Child Protection Community Volunteering (Children’s Champions) Project: an evaluation

Africans Unite Against Child Abuse (AFRUCA)

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Executive summary

Introduction

AFRUCA’s Child Protection Community Volunteering Project (also known as the Children’s Champions Project) began in April 2013, and has funding from the Department for Education until March 2015. It was created in an effort to address the over-representation of Black, African and mixed race children in the child protection system across London and much of the South of England.

The project provides training for Children’s Champion volunteers, volunteer-led workshops for Black and African community members, support for families involved in the child protection system, and training for practitioners (including children’s services staff and health professionals). It aims to:

- enable Black and African community members to adopt more effective and appropriate parenting practices
- build the capacity of Black and African communities to address child protection issues
- enable families involved in the child protection system to keep their children safe from harm
- improve the ability of practitioners to support families.

In 2014, AFRUCA commissioned Charities Evaluation Services (CES) to conduct an external evaluation of the project’s activities between April 2013 and December 2014. The evaluation methods included: surveys of Champion volunteers and workshop attendees; qualitative interviews with family support recipients and workshop host organisations; and an analysis of AFRUCA’s monitoring data. AFRUCA also conducted interviews with practitioners who had attended training.

Summary of findings

Champion volunteers and community workshops

Between April 2013 and December 2014, AFRUCA recruited and trained 96 Children’s Champions from a range of African nationalities. Following their training, Champions led 78 workshops which were attended by over 1,800 people.

We found evidence that both Champions and workshop attendees were very satisfied with the quality of service provided. The following outcomes occurred:

- increased awareness of child protection issues and UK legislation among Champions and workshop attendees
- adoption of more positive parenting practices by workshop attendees
- increased community capacity to discuss and address child protection issues.
Family support
AFRUCA supported 29 families involved in child protection, or with child welfare needs, over the evaluation period. Users we spoke to were very satisfied with the support provided, and we found evidence of:

- an improved ability to engage with services
- an improvement in parenting skills
- children staying with or returning home to their families.

Practitioner training
AFRUCA trained 500 practitioners (including teachers, social workers, outreach workers, foster carers, housing workers, healthcare practitioners and police/crime workers) over the evaluation period. We found evidence of an increase in practitioner understanding of child protection issues affecting the African community, as well as some early evidence of changes in practice when working with African families.

Success factors and challenges
Across AFRUCA’s work, success factors linked to high satisfaction levels and the achievement of outcomes included the depth of engagement of those involved, the creation of a ‘ripple effect’ whereby those who were involved brought in others, and the culturally-specific nature of AFRUCA’s project delivery.

There were some challenges experienced during the evaluation period. It was difficult to maintain a consistent attendance level at the community workshops, and AFRUCA was unable to meet some of the demand for its family support service due to the absence of an in-house social worker in the charity’s London office.

Summary of recommendations
We recommend that AFRUCA should:

- Update Champion roles, reviewing where they can be tailored to the interests and experiences of individuals.
- Continue to monitor the profile of Champions with a view to securing more volunteers from different African nationalities and more male Champions.
- Update guidance for Champions so they are better able to discuss child protection issues outside the project and manage disclosure of personal experiences at workshops.
- Monitor workshop attendance levels and continue efforts to secure 20 attendees at each community workshop.
- Review delivery of the family support service so that more complex child protection cases can be taken on.
- Explore opportunities to replicate the project in areas where there is a suitable local infrastructure of faith and community organisations, and demand from local authorities for an African specific family support service.
• **Review training marketing and administration** to identify opportunities to better promote the offer to practitioners.

• **Continue outcomes monitoring** and ensure that learning is used to inform service delivery and development.
1. Introduction

1.1. About AFRUCA and the Child Protection Community Volunteering Project

Africans Unite Against Child Abuse (AFRUCA) is a UK charity that promotes the rights and welfare of African children. By working with government agencies at local, regional and national levels, as well as organisations, families and young people directly, AFRUCA aims to inform and influence policy, and provide support to those affected by child abuse. AFRUCA’s vision is a world in which African children can live ‘free from cruelty and abuse at the hands of others’.

AFRUCA’s Child Protection Community Volunteering Project (also known as the Children’s Champions Project) began in April 2013, and has funding from the Department for Education until March 2015. It was created in an effort to address the over-representation of Black, African and mixed race children in the child protection system across London and much of the South of England.

Specifically, the project aims to:

- enable Black and African community members to adopt more effective and appropriate parenting practices
- build the capacity of Black and African communities to address child protection issues
- enable families involved in the child protection system to keep their children safe from harm
- improve the ability of practitioners (including children’s services staff and health professionals) to support families.

Its core work areas are:

- training for Children’s Champion volunteers, who are members of the African community
- volunteer-led workshops for Black and African community members
- specialist advice and support to families
- training for practitioners.

1.2. About the evaluation

In 2014, AFRUCA commissioned Charities Evaluation Services (CES) to conduct an external evaluation of the project’s activities between April 2013 and December 2014. CES began work with AFRUCA in June 2014.

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- assess the impact of the project
- assess how effectively key elements of the project create change for specific groups
• identify lessons learned from the project
• assess the potential for replication in other parts of the country and at the national level
• assess AFRUCA’s skills and ability to deliver the project, and to meet targets.

1.3. Evaluation methods

Data was collected for the evaluation from the following sources:

• a survey of Children’s Champion volunteers
• a survey of African community members who had attended workshops
• qualitative interviews
• analysis of AFRUCA’s monitoring data.

Due to the small scale of the evaluation, both CES and AFRUCA collected primary data.

Survey of Children’s Champion volunteers

CES developed an online survey for Children’s Champions, which was circulated in October 2014. The survey was sent to 57 Champions who had attended AFRUCA’s first three training weekends in 2013 and 2014. As the survey questions focused primarily on the involvement of Champions after their training, it was not sent to 39 additional Champions who attended training weekends in the autumn of 2014. Thirty Champions completed the survey (a 53 per cent response rate).

