Our Impact...

...On Charities
The impact of SkillsBridge support on charities, social enterprises and community groups is often felt over time. A new business plan might take time to become fully operational, staff who have been mentored need the opportunity to develop and implement the skills they’ve learned. In the short term we can see an effective and positive return from the work we put in but our goal as a charity goes beyond this. We want to support the development of a vibrant, effective, sustainable voluntary and community sector, one that has the capacity to meet needs and is both creative and innovative in its approach. That’s less straightforward to measure but that is where much of the real value lies, and it’s the key driver behind our work.

...On Businesses
Over 75 of our leading businesses support the work of SkillsBridge which is what makes a small charity have such a big impact. It’s thanks to all of our 155 skilled and talented volunteers who support our work that we’re able to provide support in everything from high level strategic planning to information management systems, and from front line HR to website design. There are far too many areas of support to list but the key to all of it is that we take a personal centre approach. SkillsBridge is about creating great partnerships between our skilled advisors and people they work with. In getting that right the benefit flows both ways and our advisors get something valuable in return.

...On Individuals
Through two courses in West Yorkshire 25 recent migrants, refugees and asylum seekers supported on our Work Out programme. Backed by sound research and developed to fill a gap in provision, Work Out provided more than just run of the mill training, it gave people a sense of hope and purpose. By creating a programme that involved as much listening as talking we were able to understand and adapt around individual needs to provide tailored support that recognises each person’s unique skills and qualities. In addition to a great sense of camaraderie and a positive approach to building the life they value, our participants:

- Developed their confidence and self belief
- Clarified their aims and goals
- Discovered a sense of purpose
- Created a personal development plan
- Improved communication skills
- Accessed mentoring, training and peer support
- Developed their confidence and self belief
- Accessed mentoring, training and peer support

After my retirement from Local Government I was looking to pursue a range of activities and was pleased to join SkillsBridge. I have thoroughly enjoyed mentoring third sector Chief Executives/Directors who have been able to talk through their various issues on a confidential basis. It has given me the opportunity to play a minor role in supporting the sector when they face financial challenges, at a time when their services are even more in demand.

John Robinson, former Group Director, Local Environmental Services at Gateshead Council

SkillsBridge Annual Review
2015-16

£338,000 Of new income generated

£88,000 Of savings made

£53,000 Of pro bono consultancy

£3.33 For every £1 it cost to run SkillsBridge, charities received £3.33 in benefit

53 Charities provided with one-to-one support

2 Charity partnerships developed and supported

100% Rated the experience of working with SkillsBridge as good or excellent

100% Said it gave them a sense of achievement and a ‘feel good’ factor

50% Reported that they have developed a long term relationship with the charity they supported

100% Told us they would recommend SkillsBridge to a colleague

100% Said we made the best use of their skills and expertise

62% Said they developed new networks and opportunities

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Chief Executive’s Letter

Every year seems to be a tough year in the charitable sector at the moment but it’s important that we take time to stop and reflect on what we’ve achieved and how far we’ve come over the last 12 months. It has been another year of change that has seen us branch out in new and exciting ways.

In Bradford we launched the Work Out programme, using our skilled volunteers to help mentor and support individuals rather than organisations, and in the North East we’ve been supporting not one but two local area partnerships. All of this is on top of our skills sharing work that has benefitted over 50 charities and social enterprises in two regions, across four counties.

We’ve never been an organisation that has contented itself with repeating the same formula year on year. The world changes, new challenges emerge and we must change to meet them. This isn’t a departure, it’s an evolution. We weren’t set up to champion any one single cause; we were set up to support communities, and we must continue to grow and change if we are to do that effectively.

We may not be a big, cash rich charity but what we do have to offer are the skills and time donated by over 150 people from 75 businesses. People that have a passion for helping others and skills and experience built up over many years. That’s a tremendous resource and one we’re committed to focusing to bring the biggest community benefit.

I hope you’re inspired by some of the work our skilled volunteers have been doing and if you are then feel free to get in touch and find out more. SkillsBridge is that small but vital mechanism that links the talented and generous people in our local communities with the good causes right on their doorstep that need their support. How we do that is the really interesting part and so without further ado I’ll let you read on and see for yourself the work that SkillsBridge does to change lives.

Chairman’s Letter

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2015-16. Times are changing in the North East and we’ve changed our work to keep pace with that. It’s often the case that change needs time to bed in and show results but this last year we’ve hit the ground running and as the pages that follow will show, we’ve seen a lot of early successes from our new work in West Yorkshire and our Partnership Development in the North East.

