



REACH

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECT

Voluntary Action Fund: REACH Community Health Project, Govanhill, Glasgow

Background: REACH Community Health Project

REACH Community Health Project (<http://www.reachhealth.org.uk/>) is a national third sector organisation with a key strategic role in improving the health, wellbeing and health care provision of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in Scotland. REACH has units engaged in culturally sensitive Service Provision, Policy and Research as well as Training and Development. These areas of expertise act to mutually reinforce one another and make REACH uniquely placed to tackle health inequalities and service barriers faced by BME communities.

How the Grant Funding was used

REACH Community Health received a grant of £50,000 from the Scottish Government Equality Unit for 2012 -2013. The grant was awarded to develop and deliver an *“Employability & Health: BME Skills Development Training Programme* to address the under representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities including refugee groups in the job market. Outcomes were to increase participant’s confidence, self-esteem; motivation and employability knowledge with a particular focus on enabling those that have been inactive due to health issues to enter employability route via training and education thus enhancing their integration and contribution to the Scottish society and economy. The grant has helped to develop and deliver Skills Development Path Training Programme to BME communities and provide one-to-one support and advice on a regular basis on a variety of employability related issues. Also helped to engage with a diverse BME community individuals and groups and deliver support and advice. To get a flavour of benefits of the grant to BME communities please refer to page 2.

Many BME groups in Scotland experience higher rates of poverty than the White British, in terms of income, lack of work, inadequate basic necessities and living in areas of deprivation.

BME groups generally have worse health than the overall population, although the patterns of ethnic health inequalities are very diverse. Ethnic health inequalities result from many interlinking factors, of which the relative poverty and unemployment of BME groups are probably the most important. “Over 56% of white people are economically active compared

to 45% of non-white people, albeit this varies among the different BME communities”¹
Among BME the highest number BME populations living in Glasgow are of Pakistani origin, “the Pakistani and other South Asian communities as well as the Black community have a lower economic activity rate and higher unemployment rate.”²

What Changes the VAF Grant Helped Bring About

The grant from the Scottish Government has helped achieve the following outcomes:

The benefits from an organisational level

- Has helped REACH to strengthen its employability and health areas of work.
- Has helped REACH to reinforce the skills resources of staff and volunteers.
- Has helped REACH to strengthen partnerships with existing stakeholders and build and develop new partnerships with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, Skills Development Scotland, Health Social Care Alliance Scotland, Langside College and others.

The benefits to clients from BME backgrounds

- REACH has increased its engagement with BME groups 86 clients in the first year have benefited towards their employability goals in numerous ways. Delivered 14 Skills Development Path Training Sessions.
- All 86 had at least once on-to-one assessment with an advisor and all of them have their Personal Development Plan prepared to work towards their aim in a systematic way with regular ongoing support. Clients who have fully engaged in the programme are more confident and have gained a better understanding of self-worth and their potential. Examples of some of the key benefits are as follows
 - 21 individuals had one-to-one support to for job searching skills
 - 65 had support to develop their CV
 - 23 had ESOL assessment & 14 have already started their ESOL class
 - 10 had support in volunteering and 6 are now volunteering at REACH and 4 with RNIB

¹ Employability and BME communities in Glasgow, Stephen McGill, Glasgow Planning Let, 2007, page 1
<http://www.glasgowworks.eu/NR/rdonlyres/4965766A-E5C2-4E4D-B77A-8397ECBB3A10/0/EmployabilityandBMEcommunitiesinGlasgowFinalReport2007.pdf> (viewed on 12 Jun 2012)

² Employability and BME communities in Glasgow, Stephen McGill, Glasgow Planning Let, 2007, page 1
<http://www.glasgowworks.eu/NR/rdonlyres/4965766A-E5C2-4E4D-B77A-8397ECBB3A10/0/EmployabilityandBMEcommunitiesinGlasgowFinalReport2007.pdf> (viewed on 12 Jun 2012)

The project benefited from VAF's training sessions, which helped to gain new skills for REACH staff and regular meetings of REACH project team with VAF Programme Development Officers was a great support to deliver the project successfully.

Challenges in Developing & Delivering the Project

On a general level the key challenges have been the current poor state of the labour market with intense competition for available jobs. The majority of the clients accessing the service were difficult to fit into and or meet the criteria required by traditional/major employers, due to their cultural and language barrier.

The clients on the programme although motivated and skilled lacked the extra resilience to stay motivated if they fail to get the job or placement. The challenge was to develop resilience and sustain motivation throughout their journey towards employment/employability route. Some clients had unrealistic expectations and expected instant success. One way of address this was to introduce them to role models from a similar background and who had been on a similar journey. Clients were encouraged to plan for the future and regard small achievements as successes and markers towards their ultimate goal.

Many clients were also not fully aware of the benefits of work experience and volunteering as their understanding of the concept was not clear. The challenge was to present volunteering and work-experience as a way to develop an employability profile, gain a credible work reference and to tap into employment networks. The Project overcame this through planned workshops with agencies who would take volunteers, i.e. the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and by providing more information about volunteering.

What Surprised Us as the Project Unfolded

There were a number of surprises as the Project unfolded:

- The overwhelming response from partner agencies and from clients, which meant putting temporary pause on client referrals from Job Centre Plus for a month (Jan – Feb 2013) to ease off the caseload.
- Within seven months of the Project a client who was recovering from a long term illness felt that the opportunity to reuse her skills through volunteering at REACH helped her to regain her self-worth and motivation. Moreover, she was able to secure a sessional position with NHS Scotland as a way of returning towards full time work.

The Most Exciting thing about the Project

The most exciting thing was to track the change in people as they progressed through the project. Clients made a commitment to follow their Personal Development Plan realising that applying a systematic approach to their goals and objectives would benefit across all aspects of their lives.

To see a smile on faces of clients who had lost hope and lacked confidence suddenly enjoying and showing confidence by being recruited as volunteers.

Future Plans

REACH plans to continue to develop links to provide people with a wide range of employment, development opportunities and to undertake a more proactive approach to out-reach delivery of training development programmes. REACH will continue to develop ways to help people towards self-management of their employment goals and to manage and follow a Personal Development Plan and raise awareness of impacts of unemployment/employment on an individual's health and wellbeing.

REACH will target and build partnership with employers from BME businesses in order support our clients into volunteering and possible employment.

REACH hopes to have an event later in 2013 to share the leanings from the project with other stakeholders, meet with other employability agencies, and provide opportunities for prospective BME employees to meet face to face with employers and training providers.

For further information please contact Shabir Banday, Director on 0141 585 8022 (shabir@reachhealth.org.uk)

April 2013