

## Introduction

This project was funded by NRF in their last year of operation. NRF officer at the time signed post BEMWG to work in partnership with SAFH. The first stage of the project the negotiations part was smooth and friendly but unexpectedly the partnership suffered difficulties in communication and delivery.

BEMWG forced to change their essential project presented to NRF as "Health Literacy Project" to suit delivering agency (SAFH) perspectives

Regardless the difficulties BEMWG managed to train different people from BME groups representing 13 community leaders to enable them work with their communities to identify problems and issues concerning them.

Such representation from wider & diverse communities is the heart of BEMWG work identified as our guidance

*BEMWG – "Where diversity drives the agenda"*

The outcome from such a diverse will shape BEMWG work. BEMWG future planning will build on the valuable local knowledge gathered and identified by the communities in the Health Literacy Project. The identified concerns will be taken forward with the relevant agencies and will follow it up. As well will continue too find more funding to carry this programme again for the benefit of the wider community.

# **Report to BEMWG on the Social Action for Health (SAfH) Health Literacy project: 2006/7 (Health Guides in Hackney)**

## **Context**

**Social Action for Health** was commissioned by the Black and Ethnic Minority Working Group (BEMWG) in January 2006 to train up some people from the BEMWG membership as Health Guides, to support them in delivering 20 Health Guide sessions out in local community settings.

The purpose of the Health Guides project is to train local people to educate their peers about how to access services, what to expect from them; about promoting positive health and encouraging people to take more active control of their own health, providing information as necessary.

22 people through BEMWG were selected for training and 13 completed the training. The successful trainees are a confident and diverse group, representing a wide range of communities:

Congolese

Nigerian

Turkish/Cypriot

Somali

Bengali

Angolan

They are proving as asset in the borough, knowledgeable and skilled. They were trained together with a group of mental health service users to enhance the experience of trainees all ways round, confirmed in the feedback at the end of the training. Details of the content of the training programme was provided to BEMWG at one of the first steering group meetings, set up to take the work forward on a partnership basis.

It was a pity that the partnership proved difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, the training proceeded and the overall Health Guides project in Hackney was launched at the Hackney Empire in September 2006. We understand that BEMWG itself planned to award the certificates to the successful Health Guides after Ramadan. We are not sure if this took place.

What follows is feedback about the issues that emerged from the BEMWG Health Guide work, as promised. The issues can provide BEMWG with useful information on the issues of concern in their constituency agencies that we hope will be of use.

## **Health Guide sessions**

### **Outputs**

These exceeded the agreed targets. We found that the level of need was high – people had lots of issues they were struggling with. Yet, it took a good deal of effort

to establish relationships with community groups that led to our running health guide sessions with them. There is little trust in Hackney; groups are very isolated; coordinated community action seems to be unusual. This meant it took a good deal of time to set up sessions. Even so, by the end of the year, we had undertaken 41 Health Guide sessions. We are hopeful that we will be able to build on the relationships now built up, and that BEMWG will reap the fruits as local people from BME communities gain knowledge and confidence.

41 Health Guide sessions took place :

- 8 Turkish/Kurdish
- 12 Bengali
- 7 Caribbean
- 10 Somali
- 4 Nigerian and African Other, including Congolese

320 participants took part in Health Guide sessions.

2 Practice Development meetings took place to support and brief the Health Guides.

### **Information**

Information was shared by Health Guides and discussions facilitated with participants on a range of issues, including:

- Accessing services (Pharmacy First, PALS, Choose and book, Walk-in centre, Dental services)
- Diabetes
- Healthy Eating
- TB
- Heart disease (cause and prevention)
- Breast cancer
- Stroke.

Analysing the records from Health Guide sessions on the database, the key issues of concern for local people that emerge can be summarised as:

- Across the communities there is concern about shortage of housing and lack of employment opportunities.
- Local people feel disrespected and excluded and feel that services, particularly health services are unapproachable, unfriendly and difficult to access. A lot of complaints regarding referrals and GP practices.
- Language barriers and lack of interpreting was a concern for all the groups
- Immigration advice and information was a concern for the Congolese, Nigerian and mixed African groups.