Survey of African community members

A second online survey was sent to African community members who had attended child protection workshops in 2013 and 2014. AFRUCA also collected some responses to this survey over the phone. The survey was sent to 1099 community members, and 100 completed it online or over the phone (a nine per cent response rate).

Qualitative interviews

Interviews with family support users

In October and November 2014, CES conducted six semi-structured interviews with members of families involved in the child protection system who had received bespoke advice and support. Of the six interviews, two were completed face-to-face at AFRUCA’s offices, and four were completed over the phone. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

The interviewees were selected by AFRUCA. Three of the interviewees had been supported because of needs relating to child protection issues\(^1\) and three had been supported because of needs relating to child protection issues\(^1\).

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\(^1\) Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on Local Authorities to investigate and make inquiries into the circumstances of children considered to be at risk of ‘significant harm’.
supported because of child welfare concerns\textsuperscript{2}. More details on these two types of support need are included in chapter 5 of this report.

One of the interviewees had started receiving support from AFRUCA before the evaluation period; the other five had received all their support during the evaluation period.

\textit{Interview with AFRUCA staff}

CES conducted a joint interview with AFRUCA’s chief executive and the project’s coordinator in December 2014.

\textit{Interviews with African community group representatives}

CES also conducted four short (15 minute) telephone interviews in November 2014 with representatives from African community groups that had hosted child protection workshops.

\textit{Interviews with practitioners}

AFRUCA conducted five telephone interviews with practitioners who had attended training courses. The interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes each, and were based on an interview schedule prepared by CES.

\textbf{Analysis of AFRUCA’s monitoring data}

In June 2014, CES supported AFRUCA to update its monitoring tools, and to introduce some new ones, so that more information on outcomes occurring as a result of AFRUCA’s work could be collected. CES has analysed monitoring data collected by AFRUCA before and after these updates took place to inform this report.

The following data sources have been reviewed:

- profile data collected via a registration form for Champions
- evaluation form data collected at training weekends for Champions
- a log of child protection workshops held
- evaluation form data collected at child protection workshops
- a log of outcomes that have occurred for family support users
- a log of practitioner training sessions held
- evaluation form data collected at practitioner training sessions.

\textsuperscript{2} Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need.
2. Findings: Children’s Champions recruitment and training

In this chapter, we describe the work undertaken to recruit and train Children’s Champion volunteers, and summarise feedback from Champions on the quality of service.

2.1. The role of Children’s Champions

Children’s Champion volunteers were required to:

- attend a two-day training course to equip them for their work
- deliver at least one child protection workshop hosted by a community group (alongside an AFRUCA member of staff)
- sign a code of conduct covering their involvement in the project.

They were also asked to:

- suggest community groups who could host workshops
- contribute to opportunities to feed back on the project.

2.2. Recruitment of Children’s Champions

At the time of writing, AFRUCA has recruited 96 Children’s Champions, against a target of 100 by March 2015. AFRUCA staff anticipate that they will meet this target by March 2015.

In our survey, we asked Champions about what had motivated them to volunteer for the project. Table 1 outlines their responses (Champions were able to select up to three options).

Table 1: Reasons for volunteering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for applying</th>
<th>Number of respondents (n=30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I thought the Children’s Champions Project was focused on issues that Black African communities need to address</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to help parents/carers in my community to improve their parenting</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought I would gain understanding and/or experience that would help me in my job or career</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a parent/carer and I wanted some parenting tips which I could put into practice</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I had some spare time and I wanted to find something to do 2
I wanted to meet new people 1
Someone I know suggested I should apply 1

AFRUCA staff report that the vetting of Champions undertaken as part of the recruitment process was a barrier – albeit a necessary one – to engaging some people:

*Some people drop out when you ask them for personal information, references. They don’t want to share their details. Sometimes they might have immigration problems or don’t have documents.*

### 2.3. Profile of Children’s Champions

The large majority of Champions (91, n=96) were African, and ten different African nationalities were represented. The largest group were from Nigeria (52 Champions). Other African nationalities were represented by a smaller number of people; people from Ghana (10), Uganda (7), Zimbabwe (6), Somalia (5), Congo (4), Cameroon (3), Sierra Leone (2), Togo (1) and Niger (1). The non-African Champions were from Caribbean backgrounds (5).

AFRUCA’s monitoring data shows that four Champions were aged 18-24, 20 were aged 25-34, 36 were aged 35-44, 32 were aged 45-54 and four were aged 55-64. The majority of Champions (74) were parents or carers. There were more female (82) than male (14) Champions.

AFRUCA staff report that Champions came from different backgrounds in terms of profession and experience, and that this brought benefits to the project:

*The way [different Champions] put the message across [in community workshops] is different. Approaching it from their viewpoint makes it real.*

*When you go to a workshop and the Champion says ‘I’m a doctor and an AFRUCA Champion’, it commands attention [of the people attending]. They understand it’s important.*

### 2.4. Training of Children’s Champions

AFRUCA ran five training weekends for its 96 Children’s Champions over the evaluation period. They were held in November 2013 (23 Champions trained), February 2014 (22 trained), June 2014 (12 trained), October 2014 (20 trained) and November 2014 (19 trained).

The two-day training covered a range of issues relating to African communities and child safety. It also gave tips on presenting, and Champions were able to practice giving presentations on child safety issues. Champions were also asked to sign a
code of conduct, which set out rules to govern activities and the manner in which project activities should be carried out.

2.5. Champions’ satisfaction with the recruitment process and training weekends

We found evidence that Champions were satisfied with the way in which they had been recruited to the project. Of our survey respondents (n=30), 27 reported that AFRUCA had kept them well informed about the status of their application before their place as a Champion was confirmed.

Evaluation forms from the five Champions’ training weekends also showed a high level of satisfaction. Attendees were asked to rate the quality and usefulness of information provided and the quality of delivery of training for each subject area covered; in each case over 90 per cent of respondents gave a rating of ‘good’, ‘very good’ or excellent’ (n=96), and in each case with the exception of one, 60 per cent or more gave a rating of ‘excellent’.

