory members

"Really want to see more private sector involvement – that would give momentum. It has been giving out soup but we need more systemic changes."

"I think for me, it always come back to rough sleepers. We drop cards for people and even ones we know. A rough sleeper said I love that you drop the cards."

"It is building the capacity for community to look out for people in the community. For example, saying 'I saw Bob and I am worried about him'. It just means someone in the community cares. I want people to call and say what happened to Bob."

"Sow those seeds that people looking out for vulnerable members of community."

"I want the program to build a sense of community. I don't know where they might have those conversations – high level business meetings and they ask what can be done and that's when things change. When lots of people asking the same questions in different ways – you can get a lot done."

Advisory group recommendations

The key recommendation the advisory group had was to include more diversity on the panel and among the Outreachers. They also expressed strong interest in understanding the impact of the program on the Outreachers, including their perception of safety, how their thinking changed and if their confidence related to mental health issues increased.

Post program interviews with advisory members

"I would like to have more broader collective impact, including more community members and those with lived experience, and business on the Advisory would be good. We get stuck with the sector lens, we need to challenge the old ways of thinking."

"Is important to ask what they got out of it, has thinking changed, how did interactions change."

"I want to know if their levels of confidence engaging initially versus now (concerns about mental health issues)."

"What about people who English is not a first language – how is that managed? Was there a volunteer who identifies as aboriginal? "

"Curious about why they volunteered to be Outreachers."

"A big focus is risk and safety, so I would like to know if they feel safe. Do they know what to do."

"Hearing a rough sleeper tell a story – to talk to Newtopian."

In summary, the advisory group described the program in positive terms, highlighting the impact on the volunteers and the broader community. They also appreciated the collaborative relationship they experienced with Liz Yeo and the NNC team.

The group perceived the panel as adding value to the program, citing the diversity and the good working relationships between members. They expressed high hopes for the longer-term impact of involving community volunteers in the sector including more engagement with business and potential contributions to systemic change.

The group members expressed an eagerness to understand more about the experience of the volunteers as well as the impact of the program on rough sleepers.

Part 3: NNC Team

NNC Team experiences, feedback and recommendations

Three of the NNC staff and guest speakers (NNC team) were interviewed as part of the program evaluation. All were active contributors to the program.

The team indicated their pleasure in being associated with the program. They were proud that the program happened despite the impact of COVID and credited the Outreachers for their motivation and persistence.

NNC team's perceptions of program impact

The NNC team observed positive impact for the Outreachers, the rough sleepers and the broader community. The team demonstrated both a professional and personal zest for this work. Their excitement in seeing 'light bulb moments' for the Outreachers was palpable. Similar to the Advisory group members, the team were able to see the many layers of impact from the direct impact on rough sleepers, to the mindset and behaviour shifts for the Outreachers, to the ripple effect that the Outreachers have on their broader networks.

Post program interviews with staff
"The biggest change was their confidence. Some came in with confidence, but most gained going out on shift."
"At the beginning there was apprehension – 'what will this be like'. On subsequent patrols they were more realised and confident."
"I feel like Carlos and I can take credit for being a model for engagement and for preparing people for possible engagements."
"I can think of some people (rough sleepers) who we engaged with, going by their reaction, I think they felt an enhanced sense of belonging. For example, one guy Carlos and the volunteer engaged with over 3 weeks - on the last day he had been offered his own tenancy and I could see he really enjoyed telling Carlos that it happened, you share those things when you have a connection and belonging."
"Even people who were eventually housed somewhere else, if there had been a relationship and mutual respect, the person felt there was a connection between self and the program."
"A couple of others (rough sleepers) we got to know in the last half of the program who seemed quite surprised that people wanted to talk to them and have a conversation – small ways that enhanced connection."
"Others would have acquired referral on to other services – that would have happened through Carlos."

“Once people realised we did not have an agenda, and we just wanted to have a conversation and offer something if needed. For example, a couple of people came towards us and make disparaging comments at the beginning, but they softened over the time as we persisted.”

“The reputation, predictability and continuity are the keys. The t-shirts and hoodies with the unique design help you stand out from others. I would have scoffed at the idea of having a branded t-shirts, but I have been proven wrong. But the credit is to the volunteers - they protected the brand. Years ago I saw another group with uniforms and it was all about showing that that were doing good. This was different.”