The following identifies the issues that were raised in the specific communities:

**Community issues: Turkish/Kurdish**

- *Financial*
  - Debt increases stress. Don't receive enough benefits/support to enjoy life, pay for bills etc.
  - Financial & economical problems, little money leads to stress in paying school fees, tax, bills etc.
- *NHS*
  - GP didn't take me seriously, I told him to check again and finally he realised I needed to be referred to Physiotherapy.
  - PALS – person had surgery at Homerton hospital, feet surgery, had lump around her ankle, they didn't tell her after affects and now she has feet pains. She made complaint to PALS as advised by GP but haven't heard from them.
  - Person had 3 lumps on her legs, they removed it but she got them back, developed on her chest and right legs, the doctor wasn't able to answer why she got it. Patient believes the operation wasn't successful, they done a poor job and she still lives in pain – not enough feedback from doctor
  - The same patient gave birth and had several stitches done, after a while she had problems and her stitches came out, so she went to see her doctor. The doctor would not refer her to a specialist (Gynaecologist) because it had been more then 8yrs.
- *Self care*
  - The local community wants to find out about diabetes, how to take care of themselves.
- *Access*
  - They came to this country on a visit - just wanted to know if they are eligible to join surgeries and what services they can use.

**Community issues: Congolese**

- *NHS*
  - Waiting times for doctors are very long.
  - lack of information about A&E, people do not know how to use it.
  - Busy lines when trying to make appointment.
  - Feel discriminated by NHS
  - Disrespectful staff
  - Doctors are unfriendly and don't pay attention of what is said by

patients.

- GP's - language barrier, no interpreter, lack of information, inadequate treatment, disrespect of GP
- Do the doctors hide Information such as pharmacy first and booking hospital?
- How scary it is to see a nurse looking or reading a book before prescribing medicines.
- Late appointments even if the problem is serious.
- Inadequate treatment or wrong treatment.
- Unkindness and unsupportive staff.
- Waiting time too long.
- Waiting time too long.
- Same prescription every time.
- Service is really slow.
- Service is slow and bad.
- Service line (helpline) very bad, do not give the exact information.
- Sometimes patients are ignored.
- Pharmacy - change medicine without consent
- Nurses are unfriendly.
- Walk-in Centre lack of information, do not know how to use it.
- *Finances*
  - Cannot afford the bills especially council tax
  - Child maintenance a problem
  - Would like to work but financial barriers prevent us taking up employment
- *Housing*
  - Housing conditions are poor, it causes sickness.
  - Housing benefit too high, council tax too high - why?
  - Housing in Hackney is too expensive
  - How do we bid for housing?
  - Temporary accommodation.
  - It takes a long time to get proper place when you are in
  - Poor conditions of housing cause illness.
  - Priority need, homeless, local connection needed – this a problem
  - Language barrier, do not trust, poor conditions of housing.

- Many families are overcrowded
- Rent arrears, unpaid bills because of low income and not having money, where to go for information and help?
- The Housing system encourages crime in young people, If you commit a crime your have a chance of being housed, young people are aware of this
- Poor housing.
- When I call up for repairs they cut the phone off rather than trying to understand me
- *Immigration*
  - How to access further education and where to go to have right information.
  - How to get access to benefits and how do you know you are entitled to it.
- *Employment and benefits*
  - Job centres don't give right information.
  - Language Barrier is a problem
- *Education*
  - Need information about courses
  - Need some short courses
  - Would like courses that pay for childcare
- *Children*
  - Not aware of any activities for children
  - Not enough language support at school
  - Parks are not safe for children to play
  - There is a lot of crime and bullying on the streets
  - There is no encouragement from teachers they discriminate against the children
  - There should be more extra curriculum activities
  - We are discriminated against because of our background and language

**Community issues: Somali**

- *NHS*
  - In GP surgery, hospitals, health visitors, there is no Somali/Brava interpreters.
  - Lack of Bravani's Interpreters
  - Lack of information, we don't know where to go for information

