

# **The Barka pilot project in Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F)**

## **A 3 month report**

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 H&F was one of a number of London local authorities that received a grant from the Communities and Local Government to address issues relating to A8 accessional migrants. H&F wished to use the grant to deliver an intervention for A8 street populations who were engaging in street population activities including rough sleeping, street drinking and begging, but were not entitled to interventions or public funding. Many of these individuals were identified as highly vulnerable and at risk of becoming increasingly entrenched on the streets.
- 1.2 The council identified the Barka foundation, a Polish social inclusion charity, as a prospective partner as they had experience across Europe and were well aware of such issues for A8 nationals in the UK. Representatives from H&F and Broadway accepted Barka's offer of invitation to visit Poznan and the projects and communities set up by Barka to witness and learn about what they provided. What representatives witnessed far exceeded the expectations of the visitors and the findings of the visit are contained within the report of the visit.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 Following discussion with H&F, the Broadway and the Barka foundation, a proposal was agreed that a 6 month pilot would see Barka working through the Broadway day centre to contact and offer reconnection to accessional migrants who were on the streets of H&F. Reconnection would involve supporting contacts into rehabilitation and social integration programmes in their home country so that they were offered the opportunity to address all the problems that contributed to them experiencing difficulties they were not able to address in H&F.
- 1.4 In a Service level Agreement between H&F, Broadway and the Barka foundation, a target of 40 contacts with 3 individuals reconnected per month was agreed. Barka can only work with those A8s known in H&F to avoid creating a magnet service. The pilot started in June 2007 and runs until November 2007. The Barka Foundation will provide monthly monitoring reports and a full 6 month evaluation on completion.

### **2.0 3 month results**

At the stage of 3 months into the project 28 individuals have been reconnected. Details on the groups and current outcomes so far are given below:

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<sup>1</sup> The report can be obtained from the contact at the end of this paper

## 2.1 Group 1 & 2

An initial group of 6 agreed to leave on June 21<sup>st</sup> but it was reported that negative stories about the motives of the project and pressure from within A8 street population groups and their leaders caused 5 individuals to change their decision on the day. However one individual (first group<sup>2</sup>) still went back and on witnessing the Barka foundation programmes volunteered to come back to London to speak to those who decided not to return. During his three day return to London he spoke to the group and other A8s in the borough to dispel misconceptions about Barka. On July 16<sup>th</sup> he accompanied this second group to Barka Centres in Poland and later returned to his family in Wroclaw (and has stayed in regular contact).

The first member of the second group is now staying with their partner in accommodation operated by a social cooperative within the Barka system in the village of Chudopczyce and is working on Barka's farm there (visited by H&F representatives). On September 1<sup>st</sup> they will start education in the Centre of Social Integration, a vocational training school.

The partner of the first member also returned with this group and is now working in construction in Poznan with 4 members of one of Barka's self-help associations from the village of Chudopczyce.

The third member of this group completed a detox on 20<sup>th</sup> of August and has just entered rehabilitation in Miedzyrzecz.

The fourth member returned to his family in Wroclaw, and has stayed in regular contact with Barka

The fifth member has returned to his family in Wisła and keeps contact with Barka.

The sixth member returned to his family in Inowroclaw but has not been in touch with Barka since.

## 2.2 Group 3

A third group of 6 individuals left on 3<sup>rd</sup> August.

A letter of thanks (appendix 2) to Barka was written by this group and asked this be passed on. In this letter they described their experiences in London but stated they wished to stay with the Barka foundation to rebuild their lives.

2 persons from this group are currently living in a hostel within the Barka's Centre of Social Economy in Drezdenko and are currently in legal employment whilst they develop further skills. They are therefore engaged with Barka's cooperatives either through training or plans to work within one of

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<sup>2</sup> Although only 1 individual returned Barka refer to this as a group as they return assisted by other Barka members to ensure they are supported and as a continuation of engagement

Barka's social enterprises and are also continuing with ongoing rehabilitation programmes.