“There were only less than one third the number of rough sleepers on the streets than would have been before COVID. Engaging those that were there, when the time was right for them was our goal. Once COVID hit we focused on building the relationships with those that were still there. Some were very cynical at first, but as we stayed true to our purpose of no agenda. – just connection, they shifted. Even one of the most cynical people who has been on the streets for 15+ years, pro-actively engaged with us during the last month.”

“I think the real potential of this program is affecting change through educating and informing the broader community about these issues and challenges. Homelessness is not a sexy topic, and people don’t understand. For example, there is always NIMBY when it comes to social and affordable housing, but if they learn and empathise – that’s the potential to change mindsets.”

“Another thing is how well the program was accepted by other professionals. When they heard about it – they got it. They can see the power of human connection without an agenda – they see the role for the volunteer for the rough sleeper and for the ‘people power’ that happens when people have a shared understanding of the challenges.”

The NNC team identified aspects of the program that they believed contributed to the success including their relationships with the Outreachers, the level of training, the sensitivity to integrating the needs of the Outreachers and rough sleepers, and day-to-day management of the program.

Post program interviews with staff

“A lot of it is about the volunteers. It means a lot to know that so many people really want to make a difference they just don’t know how. We can help them contribute and that is powerful.”

“Carlos did a tremendous job – the volunteers respect him and when he talks they listened.”

“Carlos kept them up to date and pre-empted and empathised with frustration related to low engagements. They knew he cared for them.”

“The training looked very good. I did not attend but saw the content.”

“The management and retention of volunteers was excellent.”

“The screening was thorough, however, you still never really know how someone will react until you have the out there. Sometimes people look great on paper and they do have lots of experience and even credentials, but they struggle with relating at a human level. You can also

have someone with no related background but they just know how to connect. Our job is to make sure they both engage in a way that is sensitive and beneficial for the people who are sleeping rough.”

“Our facilitation is in part about helping the Outreachers relate in a peer-to-peer / human way and to gradually develop realistic expectations for how they can engage and the impact they can have. Some people come in with an overzealous belief about what they can accomplish. They want to engage with every person they see and expect they will be able to recommend the ‘right service’ that will deal with their challenges. It is rewarding when they come to understand relating in a way that causes the person to simply feel valued is success.”

“It is terrific when after a few outreaches, people come back and say ‘I get what we are trying to do’.”

“This program is different than the Newtown Program. For example, at Martin Place there may be 50 or more people running around accessing food or other things. The situation can feel daunting for volunteers. At the end of the program, I could see they were getting comfortable with the landscape.”

“I love to engage with these people. I know I can relate in a human way. If my involvement or how I related helps the Outreachers connect then I am glad. I know this type of engagement is powerful.”

“We were seen to do what we say what we do, that builds trust.”

“It was a good experience for me. There had been good recruiting, and everyone was really grounded in their expectations. They were asking the right questions.”

The team identified the limited number of engagements as the main area that may have been a negative experience for the Outreachers. They provided a few recommendations for continuous improvement including ideas for increasing the number of engagements. They also had ideas for improving the pre/de-briefings. The team commented on the necessity of educating the rest of the NNC staff about this project and the potential impact.

Post program interviews with staff

“We may need to give more attention to the routes. On one evening when I was not working, I was at Circular Quay and there were lots of rough sleepers there, but the Outreachers did not have any engagements that night.”

“I think one way of keeping the predictability and increase the number of engagements is to spend more time at Martin Place – because more opportunities will be there.”

“Maybe looking at other ways that teams could have a presence at Martin Place and design it in a way that gives permission to approach. For example, a table with water or offering a bottle of water to people in the food queue.”

“This program is different from the Newtown Outreachers. The CBD is different, and our purpose is slightly different. I think we need to spend more time sharing what we are doing with the rest of

the NNC staff, so they can see the potential in this type of program and the power of educating and engaging the broader community of volunteers.”

“At the pre-brief we could discuss where conversations were left with people – that might give people more confidence, so rough sleepers don’t have to tell their story over and over.”

