



Sensory Library and Bus

(Evaluation Report, August 2018)

Introduction



In 2016 Linkage Community Trust was awarded a three-year grant from the Big Lottery Fund's 'Reaching Communities' programme valued at £371,821. The award is for a Sensory Library and Bus: a fully-accessible converted bus providing individuals and groups across Lincolnshire with a sensory room (and multi-sensory equipment hire), on their doorstep, at no cost. This mobile project provides children, young people and adults with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and other health conditions with access to sensory resources and facilities. The funding from the Lottery covers the 'revenue costs' (e.g. staff salaries, running expenses and training), 'capital costs' (bus and stock) and 'overhead costs' (e.g. accommodation and utilities) needed to deliver the project.

In April 2018 Linkage commissioned Rose Regeneration to undertake an external and independent evaluation of the impact of the grant. The evaluation has followed a logical path through the evidence – from looking at data collated by the project supplied to the Lottery and the systems/processes put in place through to speaking with beneficiaries, parents/carers, professionals, partner organisations and stakeholders. We have used this information to understand: (1) what the Sensory Library and Bus's core work is; (2) how this core work is delivered and monitored; (3) the outcomes being delivered by the project; (4) how much it costs and whether the project is offering value-for-money; and (5) where next?

About the Sensory Library and Bus: its core work & what it is trying to achieve

“40 years ago when Linkage started people with learning disabilities were hidden away. Some of this still continues today but at Linkage we’re trying to break through. The project enhances what we do in providing outreach specialist services to help people with learning disabilities increase their independence.”

“The project team listen to what people need and take on feedback. They haven’t bought a load of flashing lights which would be nice to look at but not help the children; they’ve found better and often much lower cost alternatives.”

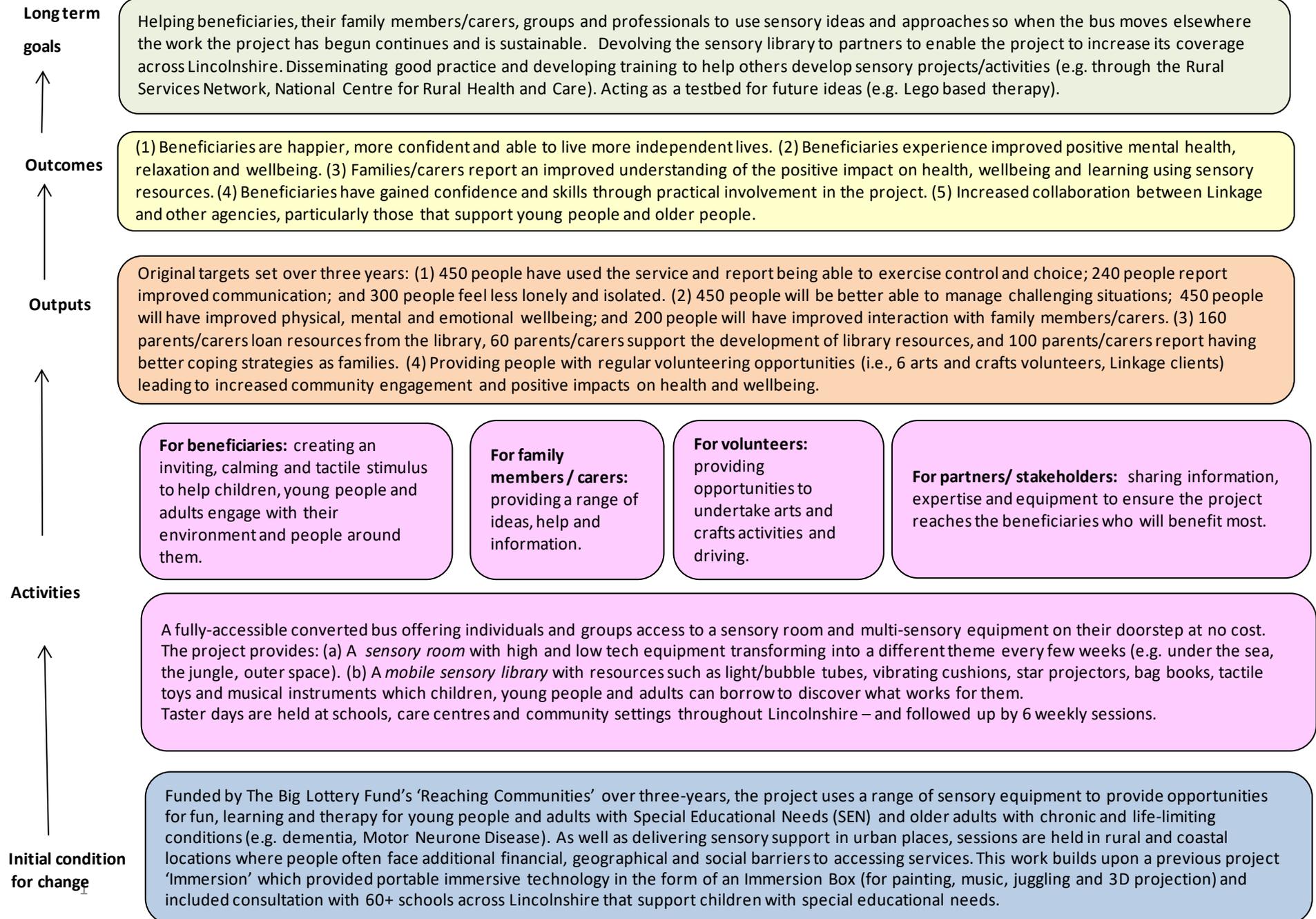
“Without the project we would need to send a lot of people out of country which would be difficult for them and expensive for us. Having a mobile sensory resource in the community makes such a difference.”

