

## **Moulsecoomb Inclusion Project**

### **What was the issue?**

The role of the Moulsecoomb Inclusion Project is three fold

- To engage with seldom heard communities
- To support representative neighbourhood forums
- To support community buildings towards sustainability

This case study describes how the Project has engaged with seldom heard communities over the last two years.

A community audit in November 2005 had explored the experience of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in Moulsecoomb showing that

- Many BME residents feel isolated, have experienced harassment and lack support.
- There are low levels of involvement in local community based activities and use of facilities by BME residents.
- Agencies have struggled to engage different communities and there is a lack of partnership work to guide the development of strategic initiatives.

Audit extracts:

*'..nearly a fifth of the respondents cited racism as a regular problem ... However, there was interest from a significant number of residents in being involved in initiatives... There was some positive support for setting up multi-cultural events and potential support groups and representative forums.'*

*"Of the twenty caseloads that I currently carry, only one is happy to remain living in the area. Of the (BME) people I work with it is generally considered not a good place to be." (Agency worker).*

### **Who did you engage with?**

We aimed to engage with BME groups in Moulsecoomb. We began with the Bangladeshi community because it had been identified as the largest minority in the area. We focussed on engaging with women because they were usually the most isolated as they tended to be based at home. Over time we are supporting the group to expand and include women from many backgrounds.

### **What did you do?**

#### **Step One – Identify members of the community and their interests**

We made contact with as many Bangladeshi families in the area as we could.

We used lots of different methods including

- contacting parents through the Primary school as demographic data showed that many families had young children,

- through the electoral role, identifying households with traditional Bangladeshi surnames and knocking on doors,
- partnering with the Working Together Project who had been researching training needs amongst the Bangladeshi Community across the City.
- networking with everyone we contacted to see if they knew of anyone else
- working closely with an interpreter who knew the community well

Lots of people wanted to learn about First Aid so the Working Together Project set up a days training with an interpreter at Moulsecoomb Primary School.

### **Step Two – Bring people together and agree common interests**

The First Aid training was a success and the women were keen to meet again and talk about other training and activities they could do. We held a second meeting and identified areas of interest.

The top ones were

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**Drug abuse - information for children**

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**Childminding training**

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**Morals and children**

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**Exercise, relaxation, dance and keep fit**

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**Swimming group**

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**Teaching Bengali to children**

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**ESOL Basic and advanced**

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**Life in the UK test**

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We arranged to meet regularly, share lunch, hear from a speaker and plan activities.

### **Step Three – Offer a regular, supported place to meet**

The group initially met at Moulsecoomb Primary School because it was safe, familiar and very welcoming. Members of the group took turns to cook for the meeting and we reimbursed their costs.

Interesting speakers were invited to each meeting such as Drug and Alcohol Advice workers from RUOK and East Brighton Healthy Living Centre, the Police, the Family Information Service, Housing Officers, Racial Harassment Officer, Cancer Screening and the Carer's Centre. Helped by an interpreter the women found it a really useful opportunity to find out about the different services and ask questions.

### **Step Four – Work with partners to offer new and existing supported activities**

The women were concerned about community safety and by working jointly with the Police and Housing we were able to tackle some longstanding anti-social behaviour neighbour issues. This success increased the confidence levels within the group around reporting crime and safety issues to the Police.

We worked with a range of partners to ensure activities were accessible to the women in the group.

The Friends Centre met with the group to explore reenergising **English classes** in the school and found that by changing to a female teacher the women were much keener to attend. We have worked closely with the English teacher who often attends the monthly lunch meetings and teaches the language needed for the other activities the group are doing.

The women were very keen to go **swimming** and through many steps we have achieved this. At the time there wasn't a suitable swimming session as there were no women-only swimming sessions in the City with a female lifeguard. We hired a pool with a crèche for four Saturdays and were overwhelmed when over 30 women attended each time. Young women who had never swum experienced the water for the first time and older women who hadn't swum for 30 years rediscovered the water. Through joint working with the East Brighton Healthy Living Centre, the City Council and DC Leisure Management we managed to get a suitable weekly lunchtime swimming session at St Luke's Pool.

In partnership with the East Brighton Healthy Living Centre we offered women only **exercise** classes for the group. Through the Bridge Community Education Centre the group did a **tailoring** class and an **ESOL and cookery** class. We visited the local **library** and the group were shown round, how to join and participated in the Boogie Baby session. We offered yoga and assertiveness sessions in partnership with BMECP.

#### **Step Five – Diversify activities and the membership of the group**

As the group gains in confidence they have started to diversify their activities and women from other backgrounds have joined the group. A mixed group of women now go swimming together and attend a gentle exercise class each week. The group have just been on their first **Health Walk** in Wild Park.

The group is **constituted** and they have opened a **bank account**. NovasScarman through the Can Do Health Programme are funding the monthly lunch meetings so the women can continue to promote health activities amongst the multi-cultural communities of Moulsecoomb.

The group have organised two **summer trips** which families from across Moulsecoomb have all enjoyed.

The group cook for local community events such as the summer fair at Moulsecoomb Primary School, Moulsecoomb Family Fun Day, the Trust for Developing Communities AGM and a Healthy Living Centre Roadshow.

### **What was the impact?**

The impact of the project has been to

- Increase the confidence, skills and knowledge of the women in the group
- Be an example of good practice and a catalyst for the City and nationally. Similar projects are now running in Hangleton and Knoll and Tarnar. The Project was cited by the Chartered Institute of Housing as an example of good practice in involving Muslim communities.
- Introduce different service providers to the needs of seldom hear communities and how they might deliver that service in a more appropriate way
- Improve links with key service providers such as the Police and Housing.
- Strengthen links between the local Bangladeshi community and the wider Moulsecoomb community
- Raise the profile of minority communities in the area

### **What barriers, challenges or points of learning did you identify from the process?**

- Don't assume anything, ask the community you are working with what works best for them
- Work with a member of that community, perhaps an interpreter or community development worker
- Be prepared to pay for a professional interpreter at first in order to avoid conflicts of interest
- Develop a 'stepping stone' such as the lunch meetings to act as a hub from which other activities can be accessed and information can be disseminated
- Don't be surprised by the energy and enthusiasm that can be unleashed from communities who haven't participated in community activities before
- Be creative in how meetings are run – formal meetings aren't for everyone
- Let the group set the pace, it takes time to build trust and develop confidence
- Network with potential partners and find ways of joint working that meet the needs of the group
- Food can be easily shared and is a useful way of overcoming language barriers. Cooking for the group helps to build confidence enormously. We tried meeting without lunch and the women stopped coming!
- There's more to be done, it would be great to have a women only swimming session on a Saturday for example.