

Equality and Diversity Case Studies
Directorate: Adult Social Care and Health
Service: Health and Well-being

Title: FIVE TO STRIVE – CREATING CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES CONFIDENCE COURSE

Introduction: A strand of the Council's Five to Strive Project is the delivery of a series of confidence courses across the Borough to residents in three of our most deprived communities, based in designated Super Output Areas. By supporting them, using volunteer mentors, to achieve a number of personal well-being goals, residents can begin to make long-term improvements to their life. The modules are designed to be informal and friendly, using participatory appraisal techniques, which reduces the need for people to have good literacy or numeracy. Attendees learn by discussing and sharing experiences and, as described, by having one-to-one support to help reach their goals.

The Council recruited over 40 volunteer mentors from organisations including CwaC and partner organisations from across the Borough. These Mentors work alongside individuals and provide support such as:

- providing advice;
- managing money;
- help with form filling (including application forms) ;
- accompanying people to appointments and meetings;
- directing people to specialist services.

The free courses are held in a local venue and are open to ages from 17 upwards. We pay child and carer costs to course participants, so that these are not barriers to participation.

Challenges:

1. Recruitment of the course participants, as we wanted to attract people who would normally be considered "hard-to-reach". They would also need to have a personal desire to want to make changes in their life, as well as committing to a weekly, nine-module course.

2. To support a mixed group of course participants – gender, age, disability, ethnicity and background.
3. To run a course with a group of people who had mixed levels of numeracy and literacy.
4. To address the specific needs of course participants e.g. a group of young women living in a hostel who have experienced domestic violence.

How the challenges were overcome:

1. By recruiting in a variety of ways:
 - Referrals through professionals (social workers, health visitors, district nurses etc)
 - Using partners to promote the courses – newsletters, at meetings, fliers
 - Face-to-face meetings e.g. at New Deal, Childrens' Centres etc
2. By having a group contract, established on the first module, so that the group could set its own rules for a successful course. These included things like (smoking) breaks, timeliness, and confidentiality.
3. By using participatory appraisal techniques in the course, a methodology which requires relatively low levels of literacy and numeracy, as it is very visual
4. We have allowed support/project workers, or family members, to attend with the course participants if they lack the confidence to attend on their own. However, we have been very pleased to note that on the three occasions this has happened, to date, the participants felt confident to attend on their own after the first week.
5. We assigned, as requested, a female mentor to a vulnerable young woman who had experienced domestic violence. Issues of personal safety also need to be considered where women continue to be at risk of domestic violence.
6. Child and carer costs are paid so that these are not barriers to participation.

Outcomes:

1. We want to improve community engagement and close the gap between residents in the poorest areas and those who live in our more affluent ones. These courses have been designed to offer residents the opportunity to make a real and positive difference to their lives by providing the support they need to learn new skills and become more positive and motivated.
2. The courses have attracted a very diverse group of people:
 - Age - range from 17 to mid 70s

- Gender - males make up about a third of the total participants
- Ethnicity - one course is attended by a male, gay, Muslim, gypsy.
- Disability – currently, we have one young woman in a wheelchair and a couple of women who have mild learning difficulties attending courses. This number is set to rise with two new courses beginning in May.
- The majority of people on the courses are unemployed
- A number of young women are from a Women's Hostel.

What we could have done better:

Time will tell whether it would be better to target courses to specific groups of people, or to run them as mixed groups as we are currently doing.

The ethnic mix of people on the course could be more diverse. In particular, the courses do not seem to have attracted people with Asian or Eastern European backgrounds. Some more targeted publicity may address this issue.

Further information:

- **Five to strive diary (PDF)**
- **Equality impact assessment on five to strive project (PDF)**