In summary, the NNC team believed the program met its objectives of having a positive impact on the Outreachers, rough sleepers and the community. The team was keenly aware of the multiple layers of potential impact comprised in this program, including the direct impact on rough sleepers and the education and awareness building for the Outreachers, but also focused on the potential to affect the thinking and attitudes of the broader community through the Outreachers.

Outreachers were seen as enthusiastic participants who gained a deeper understanding of issues related to homelessness and experienced first-hand how to apply their knowledge in real life. The team saw the training and the facilitated outreaches as contributors to the Outreachers learning. They also highlight the value of the relationships they had with the Outreachers.

All team members described thoroughly enjoying being part of the program and uniformly credited their colleagues with the success of the program. They also appreciated the collaborative relationships that developed with CBD partners. The team members enjoyed building relationships with the volunteers, whom they described in positive terms.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Volunteer demographics

The project recruited 41 community volunteers, consisting of 29 females, 12 males. The majority of volunteers were between 20 and 39 years of age (Figure 1). Overall, the volunteers were well educated with 29 out of 41 having attained a bachelor or graduate degree (Figure 2). Occupational status was similar, with 27 working as managers or professionals, and four working in community, personal service or sales (Figure 3). Twenty-five reported currently working full time, seven part-time, two described themselves as students (Figure 4). Ten volunteers lived in Newtown and most others lived in surrounding suburbs and 13 worked in the CBD.

Fig.1 AGE

<20	1
20-29	15
30-39	10
40-49	7
50-59	6
60-69	1
70-79	1
>80	0

Fig, 2 EDUCATION

<11	0
Year 12	4
Cert III/IV	5
Advance Diploma	3
Bachelor	16
Graduate Diploma	1
Post Graduate	12

Fig 3. OCCUPATION GROUP

Managers	2
Professionals	25
Technicians and Trades	0
Community and Personal service	2
Sales	2
Machinery Operators and Drivers	0
Labourers	0
Other	7
Student	2
NA	1

Fig 4 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employed FT	25
Employed PT	7
Not Employed Looking for Work	3
Not Employed Not Looking for Work	0
Retired	1
FT career, no work outside the home	0
Disabled not able to work	0
Student/FT or PT	2
Other	3

Appendix 2: Training Evaluation

2020 Newtownian CBD Outreacher

Training Evaluation
2 September 2020

Immediately following the volunteer training, participants completed a survey to assess their impressions of the program, their perceptions of learning, and to provide general feedback about their experiences. The participants described the training in overwhelmingly positive terms. They valued the content, process and overall approach of the training.

This document summarises the quantitative and qualitative evaluation.

Participants benefited from and enjoyed the training. One hundred percent indicated they would recommend this training to someone else. Many expressed gratitude to the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) for offering this program for volunteers and for providing service to the community.

Thank you for providing such a well organised, fun, informative program, particularly in these turbulent times. You are all amazing.

Super grateful that this program exists!!! I think everyone involved is brilliant.

One-hundred percent of the participants reported an increase in their understanding of homelessness, with 69% describing the increase as *a lot* and an additional 27% stating they had a *thorough understanding* of homelessness after the training.

Has your understanding of homelessness increased?	27% thorough understanding 69% a lot 4% a little
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One-hundred percent rated the content of the sessions as engaging, and all participants indicated they were *satisfied*, with 57% reporting *extreme satisfaction* with the training. Overall the training was rated as *great* by 73% of participants and *good* by 27%. Pre-program communication, the session content, the spacing and length of the sessions, and the overall organisation of the program were seen as appropriate by 100% participants. They also appreciated the catering (65% *great*, 35% *good*).

How did you find the content of the training sessions?	100% engaging
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Were you happy/satisfied with the training that was provided?	57% Extremely satisfied 43% Satisfied
Overall, how would you rate the training that was provided	73% Great 27% Good
Did you feel there was enough communication prior to the start of the training?	100% Yes
How did you find the length of the weekly sessions?	100% Right length
How did you find the length of the individual presentations?	100% Right length
Did the weekly consecutive sessions suit you?	100% Yes
Do you feel like the training sessions were well organised and prepared?	100% Yes

Very well managed, especially considering all the changes made necessary because of C-19.

