Adult literacy: ‘whole-of-service’ policy and practice directions

Final Report
June 2013
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Salvation Army received triennial funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund in 2009 to research, trial and develop a range of literacy and numeracy tools and strategies to target people who do not access other literacy programs. This program, STeP123, involves three steps: assessment, engagement and referral. The target group for the project were children from 0-5 years, young people and adults. This report represents an evaluation of the STeP123 project undertaken by the Department of Rural Health at the University of Tasmania.

The evaluation involved an analysis of program documentation and consultation with project staff and allied stakeholders within the Salvation Army. The evaluators undertook a preliminary survey of Salvation Army frontline staff to ascertain their skills and knowledge of practice and resources for those clients presenting with observable difficulties with literacy and numeracy.

The project encountered some delays in its implementation. The original premise of the project involved developing multimedia resources to assist staff and clients. This was found to be impractical and so the rationale behind the project required re-examination and reframing. Where the project had expected to be able to use existing assessment tools and resources, a large proportion of adult clients presenting to the Salvation Army proved to be pre-literate and it was established that resources for this group were non-existent. STeP123 was in the position of having to start from scratch and go through a research and development process to find a way of working with these adults.

At the end of this funding period the project has developed an assessment tool for frontline staff to use with clients; a range of resources have been developed and streamlined for the 0-5 age group (DVDs, CDs, and literacy and numeracy kits); two colourful cookbooks have been developed to promote functional literacy among parents and two comprehensive workshops have been developed and trialled with five groups of vulnerable adults. These workshop courses have been produced with comprehensive manuals and teaching kits. One of the workshops focuses on emotional literacy as a catalyst for self-expression and re-engagement with literacy; the other uses computer desktop publishing as a vehicle for exploring other literacy issues. A key learning from this project has been the link between emotional literacy and developing the self-confidence to embark on other learning. There are early indications of the power of working on the confidence of the adult before embarking on more formal tuition. While there was some concern about using poetry to explore emotions, this has been a surprisingly successful technique. One participant reports:

(It) has brought me back to reading, and enjoying poetry (Hobart participant This is Me!)
Other participants validate the use of the emotional literacy techniques with this group of adults:

*I think this has been great... It has inspired me to go on with other projects, as in adult literacy and other things. The start of the computer course was a bit challenging.... I pay more attention now to reading stuff and find it easier to fill out forms.* (New Norfolk participant STeP UP to IT and This is Me)

A website has been developed for STeP123 where staff will be able to find a suite of tools to use with their clients. The site is split into three sections, with a section for each of the client groups. Staff are also able to share their own resources with others and provide feedback on the tools available.

The delays associated with the changes of direction of the project and staff changes have meant that the implementation of STeP123 resources is somewhat delayed. The resources developed are of high quality. The project has been granted an additional 12 months funding from the 26/10 organisation to enable this implementation to occur.

Stakeholders reported being confident that STeP123 will be a vital component of Salvation Army programs with potential to be used by other organisations.

*STeP123 has the potential to be as successful as Safe from the Start (allied program manager)*

The evaluators offer the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:**
All resources for STeP123 need to be publicised well. The opportunity is there for a big launch to raise staff and client awareness.

**Recommendation 2:**
The Salvation Army has a large pool of volunteers that may well be interested in taking on roles in assessment and engagement with the STeP123 resources. It is recommended that the volunteer corps is given the opportunity to taken on these more specialised roles, with appropriate training.

**Recommendation 3:**
Currency of all resources is vital to protect the investment in SteP123. The website, resources and workshop materials need to be maintained and upgraded to remain relevant to the needs of the three groups of clients. This is likely to require the appointment of a permanent literacy worker.
**Recommendation 4:**
There is a ready opportunity for This is Me and Step Up to IT to be run in the short term with parents in the Communities for Children program as this is a well-connected cohort of vulnerable families and can be packaged to cater to parents interested in returning to the workforce.

**Recommendation 5:**
The Salvation Army needs to expedite the rollout of partnership agreements and MOUs with organisations interested in using the material developed by STeP123. These resources have the potential to be used by a wide range of organisations (similar to Safe from the Start).

**Recommendation 6:**
A comprehensive suite of feedback tools has been developed by the University Department of Rural Health for gaining feedback on all components of STeP123. This feedback should be collected 12 months after the formal launch of the materials.
PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Community Support services provided by The Salvation Army around Australia are a practical and physical response to poverty and vulnerability in local communities. In Tasmania, there are eleven services and these provided assistance to 5864 people in 2007-8 (2009). Services such as Doorways provide families and individuals with direct assistance, in the form of vouchers, food parcels, and assistance with utilities, clothing and furniture, thereby providing a safety net when other community supports have failed. The Salvation Army also provides longer term assistance, such as counselling, drug and alcohol assistance, and provides referrals to other services where required.

Some clients have a need for services due to a situational crisis, while others are in a state of chronic crisis. This project arose out of a perceived need for the Salvation Army to look at ways to resolve the underlying issues for those in chronic need. One dimension of the underlying issues was perceived as relating to low literacy and numeracy. A large number of Tasmanians have very low levels of literacy and numeracy (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). People with limited or low education are disadvantaged through their ability to access employment and therefore at greater risk of economic crisis and other forms of exclusion from full participation in society.

The Salvation Army undertook a preliminary analysis of the level of clients with literacy issues as ranging from eighty per cent of prisoners in their outreach program, as well as seventy per cent of families with complex needs to twenty per cent of women and children seeking support with family violence. The STeP123 project was developed as an initiative to target the literacy and numeracy of clients presenting to the Salvation Army in crisis.

STeP123 is a three step program devised by the Salvation Army Tasmania to address the literacy needs of socially excluded people.
The first step involves the development of an assessment tool to use with vulnerable families plus training for staff and volunteers in performing assessments.

In the second step, all Salvation Army program staff are trained in incorporating literacy training into delivery of their service programs. The STeP123 staff are responsible for training literacy volunteers. A range of multi-media literacy tools will be developed which target people who do not access other literacy programs, including a website with tools and strategies which will be made available to other organisations. This tool kit is interactive; using tips on using the latest technology, offering literacy skills in innovative and unconventional ways (e.g. not in a classroom) and utilising existing successful programs.

By using a range of media formats, the program will cater for the needs of individuals with diverse learning styles and abilities. For example, people with different learning styles will be engaged using activities which appeal to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles (Biggs, 1987). In addition, the STeP123 team will develop strategies to enable all Salvation Army programs to integrate literacy and numeracy improvement in assessment, case planning and family service delivery.

In the final step, the Salvation Army needs to refer clients to programs that address specific literacy and numeracy targets that individual clients may have. While the Salvation Army is a registered training organisation (RTO), it does not provide professional remedial literacy education services. STeP123 seeks to meet the needs of the client through the integration of literacy content throughout its client programs and encouragement to seek further education and training. The referral process includes all staff and volunteers having access to the descriptions of a range of literacy and numeracy programs and contact details.

The STeP123 program design includes the employment of staff with literacy and numeracy expertise to undertake preliminary research, consult with stakeholders, and establish an advisory group for the project. Implementation involves the incorporation of support with literacy and numeracy across the full range of Salvation Army programs, thus this is a whole-of-service approach that involves both policy and practice.

The key performance indicators that have been identified for STeP123 are to:

1. Develop a basic but reasonably accurate literacy/numeracy assessment tool for use by frontline staff;
2. Train frontline staff in the use of the assessment tool and provide a help tool for assessment;
3. Develop trial and assess programs that encompass explicit literacy and numeracy content within context-based group learning situations tailored to the needs of the clients;
4. Provide assistance to the Salvation Army in integrating explicit and context-based literacy and numeracy content into existing and new programs;
5. Further develop the list of literacy programs available to include more detailed information (including refreshing the list);
6. Provide on-going support through referral of clients to other literacy/numeracy courses; and
7. Provide context-based support for front line staff.

The STeP123 project has been designed as a state-wide program which includes the main centres of Hobart, Launceston, Burnie, Ulverstone and Devonport. The target group for the project includes children aged 0-12, young people aged 12-16 and adults; with a particular focus in socially excluded families and individuals who do not engage with mainstream community services or educational institutions. Once fully implemented, it is expected that 500 people, as individuals and in families, will be directly impacted by the project each year.

High level literacy and numeracy training is not a component of The Salvation Army’s core business; however the organisation is aware of the importance of improving levels of literacy and numeracy in order to build the personal capacities of its clients. A core premise of the STeP123 program is that basic literacy and numeracy assessment training should be built into any frontline intervention program run by The Salvation Army. Any such skills training should be informal because informal learning is deemed useful for pre-literate or disengaged learners because it is performed within real context, has no formal assessments involved and therefore is less threatening than formal education. Informal learning includes activities as reading, using the Internet, television, radio, libraries, vocational training, and so forth.

The increase in personal capacity (human capital) and social capital offered by STeP123 has the potential to lead to less reliance on services as clients improve their abilities to meet their own needs. Clients potentially also provide positive role models within their communities and networks and thus improve the capacity of the whole community.

The Salvation Army received $255,000 from the Tasmanian Community Fund to develop STeP123 over a three year period.
UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES, NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF LOW ADULT LITERACY

There are over four hundred papers (journal articles and reviews) published since 2006 in the social sciences and health sciences that use the term ‘adult literacy’ in their title, abstract or keywords. This literature suggests how complex is the definition of adult literacy (St. Clair, 2012). Such definitions are important, shaping policy for who is identified as a literacy learner and what is counted as literacy learning and how it is evaluated (Hamilton, 2012). This evaluation uses the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) definition of literacy as

The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society (UNESCO, 2004).

The causes of low adult literacy are many and complex, including historical, cultural, social and biological factors. Historical institutionalised racism and social inequities have been linked to lower literacy rates by race (Cohen, White, & Cohen, 2012b). Factors shaping literacy such as gender, race and educational attainment are complex and changing over time. For example, gains in women participating in higher education have affected the gender literacy gap (Cohen, White, & Cohen, 2012a). The cultural shapers of literacy are therefore diverse and include the gains of participation in society i.e. participation in particular cultural activities may positively shape reading acquisition (Sebastián & Moretti, 2012). Health is also a key shaper of literacy in a context in which health is related to socio-economic well-being. For example, early childhood illness has been linked to later adult low literacy (Warren, Knies, Haas, & Hernandez, 2012).