“The core purposes are providing access to sensory equipment... not many schools or organisations have that.”

We’ve produced the diagram on the following page (sometimes called a ‘theory of change’ or ‘logic model’) by working with beneficiaries, families/carers, volunteers, staff, partner organisations and stakeholders. It shows how the project works: explaining the activities that will bring about change and the results the project expects to achieve through its grant.



Linkage Sensory Library and Bus



How this core work is being delivered

The Sensory Library and Bus is a mobile project that provides discovery led learning and therapeutic benefits to children, young people and adults with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and other health conditions in community-based settings.

“Parents don’t know what is out there [sensory resources] and how to access it...or it’s too much time and paperwork.”

“The project is unique and priceless to me in my role...years ago we had trials from big companies wanting to sell big, expensive sensory equipment. I work for the NHS, supporting people in the home and at day centres with severe and complex special needs and learning disabilities...I have been advising them on sensory equipment and helping them loan equipment from the bus...without the project we would be in a chronic situation, we have nothing locally to draw on apart from the project.”

“There is nothing quite like it in the local area, and even if another organisation existed offering sensory equipment we would still have to take the children to that place, there would be the cost of transport, taking them off the school premises and so on. The bus is unique.”

“We bought him some toys for Christmas and he showed no interest in them. We thought we’d try the library before forking out more money for things. We couldn’t use the toy library in town as it has normal toys in it and its closing down.”

The project is a new development for Linkage Community Trust. Linkage’s traditional work has been largely local authority funded and includes the provision of a Specialist Education College (now over three sites), Care (ranging from 24 hour provision to those living independently and calling on support for specific activities), Adult Skills (day time activities) and Employability.

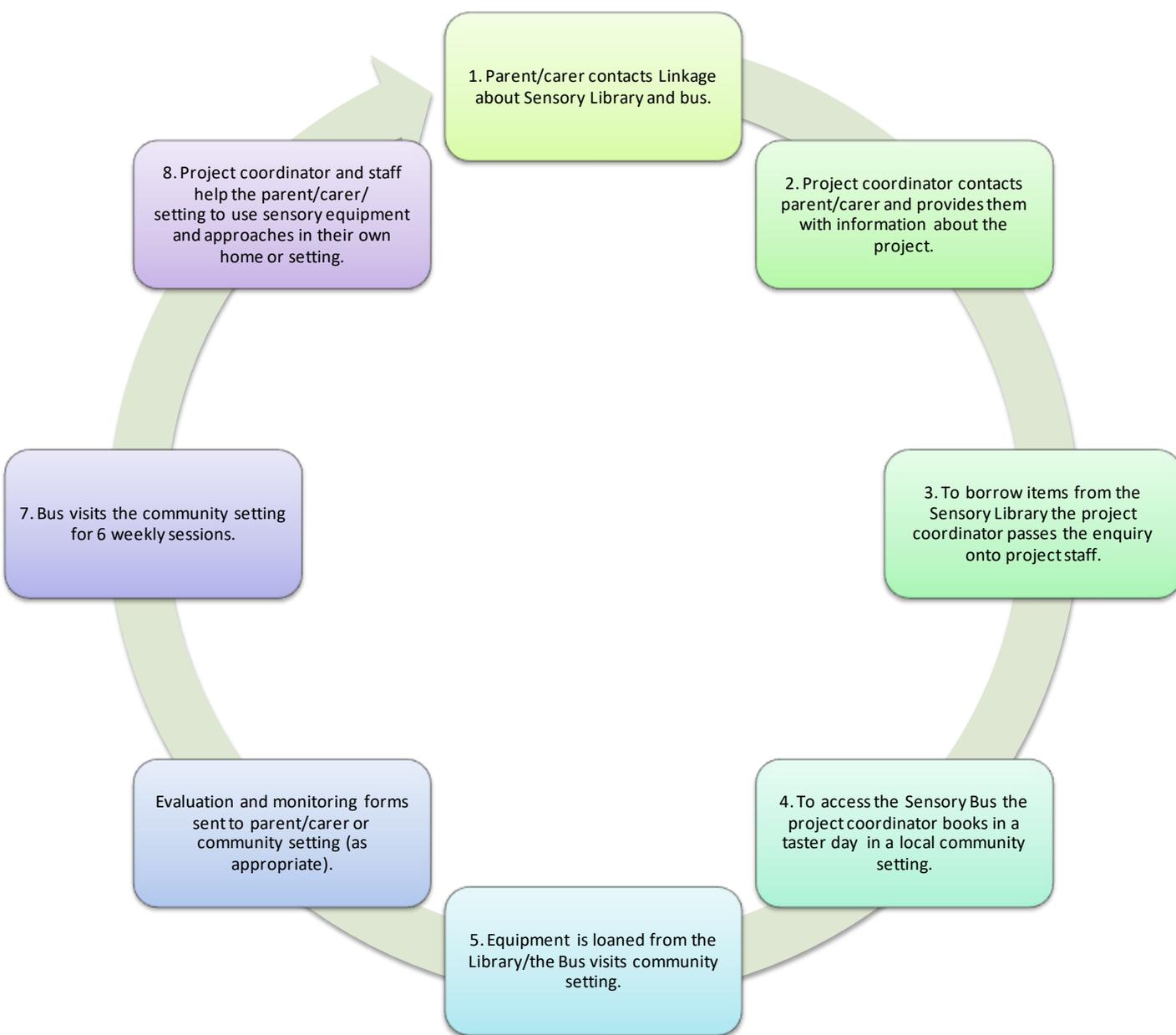
While the Sensory Library and Bus is supported by the core administration services of Linkage i.e., finance, HR, marketing and business development and sits in the Education Directorate, because of the unique nature of the project systems were set up specifically for its delivery. The project’s remit has always been to work with clients both inside and external to Linkage with the emphasis being on the latter.



