

DAWSUN Sewing Hub and Free Clothing Exchange Hub – Providing clothing upcycling and ethnic minority women community sewing skills, language practice, and pathways to employment.

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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DAWSUN Sewing Hub and Free Clothing Exchange Hub – Providing clothing upcycling and ethnic minority women community sewing skills, language practice, and pathways to employment.

Title	DAWSUN Sewing Hub and Free Clothing Exchange Hub – Providing clothing upcycling and ethnic minority women community sewing skills, language practice, and pathways to employment.
Lead Organisation	Disapora African Women’s Support Network (DAWSUN).
All Organisations	Disapora African Women’s Support Network (DAWSUN).
Category	The Project has ended without evaluation of its impact and a low turnover of service users. This may change if future funding streams are found and the Project can then re-open. It has therefore been categorised as ‘interesting’.
Poverty Impact	Reduction. Mitigation.
Introduction to the Project	
<p>The Sewing Hub focused on teaching women of ethnic minorities and low-income backgrounds to sew, increasing their confidence and offering them a pathway to paid employment. The participating women receive free training in sewing, and once they have advanced knowledge in sewing, they are employed at the Sewing Hub, offering alteration and engaging in sewing projects. Every last Saturday of the month the Free Clothing Exchange Hub offers the community free clothes, shoes, and bags, some of which have been altered in the Sewing Hub.</p>	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?	Beneficiaries of other DAWSUN Projects.	
How did the idea for the project come about?		
The DAWSUN Executive Director and project coordinator took up the idea of a community based sewing hub and discussed how to bring women of different ethnic minority groups together and provide them with a skill set that would be useful to them in the future. This led to the initial project, called Homelessness Intervention Hub, in which DAWSUN provided sewing training for eight women originating from different parts of the world, such as Sudan and Algeria, to mitigate the risk of homelessness. Participants received sewing training from a volunteer instructor whom they met a couple times a week.		
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?	No	
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes	
DAWSUN executives and beneficiaries of other projects.		
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes.	
Some staff members and beneficiaries of DAWSUN have lived experience of poverty and marginalism.		
Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?	Yes.	
Which organisation provided funding?	The Glasgow Homelessness Network.	
How much was required?	Not specified.	
What was the specific source of funding?	Not specified.	

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Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?		Yes.
Staff/Volunteer Time		
Facilities / Workspace	The women and sewing instructor met a few times a week in meeting rooms at the DAWSUN headquarters (Adelphi Centre).	
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewing machines, locking machines, and irons. • Sewing materials (thread, buttons, and other sewing equipment) both bought and donated. 	
Local Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about the living situations of women of ethnic minority backgrounds, sewing instructors, and potential funders. • A woman from the local community offered to be a translator for the project participants. 	
Food and Drink		
Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?		Yes
<p>Language barriers proved to be a major issue and were given consideration in the development of the project. Most women who are engaged now in the Sewing Hub are Arab-speaking individuals, and for some of them, English was not their first language or they did not speak much English. DAWSUN quickly discovered that talent has no language because the women, even though they couldn't speak the same language, were able to take measurements and learn sewing skills. Nevertheless, a translator was needed to provide the greatest learning opportunities for the participants and to ensure successful communications with customers.</p>		

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Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?	Yes.
It was helpful to draw on the insight and knowledge of those with lived experience of poverty to set up the project, and to develop a resourceful community network (e.g. for finding a volunteer translator).	
How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?	It took around four months before DAWSUN found funding from, the Homelessness Network Glasgow.
Who made the decision to introduce the project?	DAWSUN Executives.

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Early Development

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study or test of change?	No
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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Are potential users referred to your Project?	No.
Are there ways, other than referral, that are used to make potential users aware of your Project.?	Yes.
Potential clients were made aware of the project through social media and direct interactions with other DAWSUN projects. The Free Clothing Exchange Hub, was advertised in flyers through the Organisation’s social media network.	
What is the most common way through which users typically access your Project.?	
Direct interaction through other DAWSUN Projects.	
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to users?	Yes.
DAWSUN mostly interacts with its members via phone or through direct interaction at its headquarters.	

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	Yes.
A majority of the DAWSUN beneficiaries have experience with extreme poverty. Some women may have had issues finding employment because of language barriers; others may have faced religious or cultural constraints such as, being expected by family members to stay at home and look after the house and family chores.	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or in project <u>governance</u>?	Yes
The women of the Sewing Hub advanced to become responsible for aspects of the project. They ran the “Alteration Mondays” at the Sewing Hub themselves without the DAWSUN Executive Director present. Their engagement meant the Hub was on its way to becoming self-sustaining.	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>any other aspect</u> of the project?	Yes.
People who use the clothing exchange (still an ongoing project) may come from low-income or poverty backgrounds.	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
Anne Osuchukwu – Project Coordinator.	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	No.
Anne Osuchukwu is also the Manager/Office Administrator at DAWSUN. She is responsible for managing DAWSUN’s administrative work.	
What proportion of the manager’s overall workload is given over to this project?	
Not specified.	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	No.
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	Yes.
There is a Board of Members who reviewed progress of both aspects of the project (one live and one now ended) and are accountable to the funders.	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

To the best of your knowledge, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	Yes
The project received funding from the Big Lottery because it contributed to tackling the cost-of-living crisis.	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	Not specified
Not specified.	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	No.
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	No.