- Long waiting lists.
- Long waiting times to see doctor especially when in pain.
- Many participants not aware of Pharmacy First.
- Reception staff rude sometimes.
- Not referring to specialist.
- Old Hill Medical Centre - don't have the system for pharmacy first. No voucher system.
- Want to learn about healthy eating, where local swimming centre is, gym classes.
- Wanted to know if there are any centres that provide free entitlement to leisure activities for Women Only!
- When they go to the pharmacy first, they send them back to the GP.
- Rude receptionists.
- Sometimes have to wait for weeks to be seen by doctor, if your late doctor cant see you but the doctor never see's you on time.
- There is always a rude receptionist, they speak the same language as you and when you speak the same language to them they speak in English.
- They need interpreters but they don't get.
- *Access*
  - Lack of advice services
  - Lack of service
  - Not aware of their rights
  - Don't understand service providers.
- *Self care*
  - When we eat a problem
  - Want to know about local courses, sewing classes, cooking, healthy eating, activities for them and children.
- *Feel unsafe.*
- *Benefits*
  - Participants not sure how much benefit they should get. One person went to benefit office but no one there helped her, she could not speak English.

## **Community issues: Nigerian/African Mixed**

- *Transport*
  - Bus service very bad in Hackney, don't arrive on time and when do arrive all buses come in the same time.
- *GPs and receptionists, pharmacy*
  - GP's do not explain or don't have enough time to go through all leaflets for conditions and illnesses.
  - Reception staff have power on whether or not patients get to see the GP and make appointment.
  - Disrespectful GP's, inadequate treatment, bad reports from GP to another.
  - Late appointments or not at all, even if it is an emergency case.
  - Dental prices too high refuse to provide emergency treatment without payout, whereas in A&E it is treated straight away on the NHS.
  - No antibiotics if needed (prescription is a must)
  - Pharmacy 1st instead of queuing at a surgery.
  - Respite Service providers put people off by saying you are on waiting list. Waiting time too long.
- *Housing*
  - Waiting many years for a temporary accommodation, if given poor condition of houses.
  - The bidding system is good but also provides too many conditions even before application is passed on.
- *Safety*
  - Bad behaviour of children and influencing others.
  - The police do nothing about it, the problem persists.
  - Unsafe areas, if you refuse the offers you are taken off waiting list.
- *Exclusion*
  - Deportation, refusal of asylum applications, employment prohibited how to survive?
  - No colleagues, no access to services.
  - Even if you report or complain schools are powerless.

- Long waiting time to get an appointment at GP
- Most living in temporary housing for many years.
- Most of them were not aware of doctor's services, Pharmacist First and the roles of GP's & Hospitals.
- Most people not aware of doctor's services, pharmacy first, roles and responsibilities of GP's and Hospitals.
- Mostly people complained, especially GP's, they are not interested in investigating patients condition, they just take a minute, write prescription and of you go.
- Not being able to book GP appointments.
- Our people are poor in the English language and we don't have any staff in the hospital. So we request our government to employ Somali community interpreters.
- The main concern with Somali community is language problems.
- We are complaining about pharmacy because if you go for first aid assistance they will never give any help.
- We use our children and members of our family to interpret for us.
- When patients go for emergency, they asked to go walk-in centre and then emergency service. You go around in circles.
- *Housing*
  - Most people have been living in temporary housing for many years
  - We have seen some of the people complaining about waiting long time now to get council housing although not as before.
- *Community support*
  - There are no community organisations to represent the Bravanise community

**Community issues: Bengali**

- *Housing*
  - 4yr child has spinal sclerosis and waiting 10yrs to be re-housed, council still not given house, child cannot walk up and down stairs.
  - Also overcrowding a problem.
  - Complain about housing problems but they don't respond
  - Council doesn't make people with physical disability priority.
  - Damp problem in many houses.
  - One participants water was leaking from the ceiling but the council took 2 weeks to come down to sort it.
  - Overcrowded situation, long waiting list, no lifts, damp, need room for studying, long wait for repair and maintenance service to check the

problem, rude staff at repair & maintenance.

- Participant waiting 10yrs for another house because of overcrowding.
- Participants feel there is a drug problem, youths hang around late at night, use buildings to take drugs.
- Repairs take too long.
- Over crowdedness
- **NHS**
  - Workers are always speaking with their colleagues, not to us.
  - Appointments hard to get.
  - At evenings there's always a rude receptionist.
  - Can't get appointment at the right time.
  - GP - Doctors don't listen properly to patients problems.
  - Kept on medication for too long.
  - Have problems with constipation, diabetes, sleeping problem.
  - Need a dentist
  - Late Diagnosis