



## SIGNPOST TO POLISH SUCCESS

BIG LOTTERY REACHING COMMUNITIES FUND  
PROGRAMME:

APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2015

Evaluation Report

August 2015

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Anne-Marie Ainger

3 Worlds Consulting

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## ABBREVIATIONS

DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
JCP	Job Centre Plus
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
N&EC	New and emerging communities
NCC	Nottingham City Council
SPS	Signpost to Polish Success

## BACKGROUND

The Signpost to Polish Success (SPS) was first established to offer activities for the Polish community in Nottingham in 2005, with grant-funded services beginning in 2006. Initially this entailed small scale activity such as English classes and social events run by volunteers in a small room above a shop. In time, a basic Polish language newspaper was launched and informal translation and Information Services were offered.

In March 2008 SPS received a sizeable three year grant from the Big Lottery. The grant allowed this community initiative to develop into a fully functioning voluntary sector organisation, working from a professional, fit –for– purpose building, with a staff team and formally planned services. This was followed by a second three year funding programme in April 2012. This evaluation report summarises the impact of this second programme of funding with a view to identifying how SPS has met its pledged outcomes alongside the broader impact upon the organisation, wider statutory and voluntary sector partners, and the local Polish community at large.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted over a six month period, and included the following activities.

- **Annual reports** were reviewed;
- The **staff team were interviewed**, including specific sessions with the Information Service team;
- **Case files data** for clients of the Information Service were analysed, covering a total of 1,393 clients and 4,065 sessions over the three year period;
- A **language café session** was attended (seven people took part);
- A **focus group** with members of the Polish community was held (attended by 13 people);
- An **information workshop** was attended, (delivered by Nottingham City Homes, the primary social housing provider in Nottingham - 21 adults with four children attended);
- **Evaluation questionnaire** results from seven **information or skills building workshops** were analysed;
- **Evaluation questionnaires from two English classes** were reviewed (a total of 14 respondents);
- Results from the **newspaper and website survey** were reviewed;
- A **questionnaire for drop-in clients** was designed and distributed. **A total of 30 completed questionnaires were received**, primarily from Information Service clients (67% of respondents) and those attending a social event (40% of respondents);
- A **volunteer survey was designed and distributed to current and former volunteers (11 responses were received)**.
- A **series of case studies** relating to individual clients were gathered.

Information from these sources was evaluated and compiled to produce the findings summarised below.

# SPS SERVICES

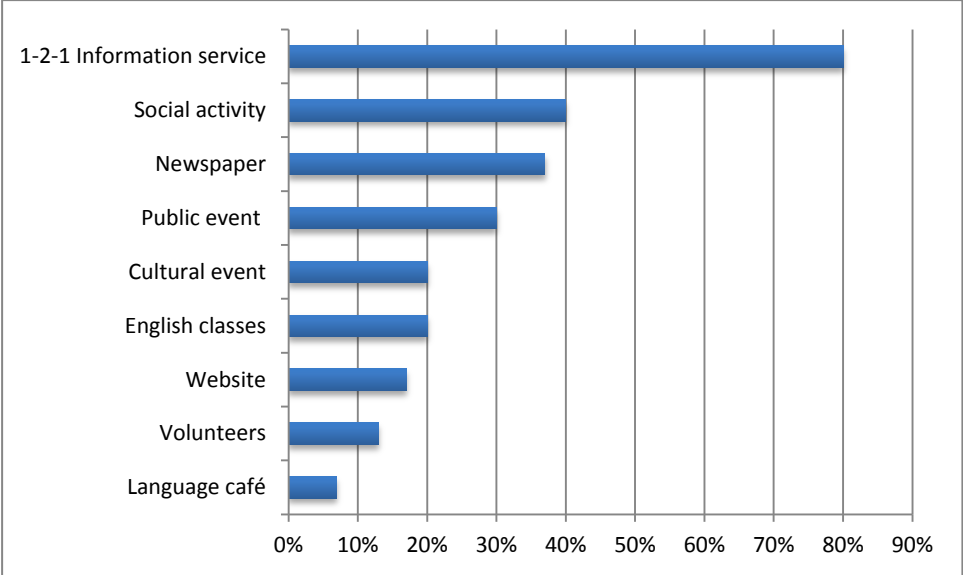
As a result of Big Lottery funding, SPS has offered the following range of services over the last three years. The contribution each activity has made to the outcomes of the organisation is discussed below.

Diagram 1: SPS Services

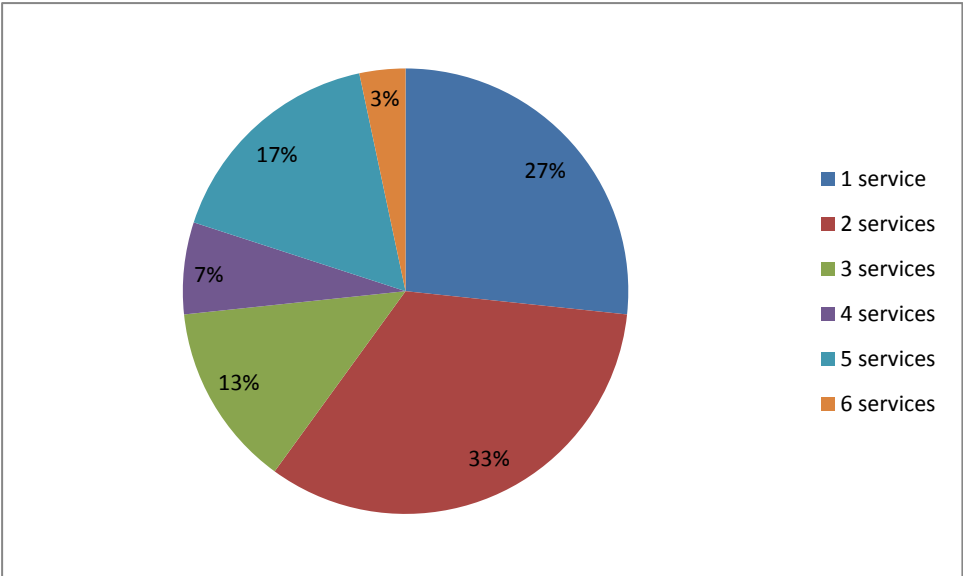


In the very early days of the organisation, English classes and social events were the most well attended services. However, in recent years this has shifted to the 1-2-1 information service. It should also be noted that clients often access multiple services. This is illustrated in the drop-in survey, in which 40% of respondents had accessed three or more services in the last 12 month period.

**Diagram 2: Percentage of drop in survey-respondents who have accessed different SPS services**



**Diagram 3: Number of services accessed by drop-in survey respondents**



## PROJECT OUTCOMES

The Big Lottery grant was tied to the successful achievement of a set of outcomes and activities for New and Emerging Communities (N&EC). These are summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1: Big Lottery funded programme target outcomes**

<p><b>Outcome 1:</b> N&amp;EC will have improved wellbeing as a result of better access to information/support services, tailored to their specific needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. people using SPS 1-2-1 Information Service</li> <li>• No. people confirming that their wellbeing has improved as a result of SPS support</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Reduced isolation amongst N&amp;EC through increased participation in volunteering, social events, workshops and other activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. people volunteering for SPS and participating in SPS events</li> <li>• No. people volunteering for SPS</li> <li>• No. people participating in SPS events feeling less isolated</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 3:</b> Increased knowledge among N&amp;EC leading them to be more confident, independent and empowered to be part of local society/culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. people feeling better informed about life in the UK</li> <li>• No. people stating that they feel more confident living in the UK</li> <li>• No. people who have played a greater part in local society as a result of feeling more empowered</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Big Lottery funded programme activities**

➤ SPS to deliver one-to-one information sessions
➤ SPS will encourage one-to-one information session users to complete their own forms
➤ SPS will organise workshops, focus groups or other events
➤ Local forums will be attended by SPS users
➤ SPS will recruit volunteers
➤ SPS volunteers will have received experience and training necessary to develop their own initiatives
➤ SPS service users will have been involved in the production of SPS information newsletter and coordination of social media
➤ SPS will provide information through its newsletter

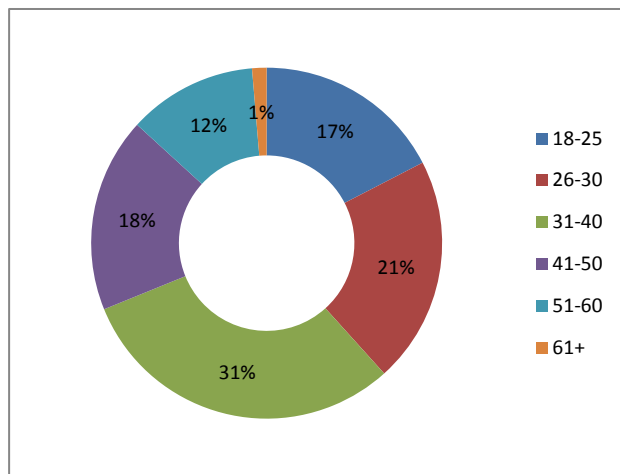
## EVALUATION FINDINGS: KEY SERVICES

*“SPS have helped me with improving my emergency situation and employment situation, with access to the foodbank, clothes and shoes, and signposting to other services for complex information.”*

### Information and Guidance Sessions

The Information Service continues to be a lifeline for many in the Polish community and demand for the service continues to grow, with increasing numbers of clients accessing the service from broader Eastern European communities. **Over the period April 2012 to February 2015, the team have supported over 1,390 individuals, through over 4,000 one-to-one sessions.** The client database records slightly more female than male clients (56% female), with a broad mix across age groups.

**Diagram 4: Age range of SPS Information Service clients**



It is interesting to note that **the service continues to attract many new arrivals (33% of all clients over the last three years)**, in addition to settled clients who come back with new issues as their life in the UK evolves (31% of clients have lived in the UK for 4 or more years).

**Table 3: Time spent in the UK (information reported by 947 clients)**

	No. cases	% of cases
<b>New arrivals</b>	317	33%
<b>1 yr</b>	115	12%
<b>2yr</b>	100	11%
<b>3 yrs</b>	117	12%
<b>4 yrs</b>	110	12%
<b>5 yrs</b>	101	11%
<b>6 -9 yrs</b>	83	9%
<b>10 yrs +</b>	4	0.4%

Interestingly, many more Slovakian clients are now presenting to the service. The team note that *“Many more people are contacting us, from the Job Centre for example and they are referring Latvians and Slovaks to us”*. This presents a significant potential issue for the team, some statutory sector agencies assuming perhaps that all Eastern European migrants speak the same languages. However, SPS is not funded to support these three very different national communities in this way, and it does not have sufficient numbers of interpreters who speak all the languages required to support these new clients.



The service continues to be primarily drop-in based. However, over the last three years the team has started to run appointment-only sessions on Wednesdays, to allow additional time for people with more complex cases. **This was made possible by the recruitment of a second member of the Information Service team in May 2013, creating additional capacity.** The Manager of SPS notes, *“With a second information worker, we can breathe, we can do other things.”* Having a second worker has also meant that the team can learn from each other, and can attend external training without closing the service, resulting in greater expertise within the team. For example, during year 2 the team developed working relationships with the food banks and learned how to make hardship fund applications to JCP.

**However, demand for the services continues to grow, with queues of eight to ten people waiting for the centre to open each day, and more people arriving throughout the day.** The team are, once again, finding that they have to send home unseen clients at the end of each day.

**The team also notes that the problems presented by clients have become more complex over the last two years.** Polish community members are evidently committed to abiding by the law but, with rapid changes in rules and regulations, this can be extremely complicated. As noted by one client, *“People really struggle getting hold of information. People even commit offences because they aren’t aware of the law.”* In previous years clients’ problems have focused on practical issues relating to life in the UK, such as registering with a GP or accessing a national insurance number. These types of issues are still commonplace. However, over the last two years clients have presented with increasingly technical issues around personal finance, benefits and workplace tribunals, with particular recurrence on issues to do with taxation and working tax credits. Housing issues, particularly in relation to issues with utility bills and changes in the rules for social housing eligibility, were common. Clients are also starting to present with broader issues such as domestic violence, homelessness and even human trafficking, because mainstream specialist services do not have Polish speaking workers. In some cases there is little that SPS staff can do.