People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by lower literacy with still limited global attention on the needs of older people (Groce & Bakhshi, 2011). A failure to diagnose learning disabilities at a younger age can powerfully shape literacy outcomes. Learners with conditions such as (sometimes undiagnosed) dyslexia are over-represented in adult literacy programs (Ade-Ojo, 2012). Adults who have a wide range of learning disabilities therefore present with particular needs in literacy programs (Hock, 2012).

Literacy can shape health literacy which in turn shapes people’s capacities to self-manage their health and thus their health outcomes (Harrington, Haven, Bailey, & Gerald, 2013; Ingram & Louise Ivanov, 2013; Mooss, Brock-Getz, Ladner, & Fiaño, 2013; Nemmers & Jorge, 2013). Functional health literacy is often defined in terms of people’s capacities to obtain, process and understand basic information about their health (Bowskill & Garner, 2012). Lower literacy levels have been found to affect the capacity of people to communicate their wishes to, and understand advice from, health and social
service systems (Bowskill & Garner, 2012; Waite et al., 2013). The relationship of health literacy to health outcomes is thought to be formed by cognitive skills influencing self-care (Wolf et al., 2012). However, the complex relationships of lower health literacy to poorer health outcomes are not yet fully understood (Ownby, Waldrop-Valverde, & Taha, 2012).

If adult literacy levels are shaped by socio-economic well-being they also divide different occupational groups, for example, blue collar versus white collar occupations have different literacy levels affecting social mobility and economic well-being (Athanasou, 2012). When a person is older and no longer employed, lower literacy and lower health literacy may shape their ability to self-manage and thus lead an independent life (McDougall Jr, Mackert, & Becker, 2012).

Adult literacy needs to be understood in the context of family relationships and inter-generational inequity, not simply individual needs. Improved maternal literacy levels through participation in adult literacy programs have been linked to improvements in child health (Blunch & Pörtner, 2011). The children of parents with lower health literacy may be more vulnerable to lower medication adherence (Freedman, Jones, Lin, Robin, & Muir, 2012). Parental participation in literacy learning has also been linked to improved child school performance (Amenyah, 2012).

Adult literacy also needs to be understood at the community level. Adult literacy is a critical component of economic and community development. Targeting adult literacy is about improving the real economic conditions under which people live (Strawn & Monama, 2012). Societies with better human development outcomes, as defined by the ‘Human Development Index’ have better quality of life (life expectancy), knowledge (adult literacy) and standard of living (gross domestic income) (Cabello et al., 2012).

**KEY FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS**

Adult literacy programs, produced most often in the not-for-profit sector, struggle with a range of challenges. Yet there is a growing body of literature on successful features of such programs. Notwithstanding, theory and approaches to improving adult literacy remain a contested site. To date though, policy defining literacy as formal rather than informal learning, with standardised, easily measureable outcomes is privileged (Hamilton, 2012).

The literature offers insights into the design and management of such programs. Sustainable adult literacy programmes are known to be ones that build partnerships across three organisational levels, useful to developing the social capital of clients and the quality of the learning providers: micro or local community, meso or regional level, and macro or national system level (Black, Balatti, & Falk, 2013).
Keeping adult literacy programs and their resources relevant in the context of cultural diversity is a challenge (Straubhaar, 2013). The ‘New Literacy Studies’ theorises literacy practices that are grounded in ordinary daily life are more likely to generate learning gains (Strawn & Monama, 2012). Adult literacy teachers ideally share the characteristic of drawing on students’ interests, experiences and preferred ways of learning in ways that recognise and value diversity (Mosley & Zoch, 2012).

Attrition remains a key challenge of literacy programs. It is also known that basic skills instruction can lead to positive results for adult literacy clients who persist with programs over several months (Scarborough et al., 2013). However, a wide range of factors typically influence literacy program attrition rates including gender, age and English language status (Greenberg et al., 2013). Again, client-centredness is important, for example, one potentially useful attrition strategy has been to generate resources using client input, found in approaches associated with Paulo Freire (Straubhaar, 2013).

The complex nature of literacy acquisition means that adults with lower literacy levels are likely to have a wide range of complex learning needs (Taylor, Greenberg, Laures-Gore, & Wise, 2012). The literature also cautions that empirical evidence of the effectiveness of many adult literacy programs responding to these needs is limited. However, it is clear that a detailed nuanced understanding of specific client needs must drive program design and delivery. Given the complex nature of literacy, decisions about whether the program focuses upon academic reading (as in reading a textbook) or functional reading (such as filling in a driver’s licence application) will shape decisions about whether to place more or less emphasis on reading fluency (Mellard, Fall, & Woods, 2013). (Taylor, et al., 2012). Skills in oral and written language and reading comprehension may be related but are not necessarily the same (Taylor, et al., 2012). Adult literacy learners may have highly individualised profiles in specific areas such as reading skills indicating the critical importance of skills assessment to program development (MacArthur, Konold, Glutting, & Alamprese, 2012). The support needs may be specialised and sometimes need to work indirectly, for example, adult learners may need vocabulary and auditory working memory interventions to help develop their reading skills (Mellard, Anthony, & Woods, 2012). Different subgroups will likely benefit from different approaches. For example, adults with learning disabilities may benefit from the use of a range of tailored strategies such as ‘explicit instruction, instructional technology, and intensive tutoring in skills and strategies embedded in authentic contexts’ (Hock, 2012).

**ADULT LITERACY IN AUSTRALIA AND TASMANIA**

Active participation in contemporary society requires a level of functional literacy because so many social and economic transactions are based on written documents. The limited language, literacy and/or numeracy skill of some adults in Australia constrains the opportunities and choices they need to lead active and productive lives. Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to be living on a low income, and vulnerable to poor health and early morbidity (Brynner & Hammond, 2004; Fullick, 2009; Hammond, 2004; Willms, 2003).
Teaching literacy to adults is a challenging area in a context where adult learners have often been failed by the education system (Australian Council of Adult Literacy, 2007). In the Australian context, key surveys are the 1996 and 2006 International Adult Literacy Survey and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey which measure both numeracy and literacy skills and the 2011-12 Programme for the International assessment of Adult Competencies (Caldwell & Webster, 2013). These indicate that adult literacy is a whole-of-society issue. The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey suggests ‘some 38-64% of employed Australians were below minimal competence (at Level 1 or Level 2) in one of the four skill areas of prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy or problem-solving skills’ (Athanasou, 2012).

Australia has begun to use the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC) scale for assessing the literacy of the population. Under PIACC, literacy is defined as understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential. Both literacy and numeracy are measured on five point scales (see Appendix 1 for details of how the scales are constructed).

One in eight Tasmanians between the ages of 15 and 74 years are at the lowest level in literacy on the PIACC scale and almost one quarter are at the lowest level for numeracy. Almost half Tasmanians in this age group are at Level 1 or 2 for literacy and almost three in five are at the two lowest levels for numeracy.

| TABLE 1 PROPORTION AT SKILL LEVEL, POPULATION AGE 15-74, TASMANIA AND AUSTRALIA (PRELIMINARY DATA) |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                                          | Level 1 (%)                                    | Level 2 (%)                     | Level 3 (%)     | Level 4/5 (%)   | Total (%)      |
| LITERACY                                                 |                                                 |                                |                |                |                |
| Tasmania                                                 | 15.0                                           | 33.5                           | 36.9            | 14.5            | 100.0          |
| Australia                                                | 14.1                                           | 30.3                           | 39.0            | 16.6            | 100.0          |
| NUMERACY                                                 |                                                 |                                |                |                |                |
| Tasmania                                                 | 24.1                                           | 34.0                           | 30.3            | 11.6            | 100.0          |
| Australia                                                | 21.7                                           | 32.9                           | 32.4            | 13.1            | 100.0          |

Source: (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, Table 2)

There are proportionally more Tasmanians at these lower levels than the Australian population as a whole.
There are gender differences, with more males with low literacy and more females in the lower numeracy groups. In 2006, 46 per cent of females aged between 15 and 74 were at the lower levels of literacy, compared to 52 per cent of males. In terms of numeracy, half the males in Tasmania were at the lower end of the numeracy scale, compared to over 60 per cent of females. Both males and females in the 65-74 age groups had the lowest scores on literacy and numeracy.

**Table 2 Literacy and Numeracy Scores by Age and Gender, Tasmania 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1/2</td>
<td>Level 3/4/5</td>
<td>Level 1/2</td>
<td>Level 3/4/5</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Level 1/2</td>
<td>Level 3/4/5</td>
<td>Level 1/2</td>
<td>Level 3/4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–34</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–44</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–54</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–64</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65–74</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, Table 1)
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research
The methodology included two surveys of Salvation Army staff and volunteers. The first was scheduled before the rollout of STeP123 resources and training, to be followed by a second survey once all frontline staff and volunteers have had a chance to work with the resources. The methodology also included analysis of data from the ABS to provide a context for the project.

Qualitative research
Qualitative components of this evaluation were a suite of interviews and discussions with Salvation Army staff, relevant stakeholders and a sample of clients, as well as the review and analysis of records and reports from the STeP123 Project Managers. Desktop research was also undertaken to gain insight into current thinking around best practice in the literacy and numeracy field.

Ethics
The evaluation activity was designed to protect the rights of all participants and was conducted with the approval of the University of Tasmania’s Human Research Ethics Committee.

Analysis
Individual interview data was transcribed and coded into thematic areas.
The baseline staff survey was analysed using the analytics available in Survey Monkey, Excel and SPSS.

