

People Know How

Spanish speaking community event

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People Know How

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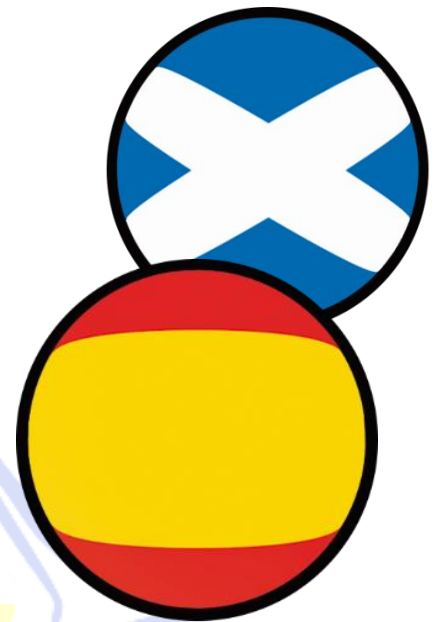
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INTRODUCTION

People Know How (PKH) was established as a social innovation organisation to help and support people to discover their strengths and assets. We are a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) based in Edinburgh and our initial focus is with children and young people. We plan to work with other groups of people on a range of issues over the coming years. We fundamentally believe people know how to achieve their full potential and seek to empower them towards their goals.

Now, you may wonder why a social innovation charity gets involved in consulting the Spanish speaking community in Edinburgh and facilitating dialogue between individuals, organisations and stakeholders. Back in 2014, three Spanish social researchers met in Edinburgh and started to think about how the Spanish Community could contribute to Edinburgh and what they could learn in return. They produced a research report that was formally launched in February of 2015 at City Chambers in Edinburgh. The report “The new Spanish community in Edinburgh: Situation and needs” identified a range of issues and solutions to take into consideration for the Spanish community’s integration in Scotland, but particularly in the City of Edinburgh. After the presentation of the *El Puente* team’s report, many organisations agreed on holding another event Spanish speaking people, Scottish people, organisations and stakeholders to consider the report and how to support everyone in the process of integration. People Know How agreed to host the event and started to contemplate the next steps towards the future gathering.

Furthermore, as People Know How we were naturally seeking new innovative solutions to modern social issues.

MAIN OBJECTIVES OF HOSTING AN EVENT

After the release of the *El Puente* team's report many issues came up as discussion points within the Spanish speaking community. People Know How was delighted and privileged to be able to take the initiative and started contacting a range of individuals, organisations and groups as we sought out those most interested in being part of an event.

The main objectives of hosting an event were to:

- ▣ identify solutions to assist and support Spanish speaking people's integration; and
- ▣ gather people together in order to identify and share existing resources with those in need of them.

THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE EVENT

Interested possible attendees

Since the *El Puente*'s research was presented previous months before, in February; we already had a list of people who said that would be interested in participating or attending an event for the Spanish speaking community. In order to get more information, we contacted Adult Learning Project (ALP) who hosted the previous event with the *El Puente* team. They connected us with further organisations and individuals, who we could involve in the design and planning of the event; to ensure it met people's expectations. In addition, we contacted further stakeholders that we thought would be interested in participating.

Designing a survey

We had numerous ideas for this event but we wanted to be sure they would interest our possible attendees. We decided the best way to reach people and get feedback from them was to design a survey, for distribution and completion. We designed a survey asking people to register the date and time that would suit them best as well as what topics they would like covered. We used a series of open and closed questions in order to get suggestions on what the event could cover.

We included a brief explanatory text on the Spanish speaking community in Edinburgh and grouped the questions in blocks. The survey is still visible at the following link: <http://form.jotformpro.com/form/51122899735968> .

We launched the survey and emailed it to all our contacts and gave them a fortnight to respond. We posted it on social media as well as in private Facebook groups. Once the survey was closed and all the data collected, we proceeded to organise the event according to what people had said.

What to include in the event

Widening access to existing resources was one of the main points we wanted to cover as we became aware of many organisations and groups offering a wide range of support, information and services that few Spanish speaking people, especially recent immigrants, were aware of. To start to address this we invited a selection of relevant groups and organisations to attend and present at the event.

Another main point that needed to be addressed was the language barrier. In the report *El Puente* presented, the language barrier was one of the main obstacles Spanish speaking people needed to overcome, making this a topic to be included in the event.

Location, date and time

Thanks to the information collected in the survey we decided when and at what time the event was going to be and approximately how many people would come. Around 50 people responded and registered to attend.