To take nothing away from our dedicated team, SkillsBridge is a conduit for the goodwill, the talent and the expertise we have in our local business community. Our work is founded on the people who give freely of their time to help others. It’s our job to match them with projects that inspire them and make the best use of their skills. Their feedback to us is captured on the back page and I’m pleased to say shows that we’ve done that successfully.

I think we’re all increasingly aware of the challenges we face as a society, with new members of our community arriving and an ageing population that deserves our respect and our support. We see the work we do as tapping into people’s and business’s social giving as a resource, and we will continue to explore new ways to use that resource to help our communities now and in the future. So expect more change in the years to come. Perhaps we’ve only scratched the surface of what we can achieve when we match good will and talent with need.

Some of the best ideas start with a simple conversation so if you feel inspired by what you read and want to share your thoughts and views with us then we’re always happy to hear from you. Lastly, on behalf of myself, my fellow trustees and the team, I’d like to say a heartfelt thank you to all of you who have supported our work this year. It’s a privilege to have you with us on the journey.

Richard Bottomley OBE
Chairman

The world changes, new challenges emerge and we must change to meet them. This isn’t a departure, it’s an evolution.

SkillsBridge has been supported in our work this year by:

- Esme Fairbairn Foundation
- The Dallerton Trust
- Lottery Funded
- Northumberland County Council
- Newcastle City Council
- K.W. Mann Trust
- Sir James Knott Trust
- TL Dallas
SkillsBridge Board

Our Board of Trustees represent skills across a number of sectors including charity infrastructure, corporate responsibility, social enterprise, legal and accountancy expertise and high level governance. They provide leadership to the organisation and review and set our strategic aims and goals.

Our Trustees are passionate about our work and about finding new and innovative ways to bring the expertise within our region to the benefit of those most in need in the community. Having led the development of the skills sharing brokerage they have led us into new areas of work including the development of partnerships to facilitate direct delivery. This has broadened the portfolio of our work and increased the opportunities available for skilled volunteers to get involved.

Our Board continue to play a key role in shaping the future direction of the organisation as we look ahead at emerging challenges and new opportunities.

Richard Bottomley OBE Chair
Richard has been Chairman of SkillsBridge since 2009. A former KPMG Senior Partner, he has advised on strategic planning and corporate transactions, including multi-national groups as well as owner managed businesses. Richard is currently Chairman of Greggs Plc Pension Scheme, a director at Newcastle Building Society and a director at Durham CCC.

John Litherland Board Member
John supported the development of SkillsBridge in 2011 as a Consultant. Since 2012 he has been on the Board of Trustees. He has become heavily involved in community enterprise in Newcastle after having over 20 years experience of North East local authorities at Director level. John is Chair of Recycle Y’like, a charity which has trading bases in Newcastle and Durham.

Jan Worsters MBE
Jan is Chair of Durham Community Action, Lay Chair of St Cuthberts PCC and Chair St Cuthberts Hall committee. Before retiring she was Chief Officer of North Tyneside VODA. She has promoted the value of the third sector in a range of forums, including North Tyneside Strategic Partnership, VONNE and the Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland.

Tim Jones Board Member
Tim is Chief Executive of the Allia Group the 2001 original founding organisation of SkillsBridge and Chairman of its sustainability and global flavour and fragrance supplier Treat Plc (LSE:TTE). Tim also serves on the boards of Retail Charity Bonds Plc, Good Business Alliance Ltd and the Business School at Anglia Ruskin University.

Graham Randell
Graham is the former Director of Social Responsibility and Managing Director for Greggs Plc in the North East and Cumbria. He is also a trustee of Northern Sinfonia and a former trustee of the Tyneside Cinema.

Adrian Stanley
Adrian is a former Partner at Everneds. His expertise covers public and private sector urban regeneration and commercial development. In addition he is a former trustee of Northern Architecture and a former governor at Dame Allan’s schools.

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Tim Pain Board Member
Tim is Assistant Director at the University of Sunderland, having previously worked as a consultant working on a variety of assignments including economic strategies and business engagement projects. Tim was formerly Head of Business Enterprise & Skills at One North East.

Tim Jones Board Member
Tim is Chief Executive of the Allia Group the 2001 original founding organisation of SkillsBridge and Chairman of its sustainability and global flavour and fragrance supplier Treat Plc (LSE:TTE). Tim also serves on the boards of Retail Charity Bonds Plc, Good Business Alliance Ltd and the Business School at Anglia Ruskin University.