Initially the project was promoted through Linkage’s existing channels, and is still promoted through its website; but increasingly its work has developed through word of mouth and referral from external organisations.

When the project began Linkage was using an online survey tool to evaluate its work. The Sensory Library and Bus initially followed this approach but it was found to be too cumbersome and organisations and individuals were daunted by the length of the forms. Instead, project specific materials were produced in the form of a short easy-read pictorial sheet for beneficiaries and a short monitoring form for professionals/ carers. The project has since developed a ‘bus’ that can slide between happy and sad faces, providing instant feedback from beneficiaries about activities and pieces of equipment.

The project does not have a ‘one size fits all’ approach to its activities and achievement of Lottery targets. This means the way beneficiaries, parents/carers, partner organisations and stakeholders access and navigate the service is not standardised. Beneficiaries and their parents/carers are integral to, and shape, the project. The diagram below illustrates how a parent/carer may contact and receive support from the project:



The following table sets out the indicators and targets agreed with the Lottery and delivery against them in year 1, year 2 and part of year 3.

Outcome	Indicator	Target	Timescale	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Notes
1. Beneficiaries report they are happier, more confident and able to live more independent lives.	People using the service report being able to exercise choice and control, i.e. being able to choose or reject sensory equipment on the bus.	150	Annual	91	183	281	The year 1 figure does not include work with beneficiaries that started in year 1 and finished in year 2.
	People using the service will report positive benefits through improved communication, interacting and/or self-expression.	80	Annual	62	87	181	These figures are based upon family/ carer observations and do not include partner organisation/professional observation.
	People using/supporting the service will feel less lonely and isolated.	300	End of project	#	191	135	# Monitoring was put into place in year 1 to capture this information in years 2 and 3.
2. Beneficiaries report they experience improved positive mental health, relaxation and wellbeing.	People using/supporting the service report better coping strategies and being more able to manage in challenging situations.	150	Annual	42	116	183	
	People using the service report increased levels of physical/mental/emotional comfort and wellbeing.	150	Annual	78	127	193	In year 1 36 of the 78 beneficiaries reacted positively to particular items, leading parents/ carers to purchase equipment.
	People using the service report positive impact on personal/social interaction involving carers, families and supporters.	200	End of project	91	183	189	

3. Families/carers report an improved understanding of the positive impact on health, wellbeing and learning using sensory resources.	Parents/carers loan resources in increasing numbers on an annual basis.	35 in year 1 50 in year 2 75 in year 3	End of project	36 parents/ carers 8 settings	71 parents/ carers and professionals	25	
	Parents/carers become active in supporting the development of library resources, including volunteering their support.	10 in year 1 20 in year 2 30 in year 3	End of project	12	21	25	
	Parents/carers report having better coping strategies as families.	100	End of project	22	52	18	
4. Beneficiaries report they have gained in confidence and skills through practical involvement in accessing and supporting the project.	People volunteer their time and skills in support of the project - including direct beneficiaries - leading to increased levels of confidence.	45	Annual	34 volunteers contributing 312 hours	18 volunteers contributing 487 hours	14 volunteers with learning disabilities (Linkage clients) and 8 volunteers (non-Linkage clients)	These figures are for face-to-face hours only. Many of these volunteers also donate an unknown number of hours at home. Parents/carers have not volunteered their time due to caring responsibilities. They are informally supporting the project (e.g. suggesting library resources, donating patterns).
	People volunteering their time and skills report increased community engagement and belonging.	35	Annual	21 craft volunteers 6 direct beneficiary volunteers	16	22	
	People volunteering their time and skills report a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.	50	End of project	34	18	22	The project has fewer volunteers than profiled before the project started. These volunteers are meeting more frequently (weekly), contributing more hours and their involvement in the project is leading to increased confidence, community engagement and wellbeing.

5. The organisation will have increased its capabilities (knowledge/skills/confidence), acquired relevant supporting tools where/ if appropriate and used these newly developed capabilities to deliver outcomes more effectively and sustainably to beneficiaries.	Conducting an organisational strengths review.	Review	Within 3 months of year 1	Completed	N/A	N/A	Online Lottery feedback form submitted and signed off.
	The organisation will have brought in expert support and tools as relevant to develop capabilities as prioritised by the strengths review.	Support and tools	Year 1	Managers undertook leadership and LEAN training	Managers undertook commercial awareness and strategic management skills training.	N/A	This has led to greater working between managers, staff and volunteers within Linkage, and a more joined up approach to administrative processes. This has streamlined information for people/ organisations contacting Linkage and shortened the length of time between contacting Linkage and accessing a service from the organisation.
	Project staff and trustees report how the capability building support has enabled them to work more effectively or sustainably with beneficiaries.	Report	End of project	N/A	N/A	Report to be prepared at the end of the project.	The project has brought additional services into Linkage and built capacity to deliver consistent and high quality services to beneficiaries across all parts of the organisation in line with the corporate values and behaviours. The project has also provided an opportunity for Linkage to take initiatives out into the wider community, therefore reaching more people with a learning disability. E.g. Lego-based therapy is being used to support a younger age group than Linkage has traditionally engaged with - equipping beneficiaries to be able to learn and/or access further education.