Two other members of the group have been living at the community farm in Chudopczyce. One member, whilst waiting to join the Centre for Social Integration, was arrested by police on the grounds of outstanding debts to the state. He was released on the condition he takes up employment to repay these debts, and intends to do so whilst staying at Chudopczyce. The other member firstly visited his family before returning to the Chudobczyce farm to work as a volunteer and is about to enter the Centre for Social Integration with plans to join one of Barka's partner social cooperatives.

Another member of this group returned straight to his family in Kielce.

The final member of this group began living at the community farm in Chudopczyce and was selling the polish street paper (Big Issue equivalent) whilst waiting for new legal documents. During this time, they were being encouraged to enter treatment for an alcohol problem. However despite agreeing to treatment, shortly before the programme was due to start the person became intoxicated and left for the seaside on the 27/08/07. Barka have not had contact since.

### 2.3 Group 4

A fourth group of 10 individuals left on the 17<sup>th</sup> August. 7 of these returned by Barka's minibus and 2 members, a mother and her baby son, were reconnected by flight and met by Barka representatives at the airport. The final group member, a woman from the Czech Republic, left for the Barka farm in Chudobczyce by a coach (the cost of her travel was covered by the Upper Room).

6 are living in a hostel, which has been established especially for this group by Barka's Centre of Social Integration in Poznan. (One group member has entered a detox unit).

The other 3 have returned to their families including the mother and baby son (Katowice and Warsaw).

### 2.4 Group 5

6 individuals were reconnected on August 31<sup>st</sup> so an update for this group will be available soon. (So far one person has entered a detox unit and another has returned to his family in Świdnik/Lublin).

## 2.5 Reconnection summary

Out of the 28 people reconnected so far, 19 are staying within community and housing associations which have grown out of the Barka foundation and are participating in programmes of work whilst preparing and planning for their future. 8 have been returned to their families. One person was unable to maintain their sobriety and left Barka without any contact details.

## 3.0 Other findings and work

### 3.1 A8 street population numbers

Barka have reported that after the first two months of the project they identified 97 A8 individuals in H&F who were considered to be without safe, suitable or legal accommodation. This includes Rough Sleepers and those living in squats or garages in the borough. The majority of these were found within the north of the borough (only 8 of the total identified in the south).

At the stage of having reconnected 21 individuals, Barka highlight they had reduced this number by 20%.

### 3.2 Other work with A8s

Barka are also utilising the assistance of a volunteer connected with the Ur4jobs service at the Upper Room, who helps with IT training, employment, legal advice and documentation. For instance a large number of those who have returned had passports lost or stolen whilst on the streets. The volunteer assists in such situation by providing those wish to reconnect with temporary passports and other necessary documentation.

Barka have also developed a full understanding of services available to A8s within the borough and refer as appropriately. For instance where someone is able and seeking work, they have direct links with employment services or support agencies in the borough such as the Polish Alcohol Anonymous (AA) group (Sw. Andrzej Boboli Church). Barka are however well aware of the condition within the SLA that they only work with those street populations within the borough so as not to create any magnet effect that may draw more A8 street populations into H&F.

### 3.3 Other agencies

Engagement and support from other agencies has generally been good, and the Upper Room (which offers services which attract significant A8 clients including job support) have been particularly helpful in working with Barka.

However there has historically been a different response from the Polish Centre which is central to Polish networks and organisations represented by previous generations of Polish migrants who are in very different positions

than Accession State migrants. Their position appears to remain that they are a cultural centre and are not positioned to assist with any work with A8 migrants.

#### 3.4 Summary of the work by Barka

H&F has been very satisfied with the level of work put into the project by Barka and their commitment to continuing to support those being reconnected after their return. Barka have developed an excellent understanding of the borough and the presenting issues and have developed a good relationship with the Broadway centre and other key agencies. The Broadway have also been highly commendable in supporting the development of the pilot and have worked through a number of challenges such as interpretation and changes in dynamics to the centre as a result of Barka's work.