**Diagram 5: Examples of the support provided by the SPS Information Service**



**Table 4: Number of information sessions by theme**

	No. sessions	% of sessions
Benefits	953	23%
Tax credits	699	17%
HMRC other	479	12%
Housing matters	402	10%
Financial/debt	336	8%
Employment matters	279	7%
Family/ children/schools	247	6%
Healthcare	234	6%
Bills/utilities	233	6%
Legal issues	158	4%
Motoring issues	155	4%

**Table 5: Types of support given**

	No. sessions	% Sessions
Making a call	1362	34%
Completing a form	1074	26%
Provide information	925	23%
Translating a letter	522	13%
Writing a letter	433	11%
Referral	108	3%
Internet search/purchase	79	2%

The types of support provided continue to be dominated by telephone calls on behalf of the client (34% of sessions) alongside the completion of forms (26% of sessions), with information provision taking place in 23% of sessions. One team member noted, *“Many people prefer us to make the phone call for them. Often they don’t know how to phrase the question, even in Polish!”*

Looking at the number of appointments per client, the majority of clients (65%) have had up to five appointments over the last three years. However, 8% of clients have had 10 to 20 appointments and 3% have had 20 or more. **In the majority of cases it seems that clients are seeking help for specific problems which are resolved, developing some degree of independence as a result of this support. The survey results show that 365 clients are now completing forms themselves.** Client comments include:

- *“People just need a little push to make that first step, it’s very important.”*
- *“Even if you know the right answer you want someone to confirm it.”*
- *“I get things done and learn how to deal with less complicated issues on my own.”*
- *“I am calmer. I know that pretty much every problem can be solved at SPS. I also feel empowered, motivated, to try to do things on my own to avoid coming to the office with every small thing. I am learning how to write and translate letters, to speak English.”*

However, it seems that a small proportion of clients are either presenting with very complex cases needing multiple sessions of support, or are quite reliant upon SPS, coming back time and again for support with issues associated with living in the UK. Whilst empowering people to be able to resolve their own problems is the ultimate aim of the team, this is becoming increasingly difficult with clients presenting these more complex problems. One staff member noted, *“People come here and they are so fed up and miserable. For some they just need to be shown something on the internet or how to access an interpreter. But for others it’s not so simple.”*

#### Specific challenges for clients

The team note that clients’ **lack of English** continues to be a significant barrier. Clients said:

- *“People go to the Law Centre, but they need to speak English. The CAB couldn’t understand me. I went to SPS and they helped me 100%.”*
- *“It highlights the need for reliable sources of information. The Police etc, they produce a lot of information and changes happen constantly, but they don’t translate it.”*

During the first year of this funded programme the team placed considerable emphasis on clients learning English. One of the team noted, *“We did this almost as homework between sessions, asking them to learn how to say their national insurance number and date of birth in English, and many clients took this very seriously.”* In addition, the team would enrol clients in English classes. However, with rapidly growing demand, the team find that they no longer have time to offer this additional support, having to focus on addressing each problem and then moving to the next client.

Some **recruitment agencies** continue to exploit the lack of language or awareness of UK employment law, not paying for holidays or making people redundant who do take holiday time. The team also note **new issues with unemployment** with growing numbers of new arrivals and fewer jobs available for them. Benefits sanctions are also becoming more common, clients reporting that their benefits have been cut but with no idea why.

**Housing continues to be a significant issue** with many Polish people living in overcrowded accommodation. Often without a tenancy agreement, they are unable to access housing benefit. Some clients note that they are subletting from others and are therefore afraid of the consequences if they seek to tackle their rogue landlords.

**Changes in benefit** rules have meant that many Polish people are no longer eligible for housing benefits with Job Seekers Allowance. Polish people must now complete the Habitual Resident Test. There seems to be particular concerns in relation to tax credits where clients report that they are being frequently reassessed, and at times they feel that this is being done unfairly. The team helps clients to fill out the forms but also call the key agencies for them, working through the details of complex processes with them.

The team also report that their **clients are not always eligible for support from broader services** For example, they have been told that they are not eligible for help at the Women’s Centre, and without housing benefit entitlement their clients are not eligible for emergency housing.

#### Feedback from Clients

Clients are very grateful for the support provided by the Information Service, particularly **the commitment and knowledge of the staff team**. Service users find the SPS staff team professional and knowledgeable, and consider the staff to be “highly qualified”. The manner and working style of the staff is also important. They not only provide comprehensive information but they work with the client to directly tackle problems. In addition, clients greatly appreciate the kind and nurturing approach of the team, recognising that emotional support and practical support go hand in hand. This creates trust and respect for the staff team. Service users said:

- *“SPS provides professional services for Polish people.”*
- *“This helps me a lot. I would not manage on my own. I do not know the language. I trust them at SPS. I come to see them as they know my case.”*
- *“We learn about council benefits, welfare benefits, tax credit, housing benefits. My daughter’s partner left her, and SPS gave her information on what to do. I really appreciate the workers’ experience and how well informed they are.”*
- *“We are very grateful to the staff. Some days they don’t even have time to eat! They’re so helpful and kind and patient.”*
- *“SPS is very important and the people working there are helpful. They can help with very difficult cases and complex cases. They also know how to comfort you by saying a nice word. Sometimes they are like therapists!”*

Some participants noted the anxiety and stress associated with living in a country with limited knowledge of the language. Accordingly, clients report a marked **impact on their sense of wellbeing as a result of the 1-2-1**

**Information Service, particularly their sense of independence and confidence** to move forward in their lives. Knowing that they can go back to SPS should they ever need to is pivotal in this regard. Comments include:

- *“Before I came to SPS I was in a panic. Now I feel more confident, less stressed. I feel safe.”*
- *“I am not stressed out. Dorota does everything for me. I trust her so I feel more relaxed.”*
- *“Even when I’m not using SPS’s services, I know I can always go and get help and back up.”*
- *“I have become more independent, my confidence increased about living in the UK, I know there is someone who will help me.”*

**Feeling better informed** is also central to this greater sense of confidence. Clients said,

- *“Having the information to know what to do makes you feel much more confident.”*
- *“I am better informed about what is happening locally but also more nationally, with all the welfare services changes, government changes, and social issues.”*

As a result of the support, clients report feeling **more aware of the wider range of services available** to them including JCP, the CAB, Framework and Housing Advice. However, some clients noted that the comprehensive nature of the service means that they do not need to look elsewhere. One client noted,

- *“SPS is an indicator, if it can’t solve the issue they will refer you to someone else.”*
- *“You resolved the problems I was facing, so I didn't have to seek any advice in other places.”*

Clients also report **feeling more confident in their legal rights, including the right to** participate in local democracy. As noted by one client:

- *“SPS has helped them to know that they have a right to vote. Some people didn’t know that.”*

However, **clients are also aware of the high demand for the service** and the challenge this presents in accessing help. One service user noted,

- *“It would be better if it was open for more hours or days. People are queuing for hours, queuing outside in the rain with children. It’s no good.”*

Clients completing the drop-in survey were asked what they would do if the SPS Information Service did not exist. Understandably, they expressed considerable concern at this idea. They note that they would try to ask their friends for help, or would seek out an alternative organisation, but respondents were not able to name such organisations which could provide help and advice. Some clients noted that private companies exist that can offer basic translation services, but that this comes at a price. Many clients stated that they would struggle to cope, or even function fully in society, without SPS’s support. **It is evident that the 1-2-1 Information Service plays a very important role for clients, and in many ways reduces the burden that might otherwise be placed on mainstream statutory or voluntary sector services.** Being able to access help in Polish continues to be extremely important, for both newly arrived and settled migrants, given the changing and complex nature of the challenges they face. Comments include:

- *“I came to SPS with schooling issues, translation and form completion. There are no places I could go for help. I think that without SPS support I wouldn't be able to deal with everyday problems.”*
- *“SPS is essential to deal with formal and official matters and for integration. Without SPS services many issues would not be addressed.”*
- *“I would be looking for help from someplace else. Possibly I would need to pay for the service at private offices.”*

- *“It would be difficult for me to be a part of the community or to function in this society.”*

**Diagram 6: Impact of SPS Information and Guidance Service on clients, (results from the session evaluation questionnaires<sup>1</sup>)**



#### Upskilling the team

Some considerable emphasis has been given to helping the advice workers develop their skills and work collaboratively with specialist advice services. During this last two years the team have developed links with DWP, accessing specialist training, and with Advice Nottingham and the Nottingham Law Centre, the 1-2-1 Information Service workers shadowing Advisors from the Nottingham Law Centre Three training events provided by Advice Nottingham and HLG have also been attended.

#### Recommendations for the future

**Continuing to staff the service and potentially increase staffing capacity is of paramount importance for the future. The demand for this service is highly unlikely to reduce in the coming months or years and the loss of this support would result in considerable suffering and hardship for those it currently supports.** It would be ideal if, in the coming months, the team were able to identify further specialist training relating to up-and-coming changes in the welfare state, particularly in relation to universal credit. Further consideration may also need to be given to defining pathways for clients, ensuring that there is a clear distinction between information provision/guided self-help and the provision of advice. Alternatively, the organisation may wish to become a registered member of Advice UK and raise its profile as an advice provider. Identifying and maintaining key contacts in a wider number of services is time consuming. However, it will be essential to ensure that the SPS team are properly supported and that clients have access to all the help they need. It would be ideal if SPS enrolled to use the common triage and referral processes used by Advice Nottingham or other partners. SPS should continue to develop information workshops and courses with a wide range of partners, particularly relating to the advice sector. Further, seeking to recruit a bank of volunteer interpreters who speak a wider range of languages and can support clients to access external services would add significant capacity to the service.

## Diagram 7: Case studies from the Information Service

### Mrs U.

Mrs U. came to the SPS office with a number of issues. She was unemployed and very unsettled as she had been made redundant twice in the last few months; she had very low self-esteem and suffered from depression; she felt that she was failing in both her professional and personal life. Her partner was working for an agency with unpredictable hours. They were experiencing serious financial difficulties leading to arguments and tension at home. Debts were rising and she was scared they could lose their home, where she had lived for several months without a fridge, oven or washing machine. Her partner was then sent to prison for driving under the influence of alcohol, leaving her to deal with all of these issues alone.

The Information Service team helped her to complete a Personal Independence Payment claim form. They rang the Tenancy Sustainment Officer at Nottingham City Homes to arrange an emergency appointment to discuss the rent arrears and other issues relating to her property. SPS provided a volunteer interpreter to accompany her. The team wanted to refer her to a Polish speaking support group for family members of people with a drinking problem, but she felt too ashamed to talk about her problems with strangers.

Mrs. U. and her partner are now receiving Jobseeker's Allowance and have managed to keep their home. Their debts are still a significant challenge as under new legislation they are not entitled to Housing Benefit. However, the SPS team is working with them on this issue and they hope that in time this will be resolved.

### Ryszard and Malgorzata

This couple first came to SPS with a student social worker from Nottingham City Council. She explained how isolated the couple were feeling, and that they needed additional support. Ryszard had recently been made redundant. He had been travelling to work with a friend whose car had been set on fire in a suspected race hate crime. As a result he was unable to get to work and lost his job. With no income, rent and council tax arrears began to accumulate. They were also struggling with their children, the oldest of whom had started displaying very challenging behaviour. She was very angry and frustrated about their situation, and channelled these feelings by fabricating stories of neglect, calling her Children's Services case worker on an almost daily basis. Social workers had made several visits, but no concerns had been raised.

The SPS team helped them complete a housing application, and shared information about their rights as tenants. They provided the couple with a list of local recruitment agencies, a foodbank voucher, and arranged a payment plan for their council tax arrears. The couple were very grateful for this support, noting that with limited trust in other organisations, they feel much more confident coming to SPS for help and support.