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SkillsBridge Team

Andrew White Chief Executive
Chris Orrock Operations Manager
Giorgia Malam Associate Project Officer, West Yorkshire

SkillsBridge first emerged as an area of activity for SkillsBridge in 2014. We recognised that there might be a way to focus the skills and expertise we broker to support some of the communities in greatest need and do it in a way that addresses the key issues that people are facing.

That started us on a journey that led to Our Place, a national programme aimed at giving residents a say in the services they would like to see delivered in their local area. Over the course of the year we worked with local groups, businesses and the council to develop a plan for the area. At the end of the process a group of local charities decided to form themselves into a partnership to work like a mini-consortium, enabling them to take on and deliver projects wider and with greater impact than any of them could on their own.

Funding and continued support from the council made this development possible and two years on the partnership has ambitious plans to tackle some of the most persistent problems facing Benwell and Scotswood.

Inspired by the success of this partnership some of the members and the local authority wanted to set up a second partnership in neighbouring Benwell, following the same process. We successfully applied for Our Place funding once again and with a blank sheet of paper went through the community consultations that had taken place to really understand what residents wanted to see change in their area.

In almost every case environment came top of the list. Despite regular clean ups and a variety of interventions parts of Elswick were experiencing high levels of litter, rubbish and fly-tipping. We set to work trying to understand what could be done to increase recycling and reduce waste. At the heart of our plans is the community itself.

With reducing budgets on all fronts, whatever projects were developed would have to be in the hands of local residents if they were to succeed and become sustainable.

It’s clear to us that partnerships like these are a powerful tool. There is a process, there is a need for facilitation, but when it’s done well with the right group of people the result is much more than a sum of the parts. We’re delighted that looking ahead to 2016 we will still be working to support both partnerships as they move forward with their plans and help to transform the areas in which they live and work.
When we began working in Bradford in 2014 we saw SkillsBridge take off much as it has in the North East, linking skilled professionals with charities and social enterprises that needed their expertise and support. We’ve helped over a dozen local organisations to improve their capability, generate new income and make savings. But with a change of project officer, the seeds of some fresh new ideas began to emerge. Giorgia Mariani took over the role and as a new person in our organisation saw it in a fresh light. What Giorgia saw and what we came to see, is that the skilled volunteers who make SkillsBridge possible, have the potential to do much more than support organisations, they could also support individuals. It might seem like a simple change, but for SkillsBridge it was the start of a much longer journey. We recognised that there is a potential for our skilled advisors to mentor and support individuals in a number of ways, but first and foremost it is important that we do that to enhance and extend the work of other charities and community groups rather than compete with them.

Discussions and meetings with a number of partners across Bradford followed and that led us down a channel of recognising where the greatest need lay and where we could add most value. This issue that kept staring us in the face was the need to support recent migrants, refugees and asylum seekers with their personal development and social integration. Everyone we spoke to told us the same tale; there is a huge need for a programme to do this but no one is meeting that need. This led us to develop the Work Out programme, aimed at providing one-to-one and group support to help individuals create a sustainable livelihood and build the life they value in the UK. So far we have helped 25 individuals through two groups all referred to us by a host of partner organisations, social enterprises, local mosques and churches or by word of mouth.

The achievements of the group are too wide and varied to easily sum up, but with the help of Giorgia and a number of professional mentors they have accessed employment, training, volunteering and perhaps most importantly feel they have a firm foundation to build on and a plan for the future. They each have their own story to tell and though we only have space for one of those stories here, it paints a picture of how a programme like this can make a difference to people’s lives. Meanwhile the quest to continue to fund this work goes on, and in that, of course we are not alone.

Work Out

When in Bradford in 2014 we saw SkillsBridge take off much as it has in the North East, linking skilled professionals with charities and social enterprises that needed their expertise and support. We’ve helped over a dozen local organisations to improve their capability, generate new income and make savings.

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Case Study: Zyad and Kafa’s Story

It’s a sunny spring morning when Syrian couple Kafa and Zyad meet Giorgia Mariani in a quiet cafe in the centre of Bradford. It’s been an eventful time since they fled Syria in 2015.

“We had a comfortable life in Homs. Suddenly everything was… Zyad gestures with his hands searching for the words, “upside down. There was shooting in the streets. That was still bearable. Then the mortar shelling started. Take a look, my daughter, was crying in my lap. She couldn’t sleep. We decided to leave overnight.”

Zyad jumps in, “We couldn’t take Zyad’s papers and certificated. Luckily mine were in my bag. We had a five bedroom flat. Last year we heard half the building our flat was in was destroyed. Money, a house, all that will come again. Your family, your lives, that is important. Inshallah, we can start again.”