In responses left to open questions on the form, Champions commented on the high quality of the trainer’s delivery and on the usefulness of the interactive nature of the course, which provided opportunities for discussion and to learn from others attending.

Champions also reported being very satisfied with the training venue, hand-outs and information they had received before the training. The only area in which satisfaction levels were slightly lower was in relation to time-keeping during the training weekends.

Of the 30 Champions who responded to our survey, 29 agreed or strongly agreed that ‘the two-day training helped me understand what was expected of me’.

Comments included:

The course was thorough and detailed. It provided me with all that I needed to know in order to undertake the work of a children’s Champion.

The two-day workshop was practical and offered me a great opportunity of meeting other people from varied backgrounds, skills and commitment but with a great passion for a common cause. The quality of resources, presentation and hospitality was excellent.

2.6. Champions’ satisfaction with ongoing support from AFRUCA

Following the training weekends, AFRUCA staff were in contact with Champions as the workshops that they were going to be involved with were set-up. Staff also attended the workshops with Champions to assist with logistical arrangements, offer support with facilitation and – sometimes – to co-deliver workshop content.
Champions responding to our survey reported a high level of satisfaction with this support:

- 26 (n=28) said AFRUCA had provided them with all the information they needed before they ran the workshop(s)
- 28 said the support they had from AFRUCA staff on the day of their workshop(s) was useful
- 28 said AFRUCA staff have a good understanding of the issues covered in the workshops

> AFRUCA staff are very well versed in the issues covered in the workshops, so they act as a backup, making it easy for new Champions to facilitate a workshop.

[An AFRUCA] staff member contacted me prior to my workshop to discuss what was expected of me, answer any questions I had and give me advice. A copy of the presentation slides with relevant information was mailed to me in advance of my workshop and an hour prior to the workshop was allocated for myself and the staff member to go over the day, discuss any changes and finalise who would be delivering what.

However, one Champion commented:

> My first workshop I was a bit thrown off as we were given different hand-outs to do the workshops from the ones we received at the two day training. I had made my own notes and prepared – so found it a bit off-putting.

### 2.7. Champions’ engagement with the project

We found clear evidence that many Champions had engaged with AFRUCA beyond the requirements of the role (see section 2.1). However, a minority of Champions had not been able to meet the requirements.

According to AFRUCA’s monitoring data, of the 57 Champions trained at the first three training weekends (November 2013, February 2014 and June 2014), 47 had gone on to meet the requirement of running at least one workshop by December 2014 and one is scheduled to do so in early 2015. Of the 47 who had run workshops, 19 had run one workshop, 23 had run two or three workshops, and 5 had run four or more workshops.

Of the 39 Champions who were trained at the training weekends in October and November 2014 (and who had therefore had less time to go on to run a workshop within the period covered by this evaluation), seven had run a workshop by December 2014. At the time of writing, a further nine are scheduled to run workshops between January and March 2015.

Across the total of 96 Champions, 64 have so far either run at least one workshop, or are scheduled to run at least one by March 2015. This is below AFRUCA’s target of 90 per cent of trained Champions having delivered one or more workshops.
However, it should be noted that four months of the funding period remain, and it is likely that some of those Champions who have not yet run workshops will do so by March 2015.

An optional element of the Champion role was to suggest community groups that AFRUCA could run workshops with, and to support other Champions. Twenty-one of 30 survey respondents had made recommendations of community groups. Twenty of 30 reported that they had given advice or support to other Champions – at events organised by AFRUCA, such as the Children’s Champions’ reunion or at training weekends (14) or outside AFRUCA organised opportunities (15).
3. **Findings: community workshops**

In this chapter, we outline the work undertaken to deliver community workshops and summarise feedback from workshop attendees on the quality of service.

3.1. **Child protection workshops**

By the end of December 2014, there had been 78 workshops, which were attended by 1,894 attendees. AFRUCA has a target of 2,000 attendees by March 2015 and appears set to exceed this.

AFRUCA had a target of an average of 20 attendees at each workshop. The mean average of attendees was 24.3 – slightly higher than the target. However, it is worth noting that the average was slightly skewed by a small number of workshops which had a large number of attendees (see table 2 below). Around half of the workshops had fewer than 20 attendees.

**Table 2: number of workshop attendees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of attendees</th>
<th>Number of workshops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-39</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the 78 workshops, AFRUCA ran a Champion’s workshop at its annual conference in October 2014. This was attended by 230 community members.

3.2. **Profile of workshop attendees**

Attendee demographic data was collected at 21 workshops held between July and December 2014. There were 549 attendees at these events; 350 of them provided demographic data. The large majority were from Black backgrounds; 78 per cent were Black African, and a further 18 per cent described themselves as being from a Black British or other Black background.

Seventy-four per cent of attendees were female. A couple of Champions who responded to our survey felt that the low male attendance level at workshops was something that AFRUCA should try to address.

3.3. **Community members’ satisfaction with the workshops**

We found evidence that community members attending workshops were satisfied. On its original forms, AFRUCA asked attendees to rate the quality and usefulness of
different aspects of the workshops. Around half rated them as ‘excellent’. Across each aspect, between 97 and 98 per cent of attendees gave a rating of ‘excellent’, ‘very good’ or ‘good’. Similarly, between 98 and 99 per cent of attendees rated the quality of delivery on each subject area as ‘excellent’, ‘very good’ or ‘good’.

After the new forms were introduced, attendees were asked specifically about the content of the workshops, the hand-outs, and the trainer’s delivery and response to questions from delegates. In each instance, around half of attendees rated these aspects of the workshop as ‘excellent’, and over 97 per cent said they were ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. As with the Champions’ training weekends, one area with which attendees were slightly less satisfied was time-keeping.