Most people had answered that they would rather have it hosted on a Friday or a weekend day in the afternoon during June 2015. We decided upon Saturday June 13th at 3.30pm until 7.30pm.

Considering that People Know How is an Edinburgh based charity and most stakeholders attending and presenting are also from the city, we tried to make it as easily accessible as possible for everyone by using a city centre venue securing meeting space at Stockbridge Parish Church. Details of the venue can be seen in this link: <http://www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk/venuehirenew.htm>)

PLANNING THE PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Workshops

From the data collected from the survey, most people answered that they wanted to know more about how to access already existing resources, find out more about Scottish culture, ways to integrate and how to overcome the language barrier.

We decided to include all these topics in workshops and interactive sessions. To address the issue of resources we contacted relevant bodies and gave them the opportunity to make a presentation and / or provide a “stall” explaining what they did and how attendees could benefit.

Regarding Scottish culture, we identified opinions and findings within the *El Puente* report and used them to create discussion workshops. In considering these points we set two questions looking for solutions to improve integration. The idea was to divide all attendees into groups and have them discuss different points and then share their thoughts with the whole event, to get people interacting and entering into dialogue.

Regarding the issue of language as a barrier we contacted organisation that could give helpful advice on how to improve language skills. We contacted the ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) department within Education Scotland and spoke with Mandy Watts about the possibility of having someone come and give a talk. We also spoke with Sheila Duncan, Senior CLD Worker, Community Learning & Development, City of Edinburgh Council.

Contacting organisations

Once we had designed the event we continued to make connections. We had already talked in person in February with some organisations that said they would be interested in taking part in another event for the Spanish community. We contacted Asociación Española Alba - Spanish in Edinburgh, Oficina Precaria de Edimburgo-PIE and Cosmopolita Scotland with all of them agreeing to attend the event and present. A range of other organisations including Health in Mind, Health All Around and some others could not assist the event due to not having anyone available to come. Apart from those, as stated previously, we made connections with Education Scotland as well as with the City of Edinburgh Council - Community Learning & Development.

Since no gathering is complete without food and this was to be a Spanish one, we thought it may be great to have some Spanish products to eat. So we decided to contact *El Olivo Olive Oil Company*. We got in touch with them and although they could not attend the event we got together and they gave us some free samples of what they sell to offer out to attendees, thereby providing a “food tasting” for the event.



ADVERTISING AND PROMOTING THE EVENT

Banner & flyers

We designed some flyers and a bilingual banner for the event. We distributed these to all the stakeholders, posted on our website and shared using social media. We asked people to share them and post within appropriate private groups.

We also distributed flyers in various cafes and supermarkets around the city.



Social media and website advertising

Nowadays no advertising is complete without social media. People Know How has both Twitter and Facebook and so all our advertising was posted on these two platforms. Quite a lot of people shared or re-tweeted our publications and helped us reach more people.

There were also specific Facebook groups created by Spanish people who live either in Edinburgh or Scotland where we also posted flyers and messages. This advertising was effective and engaged a number of people who subsequently completed the survey and signed up for the event. This was also a good medium for people to ask questions regarding the event. We also copied the event link in all relevant Facebook groups and posted in our social media sites. We passed it on to our contacts for them to share it as well. This is how the event invitation looked like: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/spanish-speaking-community-event-tickets-17168108274>

Partners

As mentioned before, many partners helped us share our posts and increase awareness of the event and issues. We used our email contacts to promote the event and Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) circulated information in their newsletter and website.



THE EVENT

Agenda

DATE: Saturday, June 13th, 2015
TIME: 3.30 pm – 8.15 pm
LOCATION: Stockbridge Church, Edinburgh

3.30pm - 4pm	Registration & Coffee
4.00 pm – 4.10 pm	Welcome
4.10 pm - 5.00 pm	How to access already existing resources
5.00 pm – 5.30 pm	Discussion group
5.30 pm – 5.50 pm	Comfort break
5.50 pm – 6.25 pm	“How to find out more about the Scottish culture” workshop
6.25 pm – 7.00 pm	Networking dinner & <i>El Olivo</i> traditional Spanish food degustation
7.00 pm – 8.00 pm	“How to bridge the language barrier” workshop by The City of Edinburgh council
8.00 pm – 8.15 pm	Close

Attendance

Over 50 people signed up for the event with 46 attending made up of attendees and facilitators.



Workshops summary

Cosmopolita Scotland, People Know How, Asociación Alba, PIE Edimburgo, Vamos Scotland and City of Edinburgh – Community Learning & Development all presented.