### Henryk and Kryspin

Henryk had an adult son, Kryspin, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Henryk had no choice but to become his son's carer. Henryk struggled to find employment that fitted with his home responsibilities and, due to his condition, Kryspin was unable to work. Henryk came to SPS for help in relating to different agencies. This included help in translating documents, making medical appointments for his son, and arranging payment plans when finances become a problem.

After some time Henryk was invited to become a formal member of SPS and when the team began to recruit volunteers for the Heritage Project he knew it was for him. He said, *"I did filming for the Heritage Project, I was a camera operator back in Poland so it was great to get back to something I used to do. It also gave me an opportunity to meet new people and discover how Polish people settled in the UK after World War II. I could forget my problems for a moment and get involved in something I was interested in. Sometimes I feel the burden of looking after my son on my own and coping with all the tenancy issues and financial difficulties that I face, but being part of the project helped me to forget about my situation for a while."*

## Diagram 7a: Case studies from the Information Service (cont.)

### Michalina

Michalina first came to SPS in May 2014 having lived in the UK for over three years. She needed help for her son, Kacper (aged 12), as he was being bullied at school and felt he was a victim of discrimination. His performance at school was deteriorating. He began to display challenging behaviour, including getting into fights at school. Kacper had been a good student but after the four months he had spent at the school he became a different person, coming to act like the children who were bullying him. However at home, when talking with his mother, he confessed that he felt scared, lonely and sad. He said that he considered self-harming. The entire family was affected by Kacper's situation. He avoided contact with his younger siblings, lost a lot of weight and was devoid of motivation to get up in the morning, to go to school, or meet his friends.

Michalina had tried to communicate with the school staff, but her efforts reaped no results. Kacper had already been diagnosed with ADHD but this was never taken into account at school and no assessment was made. His mum felt helpless as, in her opinion, there was no support from school or a willingness to try to find a solution.

The SPS team got involved and contacted the Educational Welfare Office for advice on how to proceed. Initially, they advised that Kacper should transfer to a different school, but he refused as he believed that the same pattern would be repeated regardless of which school he attended. SPS then proceeded to contact the school to try and arrange an appointment for Michalina to discuss her son, but the school was not forthcoming. As a result, Michalina became more and more distressed. The SPS team suggested raising this issue with the family GP and a result they were referred to the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS). SPS workers have subsequently helped the family to arrange appointments, acted as interpreter during sessions and translated information provided by the CAHMS therapist.

While the problems at school remain unsolved, Kacper is receiving support via his counselling sessions. The family feel safer, the children are calmer and communication between them has improved. Kacper is more confident and has started to talk about his problems more openly. His mother has started to believe that they will find a way to cope.

### Single mothers

Single parent families are one of the groups that are most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. The SPS team have noticed a growing number of single mothers amongst their client base. Often these are women in late pregnancy, or with babies or young children, who were abandoned by their partners or decided to leave due to domestic abuse. If employed, this is usually with a recruitment agency which rarely contacts them once they know that their employee is pregnant. Some of these women have lived in the UK for several years, but were at home looking after children while their partner worked. Therefore, alone, they do not meet the right to reside criteria and so have limited or no access to social security benefits. Often, returning to Poland is not an option because there is nowhere, and no one, to go back to.

The SPS team works with each case individually, and in some cases they can help the client to access accommodation or to claim benefits. This is usually a very long process, but sometimes with a positive outcome. The majority however, are not so lucky and need to face their difficulties, often alone.

The team helps women register their children with a local Sure Start if this has not been done, provides information about the Polish playgroup at the Mary Potter Health Centre, and offers food bank vouchers. The team also tried to collect essentials for their children from other service users and volunteers, using Facebook to advertise requests. Often this results in donations of baby and children's equipment and clothing that others no longer need. When all the options are exhausted, and even the Women's Centre is unable to help, all the SPS team can do is offer a listening ear, a comforting voice and essential emotional support.



## Information Workshops

SPS has run 26 information workshops over the period aimed at equipping members of the Polish community to live and work in Nottinghamshire. Sessions include both general and topical themes, inviting specialist speakers into the centre to meet with the community. While SPS has a strong track record of running workshops that link the community with key service providers such as the Police and Housing, over the last three years the range of topics has diversified to include sessions on personal wellbeing and learning & development.

Topics included:

- Workshops with Nottingham City Homes covering both private rental and social housing
- Several workshops with Nottinghamshire Police and Community Protection Officers
- A workshop with local schools
- CV writing, computer skills and first aid
- Child development
- Personal emotional wellbeing workshops delivered by the NHS Wellbeing Team - including topics around sleep, anger and depression, noting how acutely migrants' emotional wellbeing can be affected when facing isolation, insecurity and uncertainty.

### Feedback from participants

Participants are asked to complete evaluation questionnaires at all workshops<sup>2</sup>. The feedback from eight events, with 74 respondents (of 110 participants) was reviewed. Workshops have been very well received. Over 86% of respondents rated the event they attended as 7 or higher out of 10. In excess of **97% of respondents reported that they felt better informed about life in the UK as a result, with 92% of respondents stating that they feel more confident in British society. Participants also report an increased sense of wellbeing as a result of the workshops: an average of 96% of participants reporting general wellbeing as a result. Further, an average of 73% of respondents reported that attending information workshops helped them to feel less isolated and to make new friends.**

The information workshops also proved to generate interest in taking a greater part in community activities. As a result of the workshops six individuals expressed interest in volunteering with SPS. Workshops also highlighted opportunities to volunteer with organisations in the wider community. For example, as a result of the workshop with Nottinghamshire Police, 80% of participants reported being aware of how they could volunteer with them.

Participants noted that, without these information workshops, they would struggle to find the information needed in an understandable form. One participant, for example, noted that she had tried to find information on a local authority website but struggled to pick out the relevant information. These workshops are tailored to answer specific questions relating to the circumstances of the Polish community, and allow participants to ask questions relating to their own individual experiences, accessing immediate expert professional advice. In the social housing workshop for example, participants were able to bring specific problems to the staff members present from Nottingham City Homes, resulting in several issues being resolved and queries about eligibility being answered. Participants were also very enthusiastic about the schools workshop, with 100% of respondents requesting further sessions of this type.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that very different evaluation questionnaires have been used for each event, therefore there is limited comparability in questions. Percentage based answers compile the results across questionnaires where a specific, comparable question was asked.



Diagram 8: SPS information workshops over the last three years

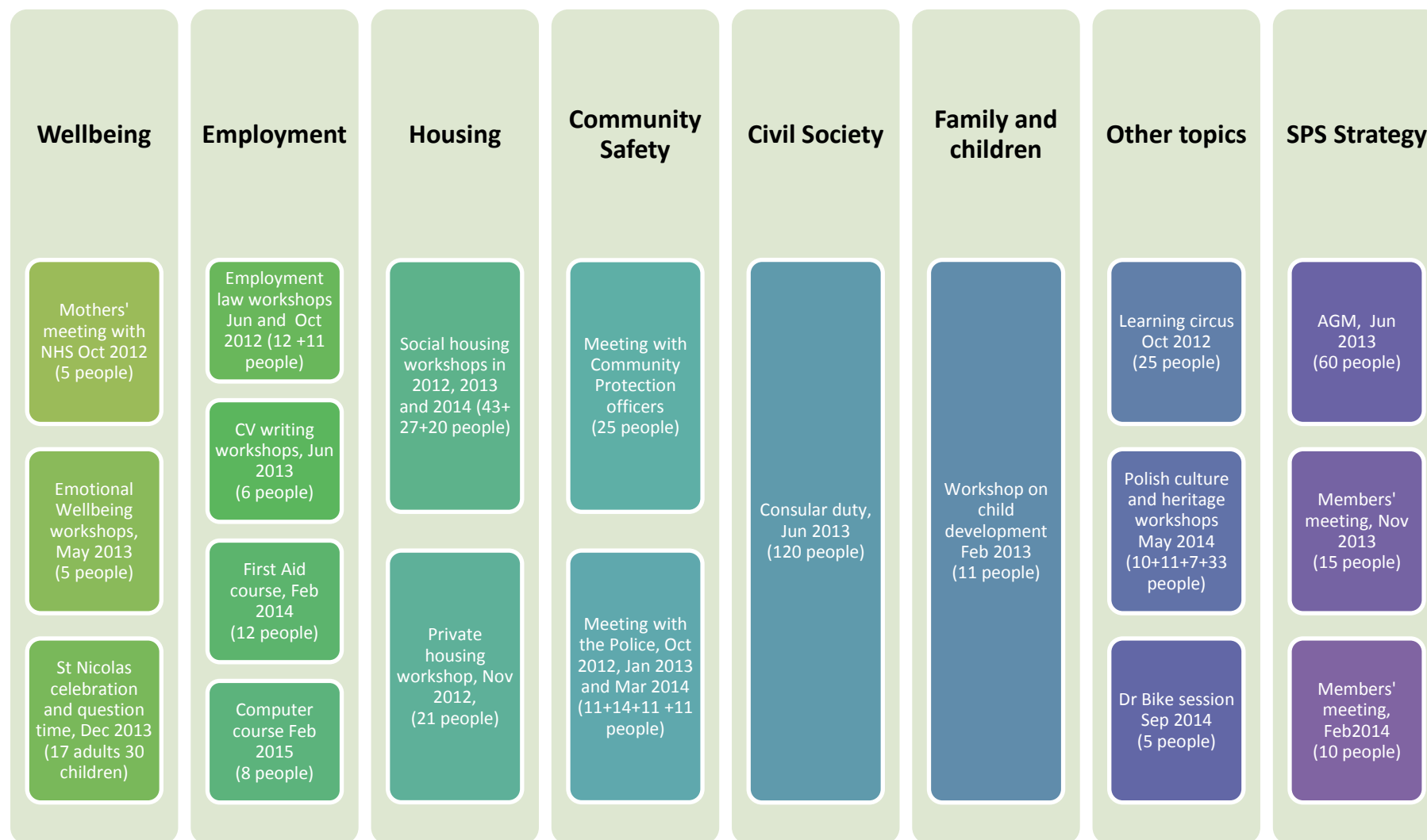


Diagram 9: Examples of feedback from workshops

**Policing Workshop:**

100% reported a better understanding of what to do to report a crime and how not become a victim of crime.

**Private Housing Workshop:**

100% of participants felt better informed about the private rental sector.

**Social Housing Workshop:**

93% of respondents stated that being able to learn about this topic in Polish had made a big difference.

**The Learning Circus:**

88% of participants reported feeling more confident as a result of the workshop.

**Child Development Workshop:**

100% stated that they felt more knowledgeable to support their child's development.

**What did clients have to say?**

- *"There was a workshop on sleep. Many of us work shift patterns so it's very hard to sleep. Just simple things, but it was really good."*
- *"During the housing meeting at SPS I could ask questions. I could see that people were encouraged to have a say."*
- *"This workshop was very useful as it gave Polish people the opportunity to get knowledge and understanding about the possibilities of having your own apartment."*
- *"I have tried to find the information on the web, but it was confusing, partly because of my English but partly because it is difficult to pick out the key information, so this was very helpful today."*
- *"I learned my rights as my husband is disabled. I learned what I could apply for."*
- *"In the workshops you can sort out many issues at the same time."*

**Engaging SPS service users in civil society**

These activities provide a key conduit for service users to learn more about life in the UK and identify opportunities to have greater involvement. Over the period SPS has placed far greater emphasis on expanding its formal membership, and has recruited many new members through its activities and Annual General Meetings. Regular member consultation exercises have been carried out to capture feedback about SPS services and gather ideas for the future. In this way, service users are given the opportunity to express their views and have influence. In addition, the SPS team directly supported many service users to take part in public

consultation activities, giving them the opportunity to help shape local services. In most cases this consisted of supporting individuals to complete written surveys and questionnaires. Activities included:

- 15 service users were supported to engage in a **Nottingham City Council consultation on cuts to public services.**
- 7 service users were supported to engage in a **Nottingham City Council consultation on changes to council tax for 2014/15.** The team translated both the information leaflet and the survey into Polish.
- 7 service users were supported to engage in a consultation for the **Equality and Human Rights Commission about the experiences of people employed as cleaners.**
- 26 service users were supported to take part in a consultation on the **new Nottingham City Homes tenancy agreement.**

#### **Case Study: Nottingham City Homes, Home Link Information Workshop, September 2014**

21 adults from the Polish community took part in this workshop. It was led by two members of staff from Nottingham City Homes, their presentation slides and hand-outs having been translated into Polish by a member of the SPS staff team.