In their survey responses, Champions commented on a high level of audience engagement, and AFRUCA staff report that the approach taken in the workshops was key to achieving this:

*The audience of parents and carers were engaged and through their participation I understood that the message was reaching them in a positive and thought provoking way.* (Champion)

*We approach it in such a way that it’s not castigating. It’s an action oriented approach to solving a community problem.* (AFRUCA staff member)

However, one Champion commented that messages were not always ones that the audience wanted to hear:

*Everything went well except the aspect of telling African parents not to beat their children.*

### 3.4. Champions’ experience of running the workshops

Champions gave positive feedback in our survey on the content of the workshop and the opportunity to engage with the audience:

*The discussions involving the audiences were enriching and informative. A lot of issues were brought to the surface and the workshops provided a good forum for further exploring ‘burning issues’ among the participants.*

When asked about whether anything had not gone well, there were a couple of comments from Champions about the challenge of managing situations in which workshop attendees revealed personal experiences:

*[One thing that didn’t go so well was] when some participants became personal on issues discussed and ended up being emotional.*

One Champion also commented that it would have been useful if AFRUCA could have given them guidance on the dress code in the venue for their workshop, as they had arrived dressed inappropriately. A few others said that they had faced challenges in terms of the timings of the workshop.
3.5. Host group satisfaction

The organisations hosting the workshops that we interviewed (n=4) were also very satisfied with the set-up and delivery of the workshops:

*Community [groups] are not easy to get hold of. [AFRUCA staff member] was extremely patient. I was quite busy but she persisted – that doesn’t happen with other organisations – you are given one chance only and if you miss it that’s it.*

*The way [AFRUCA] direct and focus [at workshops] is good, and bring their experience in, and include diversity and culture.*

The repeat bookings that AFRUCA received to run workshops also suggest high satisfaction levels. Seven host groups booked more than one workshop with AFRUCA during the evaluation period.
4. Findings: outcomes for Children’s Champions and African community members

In this chapter, we discuss the outcomes occurring from the Children’s Champion-led elements of AFRUCA’s work (as outlined in chapters 2 and 3). We focus on:

- increased awareness of child protection issues and UK legislation among Champions and workshop attendees
- adoption of more positive parenting practices by workshop attendees
- increased community capacity to discuss and address child protection issues.

4.1. Increased awareness of child protection issues and UK legislation

We found clear evidence that Champions and workshop attendees knew more about child protection issues and relevant UK legislation as a result of engaging with the Child Protection Community Volunteering Project.

All the Champions who responded to our survey (n=30) reported that they knew more about child protection issues in the African community because of their involvement with the project. Twenty-eight also reported that they had a better understanding of UK legislation which focuses on safeguarding and protecting children from abuse or harm.

As with Champions, community members who had attended workshops reported knowing more about child protection issues and UK legislation as a result. Data on this area was collected following CES’ revision of AFRUCA’s monitoring forms in summer 2014, and showed that:

- Ninety-five per cent of attendees who responded at 21 workshops held between July and December 2014 (n=353) either strongly agreed (50 per cent) or agreed (45 per cent) with the statement ‘I know more about child protection issues that can emerge in the African community’.
- Ninety-six per cent of those who responded (n=331) strongly agreed (44 per cent) or agreed (52 per cent) that ‘I have a better understanding of UK child protection legislation’.

While comparable data is not available for the whole evaluation period, at the 21 workshops held between July and December 2014 AFRUCA exceeded its target of 80 per cent of attendees reporting an increase in knowledge of child protection.

AFRUCA staff report that, for some attendees, the information given out at the events was almost entirely new:

*Sometimes people do things because they don’t know. All they need to know is ‘that’s the law, so thank you – I never knew that’.*
4.2. Adoption of more positive parenting practices

We found evidence that those who had attended the workshops had improved their knowledge of appropriate parenting practices, and that many had gone on to change their approach to parenting as a result. (While this was not a focus of our data collection from Champions, a few also mentioned an improvement in their parenting skills.)

Workshop evaluation forms provide evidence of changes in knowledge:

- At the 21 workshops held between July and December 2014, 96 per cent of those who responded (n=326) either strongly agreed (49 per cent) or agreed (48 per cent) with the statement ‘I know more about positive parenting practices’.
- AFRUCA’s original evaluation form (used at 55 events between November 2013 and June 2014) asked if attendees felt they had gained new knowledge that would enable them to develop improved relationships with their children. Among those who responded (n=538), 98 per cent answered ‘yes’, but it should be noted that 288 people who returned forms did not answer this question.³

AFRUCA had set a very high target of 100 per cent of workshop attendees across the funding period reporting improved knowledge on how to keep children safe. While this has not been met, the above points suggest that a majority of workshop attendees did increase their knowledge in this area.

As well as changes in knowledge around parenting approaches, there is also some evidence that those attending the events went on to change their behaviour. Our survey of 2014 workshop attendees asked if they had made any changes to the way in which they communicate with their children (or other children they care for). Forty-six (n=100) said they communicated with their children a lot more effectively, and 14 a little more effectively. Of the remainder, 32 said that they had already been communicating with their children effectively before attending the workshop, and three said they were still having problems with communication. (Five did not respond.)

Those who had made changes (n=60) were asked to specify the type of change(s) they had made:

³ It is difficult to know how to interpret these non-responses, as the question was placed towards the bottom of the form and AFRUCA reports that it was often difficult to encourage attendees to fill out the forms at busy community events. Attendees for whom English is not their first language may have had difficulty understanding the question and we think it is also likely that some felt it was not relevant for them to answer if they felt they had a good relationship with their children.
- 43 had spent more time talking to their children
- 39 listened to their children more
- 25 raised their voices less.

Seventy-one respondents (n=100) also reported making one or more of the following changes to their relationship with their children or to the children they care for:

- 47 had praised them more when they did positive things
- 44 had spent more time playing or taking part in fun activities with them
- 36 had talked more to them about safe internet use and/or increased how much they supervise them when they use the internet
- 35 had changed their own approach to discipline
- 18 had cut down on how much they tell them about how they compare to their siblings or other children
- 18 had reduced their contact with adult situations which may be inappropriate for children, such as hearing adults arguing.