After a moment she says, “The walls and furniture are not so important. It’s the personal stuff we can’t get back again, our wedding pictures, pictures of the children when they were small. I thought we were going to be away for a few months.”

Zyad picks up the tale. “I had a sense it would be longer… so we turned off the electricity, emptied the freezer and the fridge and ate what we could. We drove through tanks on our route. I requested an officer to let us pass. We were almost turned back.”

Kafa jumps in, “It was 3 March 2012,” Kafa says with a bit of_the_anxiety that is still bearable. Then the mortar shelling started. Take a look, my daughter, was crying in my lap. She couldn’t sleep. We decided to leave overnight.”

Kafa jumps in, “We couldn’t take Zyad’s papers and certificated. Luckily mine were in my bag. We had a five bedroom flat. Last year we heard half the building our flat was in was destroyed. Money, a house, all that will come again. Your family, your lives, that is important. Inshallah, we can start again.”

A couple decided to sign up because they needed support to find what they were looking for and clarify how things work in the UK.

“SkillsBridge, through Giorgia, has given me support, confidence, awareness, and information on legalities, jobs and education.”

Zyad has medical issues as he was affected by injuries as a child. Giorgia is helping them understand the system so they can match Zyad’s needs with suitable housing in a neighbourhood close enough to their children’s school.

The couple have also realised that though they had done a lot of things, there was still work to do. Zyad’s job doesn’t offer a fixed amount of hours it was very important for the couple to understand what to do or they could end up in a precarious position. Giorgia arranged a meeting with the Job Centre’s Community Support Worker who advised Kafa and Zyad accurately.

There are other things Kafa is doing besides.

“I’m studying Maths and English to help my children with school work. They are safe and we’ll be able to pay for the course. Giorgia put her in touch with Eman2, an interpretation service provider, helped her with the application and practice a mock interview. Giorgia also accompanied Kafa to the interview, and Kafa was taken on straightaway.”

“God, what I wanted!” Kafa says.

As a thank you, she made Giorgia a Syrian breakfast, over which they discussed what it means to be self employed, and how the new job would affect the household income, because by taking this job the couple’s job seeker allowance would end.

Since the job doesn’t offer a fixed amount of hours it was very important for the couple to understand what to do or they could end up in a precarious position. Giorgia arranged a meeting with the Job Centre’s Community Support Worker who advised Kafa and Zyad accurately.

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“I got what I wanted!” Kafa says.

She intends to get the level 5 Diploma in public service interpreting (OPSI) but as it is quite expensive she wanted a part time job to be able to pay for the course. Giorgia put her in touch with Eman2, an interpretation service provider, helped her with the application and practice a mock interview. Giorgia also accompanied Kafa to the interview, and Kafa was taken on straightaway. Case study written by Barsa Ray www.barsaray.wix.com/words-worth
Statement of Financial Activities

Year ended 31 March 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unrestricted Funds</th>
<th>Restricted Funds</th>
<th>Total Funds 2015</th>
<th>Total Funds 2014</th>
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<tr>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
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Incoming Resources

From generated funds
- Voluntary income: £29,000
- Activities for generating funds: £610
- Investment income (bank interest): £184

Total incoming resources: £94,794

Resources Expended

Charitable activities: £87,291
Governance costs: £1,708

Total resources expended: £88,999

Net income/(expenditure) for the year: £5,795

Total funds brought forward: £55,231

Total funds carried forward: £61,025

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet

As at 31 March 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Funds 2015</th>
<th>Total Fund 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
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Fixed Assets

- Tangible assets: £389

Total Fixed Assets: £389

Current Assets

Debtors and prepayments: £8,000
Cash at bank and in hand: £62,463

Total Current Assets: £70,463

Less:

Creditors: amounts falling due within one year: (£9,438)
Net current assets: £61,025

Total Assets less current liabilities: £61,025

Funds of the Charity

Unrestricted funds: £55,231

Total funds: £55,231

The trustees are satisfied that the charitable company is entitled to exemption from the provisions of the Companies Act 2006 (the Act) relating to the audit of the financial statements for the year by virtue of section 477 of the Act and that no member or members have requested an audit pursuant to section 476 of the Act.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for:

(i) ensuring that the charitable company keeps proper accounting records which comply with section 380 of the Act; and
(ii) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of the financial year and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its surplus or deficit for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of the Act relating to financial statements so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). The notes on pages 11 to 17 form an integral part of these accounts. These financial statements were approved by the Board on 20 October 2015 and are signed on their behalf by:

R J Bottomley
Chair
Sharing Skills

In the last year we’ve worked with 53 medium sized charities and social enterprises, supporting them with the fantastic work they do.

