



cheshire halton & warrington
RACE & EQUALITY CENTRE



Evaluation Report
BME Community Sector Seminar
6th November 2010



Present:

Cheshire, Halton & Warrington Race & Equality Centre (REC)	Shantele Janes, Neil Emmott, Linda Lee Parker and Helen Martin
OCEAN (Crewe)	Angela Steele, Issaac Allotey
Ragheed Action Group (Halton)	Mary Tipper, J Kennedy, Rita Kennedy, I Penlington, Mary Wheelhouse, Chris Williams
Russian Society (Warrington)	Marina Smith
Shapla (Crewe)	Sheuli Ahmed, Rabia Khatun, Kohinur Ahmed
Slovakian Association (Crewe)	Milan Czako, Tomas Jahosik, Lubomir Farkas
Wah Lei Chinese Association (Chester)	Mia Tan, Lin Guo, Ai Hua Zhang
Warrington Ethnic Over 50s	Salim Khan
Warrington Ethnic Communities Association	KS Hansra, SM Bhalla, PS Tatla
Warrington Islamic Association	Taiba Foizey, Samina Pavez
Warrington Council of Faiths	Hassan Kazi
West Cheshire BME Network	Bhupinder Virdee Lace

Background

Cheshire Halton & Warrington Race & Equality Centre is funded by Capacity Builders to develop the capacity of BME led community organisations. This project is now in its third and final year. The REC therefore decided to organise a half day seminar to evaluate the impact of the project so far and to get an idea of what needs the groups still had. We also felt that it would be an opportunity to bring together groups to meet each other, share ideas and network.

The key milestones for Capacity Builders focus on 1] increasing the numbers of BME led groups in existence 2] increasing levels of funding and activities in the BME Voluntary and Community Sector and 3] increasing representation and links with service providers.

In order to evaluate this last milestone we decided to invite representatives from the local authorities to the last session, which would enable them to hear any concerns about the relationships with them and allow groups the opportunity to ask questions.

Overall the key aims of the day were to:

1. evaluate the Capacity Builders Project as we are nearing its end
2. bring together the different community organisations we have been working with and help them to network and share ideas
3. look at future sustainability

We decided to hold the conference on a Saturday as this was more likely to attract the largest number of participants, although it prevented some others such as the Polish Saturday School from attending. Several of the groups that booked onto the day did not in fact turn up and others came that we did not expect.

The programme for the day was very much interactive. It was structured around 3 workshops with an opportunity for questions to be put to representatives from local authorities at the end.

Introduction to the Day

Shantele Janes gave an overview of the Capacity Builders Project and what we hoped to achieve from the day. Participants were split into three different workshops according to the area where they primarily worked East, West or North Cheshire.

Workshop 1

'Do you think that having a multicultural centre is important for your area and if so what is your vision?'

East Cheshire

People within this group thought that a multicultural centre was a good idea and were even able to identify a suitable building. They felt that at the moment they did not have much of a voice within East Cheshire.

They thought that a centre would be cost effective and well used. They saw it as being activity based and somewhere for groups to use as a base.

Warrington & Halton

Similar views to East – they thought a good idea and something they are already looking at pursuing.

They would want to ensure that it had disabled access, function room for hire so they could generate their own income, rooms for groups to use, cyber café, fair trade shop. They wanted to have something that would attract people in who weren't aware of it – social enterprise. Events, general activities, educational work, welfare rights, ESOL classes.

West Cheshire

Vision was for a meeting place – that addressed isolation. Focal point – cultural centre of learning and sharing. Things to do, see and buy.

Functional – serves the community at large.

English lessons, languages. Cultural festivities – sharing between communities.

Exercises – martial arts, tai chi, yoga. Singing and tuition, rooms beyond just big rooms. Smaller rooms for the groups to use.