The following comments were made:

I ask more questions about my son’s day at school. I call the school if he or myself are concerned about any issues taking place in the school environment.

I learnt that praising my children more is all part of positive parenting…My son goes for extra lessons and when he returned today he could not wait to show me how well he performed and the praises he received from his teacher. I also in turn made sure that I praised him as I have learnt through AFRUCA’s Children’s Champions event.

More than half of survey respondents (n=100) said that, as a result of attending a Children’s Champions event, their relationship with their children, or children they care for, has improved a lot (47), or a little (11). Of the remainder, 35 said they already had a good relationship with them before the event, six did not respond and one said their relationship had not improved.

The workshop host organisations we interviewed also said that attending parents had made changes:

[Workshop attendees] learnt a lot about the proper ways to treat children – some parents now create time for their children when they are home from school.

I’ve seen changes in parents – they say they are putting what they have learnt into practice and experience positive changes in child’s development, discipline, how they interact with their child. Some were worried about their children being taken away and are now more confident.
4.3. Increased community capacity to discuss and address child protection issues

Central to AFRUCA’s plans for the Child Protection Community Volunteering Project were the ownership of its delivery by African communities, and an effort to ensure that communities would engage with and discuss child protection issues on an ongoing basis, outside the scope of the project. We found evidence that AFRUCA’s work was increasing community capacity in these areas.

Ownership of project delivery by African communities

As we have seen, AFRUCA successfully engaged with its Children’s Champion volunteers, the majority of whom have gone on to fulfil the commitment they had made in terms of running one or more community workshops.

AFRUCA staff report that many Champions felt motivated to run more than the one workshop required as they wanted to help others, and felt a responsibility to their community – as noted in chapter 2, the motivation to volunteer most commonly cited by Champions in our survey was a sense that the project was focused on issues that Black/African communities need to address.

Some individuals felt a particular individual responsibility to share their experiences:

*Because my family have had our children taken into care, I’m better able, with the experience I have, to talk with parents and give practical examples too. (Champion)*

On the whole, Champions told us that AFRUCA had effectively equipped them to deliver the project:

- Twenty-eight Champions who responded to our survey (n=30) reported feeling more confident about talking to people in the African community about child protection issues, and 25 reported an improvement in their public speaking skills. Only one reported that a lack of confidence in running workshops had made it difficult for them to do so.
- Following their training weekends, Champions were asked – on their feedback forms – if they had gained new skills that would enable them to train others. Of 141 feedback forms returned (more than the total number of Champions as AFRUCA’s original forms were completed on both training days), 113 said ‘yes’, two said ‘no’ and the remainder did not respond. It is difficult to know how to interpret the low response rate to this question. We did not find many negative comments in our other evaluation activities to suggest that Champions felt ill-equipped to train others after the training.

Our evaluation also suggests that there is an ongoing interest within African communities in delivering the project. Some of those who attend workshops go on to apply to become Champions themselves.
Discussion of child protection issues outside the project

We found evidence that Champions were going on to discuss child protection issues outside the workshops that AFRUCA set up for them. Twenty-seven Champions in our survey (n=30) had spoken to others who had not attended their workshop(s), with 23 telling others about UK laws, 21 passing on parenting tips and 21 signposting people to AFRUCA for further information. One mentioned that their involvement with the project had strengthened their contribution to a Local Safeguarding Children’s Board as a lay member, and a second commented:

*I am a Child Safety Officer at my church and used some of the material to educate my church members and still do this on a regular basis.*

Those who had attended workshops had also spoken to others about the points covered. Seventy-six respondents to our workshop attendee survey (n=100) said they had shared information with people who did not attend.

AFRUCA’s Champions have also promoted the project through media channels targeted at Black African communities:

- Champions have taken part in radio talk shows on Africa UK Radio (reaching African communities in Bedfordshire) and Jesus House Radio.
- Two Champions incorporated child protection information into a programme they host on BEN Television, which is aimed at African communities across the UK.
5. Findings: family support work

In this chapter, we explore AFRUCA’s delivery of support to families involved in the child protection system, and feedback from families on the quality of that support.

5.1. Who AFRUCA supported

AFRUCA gave advice and support to 29 families over the evaluation period. This is substantially below the target of 50 families over the funding period, although it is likely that the figure will rise before March 2015. AFRUCA reports that it was unable to take on six referred cases because it did not have an in-house social worker in its London office, and the complexity of the cases was such that the team could not take them on.

Support was mainly provided to parents (either individually or to two parents), but was sometimes provided to other family members, such as grandparents. Nineteen of those supported referred themselves to AFRUCA, while nine were referred by local authorities. One was a contact that AFRUCA had supported in the past, but who was followed up with to check in on their progress.

5.2. Presenting need and type of support given

**Child protection cases**

Twenty families that AFRUCA supported during the evaluation period were experiencing child protection issues. Twelve families had had children taken into care before AFRUCA was involved (most frequently as a result of the use of physical chastisement). AFRUCA provided most of these families with one-to-one parenting support in order that they could improve their parenting skills with a view to their children returning home. In addition, there were three cases in which families required support during custody or child protection court cases.

Four families received advice on how to engage with social services in relation to child protection concerns that had been raised, while two had other types of request.

**Child welfare cases**

Alongside families experiencing child protection issues, AFRUCA supported nine families with child welfare concerns⁴, which were primarily linked to problems with housing. Most of these families were also experiencing difficulties with their immigration status. AFRUCA gave advice and support to help these families engage with services and, in some cases, advocated on their behalf.

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⁴ Two of these families were also having support with child protection issues.
5.3. Satisfaction with support

The six family support recipients we interviewed reported being very satisfied with the support they had received from AFRUCA. AFRUCA’s staff were seen as approachable, friendly and welcoming, and interviewees felt they had been given good quality advice.