The outcomes reported of those reconnected are largely viewed as very positive for those who have returned to families or are living, training or working within Barka's communities or social cooperatives. It is of course understood as emphasised by Barka that the process of rehabilitation and social integration is a long and challenging one, and many will require numerous attempts to achieve this.

A 3 month summary of the project by the Broadway's outreach team leader has also given a largely positive appraisal of the work done, especially in reducing the number of those sleeping rough in known hotspots in H&F. The report highlighted however some increase in numbers at the service particularly those seeking food on days of the departure. However the report indicates these issues are manageable and the increases are not people from out of borough but those already using the centre. The report is attached as Appendix 1.

#### **4.0 Beyond the 6 month pilot- A pan-London opportunity?**

The pilot is due to end in November 2007 and will be fully evaluated including feedback from Barka, the Broadway and H&F. However since the inception of the pilot, high levels of interest have been evident and many local authorities have proactively contacted the council and Barka seeking further information. Several of these councils have taken steps to move towards developing similar work with the Barka foundation. Additionally a number of voluntary, statutory and other organisations have contacted H&F wishing to discuss the project and expressing interest in being involved in any further development.

Having noted the successful outcomes of the first three months and the level of interest from other agencies and councils, the potential for continuing the pilot as a longer term project is recognised. However a key consideration is the risk that longer term the project could act as a magnet if continued in isolation as one borough. Therefore it is recommended that whilst the pilot could be extended until the end of the financial year, the development of a London wide approach is imperative in considering any longer term project of

this nature. Currently a network of relevant contacts is proposed to be established with a meeting of interested parties to discuss any further potential development of the project.

For more information please contact:

[James.Morris@lbhf.gov.uk](mailto:James.Morris@lbhf.gov.uk) or call 0208 753 2811

## Appendix 1-Broadway 3 month report on project by Joe Batty, Outreach Team leader

### Summary of A8 Barka Project Pilot in Hammersmith and Fulham

The first three months of the Barka contract have had a major impact on the Broadway Centre and the clients that use it. The initial stages of the contract was marked by suspicion and animosity as Poles in the centre viewed the Barka people as invading their own world and upsetting the status quo.

After the first month this settled down, as the project worked on ID issues and built up confidence in them as a practical organisation. Consistency of street level work alongside that of the already trusted Broadway Outreach team also helped embed the projects into the consciousness of those who were sleeping out. The big breakthrough came when the first client to return to Poland came back to the Broadway Centre and extolled the virtues of the work happening back in Poland. This was a real fillip to Barka and convinced some of the street level “leaders” of the Polish community that what Barka are offering is worth pursuing, since a number of the “leaders” have taken up the opportunities and return to Poland.

The impact on the Centre itself has been mixed. The Barka way of working has not been a perfect cultural fit with the Broadway Centre and has led to misunderstandings and has upset, on occasion, the working pattern of the Day Centre. However, this has never proven insurmountable and accommodation on both sides has been achieved. During the week of returning to Poland there is a particular stress placed on the Broadway Centre as there is a profound spike in the numbers using the site as people due to leave say their goodbyes and have to attend daily meetings in preparation. This can turn into a bit of a circus as the Barka staff numbers swell, with staff changes, drivers and other invitees coming to experience the event of people leaving. It is a spectacle, and is meant to be so as it builds a sense of occasion for those leaving and for those vaguely interested in what is happening – perhaps sowing seeds for them to return?

The impact on the streets has been dramatic in some areas, the hotspot to the rear of Iceland on Downes Place has reduced from 20 people down to 8 and further reductions are likely. This has certainly helped Broadway as communities on the street tend to grow when others are around, if the numbers decline so the likelihood of others joining decreases.

The impact on the Centre space wise has sometimes been difficult, but a duty session twice a week has changed this and means that the heavier numbers are not experienced every day. There has also been a marked increase in centre users wanting to eat, up on some days by 30%, this is generally absorbable but does place additional stresses on the catering staff and on the provision of food.