Access information/advice/signposting, coffee mornings. Outreach services. Healthy living and eating. Opening hrs would need to be flexible, so caretaking would be an issue. Want it to be self sustaining as much as possible.

Training facilities, skills for employability – computers/IT training.

Access for older people who are often isolated – somewhere to meet other people – café and dining room to generate income.

Also youth centre.

Physical part – reception/offices/multifunctional rooms, kitchen, storage, broadband. Toilets – disabled and mother and baby feeding room.

Workshop 2

The groups were left alone without any CHAWREC staff to discuss this next issue so that they would feel comfortable to discuss any possible negative issues.

'What difference has the Community Development Team made to your group? And if the Community Development Team weren't there, what would be the impact?'

West Cheshire

West Cheshire BME Network wouldn't have been able to form. Needed to further establish links in line with Big Society.

In the last 12 months seen groups establish – Wah Lei, Turkish Association, Japanese Mums and Tots, SIA.

The team have assisted Chester Asian Council to secure funding from the local authority to support what they do and it the largest amount of money they have ever had – this was due to the CD worker's knowledge and expertise.

Major cultural events have taken place – Chinese New Year festival, Lantern Festival, Diwali – all because of the CD worker. Working knowledge of funding streams, help with writing the bids. Also training – Wah Lei, CAC and SIA have all had residential training. Helped with practical things like office space, start up websites, helping get charitable and company status and advising on legalities.

Co-ordinating of meetings, admin and secretarial support. Used networks to bring people together. Sharing experiences, good practice, one to one guidance has been invaluable. Bespoke service to each group. Never negative – always a willingness to help. Realistic what we can achieve – integrity and professionalism – promoting harmony between the different groups. All staff at CHAWREC helpful.

If the team weren't there:

- Motivation would be a problem
- Difficult for groups to start up or carry on
- Legal framework – may fall foul – rely on expertise to tell them what they are doing right or wrong
- Dialogue with local authority would be lost
- Help to facilitate between sectors would be lost
- Funding – difficult to find
- Support for volunteers etc would be lost
- Interaction between different groups would be lost

Warrington & Halton

Enabled access to funding

Enabled the development of groups in early stages

Conversations always positive to take initiatives forward

Good interpersonal skills – discuss what's needed

Gain ideas and awareness of other groups in existence

Admin support

Opportunity to gain information and attend meetings – overall picture

One to one advice

Advisory skills – encouraging and not bombastic

If team not there:

- Would miss expertise
- Isolated without that support
- Unaware what's happening in the wider area
- Would be struggling for funding guidance
- Wouldn't know how to get in funding
- Miss motivation
- Networking opportunities

Cheshire East

Some groups felt that they wouldn't have started at all if not for the support they received. Didn't know where to start. CD worker helped find common ground, helped to co-ordinate things. Helped make links with other cultures and groups. Help with finances, getting them in order and reporting to funders. Learnt how to organise events and raise money for themselves. Help with making sustainable, guidance and leadership. Feeling that they would have done things wrong without the guidance supplied. Needed help on regulations, guidance on legalities – what we can and can't do.

Lack of time for volunteers meant that the co-ordination has allowed them to do much more.

Without the team:

- Wouldn't be here at all
- Things wouldn't happen – may not survive
- Links with other organisations may break and that would reduce funding opportunities
- Absence of information and general guidance
- Less functional
- Finances – would struggle with
- Less lobbying
- Foundation blood would be absent

Workshop 3

'Do you have enough links with service providers, ie council, health, fire, police etc and is there anything more that they could do for your groups?'

Cheshire West

The group rated from zero (where there was no contact) to 5 where there was a lot of contact.

PCT scored zero - they had no links with them. Same with Police. Fire had been in touch and the council they were in regular contact with.

Language seemed to be something that service providers used as an excuse as a barrier - that they weren't sure how to communicate with them. However the groups felt that there was always someone who spoke English in the groups. Better and cheaper translation services were needed.