Baseline staff survey
The baseline survey of current Salvation Army staff was undertaken in early 2012 to gain an understanding of their current response to clients presenting with low levels of literacy and numeracy. The survey was sent to 39 staff members. Twenty-two staff members completed the survey which equated to a response rate of 61 per cent. Most of the respondents worked in Doorways, family support or housing and homelessness programs. There was significant variation in respondents’ estimates of the literacy levels of their clients, which ranged from 5 per cent to 75 per cent of their client base. Those working in the Doorways and homelessness areas reported the greatest number of clients with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Several staff commented that clients may have very basic literacy and numeracy skills; which may be sufficient for filling in forms but find they struggle with more complex documents.

Some clients have learnt to "cover over" their problem, it’s not easy to identify in a short interview and their feelings of embarrassment or shame are often an issue that prevents disclosure.
Half the staff responding to the survey would provide a client with direct assistance with literacy and numeracy. A further twenty per cent would provide assistance and then refer the client on to a specialist service. Thirty per cent of staff use referrals only.

The majority of staff did not use any resources in working with clients with low literacy skills. Just over a quarter mentioned using resources but the majority of those who used resources did not feel they were adequate for their needs.

Over forty per cent of staff thought they needed additional support when working with people with low literacy and numeracy; a further 32 per cent were unsure. Eighteen per cent did not feel they needed additional training and support.

Most of the suggestions around additional support or training were around early identification:

*Any strategies to allow the client to self-identify if they have issues around these areas and then to be able to offer them services to improve.*

Other staff mentioned the need for good tools and strategies to help those that need assistance with literacy and numeracy. Suggestions for types of support were more resources; more training or a specialised unit in the Salvation Army which would provide support for clients with low literacy and numeracy:

*Perhaps a 2 day relaxed learning course we could recommend or even better deliver, a few of my clients are looking to improve themselves but find it hard to engage with the formal courses.*
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Program Development

STeP123 has evolved over the life of the funding period. There have been a number of staff working on the project over the period and this has impacted on its evolution. It quickly became apparent shortly after the appointment of the first project worker, a former teacher, that the project’s emphasis on multimedia and electronic resources for people with low literacy and numeracy was impractical. Not only were a large number of adult clients pre-literate or with extremely low levels of literacy; they did not have the motivation or capacity to access computers. This first project worker began working with clients at the Salvation Army and community houses using cooking as the context base for literacy and numeracy. A number of low-budget, simply worded recipes were provided alongside practical demonstrations. This worker provided tutoring for some clients and began to develop a training program for tutors. This worker left after 12 months.

The second worker had a background in media and educational resource development. A cookbook was developed in conjunction with activities for fathers that focussed heavily on numeracy and work began on a DVD for the 0-5 age group and their parents. This worker left after 9 months.

At this stage a decision was made to divide the position into three part-time positions in order to provide a variety of skill sets to the project. The single full-time equivalent position was split into two two-day positions and a one-day position. One worker was responsible for re-focusing the project and developing the website; a second worker was devoted to developing resources, and the third worker developed and ran workshops.

This newly structured project team looked at the original aims of the project and began researching the literacy and numeracy field to refocus the projects rationale. The research activity found that there was a strong and continuing demand for non-accredited community language, literacy and numeracy courses in Australia (Dymock, 2007). Such programs appeared to be as much concerned with developing self-confidence as they are with developing language, literacy and numeracy.

Confidence in oneself as a learner and in the social world interact together in complex ways and are both linked to prior experiences of learning and to social capital (Tett & Maclachlan, 2007). Social capital is one of three kinds of capital often discussed when framing the needs of disadvantaged people. These are:

1. Human capital: being the skills and knowledge needed to effectively engage in activity that is of benefit – usually paid work, but also voluntary and community work
2. Social capital: the capacity for individuals and communities to create and maintain structures which help to preserve and strengthen a decent standard of living; perhaps including neighbourhoods, political and community groups, family and kinship networks; and
3. Identity capital: the ability of individuals to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth and control over their lives. This sense of identity is crucial to well-being and mental health (Fullick, 2009).

People living in poverty often lack these capitals. Their qualifications and skills are often low and their networks restricted, particularly if they live in areas of concentrated disadvantage. They can also experience shame and vulnerability and low self-esteem. However, adults who suffer the most economic and social disadvantage are also likely to have had the lowest participation in learning.

The STeP123 team took on board that nurturing the identities of learners is crucial. Challenging established identities is time-consuming and difficult; people need a range of strategies implemented over a long period (Wallace, 2008). Literacy skills improve when memberships of networks provide opportunities to learn, or implement what is learnt (Balatti, Black, & Falk, 2006). The STeP123 team began to explore the development of workshops which blended emotional literacy with literacy and numeracy instruction.

Another key learning from this research phase was that while there was no blueprint for the perfect course, a common denominator was the importance of context based learning, in particular for adults with very low literacy. Kruidenier (2002) favours direct instruction in specific literacy and numeracy skills that the adults failed to absorb in school, while Mascolo (2002) suggests a balanced approach which includes a mix of direct instruction and practice using texts based on students’ interests. Leach and her colleagues (2009) found that while there is no one best model for teaching literacy and numeracy, best results are achieved when the learning is contextualised and authentic. Learning is reinforced by connecting learning to the adult’s interests, prior knowledge and purpose for learning (Pannucci & Walmsley, 2007). Good practice is underpinned by adult learning principles as well as adequate resourcing.

The Australian Council of Adult Literacy notes the importance of concentrating on engagement. They report that a social capital model has most promise because both the learning and the outcomes of literacy are social and interactive (Australian Council of Adult Literacy, 2007). It is pertinent to a discussion of engaging the most vulnerable clients that nobody can make us learn. We learn because we want to.

General agreement that successful engagement of hard-to-reach populations are to:

- Go to where they are
- Promote and deliver programs in non-threatening and non-stigmatising ways
- Empower people; and
- Develop relationships.
Networks are key to the success of the intervention; a person re-engaging with learning develops new networks amongst fellow students and with staff/the organisation which reinforces the desire to learn and change. Change is most difficult when it requires behaviour (such as learning) which is at odds with the values and norms of a person’s family and peer group and so emotional support from others is crucial to sustainability.

The STeP123 program took on board the learnings from this literature to tailor the program to the large proportion of pre-literate clients as well as those with very poor functional literacy. It was determined that the best possible way to meet the client needs would entail an emotional literacy component being included in the SteP123 program; networks would be prioritised to link learners with each other; learning materials would be developed which concentrated on context-based and functional literacy.

Core elements of the original proposal were retained; including development of an assessment tool, identification of existing resources and referral points and development of a website which would be a repository of resources.

The ensuing months were taken up with developing, testing and revising workshop material, developing promotional materials, getting feedback from trial users, developing the assessment tool, building the website and liaising with key people within the Salvation Army to ensure the outputs continued to align with client needs. In this sense the project followed an action research process.

The project was overseen by a reference group of six senior managers from The Salvation Army, a representative from Good Beginnings and a representative from the Calvin Christian School.

The Salvation Army received approval to extend the project to the end of March 2013.

The next section of this report will discuss the project achievements in terms of the objectives outlined in the original grant application.

**Key performance indicators**

**STeP1: Assessment**

*Project Objective 1: Develop a basic but reasonably accurate literacy/numeracy assessment tool for frontline staff*  
From the outset, STeP123 had the intention of providing staff and volunteers with a method of assessing what the client’s needs were in terms of improving literacy and numeracy. Determining the needs of learners and being able to meet them is considered vital to encourage them to be lifelong learners, not just a specific end (Nechvoglod, Beddie, Level, & Street, 2010). There are a number of existing formal and informal assessment tools for adult literacy and numeracy that were investigated by the project
workers. The various tools satisfy a range of different needs but usually take the form of standardised tests (Frager, 1991; Pannucci & Walmsley, 2007). Some require up to three hours to administer and have been criticised for reminding adults of former failure in school and don’t adequately measure improvement in functional aspects such as fluency, vocabulary, problem solving, word recognition and comprehension (Frager, 1991; Kruidenier, 2007). There are also less formal assessment procedures in adult literacy which differ from standardised measures in two crucial ways. Firstly they require individual administration which enables the assessor to observe the client’s oral and silent reading performance. Some like the Classroom Reading Inventory (Wheelock, Silvaroli, & Campbell, 1969) use sight word lists to create reading profiles while Lytle’s Initial Planning Conference (1986) involves a 2 hour interview to collect information pertaining to the client’s needs and interests.

During the process of investigating best practice in assessment tools for literacy and numeracy, the Salvation Army has identified that the majority of evidence-based assessment tools were unsuitable for clients that may be pre-literate or previously disengaged from literacy and numeracy. Many clients are not sufficiently literate to perform the tasks required to complete these assessments, which also means they are not catered for by existing programs, such as provided by the LINC.

The purpose of STeP123 was to assist Salvation Army staff and volunteers when they became aware that their client may possibly have difficulty with literacy and numeracy. The people making the assessments are staff and volunteers without professional training in reading assessment, but who may have an on-going relationship with the client through a particular support program. In this case, a tool was required that is easy to use and provides a clear pathway to identifying gaps in the client’s skill set and choosing the appropriate methods and materials for assisting the client with their literacy. There was also a requirement that this process was subtle and non-stigmatising for the client.

One staff member in the baseline staff survey made the following comment:

(We need) a diagnostic tool for the client to easily identify an area they could improve upon

The STeP123 Assessment tool is a practical guide and diagnostic tool to help staff and volunteers. The tool alerts the worker to observational cues and commonly used phrases that might signify the fact that the client may have difficulty with literacy. The assessment document outlines some simple activities the worker can run with the client if the client discloses difficulty. There are also two self-assessment matrices; for literacy and self-confidence.