Presentation content: The session went through the recently revised criteria for the NCH's social housing list, including the different eligibility criteria for particular groups, the need to be able to demonstrate affordability and the potential implications of 'the bedroom tax'. The criteria were complex and confusing, and there were some significant surprises for participants. For example, some members of the group were surprised to find that they are not eligible if they do not have working status and their children are not at school. Further, it was also noted that social housing is not usually available to you if you are currently in private housing, even if that is overcrowded or of a very poor standard.

Information was also shared about three special housing schemes: i) a programme for people aged over 60, ii) a new programme making three-bedroom houses more widely available, and iii) Home Link Plus - a very new scheme that offers properties from a range of different social housing landlords, which has different criteria and is accessible to those in private rented accommodation. Importantly, it was noted that some participants who had previously been rejected for social housing are now eligible and can re-apply. One lady in particular was delighted to find that she and her two teenage children are now eligible to apply for a three-bedroom house.

The response: Participants were very active and asked questions throughout. Many had attended to check their eligibility or to query recent rejections from the list. Accordingly, the session provided an opportunity for people to raise their specific concerns. It was also an opportunity to address misconceptions and misunderstandings. For example, one older Polish gentleman expressed feeling discriminated against because he was only offered flats. The presenters were able to explain that single people of any age, and any ethnic group, are only ever offered flats. Many participants went to speak with the NCH staff at the end of the formal presentation to discuss their individual cases. For example, one lady had been sent a letter that wasn't very clear to her and the NCH staff were able to explain to her that she had been offered a property and that it was being held for her. Further, they explained what she needed to do to arrange a visit.

The value of SPS participation: It was noteworthy that the information being shared was hot off the press. The new Home Link Plus scheme is a real opportunity for the Polish community, and it was evident that, without this session organised by SPS, that these individuals would not have been aware of these important changes. Further it was very useful to have the SPS staff present, not only to translate, but to be able to provide clarification on several key technical issues. For example, the presenter was not aware of how one achieved 'worker status' but one of the SPS Information Service team was able to provide this clarification. She was also able to explain what 'the bedroom tax' was in relation to housing benefit. The team were also able to offer immediate follow up support for housing problems identified through the workshop. For example, one woman needed to clarify her eligibility for housing benefit if she stopped working. She was given a phone number to call and one of the SPS Information Team booked an appointment with her on the spot in order to make the call with her.

*"Great teacher, interesting lessons, very helpful and nice people, friendly atmosphere, with access to other SPS services and approachable staff."*

## English Classes

SPS has a long tradition of offering English classes to members of the Polish community in Nottingham. In year 1 of the programme this centred on two weekly classes, a beginners class and a more advanced class, focused around broader topics of citizenship and introducing ideas of community cohesion and diversity. This course was also accredited, meaning that participants receive a qualification at the end. In years 2 and 3, this was changed to one formal weekly class plus the weekly Language Café. The ESOL class in these latter years focused particularly on employability skills, with an emphasis on promoting progression into further skills development, training or employment. Over the three years, 77 people took part in English classes. The vast majority were women (92%), and ranged in age, with the majority from mid-twenties to late forties.

### Feedback from clients

Evaluation findings from two courses taking place in November and December 2014 were reviewed, with a total of 14 respondents<sup>3</sup>. **Respondents evidently enjoy the classes, particularly the friendly atmosphere, the topical content of the lessons and the approach of the teacher.** Participants felt that the class creates opportunities for exposure to English people which helps to break down barriers. The link to broader SPS services was also widely noted, including the accessibility of the staff team at large. **Several respondents noted that they use multiple services, particularly the 1-2-1 Information Service and the newsletter and website.** For example one participant noted, *"Yes, I use the office to help me with the translation of documents. The ladies in the office are the best!"* SPS service users note that learning English is very important to them, particularly stressing the importance of holding the courses at their own centre. The only area for improvement noted was that participants would like more hours and classes.

English classes have achieved marked results for participants' lives. **Respondents universally reported that their wellbeing had improved, that they felt happier and more content. Further, 100% of respondents stated that they felt less isolated and more independent. All respondent noted that coming to classes had helped them to meet new people and make new friends.**

As a result of their improved language skills and the content of the course, 100% of respondents felt better-informed about life in the UK and 93% stated that they felt more confident living in the UK as a result. The vast majority felt more empowered to take part in community life, feeling themselves to be more part of the wider community. **Of this group, just under a third (29%) stated that they have now taken part in wider community events, but over half (57%) reported that they have now had the opportunity to give their views and influence issues in the local community.**

**The impact on employability was noted by many.** The majority of respondents (71%) reported increased confidence in finding good employment, whilst 86% reported that their skills had increased and that they were on their way towards achieving employment related goals.

#### What do clients have to say?

- *"English classes are very nice. It's a small group and there's plenty of time to chat."*
- *"I have improved my English and met new people. I speak English with more confidence now."*
- *"I gained confidence in conversation in English. I manage now, and I have become more open to other people."*

<sup>3</sup> Two different formats were used for evaluation questions, (see appendix 2).

## The Language Café

The language café has developed greatly over the last three years, establishing its own unique identity. Participants are both Polish and English and they meet on a weekly basis at the SPS centre. Twenty people have taken part each year. A volunteer usually leads the sessions with some prepared materials about different topics of interest, exploring both English and Polish words and expressions relating to that topic. This includes games, word play exercises and text to read together.

The sessions are very informal and fun, with intense but light-hearted debate, particularly about how to pronounce specific words! Participants help one another with translation but also with their broader life challenges through discussion and the sharing of experiences. Further the group creates a space to explore topics of interest in an environment free from judgement. In recent months this has included everything from new discoveries in quantum physics to the merits of different types of international development!

### The structure of the group

Participants thoroughly enjoy the groups and many have been regularly attending for years. The **social atmosphere of the group, combined with some structured activities**, was particularly valued by participants, one stating that he really enjoyed the *“good coffee, good friends, interesting and very helpful staff,”* another stating, *“I come here to learn English language and Polish humour!”* This personal, flexible approach was noted by several participants as a much better way to learn a language, in contrast to their previous, more formal experiences of learning English through local community colleges. One participant suggested, *“The atmosphere here is better. I feel free to speak. You feel more confident to speak to people.”*

The group also reported a **genuine exchange of learning between English and Polish speakers**, which is perhaps key to its success, both English and Polish participants feeling that they teach as much as they learn. Some participants attend for a short time to learn some key phrases before going on holiday to Poland. For others the group is a regular part of their social life. Andy, a British participant noted, *“I came out of curiosity. I saw the ‘Our History Our Story’ exhibition and came along and I’ve been coming for the last year and a half! Everyone at SPS makes you so welcome. I love it because I come every week. It’s nice being able to help with the translation.”* (See the case studies below for more details.)

#### Case Study: Language Café participants

One young man has been coming to the language cafe since 2007. He met Beata in the library and she told him about the meeting. He said, *“When I came here the first time I was looking for ways to improve my English. I’d been in the UK for two years and I’d learned English in college.”* He appreciated the informality of the group, which he found much more relaxing and informative than a formal college class. He said, *“It’s relaxed, I enjoy it. Things just develop and flow. The Language café is better for me. I like to laugh and joke, for me it’s better, not formal.”*

One Polish lady had had a bad accident, and had been stuck at home on her own. Having the opportunity to interact with other people through the Language café has been very important for her. She said, *“I first came to SPS to volunteer, and then I joined the group. I wanted to do something. It has a nice atmosphere and I enjoy the companionship.”*

Andy’s grandfather was Polish and he had wanted to learn Polish as long as he could remember so he joined the language cafe. *“Speaking Polish is one of my biggest achievements. SPS has had a very positive impact on me. I have met new people and now have a more diverse group of friends. Coming to SPS gives me a greater awareness of issues that people face: language barriers, sometimes unfair treatment. Coming to SPS has given me a greater understanding of modern Poland and I now visit Poland more often. Coming to SPS has also made me realize how difficult English is.”*

## Impact on participants

As might be expected, participants noted that the group has helped them to **improve their language skills**. This was noted as key to helping them to express their views and access employment that reflects their skills and expertise. For example, one member of the group noted, *“Exchanging information improves my English. The better we learn English the easier it is to express ourselves,”* and another, *“If we don’t speak English we feel alien in society. The language café is the first step.”*

In addition to language skills, **the greatest impact noted by participants relates to their social wellbeing**. Participants noted how the group has helped them to make new friends, and several individuals now socialise outside of the group. The group members also socialise together from time to time, including a recent party at the group leader’s home, *“There was a bonfire, drinks, cake, singing and discussions.”* It is evident that some of the participants had felt quite isolated, with limited social contact, the group offering an important lifeline to contact with others. They noted that the importance of this opportunity is not just for newly arrived Polish people, but those who have been here for some time. Comments included:

- *“I’ve been here one month. It’s a short period of time but I like the company here, because I have kindness from others.”*
- *“I come here to meet new people and socialise. It’s nice to have friends and there’s always someone new to talk to.”*
- *“It’s become like a group of friends”*
- *“It’s not just for new people, but also those who have been here longer. It’s the perfect place for people to come and make new friends.”*

Participants noted the importance of this social contact for their **physical as well as mental wellbeing**. For example, one lady noted that without SPS and the language café, *“I’d be sitting in front of my laptop, smoking, with no contact with people.”* Participants have also drawn on the support of other members **to help with day to day issues**. For example, one noted, *“It’s hard to talk to someone when you don’t know English. I wanted to buy a car. I went to the dealer with a member of the group and they helped.”*

Both English and Polish participants felt that the group was helping them to **develop a stronger sense of community**. For example one Polish member noted, *“It’s an opportunity to talk about traditions, in both countries. I’m learning more about the community in the Hyson Green area.”* At the same time an English participant stated, *“It’s opened up a whole new community for me. I wouldn’t have had any contact otherwise. Now I’m far more aware of the issues they face. It’s given me greater insight into the Polish community and culture, modern culture, not that of my grandfather!”* The staff team have actively supported this process, by helping the group to access discounted tickets for plays at local theatres and they bring in leaflets about local events. These activities have helped participants to feel more engaged and connected with Nottingham but also with the UK as a whole.

This focus on community and culture has lead several participants to **engage in voluntary activities**. For example, one of the Polish members stated, *“I’ve been involved in an exhibition since coming here, at the New Art Exchange and the Library. I wouldn’t have done that without SPS.”* One English participant has started campaigning to increase awareness of, and challenge, misconceptions presented in the media about the role of the Polish community in the Second World War.

## The Newspaper and Website

*"Since I started to read EMpP I feel more informed about local life and I often re-read the newspaper. For me EMpP is a main source of information, not only about the East Midlands but the whole UK."*

### The Newspaper

SPS is very proud of the 'East Midlands po Polsku' newspaper. It provides a key route for the Polish community to information about not only local but national issues. The paper has grown and evolved dramatically over the period. Three years ago it was eight pages long and black and white. Now it is published in full colour with 12 or 16 pages in each edition, and the staff team are pleased to report that it has a much more professional appearance. The newspaper coordinator also notes how the team has developed a deeper relationship with the broader media as a result of this more professional publication. It is interesting to note that local British businesses, not just Polish ones, have started to advertise in the newspaper. This is beginning to generate a modest amount of income, helping SPS to establish some financial reserves. Distribution has also increased over the last three years from 3,000 to 4,000 hard copies, present in many more locations across the East Midlands<sup>4</sup>, with the estimated readership of the printed version alone growing from 12,000 to 16,000 over the period.

