

COMPACT AT WORK



Engaging hard to reach groups to inform health priorities in Tower Hamlets

Shortlisted for
Compact
Awards 2015

The Community Intelligence Bursary (CIB) is a grant programme jointly funded by Tower Hamlets Healthwatch and Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and supported by Tower Hamlets CVS and Public Health. It seeks to ensure the needs and views of the local community, particularly those seldom heard, directly impact on how services are designed, commissioned and delivered in the borough, by funding voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations who have experience of working closely with the local community to carry out research.

Published:
January 2016

Theme:
Engagement

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What Happened

Discussions at a meeting of the Tower Hamlets Voluntary Sector Health and Wellbeing Forum in January 2015 revealed that statutory health partners were struggling to effectively engage with the local community, and in particular, marginalised groups.

In response to this, the CIB was set up; a small panel, consisting of Tower Hamlets CVS, Healthwatch, the CCG and Public Health, awarded research grants of up to £5,000 to VCS organisations to gather community feedback on commissioning priorities including older people, carers, children and young people, GP practices, dual diagnosis, cancer services, integrated care, the eastern European community and any other unidentified needs. The intention in having VCS organisations carry out the research was to utilise these organisations' experience of working with "hard to reach" members of the community in order to hear their views.

Seventeen organisations were successful in applying for these grants and were trained to professionally conduct research by Citizens UK and Queen Mary University. The individual

reports they produced were combined into a community intelligence report outlining cross-cutting themes, including:

- Acknowledgement that the voluntary and community sector is often the preferred provider of health and social care services.
- Funding cuts are having an impact on local voluntary sector infrastructure, putting existing community services at risk. The impact is likely to be felt most by older people.
- Issues around awareness of and accessibility of services are recurring themes in Tower Hamlets, due to its cultural diversity.
- Unemployment for working age men is cited as a major contributory factor to mental health problems.

A stakeholder event was held on 8th September 2015 to discuss the initial findings and make further recommendations. It was attended by 130 people, including residents and representatives from the VCS and statutory health partners.

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Compact Principles

1. A strong, diverse and independent civil society
2. Effective and transparent design and development of services
5. An equal and fair society

Tags

Engagement

Equality

Health

...Continued

Impact

The programme engaged more than 2,000 people over the course of two months. Recommendations from the report will feed into the CCG's commissioning intentions, as well as the local authority's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy refresh, and inform the work of Healthwatch and the wider VCS. The total cost of the programme was less than £50,000.

The bursary programme is a significant piece of collaborative work which demonstrates effective cross sector partnership working. It has been welcomed by all partners as an innovative bottom up solution to gathering community intelligence and provided an opportunity for partners to align their priorities and share information more strategically, avoiding duplication.

Community researchers involved in the programme formed a peer support network, allowing information to be exchanged between organisations who might not otherwise have interacted.

The programme provided capacity building support to the VCS. The community researchers, many of whom had not conducted any research in the past, were accredited with a certificate from Queen Mary University on community research methods.

Relevant Compact Principles

1. A strong, diverse and independent civil society
2. Effective and transparent design and development of services
5. An equal and fair society

Related links

- Healthwatch Tower Hamlets: Community Intelligence bursary project page: www.healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk/our-work/community-intelligence-bursary/
- Blog from Tower Hamlets CVS reporting on the stakeholder event: www.thcvs.org.uk/blog/health-conversation-beginning-journey-0



Pictured: stakeholder event held on 8th September 2015