We know that the work they do takes time, dedication and skill, so our first job is to understand how SkillsBridge can really add value.

The first and perhaps most important stage of SkillsBridge support is to develop that clarity and get to the heart of the issue or challenge they’re facing.

Often charities tell us that going through this process is one of the things they benefit from the most. It’s easy for any of us to get so close to the work we care about that we forget to take a step back and really look at things from a broader perspective. This isn’t about telling charities what they need, it’s about asking the right questions to make them question and understand the starting point of what may well turn out to be a journey that spans several support projects. Organisational development and transformation takes time and the skilled staff and volunteer Advisors to make it happen. Below are a few of the stories from last year’s work that show how our SkillsBridge Advisors make a difference.

Go Local Food

Established in 2009, Go Local Food Ltd is a cooperative based in the rolling hills of the Tyne Valley at Ovington offering members regular bags of fresh vegetables. The organisation is a Community Supported Agriculture Scheme (CSA) which aims to reconnect local communities with the food they eat and the land on which it is grown.

With support from SkillsBridge, Go Local Food Ltd recognised that in order to develop the business side of the organisation, they would benefit from external professional support. SkillsBridge matched the team with Mark Henderson, CEO of Home Group whose skills and experience around business planning and strategy helped the organisation to understand the options available for future income generation.

Kielder Observatory

Kielder Observatory is a public outreach astronomical facility located in Kielder Forest, which boasts some of the darkest skies in Europe and the third largest protected Dark Sky reserve in the world.

The goal is to bring in members of the public of all ages from primary school children and upwards to engage in discussions and observations of the universe.

The organisation has been going through a period of rapid growth and the team were struggling to efficiently deal with emails and IT systems. Patti Putsali, office manager, approached SkillsBridge to have an initial discussion around the issue. In her own words, “Chris from SkillsBridge visited our offices and after an in-depth discussion about KOAS and its needs we decided that initially, help with our IT systems seemed to be the priority.”

SkillsBridge paired KOAS with Lee Richardson from Coast Technology, a small technology organisation based in Morpeth, Northumberland who supported KOAS in setting up their IT systems to allow every team member to have their own email address.

The difference Lee’s support made has been felt throughout the organisation. Patti commented, “We went ahead with Lee’s plan in full and now we have a fully integrated system using Microsoft 365 which has made a massive difference to us as a professional business. Lee’s unending help and subsequent support since the new system was put in place in November 2015 has been invaluable, the full costs of which would have been impossible for us to fund ourselves.”

As a direct result of support from Coast Technology, SkillsBridge managed to save KOAS £3,000.

FILMBEE

FILMBEE is an artist-run film community interest company based in Burnley, Northumberland. They work creatively with analogue film but also offer new skills in documentary and education sessions in animation and digital filmmaking. Recently, the group have decided to curate film programmes of artist’s moving image work and specialised cinema.

FILMBEE approached SkillsBridge for support to help them to develop a new, more efficient financial system within the organisation and SkillsBridge was able to find the perfect match for the team in Darren Ferguson of Hayes Watts in Newcastle. Darren helped FILMBEE create new systems and procedures within the organisation which has helped them become more efficient in their bookkeeping, have better, more robust accounting practices and save on accountants fees.

Christo Walters from FILMBEE said: “We are now able to start from ‘ground zero’ with our accounting and feel a lot clearer about our financial management.

One of our main objectives is to run the centre and be able feed money back into the resources of the community.”

Age UK Gateshead

Age UK Gateshead is a local charity that has been in operation since 1973 supporting on average 800 older residents in the Borough of Gateshead each week. The charity offers various services including day care centres and social groups for older people, as well as a range of activities and services that help to reduce social isolation and promote independent living.

Having recognised the need to maximise their potential for developing good quality applications to funders, Ian Wolstenholme, CEO of Age UK Gateshead approached SkillsBridge for support. SkillsBridge introduced Ian to Nikki Wilkinson who specialises in supporting third sector organisations develop their funding strategies.

Nikki delivered training to the team at Age UK Gateshead and provided lots of hints and tips around developing successful funding applications. Ian told us: “Working with SkillsBridge, and Nikki has given me the professional support needed to invest in the organisation and make a tangible difference.”

As a direct result of working with Nikki, Age UK Gateshead were successful in securing an additional £30,000 of funding which will be used towards the cost of delivery services to their beneficiaries.