In year 1 the project established links with settings, parents/carers, partner organisations and stakeholders. Evaluation materials were developed and piloted in year 1 and refined ready for year 2 to make them more user-friendly and to increase their prominence and need for completion from the very start of working in a setting.

In year 2 the project expanded its delivery in rural settings. While the beneficiary numbers are lower in rural areas, the project is working in places where people find it difficult to access sensory equipment and services.

In year 3 the project is collating information to understand the outcomes and longer-term impact of the project. The information contained in this report for year 3 covers the period January-July 2018. Final figures for the project will be prepared in January 2019.



The outcomes being delivered

The table above highlights the particular contributions the project is making:

- For **children, young people and adult beneficiaries**: providing them with access to a sensory facility and sensory equipment leading them to exercise choice, control and independence; improve their interaction with family members/carers/supporters and better able to cope in challenging situations.
- For **families/carers**: improved awareness of sensory resources, and opportunities to loan/try sensory equipment in their home.
- For **volunteers** (including beneficiaries donating their time): increasing their involvement in their local community, reducing isolation and improving wellbeing.
- For **Linkage**: increasing the skills and capacity of the organisation as a whole - and developing its outreach by working with new partners.

As part of the evaluation we are collecting information from beneficiaries and their parents/carers and professionals about how the project has supported them.

How the project has helped beneficiaries feel happier and increased independence.

“The staff were brilliant, very welcoming... one or two children were a little unsure at first, worried that the bus might be about to move. The driver was brilliant, talking to the children about the engine and technical aspects of the bus.”

“It is definitely an inviting environment. We didn’t just offer the experience to our children with severe needs but across the school to pupils, even if it was just offering them somewhere nice and quiet to sit.”

“The bus absolutely made the children feel welcome and happy. The children were ‘on countdown’ and would ask every day when the bus was coming back. We witnessed a definite growth in the children after the initial excitement.”

“The children would talk about the bus for a long time afterwards, and would go home and discuss it with their parents, including those children who do not talk much about school when they are at home.”

How the project has helped beneficiaries relax and improved their wellbeing.

“It is amazing that people have created the bus for us to use. They have done their best to try to help us to be calm. They have made us lose our worries.”

“The staff on the bus were very calm and patient, and understood that it takes a very long time to get used to new things.”

“Tom has started to give us more eye contact and play, so for him the sensory ball has helped.”

“It’s improved their (beneficiaries) quality of life, reduced problematic behaviour, and improved their access to community activities... and for some of them it’s completely opened up their world.”

How the project has helped beneficiaries increase their skills and confidence

“The first time I went on the bus I was a little bit scared but I really enjoyed it. I liked the crocodile.”

"I really enjoyed the role play - flying everyone to the solar system... loved pressing buttons, making noises."

"The children made a lot of comments like "you get to play with people" by which they meant that they interacted with people in a different way than they are used to."

"The 'tactile snakes' were very popular and helped our students with their fine motor skills."

"The relationship with the staff helped the pupils' social and communication development."

YMCA Beginnings is an early years / day care setting in Gainsborough, operated by the YMCA.

How have your clients used the sensory library project?

14 children accessed the project over a 6 week period - taking part in music, dance and movement, taste and texture activities. Because we rotated them, 11 staff also came onto the bus - supporting children to play independently and cooperatively and to offer reassurance where needed.

What has changed as a result of the project?

We've created our own fidget board, are looking to loan items from the library and are buying or making sensory resources we've identified through using the bus and talking to staff. We also have a big room attached to the toddler's area and we plan to put more sensory resources in that area.

What would you say to other organisations who are thinking of getting involved?

It's well worth the experience.

How the project has improved parents/carers and organisations' awareness and use of sensory resources.

"Many parents mentioned the bus at parents evenings because the children have talked about it so frequently at home...I am aware of at least two parents who have been out and bought similar equipment to that found on the bus because the children have talked about it so much."

"My son seemed to like flashing balls and because I told the staff that they selected some items they thought he would like...He really liked some of the stuff – particularly the waterfall with the glittery bits and the wooden caterpillar. We've gone on to make him a waterfall and bought him the caterpillar."

"We have bought items Charlie has particularly liked for his bedroom...a fibre optic tree, mood lamp and light rope."

"A parent borrowed a weighted blanket for her son who has Downs Syndrome and Autism. He didn't take to it, but this was good, because the blankets are expensive so the mother didn't have to buy one only to find that it was money wasted...were it not for the bus they would have spent a lot of money on a sensory trolley which would have been ineffective...it would not have been totally immersive experience that you get on the bus and the immersion is what he needs."

"For parents and carers it makes their job less stressful and provides them with awareness and new ideas around sensory equipment. One young man didn't like travelling by car. He would work himself up and vomit. He just couldn't travel. But the bus loaned him a weighted blanket and a weighted belt and he now travels without any problem and his appetite's improved."

Linkage College is the longest-established specialist independent further education college in the country for young people with learning disabilities.