The paper is written primarily by volunteers, eight individuals having been involved over the last year. The case study below describes the experience of one of SPS's newspaper writers.

#### **Sebastian – volunteer writer for the newspaper**

Sebastian first came to SPS because of his interest in the heritage project. He had been living in the UK for seven years and was losing contact with Polish people and Polish culture. As he became more interested in SPS he was invited to write articles for the newspaper. The team discovered that he had a coaching background so it was suggested that he could write articles about well-being and self-motivation. The articles were widely commented on and became an important part of the monthly publication.

*Sebastian said, "By writing the articles for the newspaper I felt I could influence people, to make them feel empowered, happier. I encouraged them to benefit from the different things we have here, to make them feel more a part of local society. I tried to encourage them to undertake training and discover new things. I feel happier, I feel like I had an opportunity to influence my local community."*

Sebastian also recognises the impact that his volunteering has on his own wellbeing. *"My contact with SPS made me feel Polish again. I met new people there. Becoming part of SPS made me accept my heritage but also connected me more with local British people and other nationalities. Because of my volunteering at SPS I am not afraid of Polish people anymore, I feel more confident and definitely less lonely. I have learnt new skills such as conducting interviews in Polish and in English, and my written Polish has also improved. I feel I am able to organize my own events. I think that all of us need a soul mate and SPS was a soul mate for me. SPS is a very important local point for Polish people."*

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<sup>4</sup> Hard copies of the paper are distributed throughout Nottinghamshire (Nottingham, Mansfield, Newark, Worksop) and into Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, (including Derby, Alfreton, Chesterfield, Lincoln, Grantham, Leicester, Loughborough, Melton Mowbray and Shirebrook).



Web presence

The website was first launched in 2009. However, over the last three years it has received a great deal of technical development, with marked changes in layout and design. Before, it was primarily a portal to an electronic (pdf) version of the printed newspaper. Now it is a fully fledged searchable website in its own right, promoting the organisation and sharing information about news items and events. The team feel that this new-look website is starting to give SPS a separate identity beyond the scope of the printed newspaper. In the first year of the programme, **the website received in the region of 24,000 hits, this increased to 36,000 by year 3.**

Further, with the support of an Erasmus student who volunteered with SPS during 2013, SPS has progressed into social media, developing a very popular Facebook page. It currently has a reach of over 2,100 people and is becoming a key conduit for sharing information, including promoting local community activities and services and also volunteering opportunities. Further, regular posts seem to engage the Polish community in dialogue about current affairs. Recent posts are summarised in the diagram below:

Diagram 10: Examples of recent posts on the SPS Facebook page



The newspaper/website survey

A survey of the website/newspaper readership was conducted via the website in February 2014. A total of 57 questionnaires were completed, with 60% female respondents and from a wide range of ages. A third of respondents stated that they read the newspaper regularly, 28% often and 38% from time to time.

**As a result of the information it contains, 74% stated that they better understand British society. A total of 90% reported feeling less isolated and 43% feel better in their lives because they better understand what is happening in the community around them.** Having the opportunity to read a newspaper in Polish meant a great deal to 28% of respondents and 21% stated that it makes them feel more at home.

It was interesting to note that respondents had many ideas for how to improve the paper, for example, by including more pages for children. Some participants would like the paper to cover even more technical issues to do with the law and education. However, the opposite was also requested, with more articles dedicated to famous people, health and wellbeing, and different places to visit. It was suggested that the website could include a section for readers to suggest new ideas.



Comments from the focus group respondents echo these findings, reporting that the Facebook site is useful to share information with one another. All of the focus group participants read the newspaper and 92% use the website. They particularly noted the value of articles that keep them informed about the law, including taxation. Further, they noted how the newspaper helps them to be more in touch with other Polish people, including the older generations, through articles about the Polish community's history in the UK. They also presented a number of ideas for further development, including interactive blogs or chat rooms.

***What did clients have to say?***

- *"The paper explains how to deal with difficult situations."*
- *"It's important for immigrants from Poland. It tells you about legal changes, this is extremely important. Even people who speak English are still more confident reading it in Polish, especially the small detail."*
- *"The newspaper is a great source of information on top of the information workshops. It raises important issues. We'd have no idea about these things if we weren't reading it."*
- *"Thanks to SPS we met people who were the first immigrants, we could learn more about past generations."*

*"I am also happy that I could take part in various events organized by SPS, events that happened across whole Nottingham. Participating in events makes me feel less lonely as a Polish person in the UK."*

## Events, trips and other social activities

### Trips and social activities

Over the years SPS has engaged participants in a wide range of social and cultural trips and events. As noted in the 2013 annual report:

**"Our social activities contribute to the creation of a sense of community amongst the recently arrived migrants. They have helped the newcomers develop a better understanding of the host society and assisted and encouraged positive interactions with the host population, nourishing friendships."**

Over the last three years, activities have included:

- A **tree planting event** in Woodthorpe Park in recognition of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, attended by the Polish Consul General and the Lord Mayor of Nottingham (34 participants)
- Trips to **Nottinghamshire County football matches** (180 participants)
- **Trips to the surrounding countryside** including the Wellow May Day Festival and Sherwood Pines (attracting a total of 49 participants, being individuals and families with children)
- A **bicycle repair event** in September 2014 with Sustrans (5 participants)
- **Various trips to the theatre** (with 100 free tickets distributed for plays)

The SPS team seeks out discount vouchers for a range of local cultural events. This has included discounted or free tickets for local theatre productions. The team also actively promote local artists and exhibitions, particularly linking with The New Art Exchange, a local charity that promotes local and international artists from diverse ethnic communities.

Participants have greatly enjoyed these activities, which are **central to creating not only a sense of community amongst SPS service users, but a connection with the broader community** around them. Comments include:

- *"Thanks to SPS events we get to know each other, we become closer as a community."*
- *"It's important for our families and children that we have such a place, a place to eat, to learn, to chat to one another."*

Service users note how these activities **encourage them to do things they would not have done otherwise**. Comments include:

- *"We were encouraged to go to the Playhouse theatre. I wouldn't have gone there without it."*
- *"I was invited to the theatre which was a very special experience. If SPS was not here I would be at home alone all the time."*

**Participants note how they have sustained some of these activities**, for example, 100% of the survey respondents who attended the trips to Wellow and Sherwood Forest stated that they were intending to return with their family and friends.

#### Case Study: Participant feedback from Chesterfield Heritage Event

*“The event went well. We had around 30 people turn up but all new people, mostly with Polish connections, so that was good. The event was advertised in Derbyshire Times, and BBC Radio Sheffield also came along to interview a number of people for a little broadcast on the event and exhibition. The food and talks were brilliant, and people seemed to really get into joining in and sharing their experiences and family stories. We've had some really good feedback on the evaluation forms. Everybody was hanging around for quite a while after the event, and people were swapping phone numbers to keep in touch!”*

#### Larger scale events

Over November 2012 to January 2013, SPS ran and hosted a photography exhibition. Organised by SPS staff and volunteers the art work of six young local artists was displayed, viewed by around 100 people, including member of the public as well as SPS service users.

**The greatest cultural achievement of the last three years, however, has been the Polish Heritage Project ‘Our History-Our Story’, a project that would not have been possible without the core funding provided through the Big Lottery Reaching Communities programme.**

This project ran to the end of 2014, with exhibitions open to the general public from July to December of that year in various locations around the East Midlands. The team, along with numerous volunteers, gathered and recorded the memories of the Polish post Second World War migrants, including photos, documents and other memorabilia, and put this together for the exhibition. Donations were then made to local archives, information was put on to several local websites and educational visits were carried out by members of the public. The Manager of SPS noted, *“The Polish Heritage Project, funded from the Heritage Lottery Fund has been a very significant contribution to our work, allowing the project to capture the lives and achievements of the post WWII ‘vanishing’ community for the future generations, allowing us to build deeper relationships with WWII survivors.”*

This project was extremely important for many service users, attracting people from across the community to SPS. Participants noted,

- *“SPS encouraged me to take part in local events. I went to see their Polish Heritage exhibition which I really liked.”*
- *“Thanks to SPS I felt able to attend various events such as the Polish Heritage Exhibition, an exhibition of importance for newcomers and elderly Poles.”*
- *“This is extremely important from a historical point of view. It’s something that not been looked at before.”*

In addition, the project was strategically important for the organisation because it enabled SPS to work with many new partners including Nottingham Libraries, the New Art Exchange, Links in Chesterfield and different departments within Nottingham City Council.

*"I am still volunteering with SPS. There are a few reasons why I like it - meeting new people, improving myself, doing something for the community, helping other people."*

## Volunteering

### Volunteering with SPS

SPS works with volunteers across several areas of the organisation. Volunteers primarily fall into three main areas: i) supporting English classes; ii) translation or interpreter support – particularly in helping service users attend appointments with agencies such as the GP, the bank or JCP; iii) writing articles for the newspaper and website. The diagram below summarises the range of opportunities with SPS at present. The number of volunteers fluctuates but has ranged from 15 to 30 people each year, with a total of 76 different people volunteering over the period.

The newspaper is primarily written by volunteers. There are 16 volunteers actively involved at present. Volunteers have also been attracted to support specific activities, such as the Polish Heritage Project or social events. Many of these volunteers stay on and become long term supporters of SPS. In general, around a quarter of SPS volunteers are engaged for up to six months and around 40% have been involved for over a year<sup>5</sup>.

**Diagram 11: Volunteering opportunities with SPS**



Some volunteers are coming forward with more specialist skills such as offering training (domestic violence and child development), or activities specifically aimed at children or older people, alongside the traditional activities but in a wider range of languages. For example, a volunteer planned and delivered the workshop on CV skills. For some volunteers, taking part in an activity has been a step into the unknown. For example, Kasia,

<sup>5</sup> Based on the volunteer survey results.

a young mother of four, wanted to run a children's project. She was supported to attend a consultation on organising the 'Travelling Playground' project. She set about running this activity and encouraged other Polish parents to take part. Because of her commitment many parents expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the project, all of which contributed to the event becoming a huge success.

### Promoting volunteering with other organisations

The team at SPS also encourage service users to take up volunteering opportunities with external organisations, through regular emails about both voluntary and employment opportunities and by promoting organisations through the website and Facebook page. For example, one service user reported, *"I was thinking about volunteering. That week I got an email from Karolina about opportunities at a charity called Groundwork."* She applied and volunteered with Groundwork for three months, gaining the skills to go on to find paid employment.

### Impact on volunteers

A total of 11 volunteers completed the volunteer survey. Volunteers spoke very positively about their experiences with SPS. A total of 93% of survey respondents stated that as a result of volunteering they **felt happier and more confident in their lives**, whilst 64% stated that it had helped them to feel **more confident living in the UK**.

- *"I feel more confident in everyday life. I improved my English. I have better contact with the community. I feel better informed about life in the UK."*

Volunteers **like being able to use their skills, particularly to help others**. A total of 79% of survey respondents stated that volunteering had made them feel like part of the community, 100% stating that they have now taken part in community events.