Excellent speakers and activities

Excellent facilitator

Very professional AND friendly welcoming

I could have stayed for longer each night out of pure interest

It would be great if the PowerPoint presentation was emailed to us to also have as a reference to turn to. There was great stuff on the slides!

After the training 96% of the participants indicated they felt ready to commence Outreach. Many indicated although they were prepared, they still expected to learn a lot during the Outreaches and were grateful to know they would have the support of the NNC staff.

I think there is still so much to learn from the hands-on experience and practical interactions, but overall, I feel ready.

Yes. But I'm a little apprehensive about the pandemic.

I will also feel much more confident when we have gone out with a team leader

Participants described a professional and positive vibe to the training. Several themes surfaced when participants described *the most interesting, their favourite and least favourite* training components.

While all of the sessions, presentations and activities were seen as positive and useful, some participants found the first week of training a little bit uncomfortable - typically attributing

the discomfort to unfamiliarity and the awkwardness of meeting new people. Some also found being asked to describe a trauma in their lives confronting.

New experience so less comfortable with everyone

I found the first week starting with having to speak about a trauma in your life quite confronting. I can see how it was actually quite powerful and really opened people up, but I find public speaking quite hard, so I am glad there was the option to just listen.

Several aspects of the training stood out positively for participants, including learning technical information related to homelessness, hearing about lived experience, and participating in experiential activities.

Technical information

Participants appreciated learning about legal and systemic issues impacting people sleeping rough, the different services available as well as gaining a sense of the complexity associated with homelessness.

I learnt a lot about the rights of people sleeping rough

Learning about the complexities of the lives of people sleeping rough and homeless

Found it crazy how expensive boarding housing was

When the lawyer came in and told us about the police. Confirmed a lot about the NSW Police. Very insightful

I also really valued the industry professionals volunteering their time to speak.

All the different agencies that provide assistance to homeless and how difficult it can be to access

The safety and how to engage sessions. Very practical

Experiential

Participants learned first-hand how hard sleeping rough could be, through the experiential activities.

The exercise where we moved around the room following instructions from different services in the industry. I got a very small sense of the confusion and hopelessness the system can cause.

The activity where you had to walk around the room moving through the system as though you were sleeping rough. That really emphasised how hard it can be

Lived experience

Hearing directly from people with lived experience was highly valued by the participants. They described these talks as providing insight and vividness, helping them gain a sense of the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

Very honest and insightful stories which painted a very real picture of the issues people who experience homelessness face.

It was good to hear the stories and how they got out of it.

Understanding their own stories and how they overcame their own traumas

The volunteers' participation in training has already achieved many program objectives. Participants gained knowledge and insight into homelessness. Moreover, they expressed empathy for the lived experience, gratitude for the learning opportunity and felt that others in the community would benefit from this type of learning. Some participants have already shared their knowledge and experiences with friends and colleagues, thus expanding the impact of the program. These participant quotes sum up their response to the training.

It's information that all Australians need to hear, at a time when they're open to really listening.

It was a privilege and an honour

Appendix 3: Project update (includes project history and progress through the formal training)

Newtopian Outreachers – Sydney

Project Update

August 2020

Following a successful locally based initiative in Newtown, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) is seeking to replicate a model of volunteering that will harness goodwill and increase Sydney's capacity to more effectively assist people experiencing homelessness. The project will involve recruiting, training, supervising and supporting a network of volunteer "Newtopian Outreachers" in the City of Sydney LGA, to meaningfully engage with rough sleepers and assist them in connecting with housing related services.

In October 2019, NNC invited key stakeholders based in the CBD to launch our proposed Newtopian Outreachers – Sydney project. The purpose of the meeting was to provide more information on the project and to gauge interest from participants to be involved in the project.

In December 2019 participating stakeholders were invited to join an advisory group designed to provide input and feedback as we developed the project. We were mindful that although we had developed a strong, successful program in Newtown, it was important that we developed strong partnerships with stakeholders in the CBD to ensure that we could provide the best possible service to people sleeping rough in the CBD.

In January 2020 our Project Advisory Group for the project was established with members from COS, Neami, SGCH, Wayside, DCJ, Uniting, Westpac and PwC coming on board.

