

Communication in action

Guide One
What's working where



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Introduction

Community Development Workers (CDWs) are central to implementing and delivering the Department of Health's 'Delivering Race Equality' (DRE) in mental health care programme. Evidence shows that individuals from some black and minority ethnic (BME) communities fear isolation and discrimination from both mainstream society as well as their own culture if they admit to any form of mental distress.

This is why it is so important to use a communication route which target audiences will be comfortable with, and to which they can respond to without fear of stigma or shame.



About this guide

This 'How To' guide is the first in a series of publications designed to help you to better understand your local BME communities and to work more effectively with them through the use of targeted communications activities that really work.

This first guide looks at four pilot communications projects which have recently taken place across the UK. It outlines the different strategies used and reports on the impact the pilots had on the audience they were setting out to reach. It also gives you some practical tips and pointers, plus some issues to consider, if you would like to undertake the same sort of activity in your area.

Look out for other guides in this series:

- How to create a communications strategy
- How to develop relationships with stakeholders and partnerships with like-minded organisations
- How to work with the media

If you work in an organisation that has a communications or media team, it is important that you consult them before undertaking any media activity, for example, contacting local newspapers or radio stations.



Communication pilot 1:

Using local radio in Birmingham

Birmingham is one of the UK's leading multicultural cities, with almost 30% of the population made up of ethnic minority communities.

(Sourced from: <http://www.birminghamuk.com/wikipedia/index.html>)



Aim of the activity

To give Delivering Race Equality (DRE) in particular, and mental health issues in general, a higher profile.

Main audience

The local African Caribbean community.

Method used

A series of interviews with local people on New Style Radio, the UK's leading black community radio station, based in Birmingham and part of the Afro Caribbean Millennium Centre. Participants included two Community Development Workers (CDW), a consultant psychiatrist, representatives from a local community group and one of its service users.

Local reactions

'Community radio is a fantastic way of reaching all corners of the community. There is so much fear and mistrust surrounding mental health – encouraging on-air discussion gives people the opportunity to raise issues, voice concerns and share views. I'd definitely like to develop this idea further.'

**Ranjit Senghera, Race Equality Lead,
CSIP West Midlands**

Benefits of using local radio

- Radio is a good way of reaching younger members of the community.
- Hearing 'real people' talk is both credible and interesting for the audience – especially if they have a story to tell.
- Interviews let you communicate a wide range of information in a short time.

If you would like to do something similar ...

- Approach your local radio station to see if they would be interested in broadcasting a live or pre-recorded slot about the work you are currently doing. You could also make contact with the radio promotions team to explore setting up a partnership with a view to running a phone-in or competition, and/or getting regular mentions on-air as well as weblinks from their site.
- Think about alternatives to local radio – the key to a successful initiative is ensuring that the media route you select is suitable for the audience you want to reach. Local press can often be just as effective. For example you could approach an editor to ask about launching a regular column where you could cover different issues each week, or run a question and answer section. Sometimes local television stations are receptive to publicising your work, especially if it ties up with another local issue, or a wider national initiative.

Key considerations before you start

- It is vital that anyone being interviewed, or acting as a spokesperson, has been briefed with all the main facts, figures and messages to convey before they go on record – especially if they are likely to face any difficult questions – so you need to make sure they have all the information they need well in advance.
- You might like to produce a Question and Answer sheet to make sure your spokesperson is comfortable talking about the DRE programme.
- Inform the programme producer or station manager about any sensitivities in the local BME communities around talking about mental health because the last thing you want to do is alienate your audience.

Communication pilot 2: Running an event in Bradford

The tenth largest city in England, Bradford has a large number of recent immigrants and a population of 485,000, of which about 20% is Asian. (Sourced from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_Bradford)



Aim of the activity

To give Delivering Race Equality (DRE) in particular, and mental health issues in general, a higher profile.

Main audience

The local South Asian community.

Method used

A community event featuring a guest keynote speaker and representatives from different local black and ethnic minority (BME) communities. Following the formal presentations, there was also an opportunity for people to ask questions. This was followed by a drama production. Approximately 30 people from the local South Asian community attended.