- *"I did enjoy it because I love helping people."*
- *"I think it was a good experience. I wanted to utilise my language skills to help others."*
- *"I think it is a great opportunity to get involved in the life of Polish community in Nottingham."*

Volunteers also noted how volunteering has **helped them to meet new people** and make new friends, reducing their own isolation. From the survey a total of 86% of respondents stated that volunteering has helped them to feel less isolated or lonely. **This social impact was widely reported and should be recognised as one of the primary benefits from volunteering with SPS.**

- *"Volunteering changed my personal life. I could develop my interpersonal skills. I have the opportunity to meet interesting people in SPS."*
- *"It was great to start volunteering right after arriving to Nottingham, when I didn't know the city/didn't know that many people."*
- *"I have met new people, made new friends, became part of a new group. I socialise more."*
- *"I really enjoy my volunteering with SPS. I like the fact that I come regularly on Tuesday to do administration work and I am a member of the language cafe also on Tuesday which makes me feel less lonely because I have now friends."*

Several volunteers noted how this new interaction has helped them to **deepen their understanding of and connection with the Polish culture at large**. The Heritage Project seems to have been particularly impactful in this way. Comments include:

- *"It helped me to connect with Polish heritage, make new friends and improve my connection with the Polish community in the East Midlands."*

- *“I have made some good Polish friends, whose friendship I value. It has also expanded my horizons and I have a better understanding of modern day Poland, and issues facing Polish people in the UK.”*
- *“Volunteering for the Heritage Project really helped me connect with my Polish roots and understand a lot more about Poland.”*

In addition, they note how volunteering has helped them to meet a **range of different people, promoting greater familiarity with cultural diversity and greater social integration.**

- *“I met people with different backgrounds, from other cultures and thanks to that I felt like a member of the local community.”*

For some, these experiences have resulted in a marked impact on their ability to engage with the world around them, resulting in dramatic improvements in wellbeing, particularly mental health. One such example is described below.

#### **Case studies: Impact of volunteering on mental health and general wellbeing**

*“After my accident my mental health was very bad. Since I started to come to SPS my wellbeing improved. I have found new friends, new interests. For me coming to SPS is a chance to leave the house, meet new people. I have to dress well, do my make-up and this is very motivating. I feel more confident. I am not afraid to leave the house, I am not afraid of people anymore. If SPS didn’t exist I would stay home all the time. Coming here motivated and empowered me to do new things for my wellbeing.”*

Volunteers report how volunteering has helped them to **strengthen their skills and develop new ones** (86% of survey respondents). This included developing their language skills, as well as a broader range of technical skills. A total of 74% felt that they could now organise their own events.

- *“I really enjoyed a chance to publish my articles in the paper. It gave me the confidence and motivation to write more. I have learnt how to write for the newspaper, how to develop ideas.”*

For some this process has been pivotal in helping them to **gain employment**, 65% of survey respondents stating that their chances of gaining a good job had increased and 53% stating that volunteering had in fact lead to their getting a good job. **This impact on employment should also be viewed as a primary benefit of volunteering with SPS.**

- *“It helped me with the reference for my new job.”*
- *“I felt more confident communicating in English. Moreover, that opportunity helped me get work experience in the UK and later in getting a paid job.”*
- *“I gained some experience that really enriched my CV and I was able to volunteer in a way that gave me a lot of satisfaction and possibilities to do what I really enjoy doing and share it with others.”*
- *“My self-esteem increased. It gave me confidence in searching for a better job. I gained useful experience in order to find a better job.”*

Volunteers have also become keen advocates for volunteering in general. Further, **50% of SPS survey respondents have gone on to volunteer with another organisation.**

- *“It helped me to convince someone very important to me to get volunteering experience as well, which eventually helped her to find a good job.”*

It is interesting to note that volunteers report **feeling valued by SPS** and appreciate the opportunity to be able to have influence within the organisation and shape future services. A total of 61% of survey respondents

report that they have had an opportunity to express their views and have influence over the local community as a result of volunteering with SPS.

- *“I loved it! It was great to get involved. I was made very welcome and my input was valued and appreciated.”*
- *“It was a great experience and I really enjoyed that! I had the feeling that I am helpful and my opinions are important for SPS. I had the impression that I can always come and talk freely about new ideas, about my voluntary work and I am making a positive impact in the organisation.”*

It is also important to note that **many volunteers continue to be service users**, taking part in the Information Service, English classes and the Language Café. This is illustrated in the following example:

- *“SPS helped me and my daughter in our daily life because I am a volunteer but also I use SPS information sessions and I am a member of the Language Cafe. SPS gave me the chance to go to the theatre and attend an exhibition about Polish heritage. I am more friendly and open now.”*

**Diagram 12: Volunteer Case Studies**

**Joanna– volunteer interpreter**

Joanna joined SPS in January 2014. She volunteers as an interpreter and writes for the Polish newspaper. She has supported SPS clients attending appointments at the Nottingham Law Centre and Nottingham Circle. She said, *“Assisting with translating was very challenging for me. I remember feeling stressed and preparing myself for the appointments, learning new words. But I gained confidence and I learnt new things. After a few appointments I was more knowledgeable, more confident and, more importantly, I felt good as I saw that I was helping people. The people who I assisted made me realize what a contribution SPS makes. Those people would not have coped with their problems without SPS.”* And her efforts were greatly appreciated. Rob Bryant, the support service manager at Nottingham Circle, noted, *“Joanna was absolutely great. She helped us out by calling the Polish lady referred to us by her GP. Joanna has offered her linguistic skills for the future which is lovely of her.”*

Volunteering has had a positive impact in Joanna’s life too. *“Thanks to SPS I feel much less isolated in this country that is new for me. Because of my voluntary work at SPS I feel better, especially after interpreting sessions because I can see how helpful it is for people. They don’t have to worry anymore. I also feel that if something happened to me I can always go to SPS and someone will help me, the way they help so many other people.”* Joanna was also hoping to find employment which she achieved as a result of her volunteering. She said. *“My goal was to gain experience, learn new skills and gain references that I could present to my future employer. Probably I wouldn’t have got my first job without a reference letter from SPS.”*

**Andrew - Volunteer with the Polish Heritage Project**

Andy was involved with the Polish Heritage project at SPS. He was always interested in his Polish heritage but the project provided that spark. *“It was like a tribute to my Polish grandpa, I was proud to do it. Sorting photos, reading books, correcting information for the exhibition - it proved to be a kind of catalyst for me. The heritage project opened many doors. I now conduct research about my own heritage. It’s more like a very interesting hobby now. Because of the Heritage Project, RAF historians made contact with me to ask me to provide them with more information about my grandfather. I also re-engage my mum with her heritage. SPS made me feel more of an advocate for Polish people. It’s nice to be able to help. Now I help people with CV’s, translation and the media.”*

Diagram 12a: Volunteer Case Studies (cont.)

#### **Aneta – volunteer gardener**

Aneta started her journey with SPS as a service user of the Information Service. In time she became a volunteer expressing an interest in gardening. She started to take care of the garden in front of the SPS office, encouraging other service users to help. From this volunteer-led initiative the SPS gardening group was born. Aneta wanted to do more gardening work and so a member of the staff team contacted Groundwork and arranged a volunteer placement for Aneta on their allotments. She went there every week, developing her gardening skills and improving her English.

Aneta still comes to the SPS office for help but, using the knowledge she has gained, she now helps others. *“I am more confident now and I can help other people because I have learnt how to do new things. I have become more independent and I know more about what is happening locally. The SPS service is very good for people who can’t speak English. Here you can resolve your problems quickly. Because of this I am less stressed, my children go to school and all my forms are completed correctly. I feel less lonely because through volunteering and attending events I have met new people. The atmosphere here is warm and welcoming.”*

#### **Lidia - volunteer administrator**

Lidia joined SPS in October 2013. She was experiencing a difficult time after an accident, and she stopped talking to people and was reluctant to leave her house. She came to SPS and started to volunteer as an administrator. Lidia regained her independence and started to feel happy again. She said, *“For me, coming to SPS is an occasion to go out, to meet people. SPS motivated me to dress nicely, put my makeup on and care once again about my appearance. Since coming to SPS my well-being is greatly improved. I feel more independent. I have become more organized, more friendly. Because I am meeting new people I feel happier, I have become more confident. I am not afraid of leaving the house or taking a bus. Because when I am here I am in the company of nice, polite people, I have become more polite and a better person. I feel part of the community now. Last year I wanted to go back to Poland but my feelings have changed. SPS has made me feel more settled in the UK and my knowledge about life here has increased. I now know more and it makes me feel confident and happier. I now want to do more in return for SPS.”*

#### **Sylwia – volunteer researcher**

Sylwia is a volunteer researcher. *“My role is to engage people in conversation. I encourage them to have a say, to give their views and opinions. It gives me an opportunity to speak to various people. I am a good listener that is why the role really suits me. It motivates me to talk to people even more. Here at SPS I can help and my involvement is recognized and valued.”* And Sylwia feels that she has also benefitted from this role. She said, *“Because of volunteering at SPS I gained communication skills, and I am more confident when talking to people.”* Sylwia hopes that the voluntary experience gained at SPS will help her to find another voluntary role and would like to work within a school.



*"The team at SPS have been referring people to our service, and it's been really useful. Around 75% to 80% of these people wouldn't access help without it, they wouldn't manage."*

## Partnership working with other agencies

### Strategic influence

**Over the last three years SPS has actively sought to increase its profile as a charity and a member of the broader voluntary sector, something that has only been possible as a result of the Big Lottery funding.** The Manager of SPS notes, *"We've moved in so many ways, we're developing in so many ways."*

**Within Nottingham, SPS has become much more established in relation to statutory sector agencies.** For example, Nottingham City Council (NCC) provided funding towards the second Information Service Worker, recognising the importance of this service for Nottingham residents. An NHS Specialist Community Dietician ran a diabetes programme from the SPS centre, with clients primarily referred from local GPs. In 2012 SPS was invited to deliver a workshop to teachers and education professionals about the experiences of Polish parents and children in British schools, as part of the Hospitality to Diversity Conference, run by NCC. NCC Children's Services also approached SPS to advertise adoption and fostering services in the newspaper and local Councillors have been keen to engage with SPS projects. The Manager of SPS notes, *"We are perceived as a stable partner now"*.

#### Partnership working with Nottingham City Homes

*"This project is great for empowering tenants and residents from the Eastern European community and allowing them to play an active role as citizens of Nottingham. It also helps organisations such as Nottingham City Homes reach tenants from communities that are underrepresented, and with joint initiatives and workshops helps to promote community cohesion in a culturally diverse city like Nottingham."*

- Afzaal Nawaz, Tenant & Community Involvement Manager, Nottingham City Homes

#### Partnership Working with Nottinghamshire Police

For several years SPS has helped Polish service users to engage with Nottinghamshire Police through information workshops. In addition, over the last three years, SPS staff have delivered training to trainee Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers on issues faced by the Polish community.

In 2013 this interaction developed to a new level, when Nottinghamshire Police linked up with SPS to conduct a recruitment exercise seeking to increase the diversity of the Force. Several training sessions were held in which participants from the Polish community were taught what would be required and how to apply. As noted by one of the Police liaison officers, *"Notts Police wanted to recruit some Polish people and they advertised through SPS. A total of 24 candidates took part in workshops with the Police. The workshops lasted three months, and there were five stages of recruitment. None of these candidates were successful but they benefitted from the knowledge."*

**The profile of the organisation has also risen within the voluntary sector.** Particular emphasis has been placed on broadening networks with other information and advice services, resulting in a step-change of specialist support available to clients. As noted above, the Nottingham Law Centre is now an established partner, and a weekly drop-in session for legal advice was established with a local firm of solicitors, (initially at SPS now at their own premises), clients from the 1-2-1 Information Service being referred to this session for additional specialist legal support. Over the last two years working relationships with the Nottingham Refugee Forum have been strengthened and SPS has joined a consortium of similar services. Developing consortium bidding will be an important development in the coming years. There has also been collaboration with an organisation

called Begin, with SPS staff joining steering group meetings. Further, the Nottingham Law Centre has invited SPS to put forward a representative for its trustee board.

#### Partnership Working with Nottingham Law Centre

*“We have worked in partnership with SPS to give their advice staff the opportunity to observe our specialist advisers. This has enabled their advisers to sit in on initial client interviews and understand the complexities of benefit laws, especially those relevant to EU Nationals. The work that SPS undertakes at grass roots dovetails with our services, providing the basic advice and referring more complex cases to our specialist advisers.”*

- Cheryl Weston, Nottingham Law Centre

**These developments are very welcome. However, as a small organisation SPS struggles at times to embrace all opportunities due to limited staffing resources.** Further, some partners make occasional requests without recognising the resource implications. For example, Nottingham City Homes asked SPS to translate its newly revised tenancy agreement into Polish and Nottingham Trent University has approached SPS to provide information about the Polish community and asked for support in conducting research, but no funding has been offered to backfill the staff time this would require. It is evident then, that while many agencies are keen to work with SPS to provide access to the Polish community, this is not always accompanied by the necessary financial support. **That being noted, some organisations are starting to recognise this need and have begun to provide some limited financial support.** For example, SPS’s newly raised profile attracting £5,000 towards the costs of the 1-2-1 Information Service from the Metropolitan Migrant Fund, allowing this service to expand its scope.