The establishment of the Project Advisory Group assisted us in developing a model for the project, based on our original Newtown Outreach but designed specifically for the CBD. The input, advice and feedback provided by the advisory group has been invaluable and has assisted us greatly in shaping the model and understanding what is necessary in the CBD context.

The involvement of Jon Swain in the Project Advisory Group and the support received from him and COS on this project so far has proven to be incredibly fruitful. It has assisted us in developing and adapting our model, building strong relationships with key partners and allowed us to gain crucial knowledge. We are truly appreciative of all the support that we have received.

We had the benefit of having run the project in Newtown for 2 years and had experience with recruiting and training volunteers but developing the model in the CBD context was a potential challenge. The proposed project model that we developed for this project involved recruiting volunteers for 2 cohorts who would be trained over a 4-week period. Outreach would then occur twice a week in and around the CBD.

In February 2020 we began the recruitment process for volunteers. We provided information on the project and asked people to submit an Expression of Interest. This was posted through NNC channels as well as shared with our Project Advisory Group members with the hope that sharing through various networks would garner potential interest in the project.

By the end of February, we had received 53 EOI's and invited people to attend an information session on the 3rd of March. The response was inspiring. 20 people registered to attend but 34 people came along to the information session.

Applications opened for volunteers' early March and interviews were scheduled for the end of March. During this time, we drew on the relationships developed through the establishment of the Project Advisory Group to assist us with other key elements for the delivery of the project.

It was important that we secured a base for our Outreachers to brief and debrief for the patrols. A major challenge of this was the fact that Outreach would occur outside of business hours with Outreaches occurring between 6:00pm – 8:00pm. Through our relationship with Uniting we began conversations about the potential use of their sites and were able to secure 2 sites, one for Tuesday night and one for Thursday night which provided us with adequate coverage of the CBD.

It was also clear during this time that we needed professional staff to supervise and facilitate our Outreachers, so we began the process to recruit externally. Facilitation for our Newtown outreaches is provided by NNC staff but with limited capacity and resources, we had to look externally and reached out to the Project Advisory Group to assist us with this process.

The recruitment of these specialised professionals has been a challenge. Outreach occurs twice a week for very limited hours and we were aware that this might be a limitation for people looking for extra work or for those already committed to performing these duties in a full time capacity.

Not long after applications opened in March, we were presented with the evolving COVID-19 situation. Unsure of what this meant for the future of a project based on Outreach, we made the decision to proceed with recruitment and scheduled remote interviews with over 40 enthusiastic applicants.

From these applicants we recruited 37 Outreachers and proceeded with the next steps which involved background check clearances. Training was tentatively scheduled to commence on 28th of April, bearing in mind the evolving health crisis.

As the COVID-19 situation evolved, it was clear that we would be unable to proceed with training as scheduled, particularly considering it was an important aspect of the training to have volunteers attend face to face training.

In April, the decision was made to postpone training due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Communication with key stakeholders in the Project Advisory Group during this time provided us with great insight throughout the crisis and informed us on the response and support being provided to our neighbours sleeping rough.

The challenge with recruiting volunteers during a pandemic has been to keep people engaged and interested in the project with the understanding that we were unable to reschedule anything until the crisis improved. Regardless, we found that the volunteers were passionate and understanding that there would be potentially a greater need for a program such as ours once the situation improved.

We stayed in close contact with our volunteers during that time and kept them engaged, also bearing in mind that they themselves were experiencing a difficult and challenging time.

During this time, we received interest from Arup, an engineering firm in the CBD, to be involved in the project. Arup had 6 potential volunteers keen to be involved in the project and we invited them to join the proposed cohorts. The original scope of the project was to develop a corporate volunteering model and the involvement of an organisation like Arup provides us with a potential opportunity for feedback.

This time also allowed us the opportunity to adapt our training modules to ensure that they were relevant to the CBD context. We were also able to develop a stronger partnership with Neami and invited them to be involved in the development of our training package.

In June, with restrictions being eased and the situation showing improvement, we made the decision to reschedule training within a short window of opportunity. Training was scheduled to begin on the 7th of July. We held a virtual kick-off session prior to training which gave us the opportunity to meet as a group and thank the volunteers for their patience and perseverance. This also allowed our amazing evaluation consultant, Connie Henson, an excellent opportunity to begin the evaluation process of the project.