The event was produced by Sharing Voices, a community development mental health organisation working in the inner city areas of Bradford, in partnership with the Bradford Focused Implementation Site (FIS).

Local reactions

People liked the event and found it a friendly, welcoming way of finding out more about mental health issues – some even took family and friends. The pilot demonstrated that face to face contact is very important when trying to convey aspects of mental health issues in BME communities, as is the use of personal stories and experiences, all of which help to reduce any elements of taboo and shame surrounding the subject. Comments from people who attended include:

- ‘They told us about DRE and what it does.’
- ‘It was the kind of thing you would take your family or close friends to.’
- ‘Some important people were there.’



Benefits of running a local community event

- It can be a very cost effective method of getting a variety of positive, controlled messages over to a large number of people at one time – not just to your main BME audience, but also other health professionals and stakeholders as a way of encouraging more joint working in future.
- It is a particularly good way to let people know about both mental health conditions and treatment options. Not only does it help educate individuals on the choices available, but it also lets them build trust with service providers, putting a personal face on a public system. It also lets people consider issues and ask questions in a ‘safe’ and non-threatening environment.
- There are lots of publicity opportunities both during and after an event – for example, inviting the local media to attend means they can reiterate your main messages, spreading the word to a wider audience after it has taken place.

If you would like to do something similar ...

- Remember that all events need to be properly planned well in advance – for example, you would need to start working on a one-day event attracting around 100 people about four months ahead, as there are so many details to consider and arrangements to organise.
- You will also have to give careful thought to timing, content, location and budget. It may be worth approaching other like-minded organisations with a view to running a joint event and sharing the administration and costs.
- If you invite media to this kind of event ensure that they have enough information about the DRE programme. Media may also like to photograph and interview people at the event so make sure you have people prepared for this in advance.

Key considerations before you start

Some questions to consider when thinking about running an event are

- Who do you want to attend/speak/perform?
- What do you want the audience to do/know as a result of attending?
- Do you have any leaflets that people can take away with them?

Communication pilot 3:

Recording and distributing a rap in Leeds

The third biggest city in England, Leeds has a population of approximately half a million people and enjoys a rich multi-ethnic and racial mix. As with the country's other core cities, music forms an integral and important part of the local youth culture, especially among young males. (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leeds>)



Aim of the activity

To bring mental health issues to the attention of young black males.

Main audience

Young black Caribbean men.

Method used

Providing the opportunity for young men to compose and record their own rap track based around personal impressions and experiences of mental health issues – then distributing it around local community groups via an MP3 file loaded onto a memory stick. The music contained messages around general well-being and indicated other local services where people could go for help. The initiative was made possible by working in partnership with a Leeds-based community group called Touchstone, which has a vision to ‘deliver outstanding services that transform the lives of people experiencing mental health difficulties.’

Local reactions

Feedback was very positive, with rap music being considered an excellent youth medium, and one to which the target audience could wholly relate. Comments included:

- ‘I think it sounds like it’s been written by people like us, like it’s from one of our own.’
- ‘Some of the lyrics you can’t get – you’d have to listen to it again ... but you would, it’s good.’
- ‘I don’t think they could have done any better.’

Benefits of using music

- It allows you to use your audience’s peers to talk to them in their own language – and therefore they are more open to the messages being conveyed.
- It generates an emotional as well as an intellectual response in listeners – allowing the messages to stick.
- It also tends to be replayed, encouraging the constant reinforcement of those messages.

If you would like to do something similar ...

- This approach would work best if you are looking to reach younger BME audiences.
- Music is particularly important in the lives of most teenagers and they are the people most likely to listen to any communications into which it is integrated – even more so if they can relate to the band or individuals who have produced it.
- Work in partnership with a local production company or radio station to develop the music.

Key considerations before you start

- Be sure that you are using the appropriate style of music to reach the audience you have in mind – there are many different contemporary genres, and your message runs the risk of missing its mark completely if it is not aimed with careful precision.
- If you do not know the particular community well, then you may need to conduct in-depth research with your audience before producing anything aimed at them.