Everyday literacy tasks include tasks of varying difficulty associated with a range of adult roles and contexts. Thus they range widely in content and nature. Everyday literacy, sometimes called functional context literacy, typically involves instrumental goals such as
retrieving specific information, following a set of directions, writing to share or record information, and transferring information from one source to another. Examples include reading classified ads in search of a job; completing a form; looking at a bus schedule to determine the latest time the bus departs; reading a map to find the intersection of two roads; finding the latest times two people can leave their respective cities and arrive on time at the same meeting; reading a lunch menu to choose a meal with no cheese in it; and reading a newspaper article to keep in touch with current events. Helping people to learn using functional contexts is sometimes referred to as the difference between learning to read and reading to learn. The literacy checklist lists everyday indications of difficulty with literacy as shown in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can...</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read street signs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add up and check the right change when shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand a phone, electricity or water bill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a job application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work out a budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text a message</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the newspaper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a computer to email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the TV guide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a calculator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a letter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a dictionary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand driving licence tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the internet to find a local shop address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill out Centrelink and housing forms correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use fractions, percentages and decimals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a note for school or family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check bank account on the internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read books to my child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Literacy Self-Assessment Matrix**

Improving self-confidence and self-esteem can help clients to move forward with their literacy skills. In turn, improved literacy skills will boost self-confidence and self-esteem. Emotional literacy skills are important because they have a direct impact on an individual's ability to engage with learning. Communication of the emotions is a form of empowerment, with the potential to improve social relationships and self-confidence.

Having a robust level of emotional literacy will enable a person to understand, communicate and manage their emotions, recognise their own needs and their capacity to learn. For many adult literacy and numeracy learners a powerful force of their identity has been their sense of deficit, or categorisation as non-capable learners or at best fragile identities as learners during their schooling, which can block the possibility of them creating an alternative positive image of themselves as capable, competent
learners (Tett & Maclachlan, 2007). The self-assessment checklist for confidence is shown at Figure 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the whole, I am happy with myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times, I think I’m not good enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a number of good qualities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do things just as well as other people can</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have much to be proud of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel useless at times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m a person of worth and value, at least equal with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All in all, I am a failure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am positive about myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4 Confidence Self-Assessment Matrix**

This information is confidential; designed to be discussed privately with the client in order to ascertain their immediate needs and possible pathways forward. The assessment document also provides a short list of organisations and services for workers to refer clients for further development of their literacy. The assessment document is available for all staff and volunteers to download from the STeP123 website. The STeP123 tool is also reproduced at Appendix 2.

**Objective 2: Train frontline staff in the use of the assessment tool, and provide a help tool for assessment**

As at June 2013, the assessment document, which includes a help tool, is finalised and available for download from the STeP123 website. The project workers have begun raising awareness that the tool is available but staff and volunteers have not commenced formal instruction on their practical application with clients.

STeP123 has received additional funding for 12 months from 26/10 to complete the implementation of the components of the program. The implementation plan includes developing a presentation on the assessment documentation to deliver at meetings around the state.

**STeP2: Engagement**

**Objective 3: Develop, trial, and assess programs that encompass explicit literacy and numeracy content within context based group learning situations.**

One of the main tenets of STeP123 is that the program needs to suit the needs of adults that may be pre-literate or in the process of re-engaging with literacy and numeracy. Therefore STeP12 activities need to be tailored to the needs of the clients and based on relevance to each client’s context. The range of programs offered by The Salvation Army
in Tasmania provides great opportunities to provide context based resources for pre-literate clients of all ages as well as those that want to re-engage with literacy and numeracy. A wide range of resources and workshops have been developed to facilitate engagement of the three identified client groups; children 0-5, youth; and adults.

**Multimedia**
The *Count with Me123* DVD and CD has been developed and produced in partnership with STeP123 and The Salvation Army’s Communities for Children program. Both DVD and CD feature six original songs from Tasmanian songwriters and four nursery rhymes with new musical arrangements. All the songs are played, danced, and sung by local musicians (many of them young adults), performers and children from the five Communities for Children sites in Southern Tasmania (Brighton, Southern Midlands, New Norfolk, Upper Derwent Valley/Central Highlands and Triabunna). The Count with Me 123 material was developed and organised by The Salvation Army with significant input from volunteer labour within a very tight time-frame and tight budget. It is estimated that these DVDs and CDs would have cost three times as much if produced by a commercial production house. This has created a sense of pride for families in these communities and thus also contributed to transferring social capital.

*When you get this product at the end... people can see that they had done something special. The parents, the children, the musicians, the songwriters, the techs. The coordination was massive.*

*Count with Me123* has proved to be a popular and accessible resource for early childhood education, supporting school readiness and numeracy skills for pre-school age children via song and dance. Physical activity of young children is encouraged via movement to music. *Count with Me123* provides opportunities for interaction and bonding relationships between children, parents and caregivers. The DVD encourages active involvement with music in young pre-school aged children as research has shown it can improve self-esteem, concentration and literacy skills. The CD was produced after the DVD in response to requests from parents for the songs to be available for playing in the car.

Two thousand DVDs and 2000 CDs were produced and launched at a function at the Brighton Civic Centre. Distribution to date has been to Salvation Army programs that cater to children or the parents of young children including Communities for Children partner organisations; Launch into Learning programs and playgroups around the state; community houses: rural primary health services and individual parents and grandparents.

In May 2013 Communities for Children has ordered a second batch of 2000 each of the DVDs and CDs. Feedback from parents includes that children are highly engaged by the songs and that the length of the DVD/CD (being 30 minutes) is ideal as a circuit-breaker for parents.
**Cookbooks**
Cooking is a great way to learn and reinforce everyday literacy in a fun and non-threatening way. STeP123 has used cooking as an engagement tool from the inception of the program; with cooking classes being run at community houses and simple recipes provided for those cooking on a budget.

**Fabulous Fathers** was a joint project between STeP123 and Communities for Children. It involved two cook-out lunches during a school holiday break, one at Bridgewater and another at New Norfolk. Fathers were encouraged to learn new skills with their children and prepare a hot meal. Photographs from these events were then turned into bright and colourful cookbooks. 2,900 cookbooks have been distributed via Communities for Children sites to date. **Fabulous Fathers** has been well received by clientele and The Salvation Army is currently preparing a second edition of Fabulous Fathers, with revision based on feedback from families.

**Fabulous Families Cooking up a Storm**
A second cookbook was created as a result of a cooking program held at four sites in Southern Tasmania; Brighton, Derwent Valley, Southern Midlands and Upper Derwent Valley /Central Highlands. In addition to recipes, **Fabulous Families Cooking Up a Storm** also includes simple food safety and cooking tips and ideas, and is illustrated with photos of parents and children participating in the sessions. The cookbook has been designed to support parents and children with low literacy levels. Each recipe is presented as photographs in stages, the wording is simple and kept to a minimum and thus budget focused, nutritious meals can be understood either through reading or pictorially. 36 parents participating in the sessions also received a Statement of Attendance towards a Cert II in Hospitality during a formal ceremony at the Brighton Civic Centre. To date, 1,500 Fabulous Families cookbooks have been printed and distributed throughout Salvation Army centres.

*Figure 5 Parent Graduates of Fabulous Families*

**Literacy and numeracy kits for 0-5 age group**
STeP123 in conjunction with TSA’s Communities for Children program in Southern Tasmania developed three trial kits for literacy and numeracy targeting the 0-5 age groups with the aim of supporting early childhood workers in working with children in this
age group. The kits were trialled by Communities for Children partners in New Norfolk, Southern Midlands and Brighton. The Australian Early Development Index\(^1\) indicates that there are lower-than-average levels of literacy and numeracy in this group in these areas.

While kits were not identical, there were a total of 32 resources in the literacy kits and 42 resources in the numeracy kits. Resource types included:

- Books
- Flashcards
- Puzzles
- Floor puzzles
- Wall cards; and
- Games.

Workers assessed nine of the literacy resources and six of the numeracy resources as too advanced for the age of children attending these playgroups, but 59 of the resources have been recommended for inclusion in future kits. Many of the books are very visual which caters for situations where parents may have difficulty with literacy.

The two finalised literacy and numeracy kits have been branded as Little Steps123 and Little StepsABC. The Little Steps123 and Little StepsABC kits include comprehensive dossiers with details of each resource item in the kit with an explanation of the item’s strengths as a resource; the suggested target age group; a list of extension activities and links to additional material to support the learning activity.

Large brightly coloured literacy and numeracy mats are provided with the literacy kits alongside a range of suggested activities. The mats are 2.1 x 2.8m and are made of a wipe-clean and allergy friendly fabric.

![Image of literacy and numeracy mat]

Early feedback from groups who have received the mats are:

*Thank you – awesome mat! (Bagdad)*

*It’s fantastic, so colourful and enticing. I can’t wait for the teaching kit to arrive as well (St Mary’s)*

*When they came into playgroup this week everyone was really impressed and looking forward to having it as part of the weekly program (Carlton)*

---

It will be a fantastic asset to our centre and the playgroup (Parenting/Family Resource Centre, New Town)

It’s awesome (Devonport).

The kits are in the process of being distributed to Salvation Army and Communities for Children playgroups around the state. A formal feedback tool on the mat and Little Steps kits will be available on the STeP123 website.

Workshops
The project has developed and trialled two series of workshops to target client needs.

This Is Me!
Emotional literacy skills have a direct impact on an individual’s ability to engage with learning. **This is Me!** is a manualised seven-week emotional literacy program that uses poetry to stimulate self-expression and emotional literacy. Communication of the emotions is a form of empowerment, with the potential to improve social relationships and self-confidence. The program helps participants find their voice and improves their vocabulary and literary fluency. It also creates social capital within the group and with the facilitation staff. Skills developed through This is Me! include:

- Communication (speaking, listening and thinking)
- Assertiveness
- Working with others and building relationships
- Managing emotions
- Developing empathy
- Learning and problem-solving skills
- Independence.

The This is Me! program follows the following format:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My Object, My story</td>
<td>Participants share their experiences with poetry. Participants bring a personal object to the workshop to focus creativity and share emotions or feelings and their poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Found Object</td>
<td>Emotional exploration using a found object. Participants share their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Scent</td>
<td>Various scents are used to trigger memory and emotion, followed by brainstorming, writing and sharing of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>Participants listen to a range of music which may stimulate a range of emotions and choose a memory, emotion or image which has been activated by music, write and share their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sight</td>
<td>Participants bring a photograph and swap with others in the group to create a story from the image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Debriefing</td>
<td>Discussion of previous workshops and sharing of stories. Participants have the opportunity to have their work published and perform it in public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recital and Publication

The course manual contains a lesson plan for each week’s activity, including ice-breakers, suggested activities and resources. Running through the workshop is the message that ‘This is not school’; participants are given permission to break school-type rules by such activities as making and flying paper planes.