The College operates from three main campuses: Weelsby Road in Grimsby, Toynton All Saints near Spilsby and Boultham Park in Lincoln. The College incorporates classroom sessions, work experience placements and social activities to enable students with a wide range of special educational needs to achieve and become as independent as possible.

What sensory resources and facilities did you access before the sensory library project started?

At the Weelsby campus we had recently invested some money in a sensory room. This is mainly used as a place for students to calm down and is often used by the same group of students on a one-to-one basis.

How have your clients used the sensory library project?

20 clients accessed the project over a 6 week period. Each individual used the bus differently, to suit his or her own interests and needs.

- Some of the clients sat on the bus and enjoyed listening to the sounds and relaxed.
- Most of the clients enjoyed the vibrating cushions and massage snakes to help them chill out and keep calm.
- Lots of the clients explored the basket of toys to try and find something that they could use to fiddle with and help their concentration.
- A couple of the clients thought the dark side of the bus was too much so they enjoyed sitting on the wobble stools and talking to staff.
- The kinetic sand was a big hit with 3 of our clients who spent a lot of their time touching it and talking about how it felt.

We have a few clients who have one-to-one support so during the 6 week period lots of staff also accessed the project. The staff tried out the resources and let clients explore the different bits of equipment.

What has changed as a result of the project?

A few of the parents have borrowed items from the library to try out at home. We have improved our sensory room - we thought the idea of having a theme really helped to engage the clients.

What would you say to other organisations who are thinking of getting involved?

This is a fantastic project and if anyone has the opportunity to access the project we would really encourage it... it allowed our clients to relax and discover what sensory activities and resources work for them.

How the project has increased collaboration between Linkage and other agencies.

"It gets people in the community involved, not just schools... it demonstrated to us how easy it is to change themes (space, safari, underwater) and how easy it is to change themes on a budget... it really helped to give us ideas."

"[For Linkage] it's about outreach and going out there to offer more services by working together with other organisations and partners and complementing each other."

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT) and Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provide mental health services for older people.

What sensory resources and facilities did you access before the sensory library project started?

We had a snoozelen but that had fallen to disuse around 2012.

How have your clients used the sensory library project?

20 patients accessed the project over a 6 week period - for most it was about experiencing a small, quiet place.

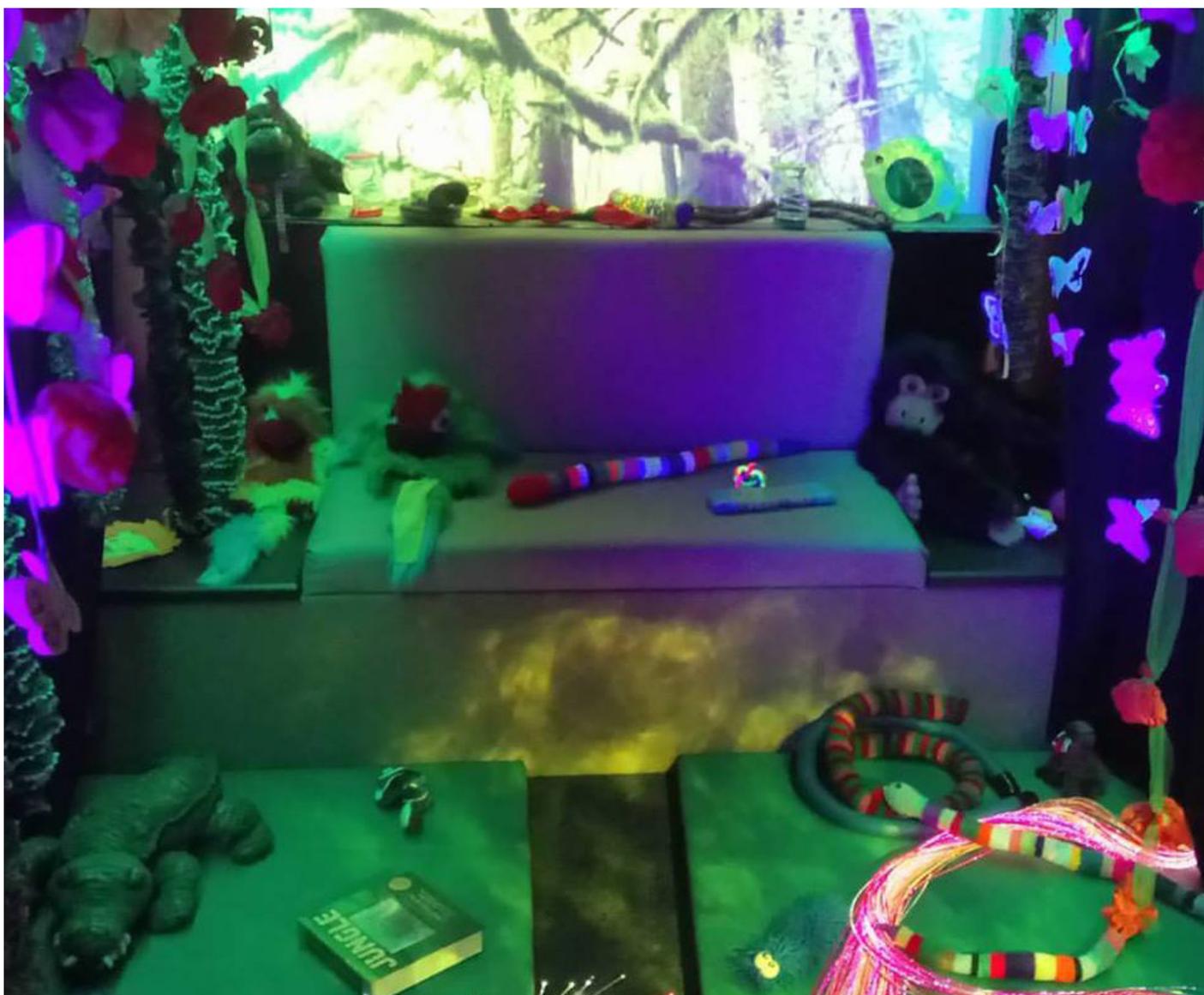
What has changed as a result of the project?