Through the presentations, workshops and discussions we included the following questions, and these are a sample of the responses.

What problems do you face when you arrive in Edinburgh?

“When you go to another country you first have to decide how long you are going to stay there for, you don’t think you can live there forever. You may come for a year and then things change. A job or even a partner comes up and you change your mind. These two are the main two reasons for staying longer or perhaps forever in that country. However, in Spain there a huge crisis still and you may not have a future there, it’s easier to get a job here.

Other problems that we face are, for instance, driving on the other side and problems with the house owners.”

Which one is the best way to find resources?

"For us the best way to find a job is through a community groups or someone you know. Nowadays you can always search on Facebook and find something useful for some months.

There are also a lot of websites you can look up. EU opportunities, Scottish organisations looking for people to integrate and even at the embassy."

Do you know how to look for a job in Scotland that fits your qualifications and background?

"It is very hard. Most of us come here to learn English and it is not possible to get a good job related to your studies if you don't speak fluent English. We find ourselves working long hours to afford living but apart from that we also need to study and pay for language exams, which, by the way, are not cheap at all.

So, our problem is more with the language rather than with looking for a qualified job itself. Volunteering and references are also really important in the UK. Without those you are getting nowhere."

What do you have to consider when you decide you are staying permanently in Scotland?

"Thinking of staying abroad forever is a huge decision and it is usually followed by a job offer or a partner. These are the main ones that think of. Once you decide you are staying you have to think of all the paperwork that it involves. Registration in social security, nationalities stuff and ask about everything in your embassy. Taxes is also another thing to consider... How to do them, where to present them... all that. Nevertheless, the most important thing is social welfare to me."

Do Spanish people feel welcome in Edinburgh? How do Scottish people feel about it?

"I think we do. Scottish people are nice and so are kids here. Children are very affectionate, much more than in Spain I would say. Scottish culture is said to be colder than ours but it all depends on the people too. They are pretty open minded which we might not be back in Spain. Everyone here seems to like Spain a lot."

What do you think about the possibility of Spanish people volunteering as Spanish teachers in schools?

"I believe it is a great opportunity to be open to the Spanish integration, especially for those who are in the education field. We all speak Spanish as a first language so how better can it be for children to learn about it from someone who lives in Spanish?"

In the second half we facilitated a discussion around integration that is illustrated with the sample of responses below:

"Whether you are a person with disabilities or from another country, wherever you are from, integration is, basically, the way you adapt to the context".

Is it really comparable to be a foreigner with having an actual disability? Being a person with a disability cannot be compared to be from another country. The greatest barrier a foreigner can find is the language. Not being able to speak another language doesn't make someone a person with actual disabilities. Communication is, in fact, something that anyone can overcome by practicing and learning. It is all about adapting and opening your mind to new ideas and possibilities you could reach before.

"At the beginning, when I arrived, I didn't want to hang out with Spanish people so I went towards other people... So now, I almost don't know anyone from Spain. However, I know very few people from here".

We tend to meet people who can actually give us a new experience. Everyone has friends back at home. Their own true friends from childhood. That is probably why we are not looking for someone to replace them but for someone that is going to change us in some way. Developing a friendship takes time and effort. People have to work on it so it actually becomes a close and trustworthy relationship.

However, it is really difficult to bond with someone whose first language is not the same as yours. We don't have the same topics to talk about, not even the same jokes; because you don't share the same origins or culture. Accents also play a hard time when it comes to socialising. It is especially hard to fit into a group of people when you can't understand most of what they say just because of how they speak.

"It's not just about adapting to the local customs but it is also about the customs themselves. When you settle you accept your ways, so you don't have to adapt and lose the way you are; your origins".

It is not about not losing yourself. When you move to another country where everything is different to where you used to live, you adapt new customs, habits and even ideas. You find yourself creating a new identity because, without even noticing it, you change. Living in another country makes you richer. You can't expect to be the same person you were at the beginning because part of you will constantly be adapting to new things, while the other will keep the essence from where you are from.

Not only your lifestyle but also your communication skills change. Whether you are in an English speaking country or not, you will unconsciously change the way you speak, gesticulate and accentuate words. Your personality may even change depending on the language you speak.



“At the moment, a lot of people are coming here with a low level of English and (Spanish) average formation so they can’t think of integrating and they have to focus on working and carrying on”.

If you want something you have to put effort into it. You don’t only have to work and work: in fact, everyone needs to socialize in order to keep their mind clear. It’s all a spiral, you need to learn English but also meet people, and so, isn’t there a better way to get to know people while you are learning a new language?