As well as the course manual, a large container is provided with all materials required to run a group. This kit contains

- Paper (white and coloured)
- Display folders for participants’ work
- Pens and pencils
- Whiteboard markers
- Two colour Oxford dictionaries and one thesaurus
- Digital recorder
- Scanner and SD memory card
- Tissues
- This is Me! signage
- Container of scent bottles (for Workshop 3)
- USB flash drive
- Facilitator’s guide
- Pencil sharpener

The flash drive contains

- Poetry PowerPoint (for Workshop 1)
- Optical Illusions PowerPoint (for Workshop 2)
- Music files (workshop 4)
- This is Me! Debriefing Guidelines PowerPoint (for Workshop 6)
- PDF files for This is Me! documents, forms and leaflets.
- Talent release form for photographs and poetry

At the end of the course, participants have the opportunity to have their poems published in a colourful pamphlet. The poems are published as they were written, that is with the participant’s spelling and grammar intact.

Three This is Me! workshop programs have been run to date, two groups at New Norfolk and one at the Salvation Army Centre in Elizabeth Street, Hobart.

Sample poems
The following three poems are reproduced as a sample of the participants’ work.

_Ya gotta giddy up ‘n giddy up ‘n go go go_
Giddy up 'n giddy up 'n go go go
Giddy up 'n giddy up 'n go go go
Giddy up 'n giddy up 'n go go go

Ya gotta get up of that lounge
Put the remote down
Put the feet on the floor
Walk around the Labrador
Walk over to the back door
Open up the back door
There's a whole wide world
Waiting for you

Ya gotta giddy up 'n giddy up 'n go go go
Giddy up 'n giddy up 'n go go go
Giddy up 'n giddy up 'n go go go
Giddy up 'n giddy up 'n go go go

Stars stars night all so bright
Shine down with delight
you make me so at peces.
care and reazce on
This beaful night. God Thank you
for is night. I am going
I will back for look
Td tomorrow Night

Anxious, longing for this to end
I'm immobised there in the chair
Just longing to catch a breath
Hoping that I wont bite the fingers
holding my mouth open
It takes forever but at last relief comes
Its over, & I can wash out, rinse
it all clean

Participant feedback
Participants reported that This is Me! helped to unlock their creative expression and communication processes, and ignited or re-ignited their interest in reading.

Got me to think (Hobart participant)

Good to express myself and listen to others (Hobart participant)

Has brought me back to reading, and enjoying poetry (Hobart participant)
The workshops helped participants to get in touch with some of their emotional issues and work through them.

*Some emotions were stirred* (Hobart participant)

*Brought up emotions e.g. sadness and helped to get it out* (New Norfolk participant)

*Made me go deeper. Made me more aware of emotional triggers and help to recognise and manage. Emotional tools* (New Norfolk participant)

Workshop participants reported one of the most important aspects of This Is Me! was the ability to explore other people’s points of view in a non-threatening environment.

*Understanding that people see things differently* (New Norfolk participant)

*Discuss things you wouldn’t normally* (New Norfolk participant)

Participants reported being inspired and more aware of their creative potential and appreciated the opportunity to express themselves.

*Has made me aware, in a big way, of my creativity* (New Norfolk participant)

*Inspired me to be more creative* (New Norfolk participant)

*Opportunity to be creative in a positive way* (New Norfolk participant)

The ability to see a project through to the end was a big milestone for some participants and was a catalyst for increased self-confidence.

*Impressed I could put something together* (Hobart participant)

*Have more drive and ability to stick to something* (New Norfolk participant)

Participants also valued the teaching style and skills of the course facilitators.

*Facilitator’s personality made it possible to open up. Gentle, accepting, pleasant. No wrong thing* (Hobart participant)

*Facilitator explained things clearly and was organised* (New Norfolk participant)

Feedback from Salvation Army staff involved or observing This Is Me! was their surprise and how well the clients engaged with the activities and particularly the poetry. The groups developed strong social capital because of the sharing of common issues, fostering of creativity and the supportive environment.

**StepUp to IT**

The world is becoming much more visual and digital. With computers and the Internet, accessing, understanding and communicating is less dependent on text alone. But while much of the material is visual, it still has to be read. **STeP Up to IT** has been designed to encourage communication and learning through information technology. Participants work in a small group. The course contains opportunities for reading and writing. **STeP**
Up to IT was developed out of a perceived need for this kind of program for young people, embedding literacy and numeracy support via a course around desktop publishing.

The end product is a manualised course designed to be conducted over four weeks – although it can be extended to five to accommodate lower levels of computer literacy.

The STeP Up to IT program follows the following format:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Microsoft Word and Computer Health and Safety</td>
<td>Participants discuss their experience with IT. Revision of computer basics. Using MSWord to write a draft story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Publisher/PowerPoint</td>
<td>Introduction to Publisher and PowerPoint software and creation of document using previous week’s draft. Addition of images and experimentation with editing capabilities of the software. Also discussion of publishing issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Publisher/PowerPoint continued</td>
<td>Additional activities with features built into software. Finalisation of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social media, safety and a story shared.</td>
<td>Participants share their work and discuss the options available through social media. Internet and cyber safety basics. Reflection on the course and their learnings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The course manual contains a lesson plan for each week’s activity, including ice-breakers, suggested activities and resources.

As well as the course manual, a large container is provided with all materials required to run a group. This STeP Up to IT kit contains

- Pens and pencils
- Whiteboard markers
- Two colour Oxford dictionaries and one thesaurus
- Digital recorder
- Scanner and SD memory card
- Tissues
- USB flash drive
- Facilitator’s guide
- Glue sticks and erasers
- Pencil sharpener

The flash drive contains

- Magnified pictures PowerPoint (for Workshop 2)
- Sample Publisher and PowerPoint presentations (for Workshop 2)
- Misunderstandings PowerPoint (workshop 4)
- Social Media PowerPoint (for Workshop 4)
- PDF files for STeP Up to IT documents, forms and leaflets.
Participant feedback
STeP UP to IT has been run twice to date, at New Norfolk and the Bridge residential program. Some feedback from these two groups is provided below. Participants were enthusiastic about learning new skills and the opportunity to be creative with technology.

*Learned different programs and ways of getting into them. It’s been good. (NN participant)*

*Helped me learn something I wouldn’t have otherwise (NN participant)*

*Helped me learn FAST! (NN participant)*

*I’m more creative than I realised (NN participant)*

*Info was easy to follow (Bridge participant)*

Social capital was also achieved by participants coming together and sharing their skills and stories

*Community connection – snacks, opinions, I felt like I was heard (NN participant)*

Some participants mentioned the personal growth that had occurred through these workshops.

*Inspired me and given me confidence (NN participant)*

*Opened my mind through verbal communication and use of computers (NN participant)*

*I think this has been great. The STeP UP to IT and This is Me. It has inspired me to go on with other projects, as in adult literacy and other things. The start of the computer course was a bit challenging.... I pay more attention now to reading stuff and find it easier to fill out forms. (NN participant)*

*Being in a class or group helped me to feel motivated to have a go at different things (Bridge participant)*

*Starting a media studies course. Feeling good about it. (NN participant)*

**Provide assistance to TSA in integrating explicit and context-based literacy and numeracy content into existing and new programs**
STeP123 project workers conducted four one-on-one literacy support sessions at New Norfolk with three adult males after the completion of This is Me!

The workshops will undergo a systematic rollout in the second half of 2013. Additional funds have been sourced from 26/10 to continue the implementation phase of STeP 123. The experiences gleaned from the trialled workshops will be used to embed the material within other programs across the Salvation Army. The organisation is satisfied that the rationale behind STeP123 is firm and literacy and numeracy will be augmented with the understanding of the importance of emotional literacy.
There are current negotiations between STeP123 and The Salvation Army’s Positive Lifestyle program, run in nine locations around Tasmania, to incorporate STeP resources into this 10-week program.

A suite of staff feedback instruments have been developed as part of this evaluation. Staff will be surveyed on the intranet after using the STeP 123 resources and a sample of staff as well as clients will be interviewed to obtain comprehensive feedback for ongoing revision.

Provide context-based support for frontline staff, perhaps via a web-based (intranet) interactive tool that frontline staff may add to

The STeP123 website is a key component of the sustainability of the project. The website is designed to be the entry point for workers and program managers who want to incorporate a literacy or numeracy component into client programs. The website address is [http://step123.org.au/](http://step123.org.au/)

The site is a depository of resources accessible by Salvation Army staff and volunteers and community partners in human service programs such as Communities for Children. Website contains info in three parts, adults, teens and children.

![Figure 6 STeP123 Website](image)

A one-stop storehouse for these resources also aids service efficiency as staff have a comprehensive collection of tools on hand. Staff, volunteers and community partners are encouraged to contribute their own resources to the repository to build up a collection of resources that work. The website is close to complete but requires additional resources to be loaded and a collection of useful links, including to other TSA programs such as Communities for Children. It has also been identified that some staff
and volunteers may need to have their capacity developed to include basic computer skills to enable them to source and upload tools.

**Promotional materials**
STeP123 has produced a fresh suite of promotional materials featuring colourful logos, images and QSR codes for quick access to the website.

A set of three leaflets has been devised. There is a generic leaflet on creating literacy awareness and a specific leaflet for the two new workshop programs This Is Me! and STeP Up to IT.

![Leaflets](image)

**Figure 7 Leaflets**

Two full-colour A3 posters have been developed to promote STeP123 in public areas. The first details the main components to date of STeP123. A second poster has been developed as a conversation starter for Doorways staff and to prompt clients to seek support. This poster poses a series of questions which may prompt requests for information or support framed in terms of everyday literacy and numeracy tasks. Would you like to know how to budget? Use a mobile phone? Use email? Get a driver's licence? etc.

