



Reaching out – developing links and interaction with seldom heard groups

Responding to the Eastbourne Community Network meeting in January 2018, we've undertaken some research to find methods that our network members may find useful in developing better interaction between their organisations and 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard' groups in our area.

**Report by Sandra Bailie, Head of Organisational Development NICVA
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NICVA, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, is a membership and representative umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

<http://www.nicva.org/article/strategies-engaging-hard-reach>

Strategies for engaging the hard to reach

Many of us are aware of people or groups of people that we would like to engage more with but that currently do not come along to our events or make use of our services. These strategies will help you to be more engaging and accessible.

The Big Lottery Funded Reaching Out Connecting Older People (ROCOP) development and support held a session on 24 March 2015 with 32 people from grant holding organisations. One of the objectives of the programme is to help Grant holders to engage with older people considered to be 'hard to reach' and at risk groups.

The aim of the event was to define the characteristics of the hard to reach, what barriers there are to accessing them, and what strategies we can use to engage them more effectively. Below is a list of strategies that the group came up with and that they use to good effect.

- Offer incentives – refreshments, food, entertainment, complementary therapies
- Provide support - transport, childcare and interpretation
- Go to where they are – provide service in their own home to start with if you can, then gradually integrate them in.
- Timing - when are they available? When are they about to get out?
- Venue - Use familiar venue, think of good transport links, near park and ride.
- Provide transport, use volunteer drivers
- Use Trusted Intermediaries - use other people and organisations to reach them, eg post office, doctor, church
- Provide a non-threatening environment
- Consider different cultures
- Use the people that already engage to invite people they know - word of mouth
- Ask them what they want - Involve them in decisions and plans. Go door to door if possible, use events when people are together to ask them
- Use their skills – ask them to volunteer/help, show them that they are needed



- Provide taster sessions
- Use community champions (people who have benefited from service) to promote and publicise
- Collaborate with other organisations in the area- provide joint services/events, signposting, links, share expertise
- Have a “meeter and greeter” - Someone who sits with person, introduces them and reduces fear of coming into room and feeling uncomfortable.
- Allow them to use services at own pace – come and go at their ease.

East Sussex Enriching Communities

The report followed a partnership workshops and conference in east Sussex, in 2010, aimed at facilitating dialogue between service providers and people working with and supporting diverse communities in East Sussex. The event was also a response to the scoping study “Exploring the Needs of New Migrant Communities in East Sussex” commissioned by East Sussex County Council and undertaken between April and July 2010, which identified the importance of exploring the needs of new migrant communities.

The report presents a good practice guide for service providers engaging with BME and migrant communities in East Sussex.

<https://www.speakupforum.org.uk/single-post/2012/10/31/Black-and-Minority-Ethnicity-BME-and-diverse-communities-in-East-Sussex>

A workbook

In 2011 Trafford Council, Adult Social Care Directorate commissioned the development and publication of a workbook which was the outcome of six years of close partnership learning between themselves and a range of key stakeholders, in particular LMCP Care Link. The workbook is an inspiring toolkit to support the sustained engagement of hard to reach groups in the delivery of quality social care services within local communities. It was written based on the learning experience in Trafford of commissioning a BME organisation working specifically with the South Asian community, LMCP Care Link.

http://lmcpcareslink.co.uk/pdf_files/hard_to_reach_workbook.pdf

IRISS

There is also a useful online report published on 27th May 2011 by IRISS a charitable company that promotes positive outcomes for the people who use Scotland's social services, by enhancing the capacity and capability of the social services workforce, to access and make use of knowledge and research for service innovation and improvement.

<https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/effectively-engaging-involving-seldom-heard-groups>