They felt that there was often unfair pressures on the groups from service providers – to go down a different route and respond to what they wanted rather than the community needed. More needs to be done – improving capacity of groups, awareness. Public sector needs to understand that the community organisations have limited capacity and as new groups form that they have no paid staff resources to help them.

What needed?

- Facilitation
- Inclusive decision making
- Meaningful consultation – at times we can attend, send us appropriate things to consult on not everything going and stop bombarding us with e-mails
- More resources
- Sustain our development
- Need links with services, because the groups came into existence because of need

Warrington & Halton

Groups felt that they had good links with councils in Halton and Warrington. Reference was made specifically to the community development teams who were very helpful. Whitecross in Warrington was felt to be an excellent resource. More cost effective than the Gateway.

Warrington Hospital very good – had looked into dietary requirements. 5 boroughs partnership good links too. Fire Service – excellent links. Fire Station given free of charge as a venue in Warrington. Police Authority – some links through Jackie May and the independent advisory group.

What More?

- What extra funding available?
- Elected members still don't have a good understanding – officers have, but from political perspective members don't
- Hate Crime in Halton – would like more to be done
- Not all the issues were BME specific – general issues that affected all communities, but no targeting of BME communities

Cheshire East

Groups felt that there hadn't been much dialogue with CD Team in Cheshire East. Major piece of work being done around the Polish – but not the wider Eastern European community – which also have major issues.

The only money allocated to BME communities from east is £10,000 – which isn't a lot.

Issues about restructure – not knowing who to go to and who did what.

Major documents that go out for consultation do not reflect the BME communities.

Police – good links with. Fire Service as well. Health, fairly limited although some work had been done with Leighton Hospital and they were more pro active.

MMU good links – lots of BME students in Crewe.

Concern about the Eastern Timorese community in East – feel it is a hidden community.

Gypsy and Traveller community – Police doing a lot of work with them and Health.

Panel & Close

The groups then asked questions of the panel which consisted of Alistair Jeffs from CWAC, Dwayne Johnson from Halton BC and Jan Souness from Warrington BC. Although a representative of Cheshire East had agreed to attend, they did not turn up, so the REC has promised to pass over any issues to them.

Q Does Warrington receive an amount of funding from government for BME communities specifically and if so how much?

A No specific grants for BME communities, but the council recognises the importance of funding local groups and sets aside £15,000 for BME groups, £10,000 of which goes to WECA.

A rep from WECA stated that it had grown and now has 9 groups affiliated to it – so needs an increase in this level of funding.

Alistair responded to a similar question from the Chair of the Wah Lei Chinese Association.

CWAC tried to retain some stability by honouring previous funding agreements until such times as a new grant process was put in place. They have allocated £80,000 to equality specific work. There are also other streams that groups can bid into through the local area partnership boards, and also each councillor has a £5000 budget to spend on local issues which amounts to £360,000 per annum. CWAC are also providing a building for a MC Centre.

Halton have no ring fenced money and have been hit hard by cuts in budget. Groups can however bid into general pots for funding.

We closed the discussion and moved onto lunch and networking.

Conclusions

Whilst not all the groups were able to be present, we did have a good cross section of groups from all areas. It was very clear from the discussions that the groups have welcomed the advice and support from the Community Development Team and that it is not help or support that they receive from elsewhere.

3 things were very apparent – 1] a need for help and advice around legalities of what they can and cannot do as organisations 2] a need for practical help with funding applications and 3] a need for one to one bespoke help that related specifically to their organisation.

Although links have been made with various providers, there is still a long way to go. The groups are still not in a position where they are able to influence decisions that affect their communities which is the long term aim. It was apparent that links were dependent on many things – the length the groups had been established, with longer established groups having clearer links; the geographical area in which they were based and whether they had the physical capacity to engage.

The groups all felt that there would be a significant impact on their growth and development if the community development team were not in place to help, advise and support.

Written up by

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