It has given staff the confidence that we are heading in the right direction. We have purchased kit (bubble tubes), made items (rummage boxes), had themed days (e.g. on the beach) and redeveloped our sensory room.

We have won a national award 'positive practice in mental health - older adults' for our innovative approaches.

What would you say to other organisations who are thinking of getting involved?

Do it, you won't be disappointed. It opens the doors to possibilities, experimentation and exploring what works for your client group.



Valuing outcomes

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a way of developing a value for outcomes funded through the Lottery grant.

We have worked with project staff and used the Social Value Engine (<http://socialvalueengine.com/>) to identify an outcome area and financial proxy for the main indicators agreed for the project. These indicators, outcome areas and financial proxies are set out in the table below:

Indicator	Outcome selected from the Social Value Engine	Financial proxy selected from the Social Value Engine	Unit cost	Number of units benefitting	Duration	Gross financial value
Beneficiaries using the service exercise choice and control.	7f Learning and participation.	Cost of mentor training supporting young people.	£1,500	555	30 days	£832,500
Beneficiaries have improved communication, interaction/self-expression.	1e Reduced social isolation for community members.	Annual value attributed to talking to neighbours more frequently.	£2,592	330	30 days	£855,360
Parents/carers have better coping strategies.	5b Improved health and wellbeing for local residents.	Valuation for improved emotional wellbeing through the Common Assessment Framework.	£2,725	92	1 year	£250,700
People volunteer their skills to support the project leading to increased confidence.	7e Skills development and improvement for residents and workers.	Average cost of a personal development course.	£850	74	1 year	£62,900
People volunteering their time and skills report increased community engagement and belonging.	1d Increased volunteering and potential for greater community participation and development.	Value that frequent volunteers place on volunteering.	£15,650	65	1 year	£1,017,250
People using/supporting the project feel less lonely and isolated.	5b Improved health and wellbeing for local residents.	Valuation for improved emotional wellbeing through the Common Assessment Framework.	£2,725	326	30 days	£888,350
People using/supporting the project report having better coping strategies.	1e Reduced social isolation for community members.	The value of feeling more confident in being with family and other people as a result of taking part in an adult learning course.	£732	341	30 days	£249,612
People using the project report improved levels of physical, mental or emotional wellbeing and health.	5b Improved health and wellbeing for local residents.	Improved mental health.	£4,671	398	30 days	£1,859,058

Parents/carers loan resources in increasing numbers from the project.	8d Improved family and children services.	Cost of family therapy.	£275	132	1 year	£36,300
Parents/carers are active in supporting the project.	1d Increased volunteering and potential for greater community participation and development.	Value per volunteer in the UK.	£1,666	58	1 year	£96,628
Volunteers report a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.	5b Improved mental health and wellbeing for local residents.	Improved mental health.	£4,671	74	1 year	£345,654
Increased links and liaison between Linkage and other organisations.	8b greater sense of cohesion and cooperation across different sectors.	Cost of time spent collaborating.	£1,996	24	1 year	£47,904

Each indicator has then been adjusted to take account of:

- *Leakage*: have any beneficiaries from outside of Lincolnshire attended the sessions?
- *Deadweight*: what proportion of the outcomes would have happened if the sessions had taken place?
- *Attribution*: what proportion might other organisations/activities have contributed to these outcomes?
- *Drop off*: what proportion of the outcomes will deteriorate over time?

To answer these questions we have interviewed 9 parents/carers and spoken to staff at three primary school settings where sessions have taken place. From these interviews we have estimated a median value for each indicator. The percentage we have deflated each indicator is shown in the table below:

Indicator	Leakage	Deadweight	Attribution	Drop off	Net value
Beneficiaries using the service exercise choice and control.	0%	10%	25%	0%	£541,125
Beneficiaries have improved communication, interaction/self-expression.	0%	10%	25%	0%	£555,984
Parents/carers have better coping strategies.	0%	10%	25%	0%	£162,247
People volunteer their skills to support the project leading to increased confidence.	0%	5%	10%	0%	£53,465
People volunteering their time and skills report increased community engagement and belonging.	0%	5%	10%	0%	£864,662.50
People using/supporting the project feel less lonely and isolated.	0%	10%	25%	0%	£577,427.50
People using/supporting the project report having better coping strategies.	0%	10%	25%	0%	£162,247.80
People using the project report improved levels of physical mental or emotional wellbeing and health.	0%	10%	25%	0%	£1,208,387.70
Parents/carers loan resources in increasing numbers from the project.	0%	5%	10%	0%	£30,855
Parents/carers are active in supporting the project.	0%	10%	25%	0%	£62,808.20
Volunteers report a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.	0%	5%	10%	0%	£293,805.90
Increased links and liaison between Linkage and other organisations.	0%	10%	0%	0%	43,113.60