![Posters](image)

**Figure 8 Stickers**

Additional promotional material has involved the development of a set of stickers to publicise the STeP123 workshops and the resources and activities available via Little
StepsABC and Little Steps123. The stickers will have widespread uses at events and be included in promotional showbags.

**STeP3: Referral**

The final step in the STeP123 framework is referral. The original business case involved a substantial effort into providing robust referral pathways for clients.

*Further develop the list of literacy programs available to include more detailed information.*

The research activity behind STeP123 revealed that there were no referral pathways for those clients who were pre-literate and limited programs for those wanting to re-engage with literacy and numeracy. The project team has developed good relationships with organisations such as LINC and the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses and is having on-going discussions regarding the development of services for this group of clients. These relationships will be further developed through the implementation phase in 2013-14.

*Need for on-going support through referral of clients to other literacy/numeracy courses*

As noted above, there are few options for clients who are pre-literate or need to re-engage with literacy. Relationships will be pursued and developed including the creation of MOUs and partnership agreements with the LINC and other organisations.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The Salvation Army has acknowledged that the original plan for STeP123 was very ambitious, and ultimately unrealistic based on the employment of one FTE staff member. The original proposal also involved the development of a range of multimedia resources. Feedback from staff of The Salvation Army support services required a rethink of this strategy as it became clear that the targeted client group does not have access to the technology required to utilise multimedia. Restrictions with income as well as literacy meant that this approach was not appropriate.

Early expectations of finding an existing proprietary assessment tool needed re-evaluation as the available tools were too sophisticated for the needs of staff working with this subgroup of clients.

Further delays were experienced with getting frontline staff on board with the concept of working with literacy and numeracy while supporting clients in other areas. They found that those working with clients in crisis did not necessarily have literacy issues on their radar. Opportunity for raising the issue with clients was also seen as problematic. A lot of TSA workers advised that discussing problems with literacy is not appropriate when dealing with a crisis. The action research process undertaken by STeP123 determined
that a client’s emotional literacy could well be at the heart of the crisis and providing ways to improve emotional literacy needed to go hand-in-hand with ways of learning that had meaning for a client. The Salvation Army was aware therefore that while the frontline workers have good rapport with this vulnerable group of clients, there was a need for a new set of skills. Some stakeholders also reported that Doorways staff were already extremely busy and that there was an opportunity to canvass the volunteer pool for volunteers to champion the STeP123 program and resources and assist staff within Doorways.

The STeP123 project team has sought to create a unique program that does not duplicate existing resources. It quickly became obvious that there was very little available in Tasmania for pre-literate adults. Existing programs did not do enough to engage pre-literate adults and so the program sought to fill a gap. The Salvation Army identified a related group of clients that might be literate but have lost confidence and so were also disengaged from literacy and numeracy. In addition, not all areas have any support available for their communities. For example, New Norfolk does not have a LINC, and the one in Brighton has only recently opened. Organisations such as the LINC and TACH are very excited about The Salvation Army developing a program for pre-literate and disengaged clients which they believe meets a previously unmet need in Tasmania.

One of the key successes of STeP123 is that they have developed a bottom-up approach to literacy and numeracy that shows promise in engaging vulnerable people. During the development and trial phase of the project, STeP123 was able to deliver client benefits due to its strong client focus. The response of participants in the workshops has been excellent. STeP123 workers reported that the insights of some of the participants have been remarkable, including concluding that education was not so much about personal ability but rather the opportunities presented to individuals in their lives. One client from the New Norfolk STeP Up to IT group has gone on to study at the Polytechnic; another has enrolled in a more intensive computer course. Along with the success stories, the team has learned to work with a range of issues germane to working with vulnerable people, including the challenge of maintaining engagement with the program through competing life events working with a range of world views.

In conclusion, STeP123 has gone through 3 years of testing and trialling in an action research framework. In hindsight, those involved believe that the project needed this much time to develop appropriately; to allow for extensive trialling and testing against client needs. A lot of work has gone into researching and testing each component and finding out what works in engaging individuals and families with literacy issues. The experience of those involved in the development of STeP123 has been that with vulnerable people a soft entry, bottom-up approach works best. The team acknowledges that catering to the needs of youth has been the most challenging and this requires more work than was available to the project.
STeP123 has developed quality course manuals with easy-to-follow outlines that can be adopted by organisations other than The Salvation Army. The team of three part-time project workers has proved to be the best use of human resources as this team brought together different skill sets and potential for synergy and development of ideas. Tasmanians are recognised as having the lowest literacy in Australia. STeP123 has been able to identify a gap in services and work towards finding a real solution.

Recommendation 1:
All resources for STeP123 need to be publicised well. New branding nice and colourful. The opportunity is there for a big launch to raise staff and client awareness.

Recommendation 2:
The Salvation Army has a large pool of volunteers that may well be interested in taking on roles in assessment and engagement with the STeP123 resources. It is recommended that the volunteer corps is given the opportunity to take on these more specialised roles, with appropriate training.

Recommendation 3:
Currency of all resources is vital to protect the investment in SteP123. The website, resources and workshop materials need to be maintained and upgraded to remain relevant to the needs of the three groups of clients. This is likely to require the appointment of a permanent literacy worker.

Recommendation 4:
There is a ready opportunity for This is Me and Step Up to IT to be run in the short term with parents in the Communities for Children program as this is a well-connected cohort of vulnerable families and can be packaged to cater to parents interested in returning to the workforce.

Recommendation 5:
The Salvation Army needs to expedite the rollout of partnership agreements and MOUs with organisations interested in using the material developed by STeP123. These resources have the potential to be used by a wide range of organisations (similar to Safe from the Start).

Recommendation 6:
A comprehensive suite of feedback tools has been developed by the University Department of Rural Health for gaining feedback on all components of STeP123. This feedback should be collected 12 months after the formal launch of the materials.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1: PIAAC LEVELS

Literacy
For the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), literacy is defined as understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

Level 1 (0 to below 225)
Most of the tasks at this level require the respondent to read relatively short digital or print continuous, non-continuous, or mixed texts to locate a single piece of information which is identical to or synonymous with the information given in the question or directive. Some tasks may require the respondent to enter personal information onto a document, in the case of some non-continuous texts. Little, if any, competing information is present. Some tasks may require simple cycling through more than one piece of information. Knowledge and skill in recognising basic vocabulary, evaluating the meaning of sentences, and reading of paragraph text is expected.

Level 2 (From 225 to below 275)
At this level text becomes more complex. The medium of texts may be digital or printed, and texts may be comprised of continuous, non-continuous, or mixed types. Tasks in this level require respondents to make matches between the text and information, and may require paraphrase or low-level inferences. Some competing pieces of information may be present. Some tasks require the respondent to: cycle through or integrate two or more pieces of information based on criteria compare and contrast or reason about information requested in the question, or navigate within digital texts to access and identify information from various parts of a document.

Level 3 (From 275 to below 325)
Texts at this level are often dense or lengthy, including continuous, non-continuous, mixed, or multiple pages. Understanding text and rhetorical structures becomes more central to successfully completing tasks, especially in navigation of complex digital texts. Tasks require the respondent to identify, interpret, or evaluate one or more pieces of information, and often require varying levels of inferencing. Many tasks require the respondent to construct meaning across larger chunks of text or perform multi-STeP operations in order to identify and formulate responses. Often tasks also demand that the respondent disregard irrelevant or inappropriate text content to answer accurately. Competing information is often present, but it is not more prominent than the correct information.

Level 4 (From 325 to below 375)
Tasks at this level often require respondents to perform multiple-STeP operations to integrate, interpret, or synthesize information from complex or lengthy continuous, non-continuous, mixed, or multiple type texts. Complex inferences and application of background knowledge may be needed to perform successfully. Many tasks require identifying and understanding one or more specific, noncentral ideas in the text in order to interpret or evaluate subtle evidence-claim or persuasive discourse relationships. Conditional information is frequently present in tasks at this level and must be taken into consideration by the respondent. Competing information is present and sometimes seemingly as prominent as correct information.

Level 5 (From 375 to 500)
At this level, tasks may require the respondent to search for and integrate information across multiple dense texts; construct syntheses of similar and contrasting ideas or points of view; or evaluate evidence based arguments. Application and evaluation of logical and conceptual models of ideas may be required to accomplish tasks. Evaluating reliability of evidentiary sources and selecting key information are frequently a key requirements. Tasks often require respondents to be aware of subtle rhetorical cues and to make
high-level inferences or use specialised background knowledge.

**Numeracy**
For PIAAC, numeracy is defined as the ability to access, use, interpret, and communicate mathematical information and ideas, in order to engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adult life. This definition should be paired with the definition of enumerative behaviour which is managing a situation or solving a problem in a real context, by responding to mathematical content/information/ideas represented in multiple ways.

**Level 1 (0 to below 225)**
Tasks in this level require the respondent to carry out basic mathematical processes in common, concrete contexts where the mathematical content is explicit with little text and minimal distractors. Tasks usually require one-STEP or simple processes involving e.g. counting; sorting; performing basic arithmetic operations; understanding simple percents such as 50%; locating and identifying elements of simple or common graphical or spatial representations.

**Level 2 (From 225 to below 275)**
Tasks in this level require the respondent to identify and act upon mathematical information and ideas embedded in a range of common contexts where the mathematical content is fairly explicit or visual with relatively few distractors. Tasks tend to require the application of two or more steps or processes involving e.g. calculation with whole numbers and common decimals, percents and fractions; simple measurement and spatial representation; estimation; interpretation of relatively simple data and statistics in texts, tables and graphs.

**Level 3 (From 275 to below 325)**
Tasks in this level require the respondent to understand mathematical information which may be less explicit, embedded in contexts that are not always familiar and represented in more complex ways. Tasks require several steps and may involve the choice of problem-solving strategies and relevant processes. Tasks tend to require the application of e.g. number sense and spatial sense; recognising and working with mathematical relationships, patterns, and proportions expressed in verbal or numerical form; interpretation and basic analysis of data and statistics in texts, tables and graphs.

