



BME Network: support for a network of small groups of Black and Minority Elders

**Time to Shine end of project report
2017**



Summary

New members are warmly welcomed into Elders' Networks for activities which are fun, sociable, culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of older people. The programme of activities is designed by older people and is supported by bilingual staff and volunteers.

BME network in numbers

- 122 individuals were supported through existing groups
- 96 new socially isolated older people were identified
- 151 One to one home visits were conducted
- The majority of those who completed monitoring form identified as Sikh or Hindu
- Very many more women than men were supported
- 21 groups supported and helped to apply for funding
- 3 new groups were supported to set up



What was planned and how did that change?

The project had three main strands: Providing support to the existing six groups within the BME network, identifying new people experiencing isolation who could be referred into the existing group, developing new community groups where there was a need.

The project was able to support existing groups, the project has enabled the groups to continue and develop. In fact, the project was able to support ten groups overall, and this provided continuing support for their 230 members. This provided a preventative safety net for those attending the groups.

Through community outreach and working with older people within the existing groups, new socially isolated older people were identified. It proved necessary to make one to one home visits which had not been part of the plan, they were used to encourage and support these older people, and to help alleviate their isolation. In many cases it was difficult for the project worker to encourage the older person to participate in regular activities and it took a number of visits, but the worker was committed to trying new opportunities. In total 122 older people were supported through existing groups.

Older people were helped to develop new community groups. 25 older people were supported to volunteer and facilitate organised groups. Each group is a constituted stand-alone group that receives support from the project worker and forum steering group. The project worker has provided additional support such as helping to develop funding applications as well as additional training and ongoing support and encouragement. It was difficult, by the end of the project, to judge how groups would sustain without the support and encouragement of the worker. The worker has improved the confidence of older volunteers through helping to develop funding applications, develop policies



What difference did it make to older people?

Of those who completed an evaluation questionnaire 67.5% reported a reduction in social isolation and loneliness, and 46.5% felt that when compared to other people in a similar situation, they took part in more social activities.

“I am enjoying coming so much! I was not prepared to come first and NOW I am not prepared to quit the group! I have also joined another group and go there with my husband”.

Groups were supported to organize weekly activities such as Bollywood movie trips, IT classes, bowling and other exercise classes, English language classes, trips out to the seaside and to temples, shopping trips. Training was also delivered for volunteer group organisers e.g., in food hygiene and safeguarding.

Learning

The assumption that older people living in extended family networks cannot be lonely is not true. The majority of participants either lived with their family or with a spouse and identified as social isolated and/or lonely.

Some of the people referred had high needs and required in depth case working – more than was anticipated and more than the Project Worker was equipped to deal with; however, there were limited referral routes for these older people particularly if language was a barrier to accessing services such as adult social care. It was anticipated that some one-to-one home visits would be required to build trust and confidence and support engagement; however, many more home visits were undertaken than originally intended.

Transport was a significant barrier. Historically many of the participants were accustomed to being driven around by family members. They were often unable to read bus timetables, lacked the confidence to use buses, and were concerned about how it would be perceived by the community. This was significantly different from the experience of the Chinese elders in Lychee Red. Taxis were generally not affordable. There was an increased use of Access bus to get to activities, but this was not always available.



Legacy

In the short term the Community Development Worker supported volunteers from friendship groups to apply for funding and successfully secure a total of over £60,000, much of it from Awards for All, which will be used to fund their continued support as the groups are established. It is anticipated the groups will need ongoing support.

Sumangal, one of the groups supported by the BME Network, was also one of the groups photographed as part of an exhibition 'Loneliness through a Lens', at Leeds City Museum from October 2017 – January 2018. It featured a series of close-up head shots of older people along with a pen portrait about their life, highlighting individual stories of social isolation and loneliness





Case study

Mrs KL described herself as very depressed before joining the project. Her husband has passed away and she was going through a period of grieving. She had no interest in and lacked the confidence to go out, preferring to stay in her bedroom crying.

She was part of another project known as Better for Me, aimed at people who were not able to get out for a variety of reasons, and seeing a Health Trainer who used to visit her. It was the Health Trainer who referred her to the BME Network.

The Project Worker from the BME Network visited Mrs KL at home and introduced her to one of the other members of the group. She also organised the Access Bus and accompanied her to the group, staying with her until she felt comfortable. The group's leader welcomed her to the group; within a couple of months, she had made new friends and then attended on a weekly basis. Mrs KL has seen a big improvement in the quality of her life since joining the BME Network. She gets out and about; she is no longer depressed and feels very happy now. She feels she has learnt a new way of living life; she looks forward to attending the group and is also now a volunteer. It has given her the courage to come out of grieving. Her hope is to continue with the groups and to get out to more activities.

“I would say that people should go out and socialise with other people and to make new friends as this will give them confidence and they will enjoy living a happy life.”

Resources

[Connecting with culture: an insight from Time to Shine](#)

[Time to Shine: a short summary of beneficiary outcomes](#)

To find out more about Health for All go to healthforall.org.uk

To find out more about Time to Shine go to www.timetoshineleeds.org

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