The group was then split into 2 cohorts with one group training on Tuesday nights and the other on Thursday.

We were aware that training as a group might prove a challenge for some volunteers, particularly considering the isolation that everyone had been experiencing and health concerns but found that all volunteers were keen to be involved.

Training ran successfully throughout July, initially with 42 participants, with only a few people dropping out over the following few weeks. One due to health concerns and 3 more due to injuries or personal reasons. The training package we developed covers an explanation of the service system, specific challenges and behaviours of people sleeping rough (Trauma, Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol), the legal rights of people sleeping rough, an introduction and involvement of agencies providing assertive outreach, presentations from people with lived experience, as well as an opportunity for volunteers to bond and share life experiences. In a questionnaire that was sent to our Outreachers post training, we assured people that their health and safety was paramount and asked people if they felt comfortable proceeding with Outreach, given the recent increase in COVID cases. Out of 38 volunteers that completed training, only 2 have stated that they are unsure about their involvement given the current situation.

A separate survey to evaluate the training program has showed positive results with all respondents indicating that they found great value in the training, that their knowledge and awareness has increased and that they feel ready to start Outreach.

Volunteers remain enthusiastic and feel connected to NNC. They have a great understanding of the project and see the value.

Although training is comprehensive, our Outreachers understand that this is only the first step and that training will be ongoing during Outreach.

During these last few months we have been able to strengthen our relationships with key partners. The strong involvement of Neami throughout the process has given them a greater understanding of the project and feedback from them and their enthusiasm has been positive and encouraging.

The close involvement of Neami and COS will also inform our Outreachers as we move forward and it is important that we have strong communication on a regular basis, as well as the sharing of information. This ensures that we provide the best possible service to the people we engage with as well as ensuring the safety of them and our volunteers.

One of the major challenges that we have had with the project, as stated earlier, has been securing Outreach Facilitators with the appropriate experience and knowledge of the CBD.

Prior to training we recruited an Outreach Facilitator to provide support to our volunteers during Outreach. We were able to employ someone who had experience leading teams on outreach as well as lived experience sleeping rough. One of the challenges with this proposition is establishing that there is adequate distance from that lived experience and, unfortunately, the timing was not appropriate for the person and they had to drop out at the last minute.

During the last few weeks, we have been able to secure someone with the necessary experience and knowledge and they are currently going through the induction and training process with NNC.

Outreach is currently scheduled to begin on Tuesday the 8th of September, with the understanding that the situation due to COVID can change at any given time. Regardless, we are looking forward to reporting back on how this next stage progresses.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre exists to create a more inclusive, resilient, vibrant and self-reliant community. We are a not-for-profit incorporated association serving Sydney's inner western suburbs.

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Appendix 4: Project update (includes history and outcomes for the outreach component of the program).

Newtopian Outreachers – Sydney Project Update December 2020

- Once we completed training, we anticipated that Outreach in the CBD would look very different due to COVID and the government's response, particularly with regards to Temporary Accommodation
- When we began Outreach, approximately two thirds of people that had been identified as sleeping rough had been offered temporary accommodation so there were fewer people visible on the streets
- The concern was that it was the most vulnerable or long-term street homeless that would be left behind
- We were also very aware that what we were proposing to offer in the CBD would be very different to what our volunteers offer with our Newtown Outreach
- The CBD is highly serviced and our goal was to compliment the assertive outreaches that occur in the area
- There was also the very real fact that the governments response was poorly managed and it was apparent that many of the people we would be engaging with might be feeling fatigued or unwilling to engage with another service
- Over the 3 month period that we conducted the pilot we have been fortunate enough to feel like we have been accepted in the CBD, particularly the community that frequents the food van that services Martin Place
- We were also fortunate to have connected and strengthened our relationships with other service providers in the CBD, particularly those that provide assertive outreach
- The involvement of the Project Advisory Group has also been invaluable in informing how we developed and designed the project
- We had many brief engagements in and around Martin Place as we patrolled the streets in that area
- Many of these engagements were brief hellos or simple questions and we have noticed that as we proceeded with the pilot, that more and more people felt comfortable enough to approach us
- There were approximately 3 weeks when we needed to adapt the Outreach due to absences and were subsequently unable to engage as anticipated. Regardless, there were still opportunities for our Outreachers to ask questions to the facilitator and learn more about services available to our neighbours experiencing street homelessness
- One of the challenges that we also anticipated was that many of the people we would be engaging with would be very familiar with the services already available in the CBD and that many people would already be connected with other service providers
- Our objective in the CBD was on connecting with people on a fundamental human level and focus predominantly on positive, meaningful engagements with the offer to refer people to other services if appropriate
- In addition to the many brief, undocumented engagements that we had, we documented 37 longer and more in-depth engagements