#### Increasing client referrals

**Through the 1-2-1 Information Service, funded by the Big Lottery, SPS has increased the number of referrals it makes to other organisations.** This has included referrals to housing services, (Nottingham City Homes, Housing Aid and Emmanuelle House), and specialist advice providers (the Nottingham Law Centre for legal advice and the Meadows Advice Group for help with debt and utility bills). Referrals to local food banks have risen sharply since SPS became a recognised voucher provider. Food poverty is evidently a growing issue across the Polish as well as the British communities in the city. Initially allocated a quota of eight referrals per week, this has been increased to 12 due to the high level of need within the community.

#### Case study: Partnership working with Children’s Centres

A student social worker was keen to give feedback on her experiences with the SPS team. She has previously brought Polish speaking parents from the Children’s Centre to SPS for additional support. She said, *“The family I’m currently working with are very isolated. This is a good service for families who speak Polish and limited English. SPS is a service which members of the Polish community can trust. Normally I have to book an interpreter for them. It is good that they can speak in Polish to the same person that can also give them advice.”*

#### Case study: Partnership working with the Meadows Advice Group

David from the Meadow’s Advice Group provides a service that helps clients tackle fuel debt. It’s a ‘gold plated’ service in that his team go out to meet with clients in their own homes and spend a couple of hours with them looking at their options. He said, *“The team at SPS have been referring people to our service and it’s been really useful. Around 75% to 80% these people wouldn’t access help without it, they wouldn’t manage. We’re talking about people who are used to sticking within their own community. Language is a real obstacle. There are a lot of Polish people living in The Meadows and so it’s important to have a relationship with SPS.”* David is keen to develop more ways of working with SPS. He now attends sessions of the language café to get to know the community better and would like to help SPS to integrate different topics like fuel poverty into English classes and other courses.

**However, making referrals has been challenging at times when named contacts move on. Extensive funding cuts in the advice sector over recent years have resulted in many services being restructured or closed which has exacerbated this problem.** Further, even when referring clients to specialist services, those services may not have access to interpreters and the SPS Information Service team do not have the capacity to go out to appointments with their clients.

As a result, the team have found it necessary to be reasonably self-reliant, learning by investigating answers to problems. They have taken part in some free training and have organised bespoke training sessions with a member of DWP. Having a named contact at DWP to ask specific questions has been extremely useful.

At times, however, the team struggles to access professional training relating to their work as they are not currently recognised as an advice provider within Advice Nottingham. For example, when looking for training for the staff team around the changes in the welfare system, the Nottingham City Council Welfare Rights Team simply referred them to a website for further information. Effort has been made to increase the profile of SPS within Advice Nottingham over the last year, and it is hoped that this will strengthen in the months ahead. The team note how difficult it can be to manage conflicting advice from different services, particularly from DWP and HMRC. However, over the last three years the team has developed greater confidence to tackle statutory sector agencies when necessary. For example, the team recently made a complaint to NCC about the way that Children's Services had treated a Polish family. The team now feel more confident to stand up for clients and take high profile action.

#### Developing new opportunities

**The Big Lottery grant has created a powerful springboard for SPS to develop in new directions and attract additional funding.** This has included a Heritage Lottery grant, enabling SPS to develop a high profile project exploring and raising awareness of the rich history of the Polish community in Nottingham (as discussed above).

Nottingham City Council also provided funding for the second full time Information Worker from April 2014 and to develop the new Eastern European Outreach Project. This has opened up whole new avenues for SPS to reach out to a wide range of communities, particularly the Roma, and allowed the organisation to conduct research to establish the needs of these diverse communities. **It is evident that none of these exciting developments would have been possible without the organisation's solid foundation, i.e. its key services and core staff team, funded through the Big Lottery three-year grant programme.**

**The team note that these important activities have helped SPS to become more established, not only in the eyes of the local British community, but also in relation to the long term Polish community.** The Manager of SPS notes, *"We are now seen as the representative of the Polish community. Even the Polish elders are treating us as part of them."* As a result SPS has developed links to Polish organisations in Derbyshire.

**Moreover, the Polish Government itself has recognised the important role played by SPS.** The relationship with the Polish Consulate has strengthened and in November 2012 the Manager of SPS received a medal of recognition, the Silver Cross of Achievement, from the Polish President for all that she has achieved, inviting her to a highly prestigious event to receive her award. Further, funding was provided by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for SPS to employ a second Information Worker (in the first part of the Big Lottery programme prior to April 2014). The Polish Ministry funded a media project which enabled SPS to develop and professionalise the newspaper and website, a key development in deepening and sustaining the engagement of its readers. This project enabled SPS also to develop links with Polish organisations and the Polish community across the East Midlands. This recognition and support will be vital to ensure a bright future for the organisation in the years to come.

## Partner organisation testimonials

The following testimonials demonstrate the value that SPS brings to other organisations, both sister voluntary sector services and statutory agencies.

### Partner Organisation Testimonials

*"I have worked with the Polish Community Group for over four years in my role as both Deputy Leader of the Council and ward councillor. I have found them well organised, enthusiastic, reliable, and keen both to promote Polish culture but also the integration of the Polish community into Nottingham society. I am convinced any support provided by the Lottery will be well used and be of real benefit to the city."*

- Cllr Graham Chapman, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resources and Neighbourhood Regeneration, Nottingham City Council

*"Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum is a longstanding partner of SPS based in the city. We have always enjoyed working alongside SPS, as they are an organisation with great integrity who do fantastic work in Nottingham. In particular NNRF and SPS are partners in the Communities of Interest, New and Emerging Communities grant from Nottingham City Council."*

– Fiona Cameron, Chief Exec, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum

*"We have worked in partnership with SPS to give their advice staff the opportunity to observe our specialist advisers. This has enabled their advisers to sit in on initial client interviews and understand the complexities of benefit laws, especially those relevant to EU Nationals. The work that SPS undertakes at grass roots dovetails with our services, providing the basic advice and referring more complex cases to our specialist advisers. As the migration of Eastern Europeans continues I can only envisage that their service will become more responsive to emerging communities e.g. Romanians. As part of a domestic violence specific organisation, I hope to maintain and expand current links to be able to further sustain Polish women who require specialised support around a sensitive subject. Combined, SPS's services of information sessions, employability advice, signposting, ESOL and (IT) workshops will enhance the empowerment and independence of the local community."*

- Teresa O'Hagan-Bull, Women's Aid Integrated Services

*"SPS has an excellent track record of providing quality services to this community and strong partnership working with other agencies – including HLG - to maximise their reach and impact. The needs of Polish and Eastern European Migrants are becoming increasingly complex, particularly as they have been hit hard by some of the recent Welfare Reforms and if the specialist work of SPS was to cease, this would leave a large gap in local service provision and expertise that would not be able to be filled by other agencies."*

– Catherine Cook, Strategy & Partnerships Manager, HLG.

*"Nottinghamshire Police values Signpost to Polish Success (SPS) as a partner in building up trust and confidence of difficult to reach communities. SPS often facilitates the dialogue with Polish and other Eastern European communities in Nottinghamshire, therefore enabling the wider audience to find relevant information and express their views about policing. By offering information, support, guidance and signposting to relevant services SPS contributes to improving trust and confidence in policing and preventing crime. On many occasions SPS proved to be the most effective and efficient medium to deliver information to the Polish community. The information ranges from community safety messages and crime prevention advice, to missing persons appeals and raising awareness of human trafficking. Nottinghamshire Police is looking forward to continuing and developing partnership work with Signpost to Polish Success in the future."*

- Boguslawa Motylska, Crime Prevention Officer

# ACHEIVEMENT OF OUTCOMES

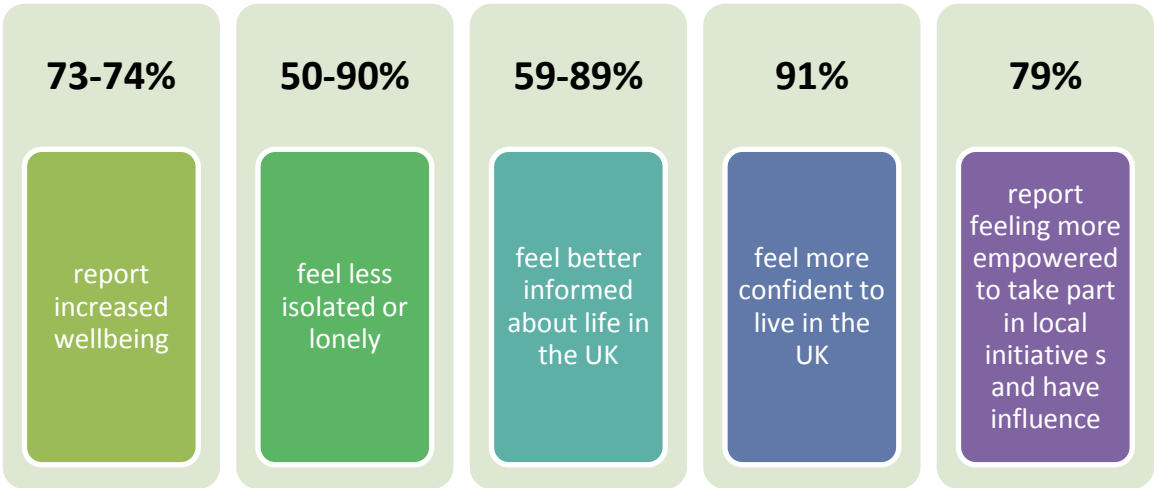
In light of the findings above, it is appropriate to consider whether SPS has met its outcome goals. Data has been compiled from a wide range of activities, including two English classes, the language café session, six information workshops, the newspaper survey, a volunteer survey and the evaluation focus group. Data is presented separately for the Information Service questionnaires as this was recorded differently.

**In terms of improved wellbeing, for many services 90% to 100% of clients report a positive impact on their wellbeing.** Advice Information service evaluation questionnaires report an increase in wellbeing of 73%.

Meanwhile **90% of workshop/event respondents (140 people) reported reduced feelings of isolation** (this was 50% for Information Service users). A total of **89% (134 people) of workshop/event participants reported feeling better informed about life in the UK** (50% of Information Service users), **with 91% (85 people), feeling more confident living in the UK** as a result of the support of SPS<sup>6</sup>. Further, **79% of event/workshop respondents (27 people) stated that they now felt more empowered to take part in local initiatives** and to give their views.

It is interesting to note the differences between the participants in the Information Service and those who have taken part in the broader activities. It is possible that the manner in which the Information Service evaluation data was captured underestimates the scale of impact, given that clients may have commented in relation to the content at that particular information session, rather than reflecting on their entire experiences with SPS. Alternatively, it may be the case that it is prolonged engagement with the staff team and others, through classes, workshops and social events, which promotes a greater sense of empowerment and reduces isolation. Further details are provided in tables 6 and 7 below.

Diagram 13: Summary of key outcomes achieved



<sup>6</sup> This question was not asked in the Information Service questionnaires.