**Level 4 (From 325 to below 375)**
Tasks in this level require the respondent to understand a broad range of mathematical information that may be complex, abstract or embedded in unfamiliar contexts. These tasks involve undertaking multiple steps and choosing relevant problem-solving strategies and processes. Tasks tend to require analysis and more complex reasoning about e.g. quantities and data; statistics and chance; spatial relationships; change, proportions and formulas. Tasks in this level may also require comprehending arguments or communicating well-reasoned explanations for answers or choices.

**Level 5 (From 375 to 500)**
Tasks in this level require the respondent to understand complex representations and abstract and formal mathematical and statistical ideas, possibly embedded in complex texts. Respondents may have to integrate multiple types of mathematical information where considerable translation or interpretation is required; draw inferences; develop or work with mathematical arguments or models; justify, evaluate and critically reflect upon solutions or choices.
APPENDIX 2: LITERACY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Literacy Awareness and Assessment

TO THE SALVATION ARMY WORKER/VOLUNTEER:
This assessment tool is designed to help workers and volunteers identify a client’s literacy needs and how this might affect their everyday life.

OBSERVATION
Here are some signs to look out for which initially may help to identify literacy needs:

Common excuses to hide literacy difficulties:
- I’ve forgotten my glasses.
- Can I take the form home to finish it?
- I can’t do it now because I’ve hurt my hand.
- I’ll get my friend/family to help me do it.
- Where do I sign? (without reading the document first).

General indicators of literacy difficulties:
- Reading very slowly;
- Staring at the page without reading;
- Not understanding what is written;
- Pretending they understand rather than asking questions;
- Very slow understanding of oral and written instructions;
- Filling out a form incorrectly;
- Spelling and grammar errors;
- May speak well but may have writing and reading difficulties.

To further confirm whether the client has literacy needs, the following steps are available to help with the assessment process:
- Practical exercises
- Self-assessment forms
PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The worker can choose any of the examples below, or create their own practical exercise that is relevant to the client’s interests. To start with, choose exercises on a level that the client is most likely to succeed with.

Observe and take note of any reading, writing, comprehension (understanding), and/or numeracy difficulties.

Rating
1 – can do
2 – can do with difficulty
3 – can’t do

Ask the client to fill out a personal details form as much as they can themselves. 
*(reading, writing, comprehension)*

Discuss the contents of some brochures from the Doorways Centre or other programs that may be of interest to your client. 
*(reading, writing, comprehension)*

Ask your client to write down some (or all) of their spending for the week, and then add up the spending using a calculator. 
*(writing, numbers)*

Ask your client to add up all the receipts or bills they might have in their wallet or handbag, with or without a calculator. 
*(reading, numbers)*

Using a calendar or diary, ask your client which date suits them to meet next time. 
*(reading, time management, numbers)*

Talk about the weather and ask the client to look up it up on the Bureau of Meteorology website or in the newspaper. 
*(reading, spelling, computer use)*

Ask your client to find the start time for a TV program they would watch in a TV guide, website or newspaper. 
*(reading, times, numbers)*

Ask your client to look up something they are interested in on YouTube such as a music video. *(spelling, computer use)*
Invite the client to write out their favourite recipe for you.
(*writing, spelling*)

Ask your client to work out what buses they will need to catch to their next appointment with you.
(*reading, understanding times, numbers, computer use if time table is on web*)

**SELF-ASSESSMENT**
Self-assessment forms are useful once a trusting relationship between client and worker has been established, particularly when clients may be reluctant to reveal their literacy difficulties.

**a. Self-assessment (literacy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can...</th>
<th>Please tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read street signs</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add up and check the right change when shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand a phone, electricity or water bill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a job application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work out a budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text a message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the newspaper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a computer to email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the TV guide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a calculator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a dictionary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand driving licence tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the internet to find a local shop address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill out Centrelink and housing forms correctly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use fractions, percentages and decimals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a note for school or family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check bank account on the internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read books to my child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Use separate form to give to your clients)*
b. Self-assessment (self-confidence and self-esteem)

Improving self-confidence and self-esteem can help clients with gaining the courage to move forward with improving literacy skills. In turn, improved literacy skills will boost self-confidence and self-esteem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please tick</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the whole, I am happy with myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times, I think I’m not good enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a number of good qualities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can do things just as well as other people can</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have much to be proud of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel useless at times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m a person of worth and value, at least equal with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All in all, I am a failure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am positive about myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Use separate form to give to your clients)

REFERRAL

Once the client’s literacy needs have been identified, the worker can offer appropriate programs or learning opportunities as found in the STeP123 program or literacy providers outside of The Salvation Army. These can be accessed through the website, www.step123.org.au.

Literacy service providers for referring your clients to:

- 26TEN – www.26ten.tas.gov.au
  Site that lists literacy providers in Tasmania

- LINC Tasmania – www.linc.tas.gov.au
  Network of Tasmanian libraries, online centres, literacy programs, and document archives

  Resources and programs for youth, and families and children

- Tasmanian Association of Community Houses (TACH) – tach.asn.au
  Network of community houses that offer practical literacy programs, and Men’s Sheds

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APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEET FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

[on the letterhead of Hobart office of UDRH, UTAS]

[The University of Tasmania has ethics requirements for the conduct of all research involving human subjects. This information sheet follows those requirements to help ensure that this research project meets the highest possible ethical standards]

Project title, funding source, and responsible staff
The project for which the evaluation is being conducted is called STeP123 being run by The Salvation Army (Tasmania) which has obtained funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund. The evaluation is being undertaken for The Salvation Army by the University Department of Rural Health, University of Tasmania. The evaluator of the project is:

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University Department of Rural Health
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Private Bag 103, Hobart Tasmania 7001

The responsible officer at The Salvation Army commissioning the evaluation from the evaluator is:
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Evaluation summary
In a sentence, the evaluation is about how well the STeP123 has worked in providing resources, tools and training for staff and volunteers to help them work with clients with low literacy and numeracy skills. There are two groups who will be invited to participate in
the evaluation: the workers involved in the program itself for The Salvation Army and a sample of clients. If they agree to participate, these groups will be asked questions about how well the project has worked: what the project has done well, what it has not done so well.

What exactly is involved if I agree to participate?
Salvation Army workers and volunteers are asked to participate in two components of the evaluation. There is a survey component as well as an interview component. If you consent to participate in the evaluation the evaluator will ask you to fill complete a survey which will be made available to you via the staff intranet. You will have had the opportunity to participate in a survey about your experiences in working with clients with low literacy before the project was rolled out. This evaluation asks you to complete a second survey once you have had the opportunity to use the assessment tools, skills and resources developed through STeP123 with your clients.

A short interview will also be involved to get your views on how well the project has worked overall. You can choose to have this interview in person with the evaluator or over the telephone.

The evaluators would like to audio-tape the interviews to assist with accuracy of note-taking. The tapes will be erased after verification that the notes are an accurate record of the interview. Individual interviewees will not be identified in any quotes taken from the notes or audio-tapes.

How the evaluator will use the information about your opinion of the program, if you accept this invitation
It is important that you know that your role as a worker for the program does not mean you are required to participate in this evaluation. This is because the evaluation is separate from the program: it is an independent evaluation being run by the University of Tasmania (whereas the program itself is being run by The Salvation Army).

However, at the same time, the only information being asked of you is general information about how well the program has worked for you as a staff member and how this may have helped your clients. No personal information will be collected by the evaluator. Even so, all the information collected by the evaluator will be stored confidentially at the University of Tasmania’s Hobart office of the Department of Rural Health, and no one but the evaluator will have access to it. It will be kept there for 5 years after the evaluation is finished or the date of publication of papers from the survey, whichever is later. After five years all the evaluation information will be destroyed. Any data from the evaluation stored electronically will be secured on password-protected computers with restricted access.

The opinions everyone, including you, give about the program to the evaluator will be used in a report about how well the program has worked. This report will be given to The Salvation Army so they can learn how to give their clients the best possible service. The
evaluator may also publish findings from the evaluation in academic journals and conferences. However, all the information from the evaluation will be used only to discuss general issues about how to make services work better for people with literacy and numeracy issues.

**Why your opinion is needed**
You are being invited to participate in the evaluation because the evaluator needs to try to include the opinions of everyone who has direct experience of the project. All staff and volunteers who have had contact with the project are being invited to participate. Without the opinions of everyone involved in the project it will be hard to know how to make it better for clients.

**What to do if you consent to participating**
If you agree to participate in the surveys, you will receive a link via email to an online survey on The Salvation Army intranet. If you agree to participate by way of interview, simply fill in the consent form (attached) and return it to Jo East at The Salvation Army Headquarters in the internal mail. The evaluator will then be in contact with you to make the arrangements. You will be given a copy of the consent form to keep.

**What to do if you want to withdraw your participation at any stage**
You can easily withdraw from the evaluation at any time, including after you have agreed to participate. You do not need to provide an explanation. To withdraw simply inform the evaluator Romy Winter who will discuss with you how you would like this to be done. It is important to emphasise that there will be no difficulty if you decide to withdraw. What is important is that you freely consent to participate in the evaluation and that you are happy for the evaluator to have your opinions of the program.

**Who you can contact if you have further questions**
You have a right to know about the evaluation results, as long as no one else’s privacy is affected. For further information about the evaluation results contact (Associate Professor) Erica Bell on 03 6226 7377 or 04 3939 4141 or by email at Erica.Bell@utas.edu.au.

**Concerns or complaints**
This research has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. Should you have any concerns, questions or complaints with regard to the ethical conduct of this research, please contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics (Tasmania) Network, on 6226 7479 or human.ethics@utas.edu.au. You will need to quote ethics reference number H2891.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation to participate in the evaluation of STeP123.
APPENDIX 4: BASELINE STAFF SURVEY

TSA: working with clients with low literacy

Baseline survey of staff and volunteers working directly with clients

STep123 is a program to improve the ability of staff and volunteers to help clients with low literacy. STep123, which includes resources, support and training, will be made available to all staff and volunteers in the Salvation Army in Tasmania over the next few months.