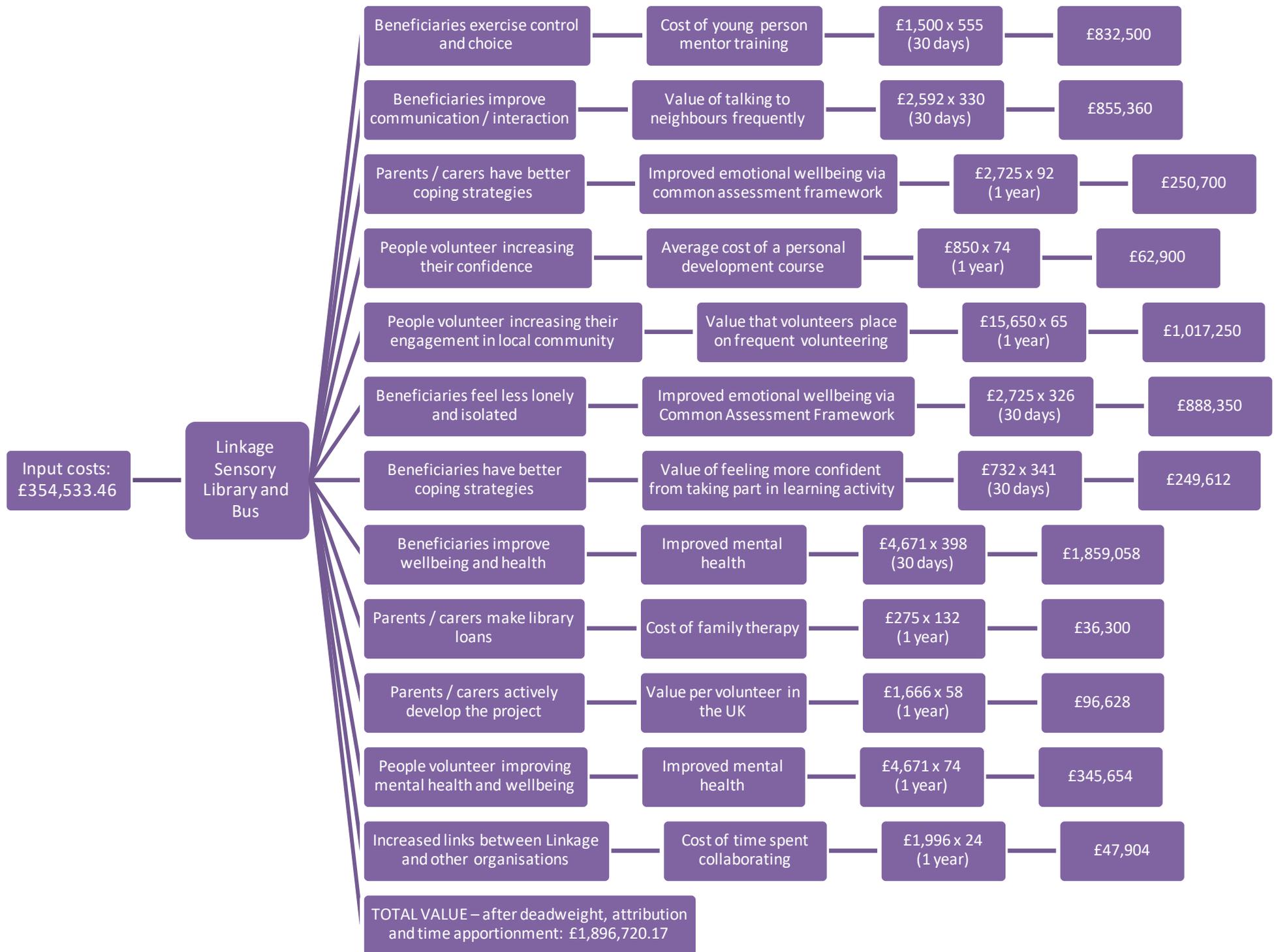


We have taken the overall return [everyone’s contribution to the project], made the adjustment for the deflators [subtracted the contribution of others] and then divided the remaining total return by the input cost. This is set out in the table below:

Overall return	£2,242,390.05
Less (-)	
Leakage	£0
Deadweight	£151,133.90
Attribution	£329,306.13
Drop-off	£0
Total return after leakage, deadweight, attribution and drop off	£1,761,950.94
Total return expressed as a Net Present Value	£1,896,720.17
Input cost	£354,533.46
<i>This includes actual Lottery spend in year 1, year 2 and year 3 (January-July only), a contribution of £4,686 from Linkage and 799 volunteer hours per year.</i>	

If you divide the total return by the input cost the **Sensory Library and Bus is delivering a social value of £5.35 for ever £1.00 invested.**

A summary of this information is shown in the diagram on the following page.



It is worth noting that the project has a high capital cost (i.e., to purchase and fit out the bus, buy equipment for the library). The social value analysis includes these capital costs.

Going forward, the only capital costs for the project now will be routine maintenance of the bus. When the large, initial capital outlay is removed from the analysis it is estimated that the project could generate £7.45 for every £1.00 invested in future years.

How much it costs and delivering value-for-money

There is evidence of effective fund management with Linkage submitting annual monitoring reports to the Lottery.