**Table 6: Big Lottery funded programme outcomes**

Outcome	Indicator	Targets			Actual			Total reported	Target Met?
		By end Year 1	By end Year 2	By end Year 3	By end Year 1	By end Year 2	By end Year 3		
<b>Outcome 1: New and emerging communities will have improved wellbeing, as a result of better access to information/support services, tailored to specific needs</b>	No. people using SPS Information Service	300	600	900	500	1041	1440 <sup>7</sup>	1,440 (est)	Met
	No. people confirming that their wellbeing has improved as a result of SPS support		400	600	370	770	1065	1,065 (est) <sup>8</sup>	Met
<b>Outcome 2: Reduced isolation amongst new and emerging communities through increased participation in volunteering, social events, workshops and other activities.</b>	No. people volunteering for SPS and participating in SPS events	20	20		21	24	31	76	Met
	No. participants in SPS events and stating that they feel less isolated as a result		40	60				90% <sup>9</sup> (133 of 147)	Met
<b>Outcome 3: Increased knowledge among new and emerging communities leading them to be more confident, independent, and empowered to be part of local society/culture.</b>	No. people stating that they feel better informed about life in the UK	300						720 (est) <sup>10</sup>	Met
	No. people stating that they feel more confident living in the UK through the support they receive from SPS		150					720 (est) <sup>11</sup>	Met
	No. people who have played a greater part in local society as a result of feeling more empowered			45				79% (27 of 34) <sup>12</sup>	Assume met

<sup>7</sup> Data available for 10.5 months of the year was 349, total estimated for the full year is extrapolated to a full 12 months.

<sup>8</sup> Extrapolated from the response rates to the Information Service evaluation questionnaires.

<sup>9</sup> From the various workshops and event evaluation questionnaires.

<sup>10</sup> Being 50% of Information Service participants, based on the Information Service evaluation questionnaires. Results from the evaluation of broader services give a total of 89% (being 134 of 150 respondents).

<sup>11</sup> Being 50% of Information Service participants, based on the Information Service evaluation questionnaires. Results from the evaluation of broader services give a total of 91% (being 85 of 93 respondents).

**Table 7: Big Lottery funded programme activities**

Activities	Targets			Actuals (Estimated)			Target Met
	By end Year 1	By end Year 2	By end Year 3	By end Year 1	By end Year 2	By end Year 3	
SPS to deliver one-to-one information sessions to (No. beneficiaries)	300	+ 300	+300	500	1,041	1,440	Met
<b>SPS will encourage one-to-one information sessions users to complete their own forms (No. beneficiaries)</b>		50	100		189	159	Met
<b>SPS will organise workshops, focus groups or other events (No. events)</b>	10	+ 10	+10	16	10	12	Met
<b>Local forums will be attended by SPS users (No. forums)</b>			4	??	??	??	Unclear
SPS will recruit volunteers (No. new volunteers)	20			7	10	11	Met
SPS volunteers will have received experience and training necessary to develop their own initiatives (No. volunteers)		10	+10	Estimated as 17 (no. volunteers stating they now have the skills to run their own project)			Nearly met
SPS service users will have be involved in the production of SPS information newsletter and coordination of social media (No. service users)		20	+20	60	60	60 <sup>13</sup>	Met
SPS will provide information through its newsletter	10 issues per year, 3000 copies			10 issues 3,000 copies	12 issues 3,000 copies	12 issues 4,000 copies	

<sup>12</sup> From the various workshops and event evaluation questionnaires.

<sup>13</sup> Estimated as an average of 5 service users engaged in relation to social media or the newspaper per month.

# THE FUTURE OF SPS

## Sustainable funding

SPS is still a relatively young organisation and therefore making the transition to sustainability is an on-going process. Three years ago, the organisation was faced with the challenge of ensuring its immediate survival. Now, the team are taking a more strategic approach and thinking about the priority needs of the community in the coming years.

**The stable base provided by the Big Lottery funding has been pivotal in creating a platform for new funding streams to be accessed and new programmes of work developed.** As noted above, funding has been awarded to help SPS hire a second 1-2-1 Information Service Worker to develop closer links with Polish organisations across the East Midlands and to professionalise its newspaper and website. SPS is now using its own website and newspaper to promote information on behalf of these wider partners. This was only possible because a staff team were already in place, made possible through the Big Lottery programme. Heritage Lottery funding was also awarded for the Polish Heritage Project, again, reliant upon the pre-existing team. The Manager of SPS is confident that none of this would have been possible without the Big Lottery Reaching Communities grant. She noted, *“If it wasn’t for the Big Lottery everything would have been impossible.”*

## Future service delivery needs

Service users have been invited to comment on the future of the organisation at a number of different events, including a focus group run as part of the evaluation. Participants identified the key issues that members of the Polish community are likely to face in the coming years. The most common themes were related to health care and unfair employers, followed by issues to do with HMRC and JCP and also benefits, as settled individuals need to support their families and children. The need for specialist advice as self-employed workers or as employers themselves was identified. Broader issues such as homelessness and human trafficking were also noted. Participants stated,

- *“Agencies are not honest.”*
- *“People are seeing it from the other side, setting up their own companies.”*
- *“Most people are settled, they need help registering their children.”*

**Diagram 14: Key issues that participants felt the Polish community will face in the coming years**

School	Job Centre Plus	Taxes/Inland Revenue	GPs/Health Centres/Hospitals	Police
Housing	Employers	Benefits	Domestic Violence	Human Trafficking
Homelessness	Poverty	Alcohol/drugs issues	Maternity rights	Unfair employers

Participants were asked to highlight the key areas that they thought SPS should focus on in the coming years. **The 1-2-1 Information Service was almost universally identified and given the highest priority, closely followed by information workshops (particularly related to recent changes in the law/politics/life in the UK). English classes, volunteering opportunities and the Polish newspaper were also rated very highly.**



Interestingly, participants requested some new areas of service delivery. They wanted the Information Service to develop further, to include specialist information drop-in surgeries with agencies like HMRC, to negotiate with organisations such as JCP, GPs and DWP, and advocate with employers on behalf of the client. Further, service users reported an urgent need for SPS to establish a bilingual crisis support service, with particular emphasis on homelessness and domestic violence. Participants want SPS to further develop employment related services, such as CV writing and job search support with a particular emphasis on the self-employed. As noted by one participant, *“Polish people are very enterprising. There’s massive potential.”*

Beyond these advice services, participants were also keen to broaden community and cultural links, particularly with the universities. As noted by one individual, *“The Polish community is integrated into part of society. We want the university to invest in the Polish community through languages classes at different levels, with cultural issues as part of this.”*

Participants were asked to identify which organisations they would be likely to access in the coming year. All participants noted SPS. The Nottingham Law Centre was reasonably well known, followed by the CAB, and to a lesser extent the JCP, Nottingham City Homes and the Police. Participants stressed that they would like SPS to make links with a broader range of training providers, especially relating to employment opportunities. Further work was also requested to help Polish people engage with health services.

It was interesting to note that several participants stressed the need for SPS to offer more age-specific activities, particularly related to the older generations and children. It was noted that in many cases grandparents are now joining their families in the UK in order to help with child care. A seniors’ group, providing an activity for people with similar life experiences, was suggested.

On a wholly different note, it was also suggested that SPS could look at promoting opportunities to engage with a broader range of music in Nottingham. It was noted that French and Polish radio stations offer a wide range of types of music including more traditional songs, a sharp contrast to the mainstream radio stations in the UK.

## CONCLUSIONS

*"This place has helped and will help thousands of people who would otherwise struggle. Thanks to it, people feel that there is always someone to ask for help. It is essential for people to remember Polish traditions and preserve our identity which cannot exist without knowing one's roots. SPS takes care of that. I wish SPS and the people who work there all the best. Thank you."*

It is evident from the information presented above, that the range of services offered by SPS over the last three years have achieved a marked impact for SPS clients, particularly in terms of their wellbeing, in reducing isolation and loneliness, in increasing the levels of knowledge about, and therefore confidence to engage with, life in the UK. English classes and the language café have helped participants to not only improve their language skills but discuss their thoughts and ideas, developing a greater appreciation for citizenship in Nottingham. Specialist information workshops alongside the Information Service have gone a long way towards helping individuals resolve their specific problems. Social and cultural events have helped participants to connect with each other and people from other ethnic communities, promoting a greater feeling of belonging. As a result, many participants are now much more actively involved in their local community, in social events, and taking part in civil society. Numerous service users have become actively involved as volunteers with SPS and within the broader community. Participants note that SPS has become, *"the centre of the Polish community."* The rapid development and professionalism of the website and newspaper has gone a long way to developing the reputation of the organisation, creating something for both the staff team and service users at large to be very proud of.

It is evident that little of this would have been possible without the steadfast commitment and professionalism of the SPS team as emotional and practical help must go hand-in-hand when seeking to support vulnerable migrant communities. Further, the interconnectedness and longevity of the different SPS services has been of paramount importance in order to provide a robust and holistic service.

SPS has grown and changed in many ways over the last three years, raising its profile both locally and internationally, attracting additional revenue streams and developing a range of new projects. The funding provided by the Big Lottery Reaching Communities grant has played the central role in allowing these developments to take place, providing the foundation for innovation, that being a stable and supported staff team.

Service users and staff members alike have great aspirations for the organisation's future. With increasingly complex issues faced by the Polish community it is vital that the service is sustained. As noted by one service user, *"Without SPS, I wouldn't have received the support and information I needed. I would still be living on the Nottingham streets."* However, the future of the organisation remains uncertain. While its funding base is beginning to diversify, there is no doubt that, without continued core funding, the organisation may falter. As noted by one service user, *"I can't imagine if they no longer existed. I hope no one will let that happen."*

## APPENDIX 1 – CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

### **Damian, former volunteer and SPS member of staff**

Damian, 29, came to the UK in 2005. He came to SPS to gain some experience as a volunteer interpreter and this changed his life. He said, *“It was a very good experience for me, I have learnt a lot and it empowered me to start an interpreting course. I understood how important and responsible job is to help people. How confidentiality is important, how important is to keep the sense of what people are saying. I am more open now. I feel more fulfilled.”*

Damian also took part in various events organized at SPS and became a very active member of the English Polish Language Café. *“At the café I have met new people, I have made new friends now and that makes me feel less lonely. Because of SPS I took part in local events such as workshops at SPS but also events that are not organized by SPS such as various exhibitions and festivals.”* This has also been supported by the newspaper, sharing information about life in the UK. He said, *“I have also gained a lot of information by reading EMpP. I found out about important events, important anniversaries, local news and important changes to the law.”*

Damian’s volunteering led him to obtain paid employment at SPS as an Eastern European Outreach Worker. He said, *“My role is to help in the integration of the local community. I have also been involved in the Roma project. I have attended several meetings and forums such as the Local Residents’ Association and I help to promote SPS. I am informing people about what is happening locally and I give them the opportunity to attend meetings and use various services.”*

Damian is confident that his skills have greatly developed over this time. He said, *“Working at SPS, first as a volunteer and then as a member of staff, helped me to gain life skills and a lot of news skills that will help me in the future. I know now more about promotion, marketing, public speaking, liaising with various organizations and individuals, organizing events. I feel that I could definitely organize my own event.”*

SPS has also supported helped Damian’s girlfriend Monika. He said, *“It’s very important for me that SPS helped Monika in terms of improving her English. She attended English classes at SPS which empowered her to join the Language Café and become a volunteer. SPS directed Monika to Groundwork where she volunteered in administration support. This has helped her improve her English, learn new skills and gain references.”*

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES RELATED FEEDBACK FROM ENGLISH CLASS CLIENTS

Because of English classes...	Version 1 (range of 6 choices)					Version 2 (range of 3 choices)			Percentage "Yes" or better	
	Definitely not	No	Maybe	A little	Yes	Definitely yes	No	Neutral		Yes
I feel happier and more content in my life (wellbeing improved)					4	3			7	100%
I feel less isolated or lonely					4	3			7	100%
I feel more independent					4	3			7	100%
I feel better informed about life in the UK					4	3			7	100%
I feel more confident living in the UK				1	3	3			7	93%
I feel more empowered to take part in community activities									7	100%
I have taken part in community events		2		3	1	1				29%
I feel like part of the local community			2		2	3				71%
I have been able to give my views and have influence over things in my local community		2		1	2	2				57%
My skills have improved				1	4	2				86%
My chance of getting a good job has improved			2		3	2				71%
I have helped with learning/employment goals									6	86%
I feel like I could organise my own event/activity		2	2	2	1					14%