The frequent changes in staff by Barka do not unduly appear to have impacted upon the service as two of the leaders of Barka tend to be around constantly for continuity. The workers that have come for the outreach seem to, mainly, have been of a good quality and their approach has been assessed by Andy Zapletal as being direct and appropriate (Andy is a Polish speaker and substance misuse specialist).

## Appendix 2 - Letter of thanks from 2nd group to return (names kept in at request)

Poznan-Chudopczyce-Drezdenko 14.08.2007 r.

Thank you BARKA!

We are a group of Poles who spent recent years outside the home country. We left with an intention of improving our material situations. In Poland we had no job and we lost our livelihood. Many of us, often for the last penny borrowed from family or friends, decided to get a ticket and take an opportunity to live and work in England. This was decided with no preparation or ability to speak the language.

Beginnings varied, some of us got a job at once, others after time. By working and making around 200-300 pounds a week we could afford renting a flat, purchasing food and leading a descend life.

Everything was fine as long as there was a job do to. Having neither permanent employment nor contract of service, many were cheated by employers who did not pay us salary. The worst was to work for compatriots. It was them who most frequently did not fulfil their commitments. When a job and money ended, one had to leave the flat. With no resources we were left on streets. Most fell into depression and increasingly cured failures with alcohol. No one thought of returning home. We were ashamed to arrive in home towns and face family and friends with no money. Day after day we found more companions and alcohol.

One got money for drinking in different ways such as begging and asking people or selling coloured metals. On failure one simply went to supermarkets and stole. Gradually our situation became worse. Drinking, hangover, drinking, hangover, no will to work.

Living this way we met people who earlier found themselves on streets. It was them who pointed out places where one can eat for free, bathe and change into clean clothes.

We all were in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Help was offered by a few institutions: "Broadway Centre", Methodist Church, nuns of Mother Teresa as well as a pastor from America – Bruce.

Subsequently, having slept in parks or gateways, we were being robbed of documents which enabled us to undertake legal work. We had to count on ourselves. The above mentioned institutions run relief programs only. In England there is a lack of concern for human being. We were only taken as people for whom the staffs of charities get paid "apiece".

Day after day we became more frustrated. With no hope for better times and close to giving up we found a light in the tunnel.

We learned that representatives of "Barka"Foundation came to London. Among Poles in tough situations there were lots of critical opinions about them. They were said to have come to "clean London off people who touched the bottom" - those who England wants to dispose of. Their help was supposed to be about paying for issuing a passport and taking back to Poland – that's it. However, it turned out that their help was reaching further. We met Grzegorz, Marek and Tomek and they explained to us what their help was about. They dealt with us individually. These people have gone through stuff so they understood us instantly and helped in a complex way. They supported us with having our documents issued and after a couple of days we were in the home country.

In the "Barka" Foundation community home in the village of Chudopczyce we were received very warmly by all community members.

It was a difficult decision for us to give up drinking, old friends and "easy" lives on streets. During a few-day-stay in the community we learned about enormous opportunities offered by "Barka".

From the beginning we were accommodated in nice rooms with regular beds and clean sheets which we did not have for long.

„Barka” operates a few programs helping people with problems. They provide support with finding a job, establishing social cooperatives, run thematic courses for those who want to retrain.

All who were reconnected have made a decision to stay with the Foundation and want to build our future with these people. It was them who stretched out their hand to us, were able to listen, and helped to relax and to focus on the new opportunities. They appealed to us and explained that outside of home there were lots of our countrymen in difficult situations.

Having experienced the involvement and determination of brothers from "Barka", I am sure these people will be reached.

We would like to express thanks to the Founders of "Barka" – Tomasz and Barbara Sadowski and all brothers and sisters in the community.

We are awaiting our friends from London. Come and visit! WELCOME!

*Janusz, Jurek, Ilona, Bogdan, Paweł, Robert, Darek*

P.S. Please send the letter out to our compatriots in London and let them know of the address where they can meet representatives of "Barka". Also please add pictures to the letter.

Translation: Ewa Sadowska, Barka office in London.