It also matters how long are you planning on staying too. It’s not the same going somewhere for a month than staying for a year or longer. If you don’t know when you are going to go back, maybe you socialize more and meet more people that will likely stay in the place you are at. It is also tiring meeting people, getting attached to them and seeing them leave.

“I feel integrated but when I think... Do I have Scottish friends? No, I don’t. Well, I have one but we don’t talk much. I know I can trust him but... I am very happy here, but I don’t know if I am really integrated”.

Being integrated doesn’t necessarily mean having local friends. You can live in your own country and still have friends from all other the world.

“I have been here a few months studying in a local language school. I only had contact with Spanish people and haven’t been 100% comfortable but at least have been here and I have survived”.

Surviving is not the way. If you come to another country sure enough you will have to put a lot of effort into everything. Language, local habits, new people and friends, and even food. It will not be easy at the beginning but you will overcome all those obstacles with time. It is also quite energy absorbing to getting used to something when everything is new and different to what you are used to. Nevertheless, you need to keep your mind open and being positive about all these changes in your life; you are not here just to survive but also have fun and meet people who will help and teach you a lot of useful stuff.

“I think the Scottish culture is a difficult one to integrate in. I did my Erasmus in Italy and although it is a very different experience, I have realized that us, Spanish, tend to do ghettos: we don’t care about the language, the culture of other people. There’s no other place like Spain for a good life”.

All cultures in the world are different. No one is better than the other, there are just different. You may compare them if you truly know both and have experienced them first hand, but not if you aren’t integrated. Coming to a new country where everything seems to be different might be a little overwhelming at first, but as previously said, it takes time. This statement is, however, a personal opinion not everyone agrees to. It may be quite common to group yourself into a community because you may share something in common with them.

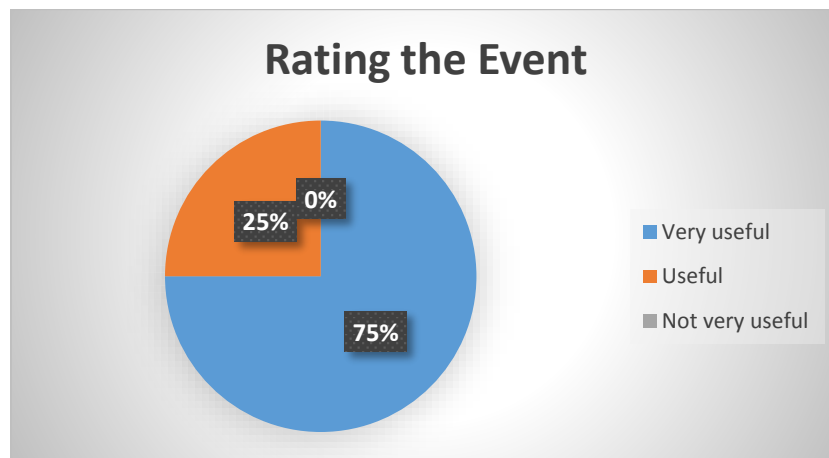
We invited people to highlight the most prevalent limitations and solutions to Spanish integration, and these were the result:

<i>LIMITATIONS:</i>	<i>SOLUTIONS:</i>
<i>Language barrier</i>	<i>Access to more resources</i>
<i>Lack of sociability</i>	<i>Access to more resources</i>

The final speaker of the event was Sheila Duncan, Community Learning & Development, City of Edinburgh Council. She talked about the resources offered especially around English language classes. Her presentation was very informative whilst being informal and she encouraged people to be very involved with an enlivened discussion. She brought along with her “Zulma”, a Colombian lady who told us all about her experience while in Edinburgh. Many people in the room empathised with her as she spoke.



FINAL EVALUATION



Finally

We asked everyone if People Know How was implement ideas discussed in the event, which ones they would like to see taken forward: The answers were as follows:

1. *Spanish Volunteers teaching Spanish in schools.*
2. *Create a website to gather all the information provided by Spanish organisations in one place and organise collaboration between organisations to publish and advertise resources for the Spanish Speaking community in Edinburgh and Scotland.*
3. *Work with the ESOL organisation.*
4. *Help to remove the language barrier*
5. *Ask children and young people their views about this area.*
6. *Solutions to help Spanish speaking people to integrate with a particular focus on celebrating the shared heritage and history of Spanish Speaking and Scottish people*



Participating organisations



Asociación española ALBA



Thank you to everyone who made the event possible from the People Know How team:

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