- Of those documented engagements, there were 3 people who we engaged with on more than one occasion of which we will share our experiences in some brief case studies
- There were very few opportunities to refer people to other services but we were still able to refer people or at least provide information
- We have been able to provide verbal information as well as pamphlets for organisations such as way2home, link2home, HPLS. We have also provided several phonecards.
- Those few that were referred gave us the opportunity us to interact and engage with COS, Neami, MissionBeat and HPLS
- The three people with which we had repeat engagements demonstrate the challenges that we anticipated but also demonstrate the potential of a project such as this

Avoidance to engagement

Barry* is a gentlemen in his 60's and well known to service providers as he has been a visible presence in the same location in the CBD for many years.

Barry is acutely aware of the services available and is reluctant to engage with other service providers.

He was reluctant to engage at first and quite cynical but he was kind enough to share some time with us and over those 3 months we have developed rapport.

His attitude to our team has changed, to the point where he is now very open and accommodating and looks out for us as we patrol on Tuesday and Thursday nights.

Both Barry and our team know that there is limited support that we can offer but it is obvious that he enjoys engaging with us and I know that our team appreciates the opportunity to listen to Barry's experiences.

Belonging – Someone to share success with

We met a gentlemen by the name of Andy* who was at Pitt St. mall with his dog, approx. 6 weeks into our pilot.

Andy had been in TA for 4 months during the response to TA but for whatever reason had his TA terminated and was back on the streets.

Andy was already connect with The Haymarket Foundation and was well aware of services available. Regardless, Andy was always keen to engage with us and we were able to connect with him on a fundamental level.

On the last night of our pilot, as we walked through Pitt St. Mall, we saw Andy in the distance and he got up and rushed to see us.

Andy was excited and told us that he had been waiting for us to let us know that he had been offered transitional housing that morning. He wanted us to know that he was OK if we didn't see him at Pitt St. mall and wanted to thank us for taking the time to talk to him.

Cynicism to story sharing

Darryl* is a gentlemen in his 50's who we met on the very first night that we went on patrol.

He approached us as we walked up Macquarie St. and the engagement was brief.

Darryl was very cynical and questioned who we were and why what we were doing.

It seemed possible that Darryl had had negative engagements in the past but we were still polite and thankful that he took the time to approach us.

About a month later Darryl approached us again and we were initially unsure how the engagement would go.

By this time people were already becoming familiar with us and on this occasion, Darryl was very keen to have a chat and share his story. This was also a great opportunity for him to better understand who we are and what our purpose is.

Darryl has since approached us again as he now feels more comfortable.

Connection people with services

Approx. 8 weeks into the Outreach we met a couple who frequent the area around Martin Place collecting money.

We had seen them a few times but were reluctant to intrude or disturb them.

The couple always acknowledged us and said hi but it was on this night that we had an opportunity to engage with them.

One of the first things they said to us was that they didn't really want to engage with other services but they were quite open to having a conversation with volunteers as we weren't necessarily offering anything.

Through the conversation we discovered that the wife had cancer and was unable to undergo surgery because she was underweight.

They also mentioned that they had been robbed recently and had spoken to MissionBeat about blankets and bedding but that they had not shown up.

We were able to contact MissionBeat direct and arranged for someone to come and see them.

Our team waited with the couple until MissionBeat arrived and they were provided with blankets, sleeping bags and food parcels.

They were very appreciative of our assistance and I know that our team walked away that night with the feeling that they had actually been able to do something for someone.

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