*I think I have always felt free with them, from the very first time I walked into that office.*

Several interviewees mentioned specifically that they had valued the emotional support that AFRUCA had provided:

*I was nearly going to lose my children. I was exhausted. AFRUCA gave me support.*

*Help is not just money or food, it’s emotional – you need someone to give you advice, that’s more important…[AFRUCA staff member] was so helpful. When I was afraid I called her.*
6. Findings: outcomes for family support users

This chapter focuses on outcomes occurring for those accessing AFRUCA’s family support, in terms of their:

- ability to engage with services
- parenting skills
- ability to have their children living with them.

6.1. Better able to engage with services

AFRUCA’s monitoring data indicates that some of the clients supported in child welfare cases were better able to engage with services. In two cases, housing issues were resolved, and in two more cases AFRUCA reports that progress is being made.

When we explored this in more depth in our interviews we found that AFRUCA had built people’s confidence to engage with services and successfully advocated for them.

Building confidence of users

Some of our interviewees told us that AFRUCA had helped them understand the type of information it would be useful to communicate to professionals, as well as the manner in which it would be appropriate to do so.

AFRUCA gave me advice about what I can do with children’s services. They made me confident…Before I thought children’s services would take my children away and send me back to [my home country]. But from AFRUCA I learnt they couldn’t. So I am not scared. It’s my children’s right to have accommodation.

AFRUCA gave me ways to speak to [social services]…It built my confidence. Before, if someone called from social services or the police I panicked. Now I feel confident and motivated [to speak to them].

AFRUCA told me to be calm, to speak to children’s services in a polite manner. That even if the issue, understandably the issues I was going through were like something that would make me angry, I should just try to keep calm when dealing with them. I am sure that if I wasn’t advised by [AFRUCA] prior to going in to see [children’s services] I would have been shouting at the top of my voice or something but I didn’t.

Advocating for users

AFRUCA also advocated for some users, helping them to get the support they needed. Some of our interviewees felt that this made services take them more seriously, or respond more appropriately to their situation:

AFRUCA wrote to children’s services explaining the situation [housing problems]. I wrote some letters of complaint as well but they were not really
taking any notice. But after AFRUCA’s letter came, I think in a space of maybe three weeks or so we got moved to a one bed flat. All the time I spent trying to do things on my own got me nowhere. But as soon as AFRUCA got involved I got like an instant result.

AFRUCA got the letter [of eviction – previously refused] from my landlord. I gave the letter to my solicitor and for children’s services it was proof my children were at risk.

6.2. Improved parenting skills

AFRUCA’s monitoring data records that 12 families worked with needed to make some or a lot of changes to their parenting approach. Seven of these families made changes to their parenting, including in disciplining and communicating with their children, after guidance from AFRUCA.

In the remaining five cases, the data available indicates that the reasons for change not being made were outside AFRUCA’s control. In two cases, the children remain in care, so their parents had not had the opportunity to make changes to their parenting. Two other cases were of families where support was not progressed beyond initial contact (because of family preference in one case, and because of the unavailability of local authority support staff in another). The final case was one in which the family member had self-referred to AFRUCA, but because of an ongoing court case AFRUCA was unable to support them via parenting sessions without a local authority referral.

Our interviewees also told us about changes they had made to their parenting approach since receiving support from AFRUCA – although it was not always clear if these changes had come about solely because of AFRUCA’s bespoke family support work, as several attendees had also attended a workshop (see chapter 3). The following comment was made by an interviewee who had implemented changes as a result of family support sessions:

[AFRUCA] went through what we can do when a child is misbehaving…we made a lot of changes [to how we discipline]. That we should listen to them, have ground rules – ‘this is what you need to do, this is not acceptable’… Children like provoking you. You say stop and they keep doing it. AFRUCA said if they’re hyper or misbehaving we can say we’re not going to watch TV tonight, you’re not going to have your i-pad or computer game today. Send them to the naughty corner. It’s really working for us.

Data is not available to assess whether or not AFRUCA reached its target of 80 per cent of families reporting improved ability to provide a safer home environment for their children.
6.3. **Children stay with their families**

According to AFRUCA’s monitoring data, they worked with three families where there was a substantial risk that a child might be taken into care, and one where there was a less substantial risk, because of child protection issues at the point at which they started working with them.

In two of the three substantial risk cases, and in the less substantial risk case, the children remain with their families. In the case of one substantial risk family, AFRUCA’s data records that some of the children were taken off a child protection plan after the parent made changes to the way in which they communicated with, and disciplined the children, although one child in the family remains on a plan.

In the case of a second substantial risk family, social services investigations are ongoing, but AFRUCA’s data records that parental engagement with social services has improved. The less substantial risk family have also had a child protection case stepped down.

In the third substantial risk case, AFRUCA is unaware as to whether the children have remained with their family; the parent chose not to continue to engage with AFRUCA after initial support as a result of stress caused by other things happening in their life at the time.

6.4. **Children return home to families**

In five cases in which children were in care (n=12), AFRUCA’s monitoring data records that they were returned to their families. In one of these cases, this happened following the intervention of a solicitor to which AFRUCA had referred the family. In the remaining four cases, the return followed the family’s receipt of one-to-one parenting support sessions from AFRUCA.

In the seven cases where children had not been returned to their families, legal cases are ongoing for four families, one family has had criminal charges brought against a family member and AFRUCA reports that there was limited scope for them to intervene, one family has been newly referred to AFRUCA, and, in the final case, the referring local authority staff were unavailable for contact to progress AFRUCA’s support.
7. Findings: practitioner training

In this chapter we set out activity undertaken for practitioners, and practitioner feedback on its quality.

7.1. Activity undertaken

AFRUCA held 27 events for practitioners between April 2013 and December 2014. Eight events were open training courses onto which any practitioners could book. Nineteen events (17 standard AFRUCA courses, two bespoke courses) were commissioned. Of the ten commissioning organisations, four were local authorities (three in London, one in Southern England), three were schools, and three were charities.

The course run most frequently was ‘Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a Child Safeguarding Issue’ (run 13 times), followed by ‘Child Abuse linked to Belief in Witchcraft and Juju’ (eight times), and ‘Working with Black African Children and Families’ (three times).