The amount requested from the Lottery over three-years is £371,821, comprising:

Year	Planned Revenue Costs	Planned Overhead Costs	Planned Capital Costs	Planned Total Cost
1	£97,171	£7,053	£66,614	£170,838
2	£82,661	£7,502	£11,081	£101,244
3	£83,661	£7,652	£8,426	£99,739
Total	£263,493	£22,207	£86,121	£371,821
Funding from Linkage Community Trust	£7,030			

The following project costs and Lottery spend has taken place in years 1-2:

Year	Actual Revenue Costs	Actual Lottery Funding Spent	Actual Overhead Costs	Actual Lottery Funding Spent	Actual Capital Costs	Actual Lottery Funding Spent	Actual Total Cost	Actual Total Lottery Funding Spent
1	£89,064	£87,034	£7,335	£7,053	£166,480	£164,148	£166,480	£164,148
2	£85,517	£83,180	£7,502	£7,502	£10,932	£10,932	£103,951	£101,614

Year 1: Actual Lottery spend was £6,690 lower than forecast. This slight under-spend was because not all staff were in post on day 1 of the project and because a 1 day a week project manager post was covered by the skills of the project coordinator. The proposed separate van to provide the loan service was also not longer required as loans are made via the sensory bus.

Year 2: The variance between planned and actual Lottery spend was £370. This was due to maintenance required on the sensory bus (a new inverter) and increased fuel costs.

In terms of whether the project is delivering value for month, we have looked at its unit cost and compared this to other, similar initiatives:

Sensory Library and Bus	Comparator projects
Taster day followed by 6-weekly sessions: £2,272	A mobile library service in the North of England providing a monthly visit to 19 locations (355.82 per session) - 6 sessions over 6 months: £2,490.74
	A mobile play project in an urban area in the South of England providing a taster and 6 weekly sessions: £2,630
	A museum in an urban area in the South of England providing school outreach with interactive displays across 15 themed sessions (£600 per session) 6 sessions: £3,600

On the basis of these comparisons it is possible to make a strong case that the project is delivering good value-for-money.

Where next?

Over the last two and a half years the project has grown its capacity and reach - offering children, young people and adults from across Lincolnshire access to a mobile sensory room and library. The project has worked with families/carers to let them borrow equipment to discover what works for their child at home; and with community venues/settings to help them continue the work when the bus moves elsewhere:

"I have taken groups of children on the bus that include special educational needs pupils, looked after children, young carers and pupils who have ongoing pastoral needs. It has been extremely positive for all these children and seeing how they have worked together, used imaginative play, but still been calm has been lovely to see...they have looked forward to its visit. Because of this positive impact on the children I have created a sensory room in the school to be able to continue the good work started on the sensory bus. It is a fantastic resource and we feel very lucky that we have been able to access it."

"We particularly liked how the staff helped to interest and engage our pupils and build relationships with us...we took many of the ideas and are using them in our setting. We ordered wobble stools, have made sensory boards and ordered some other resources."

"The bus put our children in a variety of different environments, and we could clearly see in a new environment what the children could do with different resources, and what works for each child. This was extremely useful and has informed our behaviour strategies."

"The tactile display caught 2 pupils' interests and staff have now made similar items for use within the school."

The project has developed a unique proposition around:

- Being **mobile**: the project provides access to a sensory facility and resources in the community. This means beneficiaries do not need to travel outside of Lincolnshire to access support.
- Being **affordable**: the project provides multi-sensory equipment to people in their local community, in their homes at no cost. The majority of sensory resources are low tech and some are hand made by volunteers. It provides family members/carers with a range of ideas and lets them try out equipment to help them decide what works for them. Many of the families and settings the project has worked with have gone on to make similar items and/or purchases.
- Being **beneficiary led**: children, young people and adults with learning disabilities are integral to the project and shape the equipment, resources and themes used. Beneficiaries are able to exercise control and choice in how they use the sensory room on the bus and loan resources from the library.
- Being a **catalyst**: the project works with families/carers, schools, care centres and community settings so when the 6-weekly sessions end they are able to take sensory ideas and approaches and apply them in their own home or setting. The project also plays an important role in signposting parents/carers to other sources of support (e.g. grants to help them purchase sensory equipment for their child; welfare and benefits advice; Young Carers to help siblings cope; etc.)

The project is over-subscribed. To manage demand in the short-term the project is seeking to devolve the sensory library to partner organisations as this will enable more people to borrow equipment.

In addition to meeting its Lottery outcomes in year three, the project is seeking to develop its sustainability plans. These plans include:

- Piloting and providing additional services to the 24 organisations that have worked with the project - creating stronger and longer term relationships with them.
- Developing a training/support package to help other organisations looking to develop sensory projects/activities - this will include a kit of low-cost equipment and materials so 'sensory corners' can be created in home and community settings.
- Disseminating learning and good practice from the project through national organisations (e.g. Rural Services Network, National Centre for Rural Health and Care).
- Developing new initiatives to further increase access to sensory ideas and approaches (e.g. Lego based therapy, pen pal scheme).
- Acting as a test bed for ideas that improve beneficiary outcomes and experiences and current practice/support for people with learning disabilities.
- Supporting and growing the role of volunteers in supporting the project and work of Linkage.

"We [at Linkage] work in some really deprived areas – where children have free school meals, the pupil premium is high and families have poor access to services. This project is providing children and young people with the tools and skills to help enable them to be independent. Linkage works mainly with people aged 16-72 years and this project is important in providing children's services, seeing where the gaps are and working with children, parents and families to shape future services."