In order to assess whether STep123 is working, we first need to find out what you are currently doing when you realise your client has difficulty with reading, writing and numeracy. After STep123 is rolled out, we will do another survey to find out if it has helped you.

The survey is being run by the Department of Rural Health at the University of Tasmania. Your input will be anonymous.

1. Are you a ....
   - Staff member
   - Volunteer

2. In which area do you work
   - Doorways
   - Family Support program
   - Youth Program
   - Other (please specify)

3. How long have you been working or volunteering with The Salvation Army?
   - Less than 6 months
   - 6-12 months
   - 1-2 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - more than 11 years

4. What proportion of the clients that you deal with would have low levels of literacy?

   Please enter an estimate of the percentage below:

5. What proportion of the clients that you deal with would have low levels of numeracy?

   Please enter an estimate of the percentage below:
TSA: working with clients with low literacy

6. Do you have any comments about the literacy and numeracy difficulties that your clients have?

What you currently do

7. What do you normally do when you realise a client has low literacy skills?

Please provide a description

8. Do you use any special resources to help you work with clients with low literacy?
   - No
   - Yes

9. If yes, what kind of resources?
TSA: working with clients with low literacy

10. Where did you hear about these resources?

11. Are these resources adequate for your needs?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Unsure

12. What else could the resources include to help you work with clients with literacy difficulties?

Training and Support

13. Do you think you need additional support or training around working with people with difficulty with literacy and numeracy?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Unsure
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>What are the areas that training should cover?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>What support would you like The Salvation Army to provide for working with clients with literacy difficulties?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5: DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH PROJECT STAFF

[Before this form is used as a prompt in interviews the researcher will paraphrase the information sheet in the ethics application]

What has been your role in the STeP123 project?

What is your understanding of the original objectives of the project?

Which elements of the project have you been involved with?

Process and challenges?

- Assessment Tool
- Training Programs – decision on topics, trials, manualisation etc.
- Cookbooks
- DVD/CDs
- Promotional materials

What has worked really well for you in developing the STeP123 toolkit?

Has anything surprised you?

Is there anything else you think should be included?

Changes in direction of components of the project

Timeframe challenges: what do you feel has affected on the timing of the rollout?

Referrals

1. How is the referral process working?
2. Has the implementation of referrals changed from initial ideas about the model?

What needs to happen now?
# APPENDIX 6: STAFF FEEDBACK SURVEY

To be formatted into Survey Monkey

## Your role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family support worker</th>
<th>Doorways</th>
<th>Program coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## How long have you been working/volunteering with The Salvation Army?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 6 months</th>
<th>6-12 months</th>
<th>1-2 years</th>
<th>3-5 years</th>
<th>More than 10 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Your assessment of client literacy

What proportion of the clients that you deal with would you estimate have low levels of literacy and numeracy?

\[
\% \quad \text{Your assessment of client literacy} 
\]

## Your needs now

What do you normally do now when you realise a client has low literacy skills (i.e. assessment and referral)?


Have you started to use any of the special resources from STep123 to help you to work with clients with low literacy? Yes No

If yes, what kinds of resources?


How do you go about accessing these resources now?


How confident are you about managing the STep123 resources

### Finding resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>not at all confident</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>very confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Downloading resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>not at all confident</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>very confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Download</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Uploading resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>not at all confident</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>very confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upload</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Knowing where to find help

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<thead>
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<th>not at all confident</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>very confident</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Are the resources adequate for your needs at the current time? Yes No

Is there anything else you would like the resources to include?
Considering where you are at now with your work, do you need additional support or training around working with people with low skills in literacy and numeracy? Yes No

What are the main areas that this support or training should cover (again considering your knowledge/skill now after STep123)?

The STep123 Assessment Tool

How useful have you found this tool in working with your clients?

0 I have not used the assessment tool 1 not at all 2 minimal use 3 some use 4 considerably useful

Please give reasons for your answer

Do you have any suggestions for improving the assessment tool?

How satisfied were you with the training you received on using the tool?

0 I did not receive any training 1 not at all 2 minimal satisfaction 3 some satisfaction 4 very satisfied

Please give reasons for your answer

Do you have any suggestions for improving the training?

How satisfied were you with the help manual developed for staff using the tool?

0 I have not seen a help manual 1 not at all 2 minimal satisfaction 3 some satisfaction 4 very satisfied

Please give reasons for your answer

Do you have any suggestions for improving the help manual?
Please rate the following literacy and numeracy programs on **ease of use**
Please note not all programs have been identified as at the current time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is Me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>TBA</td>
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Please rate the following literacy and numeracy programs on **relevance to your client group**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is Me</td>
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Please rate the following literacy and numeracy programs on **engagement with your clients**

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<th></th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is Me</td>
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</table>

Please rate the following literacy and numeracy programs on **improving literacy and numeracy**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not useful</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is Me</td>
<td></td>
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**Rank of programs**
Please rate the most useful program with the number 1 etc

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<tr>
<td>This is Me</td>
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<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBA</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please rate the STep123 Website
0 I have not seen the website 1 poor 2 adequate 3 good 4 very good

Please give reasons for your answer

Please rate the STep123 Website
0 I have not seen the website 1 poor 2 adequate 3 good 4 very good

Please give reasons for your answer

Have you received guidance on how to mix STep123 and literacy and numeracy into your existing programs? Yes NO

How satisfied were you with the guidance you received on adapting existing programs?
0 I have not had any guidance 1 not at all 2 minimal satisfaction 3 some satisfaction 4 very satisfied

Please give reasons for your answer

Have you received guidance on how to mix STep123 and literacy and numeracy into your existing programs? Yes NO

How satisfied were you with the guidance you received on adapting existing programs?
0 I have not had any guidance 1 not at all 2 minimal satisfaction 3 some satisfaction 4 very satisfied

Please give reasons for your answer

How important is it to you that you receive guidance on adapting existing programs?
not important 2 3 4 5 very important

How satisfied were you with the guidance you received around referrals?
0 I have not had any guidance on referrals 1 not at all 2 minimal satisfaction 3 some satisfaction 4 very satisfied

Please give reasons for your answer

How important is it to you that you receive guidance on referring clients?
not important 2 3 4 5 very important

The evaluators would like to interview some staff and volunteers around how well STep123 has improved staff capacity and the impact of the program on your work with clients.

Are you interested in participating in a short interview with the evaluators in the next month? Yes No

If you would like to participate
Please provide your first name and a contact number for us to contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time to do the interview.

Christian Name
Phone for contact
APPENDIX 7: DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Assessment Tools
1. What difference has having the assessment tool made to your interaction with Salvation Army clients?
2. How easy was the tool to use?
3. How have clients reacted? (general terms)
4. Do you have any issues with the tool/are there particular strengths?

Training
1. Do you have any comments on the training you received around STeP123, and using the resources?

Impact on practice
1. What has worked really well for you in the STeP123 toolkit?
2. Has anything surprised you?
3. What have been the biggest challenges with the materials?
4. Comments about the website
5. How have clients reacted?

Referral
1. How well does the referral system work?
2. Does anything need to be changed?

Sustainability
1. What, if anything, needs to happen to make STeP123 work better for you and other staff members and volunteers?
2. Would you recommend other organisations using the STeP123 program to help them work with their clients with low literacy skills?

Is there anything missing from the program that clients really need?
APPENDIX 8: INFORMATION FOR CLIENT FEEDBACK

To be given orally

The University Department of Rural Health has been asked by The Salvation Army to look at how well The Salvation Army is helping people who have trouble with reading and writing. The people doing this project are Romy Winter and Erica Bell. We can give you their contact details if you need to get in touch with them. Nell Kuilenberg at The Salvation Army is in charge of this report.

The University is interested in how well STeP123 has worked to help you with your reading, writing and number skills. They want to talk to some of the people who have been part of the STeP123 program as well as Salvation Army workers. Everyone will be asked questions about how well the project has worked: such as what the project has done well, what it has not done so well. The Salvation Army thinks it is important that people who take part in the programs have the chance to let them know what is working or could be made better.

Romy Winter would like to talk to some clients of The Salvation Army for around 10 to 15 minutes. You have the choice of doing this on the phone or face to face. Romy would like to tape the interviews, just to make sure she has all the information correct in her notes. These tapes will be wiped once the notes are checked. Your name or anything else that could identify you will not be used in her report.

It is important that you know agreeing to take part in this evaluation does not affect your being able to use Salvation Army services. This is because the evaluation is separate from the program, run by the University and not The Salvation Army.

Romy will not collect any details about the people participating in the evaluation. The only information being asked of you is your opinion about how well the program has worked for you. Even though no personal or identifying information will be collected, all the interview reports will be stored securely at the University and destroyed after 5 years, which are the normal university rules for this type of project.

You can also change your mind and leave the evaluation at any time, even after you have agreed to take part. You do not need to provide a reason or any explanation at all, just let Romy know you do not want to continue with it.

If you have any questions you can contact Erica at the University and also there is a committee that makes sure your rights are protected in research. I can give you details of this if you need them.

Are you interested in participating?

Christian name
Contact number or email

Name of person recording oral consent
Date
APPENDIX 9 : INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SALVATION ARMY CLIENTS

1. What projects have you been involved with in STeP123?

List of projects

2. What have you enjoyed the most?

3. What has made the biggest difference to your reading and writing skills?

4. What worked best for helping you with numbers?

5. What things could have been done differently?

6. Did The Salvation Army suggest you go to any other courses? Which ones? What did you like about these services? What didn’t you like? Do you think any of these courses have made a difference to you? Please give your reasons.

7. What didn’t the project offer you that it should have offered?

8. Have you recommended that anyone else come to The Salvation Army for help with their reading and number skills?

9. Do you think a project like this really does help people with their reading, writing and number skills? What else is needed?