AFRUCA arranged Continuing Professional Development (CPD) accreditation for three courses during the evaluation period, and staff report that this has aided take-up. Before the courses were accredited, enquiries were not translating into bookings when people discovered they could not acquire CPD points.

7.2. Who attended the training

Overall, there were 105 attendees at open training courses and 395 at commissioned courses – significantly exceeding AFRUCA’s target of 200 training attendees over the funding period.

AFRUCA collected job titles of people registering to attend its open courses, and has also collected some details of attendees at its commissioned courses. It is difficult for us to give an accurate breakdown of the professional backgrounds of those attending, as this is often not evident from their job titles. However, our analysis suggests that some of the larger groups are teachers and others working in education/early years work, social workers and children’s services staff, frontline community/outreach workers, foster carers and housing workers (with the latter two mainly attending courses commissioned specifically for them). Healthcare practitioners and police/crime workers also attended in smaller numbers.

7.3. Satisfaction with the training

AFRUCA was able to use its own evaluation forms at 13 training courses (eight open courses, five commissioned courses). The data shows that satisfaction levels are high:

- Of 77 forms collected at AFRUCA’s final four events (using the format revised by CES), 68 attendees rated the content of the event as ‘excellent’ or ‘very
good’. Sixty-two gave the same ratings to the trainer’s delivery of the event and 66 to the trainer’s response to questions from delegates.

- Data from AFRUCA’s original forms shows that 85 to 95 per cent of attendees completing evaluation forms rated the quality of information and delivery of different aspects of the events as ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’.

Practitioners interviewed by AFRUCA (n=6) had also been satisfied with the content of the events, although a couple mentioned that they would have preferred a longer event. A couple commented that it had been useful to meet other practitioners, and to understand their perceptions of the topics being covered.

7.4. Other support for practitioners

AFRUCA has also provided ad-hoc advice to practitioners making telephone enquiries. While no data has been recorded systematically, staff report supporting with a range of queries – from advising on where families can be signposted to, to advising on signs of witchcraft.
8. **Findings: outcomes for practitioners**

8.1. **Improved understanding of child protection issues relevant to the African community**

Our analysis of qualitative comments on AFRUCA’s training evaluation forms shows that participants felt they had learned about a range of areas specific to the course they had attended. There is limited quantitative data available, and it is difficult for us to report robustly on whether AFRUCA’s quantitative outcome targets were met. However, the information provided indicates that practitioners felt that learning outcomes had been met successfully.

Practitioners interviewed by AFRUCA (n=6) also reported improvements in understanding in a range of areas specific to the courses they had attended. Some already had a good understanding of the issues before the training; these practitioners reported that they had learnt some new things and that it had refreshed their knowledge of the topic.

8.2. **Undertake improved work with African families**

We found some early evidence that practitioners had changed or were planning to change some of their working practices having attended AFRUCA’s training. Practitioners interviewed by AFRUCA (n=6) commented:

*It has made me a lot more sensitive and careful when dealing with African children, African youth and it has also made me more careful when dealing with children who have learning disabilities as some of these issues can be looked at by some as spiritual issues.*

*I have shared the idea of finding out a bit about a family’s culture before visiting them or making assessments with one or two colleagues and they thought it was a good practical idea. I haven’t really practiced it yet because I haven’t been involved with any new families since the training, but when I do I will make sure I implement what I have learned.*

*[The training] made me more aware that [in my work] I may encounter some legal issues around FGM and we are going to have a chat to see how best to deal with it, when these issues arise.*

Several of the practitioners interviewed by AFRUCA mentioned that they had shared information from the training with colleagues.
9. Learning

9.1. Success factors

We have identified the following factors as being central to the success of the Child Protection Community Volunteering Project:

Engagement of those involved

Our evaluation has found that a key strength of the project is the depth of engagement among many of those involved (across the target groups). For example:

- Of Champions trained at the first three training weekends, more than half had gone on to run two or more community workshops (more than the requirement of one workshop).
- Our surveys found clear evidence that Champions and workshop attendees were sharing the knowledge that they had gained outside the project’s activities.

We also found some evidence that once people have engaged with one part of the project, they sometimes go on to become involved in another. AFRUCA staff report that, after almost all community workshops, attendees register their interest in becoming a Champion, and a number of workshop attendees have gone on to become Champions. Workshop attendees and Champions have accessed the family support service, and one of our family support interviewees mentioned that they had suggested AFRUCA run a workshop at their place of worship.

There are likely to be opportunities to further capitalise on the engagement of those who have been involved in the project so far. Several of those we engaged with expressed an interest in doing more work with AFRUCA:

*I would like to speak about my experience to other people at workshops.*
(Family support recipient – interviewee)

*I see a journey coming up where we are involved in AFRUCA’s work – I tell other stakeholders who could benefit, such as an FGM clinic we’re involved with. I will see if I can connect clinicians with the work of AFRUCA so their workers get training.* (Community workshop host group – interviewee)

Creating a ‘ripple effect’

AFRUCA staff report that building relationships with a small number of individuals has been an effective way of reaching out to communities that might otherwise not have engaged with the project and the issues being addressed. Following recruitment of Champions from particular African backgrounds, community groups with similar memberships have been easier to encourage to host workshops:
I think we’re dispelling the myth of closed or ‘hard-to-reach’ groups. Maybe they’re initially suspicious, but as soon as you reach out they’re keen.
(AFRUCA staff member)

Cultural specificity of project delivery
Across our evaluation sources we found evidence that those with whom AFRUCA was engaging felt the specific focus on the African context was an important one, with links to satisfaction levels and outcomes:

Although I work in a childcare/educational environment, working with AFRUCA has enabled me to [get] knowledge of issues specific to the African community which I have not gained through mainstream safeguarding children training. (Champion – survey respondent)

AFRUCA expanded my knowledge about different types of abuse. AFRUCA tailor made it for African children – they understand the issues. (Community workshop host group – interviewee)

In the past I tried [to get support from other organisations] but their understanding of my background sometimes I used to find it very difficult. They’re not understanding my background. You can talk [about] your problem and someone doesn’t go round it properly. It’s like coming home [seeing AFRUCA]. (Family support recipient – interviewee)

9.2. Challenges
The project has experienced the following challenges over the evaluation period:

Maintaining a consistent attendance level at workshops
AFRUCA aims to secure 20 attendees at workshops. On average, this was achieved during the evaluation period, but more than half of workshops run had fewer than 20 attendees and some ran with fewer than ten attendees.

