

FOCUS GROUP HANDOUT

Workshop “Engage to learn project” – Engaging BME Men
Monday 18th February 2008

PCDL Review

In February 2007 the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) initiated a review of the planning and partnership arrangements for Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) provision in Hertfordshire. This review will inform the planning and delivery of PCDL provision in the County. It will identify gaps in provision in specific geographical areas and target groups. It will be co-ordinated by the Hertfordshire County Council’s (HCC) Adult and Family Learning Service (HAFLS). There are four parts to the review; -

- a. Capturing the Learner and Community Voice
- b. Delivery
- c. Commissioning and Contract Management
- d. Policy, Funding and Planning

HALP’s role is to “**Capture the Learner and Community Voice**” by doing focus groups, community meetings and consultation events. The first phase of the pilot focus groups was carried out in November 2007.

Asian Men’s Focus Group Mandeville Primary School, St Albans

HAFLS has identified men as a significant target group for adult community learning. Nationally, only 23% of participants in ACL were men. In Hertfordshire this figure in 2006 was 26%.

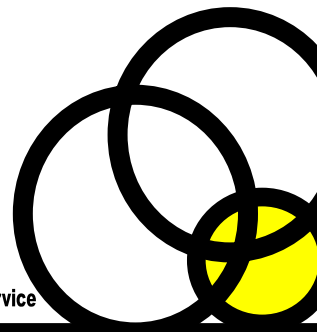
The group of Bengali men were recruited through the imam at the Bengali Mosque. It was a mixed group of 10 men, all of them fathers with an age range from under 25 or over 65 and with a qualification range from none to an MSc.

Key findings from the focus group were:

- **English language – ESOL needs – leading to social exclusion**
This was seen as particularly important as language was essential to move onto other learning and job success. Men

also felt that their wives needed English to carry out their day to day duties including answering telephone calls and engaging with children.

- They could cope with the level of work their children were bringing home at junior level, but the restaurant workers said that many of their colleagues needed courses in basic skills and English to enable them to help their families and to be more efficient at work.
- Barriers to learning were time, so courses should run when night workers were available and they suggested during school hours, and cost, because concessions still meant ESOL courses at colleges were very expensive. Cost of English courses for the wives was an issue. The said at one time it was relatively cheap to send the women to courses at Oakland's College. But now it was prohibitive.
- More family learning and parenting courses particularly for women and children. There was general feeling that men didn't want to undertake any learning with their children.
- Return to work skills, CV writing, interview skills and in particular courses to build self esteem and confidence with particular reference to the catering/restaurant work and the taxi trade.
- Need for a community focused provision/programme, which brought together people through the Mosque.



Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service: Engage to learn Project 2006/07

Background:

Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service (HAFLS) data demonstrated that there was a lack of BME men engaging in learning, Equality and Diversity Measure (EDIM) was also established to increase the number of BME men participating in HAFLS learning programmes.

Providers:

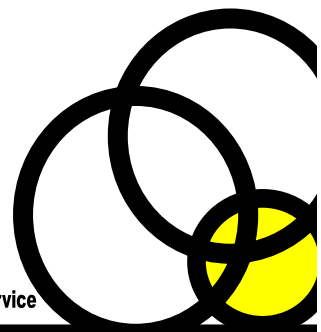
Three HAFLS Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) providers were given additional funding to deliver this project:

1. SOVA
2. Community Action Dacorum
3. Volunteer Centre Broxbourne

In total, through the Engage to Learn project 78 BME men enrolled onto programmes

Project Outcomes:

- Increase in the engagement of BME men onto HAFLS funded provision
- Tailoring new programmes such as 'Coaching in the community'
- Reaching the most 'hard to engage' learners- those who are unemployed; offenders; unskilled/low skilled level workers
- Some learners expressed interest in progression or developing their English skills
- Development of foundations that can be built upon (contacts, partners, community liaison, consultation, word-of-mouth and other outreach activity)



Case Study 1:

SOVA

'SOVA Hertfordshire is based in St Albans, but works with all communities that contain offenders and specifically at the probation centres at Watford, Stevenage, Hertford and St Albans. A strong focus of its work is to involve the community in offending and rehabilitation'.

SOVA focused on a specific programme for offenders/ex-offenders. The 'Coaching' programme was delivered to offenders at Mount Prison as part of the Resettlement programme. Attempts were made to deliver to ex-offenders in the community, however this proved to be difficult.

The Mount prison runs a five-week programme specifically for prisoners in developing their communication skills, personal development and resettlement into the community. The coaching in the community programme provided 4 sessions per programme, in total 8 sessions were delivered.

Recruitment and profile of learners:

- Targeting those on probation orders/offenders (from black and minority ethnic backgrounds)
- Aiming to recruit between 8-14 learners per programme (in total 28 - 30 learners) BME
- Although the programme is aimed at Muslim groups, it was felt that other BME groups should not be excluded if an interest had been expressed
- Learners to be aged 19 or above (targeting the younger group - 19-25)

Coaching is about 'unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own potential. The process, based on personal development in a non therapeutic context that explores: Generating possibilities; Making choices; Setting expectations; communicating clearly; Managing time; Learning from past mistakes; Solving problems; Improving relationships; Balancing personal and professional life

The feedback from the prisoners was that it was a worth while programme and they found it really beneficial.

The purpose of the programme was to improve performance, whether in a work context or at a personal level, and enhance effective action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction.