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Funding

Is funding used to support the work?	Yes.
Has external funding been secured to support the work?	Yes.
Which organisation provided funding?	Glasgow Homelessness Network and the Big Lottery.
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Not specified for Glasgow Homelessness network. Big Lottery: Community Cost of Living Crisis Funding stream.
How much funding was secured?	£38,000 from the Big Lottery Community Fund.
For how long has funding been secured?	The project currently has no funding. This has meant the Sewing Hub part of the project can no longer operate.
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?	No.
Has a specific sum been secured from your organisation to support this work?	No.
Is future funding from your organisation a possibility?	No.
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	
N/A	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from your organisation contribute toward the work of this project?	Not specified.
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?	Not specified
Extra hours worked: Not specified.	
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?	Not specified
Role: Not specified.	
Is the post permanent or fixed term?	Not specified
Duration: Not specified.	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?	Yes.
Role: The Sewing Hub project had a volunteer sewing instructor and a volunteer translator. Additionally, volunteers still sort through the donated clothing for the, Free Clothing Exchange Hub which is still in operation despite the Sewing Hub being ended.	
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?	Yes
Facilities / Workspace	Yes.
Equipment	<p>A space was needed for the woman to come together, sew, and store materials.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 10 sewing machines, 2 locking machines, and irons. 2) Sewing materials such as buttons, zips and other sewing consumables, - e.g. threads and needles. 3) Second- hand clothes for alterations.

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Local Knowledge	An ethnic minority translator who spoke the women’s languages gave her free time in addition to a community based volunteer sewing instructor.	
Food and Drink	N/A	
Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	Yes.	
Who provides:	The community provides clothing and fashion accessories for upcycling at no cost. Two community members gave their free time to translate and provide the service users with sewing instructions when the Sewing Hub was in operation.	
Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	No.	
Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	No.	

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Do you – or other organisations - collect data on the project for monitoring or evaluation purposes?	Yes.
Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	No.
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?	Yes.
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project	The Project Coordinators.
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation	Annually.
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project	No specified.
What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?	
Number of users	Yes.
Profile of users	Yes.
Experience of users	Yes.
Outcomes for users	Yes.
Anything else	Yes.
The contact information of customers of the Sewing Hub was collected.	
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	Yes.
Data from reviews was continuously used to adapt the project.	
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	No.

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Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	No.
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	No.

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	Fully met.
What difference has the project made?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the project, the participating women gained valuable sewing skills, improved their English language, and increased their confidence to engage in income-generating activities. • The women formed long-lasting friendships and found a sense of community within the Sewing Hub. • Five of the women were involved in pushing the project forward and were employed part time by DAWSUN based on their advanced sewing skills. • They received payment at a rate of £11.00 twice a week for 3 hours. This allowed some women to venture into work for the first time since moving to Glasgow. Earning an income significantly augmented their household income, directly contributing to poverty reduction. 	
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The demand increased with other women wanting to receive training and get engaged in the Hub. • The project’s capacity to take on new women was limited by the number of machines available. There were discussions about getting more sewing machines, but this was limited by funding, so they referred people to the African Challenge Group that is also doing a Sewing Hub. <p>Currently, DAWSUN are seeking new funding options to potentially reopen the Sewing Hub Project.</p>	

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<p>Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?</p>	<p>No.</p>
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<p>Has the project changed through time?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>What changed</p>	<p>The project started with eight women learning to sew. Five more women joined whilst five of the original group reached the advanced knowledge stage and started earning an income from the weekly Sewing Hub.</p> <p>The initial Homelessness Intervention Hub grew to include the Sewing Hub, in which women would not only learn sewing for free but those with advanced knowledge were paid a minimum wage for their work. The project, therefore, transitioned from a training programme to a Hub in which women did alterations and engaged in sewing projects one to two times a week. They also ran an “Alteration Monday”.</p> <p>The Sewing Hub was further connected to the Free Clothing Exchange Hub, which offered clothes, shoes, and bags for free. People donated their unused or damaged clothing, and the trained women made alterations or repairs to the garments.</p>

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Why has it changed	The project development was participant driven. The women of the first group wanted to use their skills to earn income. When the women began learning, they became eager to use their skills to earn some money. For some women, the Sewing Hub was their first work placement since they arrived in Glasgow. They met once or twice a week to alter clothes and conduct new sewing projects. Their development was supported by additional funding received from the Big Lottery.
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?	Yes
The Clothing Exchange Hub did not meet its beneficiaries’ expectations due to its location. Despite this, the Free Clothing Exchange Hub continues to run once a month (Saturdays) at the Adelphi Centre. The centre closes at 2:00 PM on Saturdays, which prevents more people from coming.	
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	Yes
The project had an impact by getting women of ethnic minority and low- income backgrounds, access to learning new employment-relevant skills, enabling their personal empowerment and increasing their income.	

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community aspect worked very well and the women at the Hub built a very strong support network for themselves. • The women really enjoyed learning skills with the instructor and earning their own money. Even the volunteer translator became a seamstress herself, learning alongside the women. • A testament of the women’s high engagement was that they wanted to come to the Sewing Hub more. 	
What, if anything, is working less well?	
<p>The marketing and social media aspect of the project could have done with some work so that more people could take part in the clothing exchange and get to know, and use the Hubs’ services. When this aspect of the project becomes widely known, this would enable the women to build a customer base and to become self - sustainable.</p>	
What are the key learning points that you’d like to share with other practitioners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated volunteers are a must for a successful project. • Strong referral/publicity is also very important. • A bus/car is necessary to make the collection of used items a lot easier. 	
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	Yes
<p>The women are continuing to run the Free Clothing Exchange Hub, but reopening of the Sewing Hub depends on further funding streams. The overall plan was to make the project self- sustainable and build a customer - base that enabled the women to continue earning a regular income.</p>	
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?	
<p>Easily transferable to other settings that have the space and need for such a project. For example, locations where there are people of ethnic minority backgrounds who live in poverty.</p>	