AFRUCA staff report particular challenges in securing attendance at workshops hosted by schools. While they feel that schools are an important type of organisation through which to host workshops, staff report that Black African parents sometimes felt stigmatised if they attend. Staff also report that schools have questioned the appropriateness of running workshops for people of particular ethnic backgrounds in a multi-cultural school environment.

Lack of capacity and skills to meet demand for family support
While our evaluation found high levels of satisfaction among family support recipients, and that a range of outcomes had been achieved, AFRUCA was not able to respond to some referrals to the service.

Staff report that they were able to deal effectively with less complex child protection cases, but that they did not have the capacity or skill-set in AFRUCA’s London office
to work with more complex cases – for example, cases that involved domestic violence, or parents leaving prison or experiencing psychological interventions.

While the London office was able to utilise some of the capacity of the in-house social worker in AFRUCA’s Manchester office, this was not sufficient to enable it to take up six complex referrals made during the evaluation period.

**Building the practitioner training programme**

As noted in chapter 7, the practitioner training programme exceeded its delivery target. However, AFRUCA staff report that securing attendance at its training courses is increasingly challenging – particularly for its FGM course, where there is a lot of competition from other providers.
10. Recommendations

We recommend that AFRUCA should:

- update Champion roles
- continue to monitor the profile of Champions
- update guidance for Champions
- monitor workshop attendance levels
- review delivery of the family support service
- explore opportunities to replicate the project
- review training marketing and administration
- continue outcomes monitoring

10.1. Update Champion roles

To-date, AFRUCA has adopted a standard approach to working with its Champions. While this was effective during the evaluation period, when the project was a new one, we recommend that there is now scope to update the roles that Champions take on to fit their interests and experiences as individuals.

For example, AFRUCA has started to enable more experienced Champions to take on a mentoring role, whereby they assist at Champion training weekends and co-deliver workshops with newer Champions. We recommend that this type of mentoring be expanded.

We also suggest that there is scope to review how best to involve Champions who have a working professional knowledge of child safeguarding. AFRUCA has plans to secure CPD accreditation for its Champions training course in the future, and those Champions with existing expertise may have useful insights in terms of the development of course content. It should be noted, however, that this evaluation has found there are benefits in working with Champions from a range of backgrounds, so AFRUCA should make sure that a professional development focus does not detract from this element of the project.

10.2. Continue to monitor the profile of Champions

AFRUCA has been able to recruit Champions from a range of African nationalities during the evaluation period. Currently, people from a Nigerian background form the largest group – which may be expected given AFRUCA’s existing connections with the Nigerian community, and the size of the Nigerian community in London. We recommend that AFRUCA should continue to explore ways in which links can be made to recruit Champions from other African backgrounds; evidence presented for this evaluation suggests that this is likely to extend the reach of the project into different African communities.

There may also be some benefit in AFRUCA seeking to recruit more male Champions and reviewing whether this has an effect on the relatively low levels of male attendance at workshops.
10.3. Update guidance for Champions

This evaluation found high levels of satisfaction among Champions so we recommend that the training and support programme be continued in its current form (although with potential updates to Champions’ roles, as outlined in 10.1).

However, we think there are two opportunities for AFRUCA to build on some of the guidance and material it provides to Champions:

- As this evaluation has found evidence that many Champions are sharing what they have learned outside the workshops organised by AFRUCA, we recommend that AFRUCA provide guidance and case studies to support this.
- Based on the experience of workshops run so far, AFRUCA could provide further guidance for Champions on how to respond to any disclosure of personal experiences from attendees.

10.4. Monitor workshop attendance levels

We recommend that AFRUCA continue to monitor workshop attendance levels closely, and implement further measures to try to improve attendance. For example:

- consider developing template marketing materials to help host organisations promote the workshops
- review the process of running workshops at schools, where it can be difficult to secure attendees – AFRUCA staff report that setting up workshops run by Champions who have children at the school concerned can alleviate difficulties, so we recommend that AFRUCA continues to trial this approach.

10.5. Review delivery of the family support service

Staff report that they would like to secure funding for an in-house social worker in the London office so that AFRUCA can take on more complex work as part of its family support service. Having reviewed the evidence available for this evaluation, we agree that this approach would be likely to enable AFRUCA to meet need.

Notwithstanding this, we recommend that AFRUCA should continue to deliver support in less complex child protection cases and in child welfare cases, where this evaluation has found evidence that outcomes have been achieved.

10.6. Explore opportunities to replicate the project

AFRUCA staff report that various community organisations and local authorities have expressed an interest in the project being delivered in their areas. We recommend that AFRUCA should further scope out these opportunities to make sure:

- that there is a suitable local infrastructure of faith and community groups through which the project could be promoted
- that local authorities identify a need for an African community-specific support provider.
10.7. Review training marketing and administration
AFRUCA has highlighted that many other providers are offering training in some of its course areas – particularly FGM courses. We recommend that AFRUCA undertakes a mapping exercise to look at what other providers are offering, and follows this with a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis to identify key messages for marketing the training.

In addition, there were a number of requests from people involved in our evaluation that hand-outs of presentation slides be provided at AFRUCA events.

10.8. Continue outcomes monitoring
As a result of CES’ work, AFRUCA now has a series of data collection tools which enable it to more effectively capture outcomes data. We recommend that AFRUCA continues to work with the outcomes-focused tools and develops a self-evaluation work plan whereby monitoring data is reviewed regularly to identify any learning and opportunities for service development/improvement.