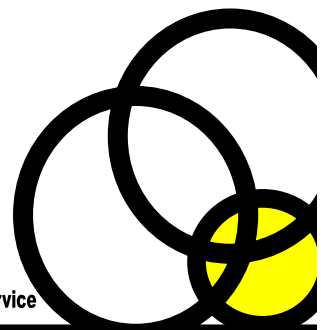
Outstanding feedback was received from both the prison and the tutor who delivered the course. The prison contact commented on initially how challenging the group were, the programme had a huge impact on behaviour, with many of the prisoners displaying 'positive behaviour' and actively taking part in the programme.

SOVA Learning points:

- All professionals that they spoke to considered the project as a necessity and were excited about the process. This was especially in relation to two points:
 1. BME men feel anxious about attending Probation programmes due to their perception of potential racism from other participants.
 2. BME men would benefit in exploring some of the difficulties they have experienced and discussing strategies for the way forward.
- To get BME men to attend would be through word of mouth, however there was difficulty in getting men to actually attend the sessions in the community

Group Task:

1. How can this type of provision be delivered in the community?
2. Share examples of good practice - what has worked for you- successes in reaching and delivering to BME men?
3. What are the issues/barriers?



Case Study 2:

Community Action Dacorum:

'Community Action Dacorum is a registered charity operating in the Dacorum area, their core work is to provide resources and support to the voluntary sector. Their provision includes a range of activity for the local community, which includes the Cultural Learning Project. Originally the project has engaged with organisations and individuals representing the African, Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Italian and Muslim communities to arrange a series of training events that encourage members of those and the wider community, into learning'

Community Action Dacorum delivered two programmes – 'IT' and 'Plumbing for Beginners', following consultation with potential learners

The consultation method with local community groups to plan and deliver courses specifically targeted at BME men. Effective partnership working and developing of new local contacts enabled the provider to deliver some particularly popular and well-attended programmes.

Recruitment and profile of learners:

- BME men working in the following industries: Cab drivers; Catering industry; post office sorters
- The age range was very diverse from the age of 19 right up to men in their late 60's
- Many of the learners were new to adult learning
- Recruitment of learners was very successful due to building effective links with local community member
- Consulted with potential learners on the type of provision, where and when

The provider organised an end of course 'Celebratory event' where they were given their certificates. Excellent feedback was received

from learners; some of the learners were very keen to return to do programmes next year. Out of the 36 learners, 6 (16%) learners came forward to say that they would like to improve their English.

Learner Comments:

'Thank you for this experience, it has helped a lot, I have already changed a tap!'

'This informal atmosphere/teaching helped me to learn better'

'Very communicative and helpful'

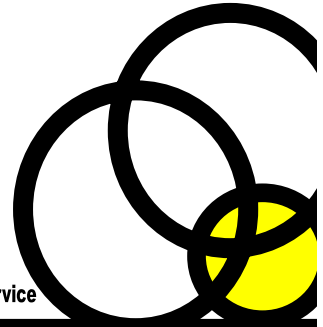
'I enjoyed learning by working in groups and everyone having hands-on experience'

Community Action Dacorum Learning points:

- Building trust, rapport and credibility in the community are vital to achieving successful results and ultimately engaging learners
- Listening to potential learner's goals and building the programme to meet the identified needs of learners
- The community link within one of the providers was involved in the recruitment, design and delivery of the programme. This worked extremely well
- Venue and timing had to be right in order to engage the men who worked shifts – Cab drivers, those in the catering agencies

Group Task:

1. What elements made this provision successful?
2. Share examples of good practice - what has worked for you - successes in reaching and delivering to BME men?
3. What are the issues/barriers?



Case Study 3:

Broxbourne Volunteer Centre:

- 1. Volunteer Centre, Broxbourne (VCB) encourages individuals to volunteer in the community. The centre provides support at a local level for individual volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. Their aims include providing a safe and non-threatening environment for people to access information, advice and guidance about local training opportunities and work experience through volunteering to address the needs of the Government's Skills for Life agenda, supporting and enabling clients to improve confidence and self esteem and increased employability.***

Broxbourne Volunteer Centre delivered a programme around improving skills for employment 'Improving your chances', which included confidence building, teamwork and personal development. The provider is based in East Hertfordshire in an area where there are lower numbers of people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Recruitment and profile of learners:

- Meetings with a variety of partners to raise profile of the programme
- In total the provider liaised with 18 different local VCS groups, this included phone calls, meetings and presentations
- Building new contacts was key to the success of the programme
- Out of the 8 learners, 4 learners (50%) had recorded a disability, including emotional/behavioural difficulties; mental ill health; visual impairment and physical disability
- The age range was diverse from age 19 up to the age of 55

Some of the learners progressed onto other courses (basic skills) and had the confidence to go for their aspirations (i.e. one learner wanted to use their skills – qualified solicitor from abroad – wanted to become a school governor or magistrate)

Because the group bonded so well, the provider has used their initiative and established an e-mail group, so learners can keep in touch and further arrangements have been made to get the group together 'coffee morning' where further sessions can be identified and delivered. The provider will be using effective learner-centred approach, identifying needs and tailoring provision to need

Learning points:

- The benefits of learners in the group keeping in touch, they worked well as a team and wanted the opportunity to meet again as a group
- Further opportunities for identifying progression routes and tailoring further programmes

Group Task:

1. What other types of programmes other than employment related programmes would attract BME men?
2. Share examples of good practice - what has worked for you-successes in reaching and delivering to BME men?
3. What are the issues/barriers?