Communication pilot 4:

Producing leaflets in Manchester and London

Manchester (population 452,000) and London (population 7.5 million) are both dense conurbations with a high percentage of BME communities, mostly concentrated within the inner city areas. While different cultures in both cities face a range of race-specific issues, there are a number of similar problems caused by mental health issues unrelated to culture, background and location. These include feeling isolated, strained relations with friends and family, and concerns around finding and keeping housing and jobs. (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester>)



Aim of the activity

To provide several different BME communities with leaflets about mental well-being, containing details of local mental health services and contacts for key community organisations.

Main audience

- South Asian women in Manchester
- Turkish/Kurdish and Irish communities in London

Method used

Partnerships were established with the following three community organisations working with specific local BME groups:

- Hosla in Manchester to target South Asian women aged 35 - 60
- Derman in Hackney, London to target Turkish/Kurdish communities
- BIAS in Brent, London to target Irish communities

In each case, face to face meetings took place with key members of the organisations in order to identify and discuss what could be done to improve the existing literature, and to tailor it more closely to the needs of the local community in question.

Following these meetings, new leaflets were produced which took account of the specific issues facing each culture and community, as well as the more general ones, mentioned above.

Local reactions

Each leaflet had a positive impact on the targeted community. For example, comments from Hosla, an outreach and aftercare service providing practical and emotional support to Asian women and their children who have experienced, or are experiencing, domestic violence, included:

- 'The leaflet made it clear that there is help available from people who understand your community and who know what to do.'
- 'I think it will generate lots of attention – everyone will get something out of this.'
- 'It's really clear and easy to use.'
- 'The colours are strong, it would definitely get my attention.'

Benefits of using leaflets to communicate

- Depending on how they are branded and from whom they appear to be coming, leaflets are a very versatile method of conveying facts and advice with authority (although it should always be clear who has produced it).
- Methods of distribution are also very flexible – hard copies of leaflets can be put through doors, inserted in magazines or left in the reception areas of other health services. They can also be left in public places like shops, libraries or cafés. Electronic versions of leaflets can be posted on websites or emailed.

If you would like to do something similar ...

- Keep language simple, sentences short and don't use jargon. Also avoid using too many figures and statistics.
- Include a balance of information and solutions – ideally with case studies or quotes from real people – plus contact names and numbers, having agreed inclusion of these with the local organisations in question.
- It is important to explore all aspects of translation issues based on your knowledge of the local community – not only to ensure the leaflets are produced in different languages, but in different formats, especially audio, as some communities are much more receptive to the spoken word, rather than the written one.

Key considerations before you start

- Decide what you want to say and how to say it as clearly and in as few words as possible.
- You will need to include images as well as text, and to break the text up into separate sections and sub-headings, in order to make it easier to read and understand. Bullet points also help people get around the text in the most logical order.
- Plan how you are going to distribute the leaflet – perhaps via the local community centre or GP surgery.
- Size is important – people need to be able to put your leaflet into a handbag or pocket to take away and read again later.
- Be aware that translating into most languages increases the number of words on the page by approximately 25%, so ensure you build in space for this.

Have you found this guide useful?

We welcome feedback on this guide. We would also like to hear about any communications activities you are currently running in BME communities, and any lessons learned in the process that other CDWs might find helpful.

Please email any ideas and experiences to dre@forster.co.uk

Useful contacts:

General

- Department of Health:
www.dh.gov.uk
- NHS Choices:
www.nhs.uk

Regional

- BIAS (Brent, London):
www.biasbrent.co.uk
- Derman (Hackney, London):
www.derman.org.uk
- Hosla (Manchester):
www.hosla.org.uk
- New Style Radio (Birmingham):
www.newstyleradio.co.uk
- Touchstone (Leeds):
www.touchstone-leeds.co.uk
- Sharing Voices (Bradford):
www.sharingvoices.org.uk

