

Community Voices

Health Inclusion with Black, Brown,
Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities

April – Sept 22

The Trust for Developing Communities

The Hangleton and Knoll Project

Sussex Interpreting Services



**The Hangleton
& Knoll Project**
Working for a better community

Overview

This report describes the work and impact of the Community Voices project during April – October 2022. The work was jointly funded by Sussex NHS Commissioners as one of a series of Health Inclusion projects and by Brighton and Hove City Council as part of their Third Sector Commission engagement with Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

The Community Voices project takes an innovative approach to ensure that the voices of ethnic minority communities can have a direct impact on health and Council policy.

We brought commissioners and decision makers together to talk directly with members of communities affected by issues, providing new insight for commissioners and empowering community members.

The project was delivered by a partnership between members of the Community Voices group, the Trust for Developing Communities, the Hangleton and Knoll Project and Sussex Interpreting Services.

Introduction

The Community Voices Group (CVG) held its first session in January 2021 via Zoom.

In this first session, there were 18 people in attendance. The group was reflective of the City's ethnic and cultural diversity. Several ethnic and cultural groups were represented, including, Indian-sub-continent, South-East Asia, West and North Africa, West and East Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. This was a lively and productive discussion.

Since the launch of the Community Voices Group Project, it is evolving to become an established and well-regarded forum for meetings between people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds and representatives from NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council. This view is held by the community members who attend the sessions and public service representatives of NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council.

The CVG project was initiated with the objective of addressing the lack of direct engagement between the people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds and NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council representatives and decision makers. The rationale underpinning the initiative was to meet several needs and address issues identified in past research and consultations. These include:

- Identifying and implementing feedback systems to participants
- Increasing awareness of divergent cultural sensitivities across the different cultural and ethnic groups
- Opening opportunities for building trust and confidence between both parties
- Opportunities for consultations and research to be more reflective of and influenced by issues identified and raised in the City's ethnically and culturally diverse communities.

The CVG sessions are a meeting place where areas of mutual concerns and interest are shared between service providers and service users.

This project allows service users to set agendas through the topics and subjects they present to NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council representatives.

This initiative's ambition is for people and representatives from diverse communities to intervene and get involved in decisions about the services they receive.

Background

The current CVG delivery partners are Trust for Developing Communities (TDC), Hangleton & Knoll Project (HKP) and Sussex Interpreting Services (SIS). It should be noted, that the Racial Harassment Forum was previously a partner, but withdrew due to capacity. The project is funded by Brighton & Hove City Council and NHS Sussex.

The purpose of the Community Voices Group is for its attendees and members to represent, advocate on behalf of, and reflect the views, opinions, and perceptions of people in their communities on matters and issues that are important to them. The group also provides feedback on information, policy plans and decisions of local Health and Council services.

Membership of the Community Voices Group has been through the invitation of the project partners. All members either represent or are from a Black, Asian, other culturally or ethnically diverse community in Brighton & Hove.

The project delivery partners have built and developed good levels of trust and understanding with the CVG members. Membership attendance is good and varies according to the areas, subjects and topics being discussed. Feedback from members indicate they value and welcome this opportunity to discuss matters among themselves and with representatives for the statutory service decision makers.

Vital to the success of the CVG and this initiative as a whole is the active engagement of the City Council and local NHS in the feedback and follow-up processes. Naturally, that process of engagement needs to extend beyond sending representatives to attend CVG sessions. Of significance is the action taken by the City Council and local NHS in response to the issues and concerns raised by the CVG.

There is an expectation that the City Council and local NHS ensure they provide appropriate feedback to the CVG on how the matters they have raised might be addressed. Beyond the meeting between CVG members and representatives from the City Council and NHS, it is expected that relevant people or departments will be delegated responsibility to follow up and explore solutions to the subjects raised in the CVG sessions.

To date, the engagement by the City Council and local NHS with the CVG has been exemplary. All parties are committed to this process and are confident they will continue their support and participation in this valuable exchange between service users and providers.

Meeting arrangements

On-line. The Community Voices Group has found meeting online very useful. It enables them to meet in an evening without travelling or organising childcare. However this can limit the informal conversations and connections between group members.

In-person. The group is reviewing when and how often to meet in person and is likely to adopt a hybrid model. We are planning an in-person meeting and consultation to inform these plans.

Interpreting support. We are adapting the meeting cycles to allow time for language-based pre-meetings so that those with low levels of English can contribute to the topic discussions.

Supporting the group towards independence

We are working with the group to explore ways of supporting them to run independently. We are considering linking them with an organisation that has a specific focus on work with ethnically and culturally diverse communities as well as constituting as a group.

Initial findings are that the group would like to continue with the support of a host organisation rather than manage the meetings themselves.

We are working with an independent consultant to explore the feasibility of a new partner. The conclusion will be a written report on the feasibility and identify actions and consideration necessary to ensure a successful transfer. It is envisaged the report will include,

- The timeframe involved
- Key operational and practical stages in the transfer of delivery
- Expectations and any requirements from commissioners for the transfer
- The continued involvement and role of current partners
- The views of Community Voices Group members
- A review of suitable lead partner candidates
- The process for selecting the new lead

Summary of the work

Meetings held:

The current meeting pattern is

- a meeting with partners and Community Voices group members to get feedback from past issues and brainstorm new topics
- then a meeting with partners and Community Voices group members to talk more in depth about the selected topic
- followed by a third meeting with partners, Community Voices group members and commissioners where the discussion points are presented.

The project partners, TDC, HKP and SIS, also met routinely to plan and co-ordinate the work.

Involving people with low levels of English.

Our partner organisation Sussex Interpreting Services are involved in the facilitation of the Community Voices group sessions as well as with meetings with NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council. They contribute an expert strategic perspective to all issues raised and subjects' discussion.

The SIS team tasked their linguists to introduce and discuss the nature and concept of the Community Voices Group with people they typically work with. The linguists supported their service users to identify subjects of concerns, and issues they were experiences with NHS or City Council services. The linguists then attended the CVG session, retelling matters that had been brought to their attention.

At all CVG sessions we have attendees who work or volunteer for SIS. Their presence ensures matters and perspectives from people with low levels of English are always reflected in the subjects discussed.

Our recently published Information Flyer outlining the purpose of the Community Voices Group has been produced in several of the most popular languages. The flyer is intended to raise awareness and encourage new attendees.

Topics discussed

The topics identified and discussed by the group these six months are:

1. Mental Health and cultural sensitivities
2. Intersectionality
3. Language and Communication
4. Consultation with diverse community groups
5. Awareness of, and access to, Mental Health services and support:
6. ESOL provision (classes, courses, and opportunities) (Nov & Dec 2022)

1. **Mental health and cultural sensitivities:**

Cultural sensitivity was identified as an important factor that governs the extent to which people (especially women) from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds fully receive the mental healthcare support and services they need. Observance of cultural norms, expectations or traditions provide a bedrock upon which one can feel at ease, open and responsive. It is possible that in the absence of traditional cultural norms people may lack confidence, feel uncomfortable, inhibited, or self-conscious. In these circumstances the chances of a successful (satisfying) interaction will be challenging. Those with English as a second language can face additional barriers when navigating appropriate support and services.

The CVG wish to impress upon service providers that in the context of health services and health information, ensuring interactions and engagement appropriately reflects and acknowledges cultural sensitivity is an important factor in the relationship between service provider and service user.

- ### 2. **Intersectionality:**
- The importance of recognising intersectionality across and within communities. Lack of in depth or true complex understanding of intersectionality at the heart of organisations impacts on the quality and appropriateness of services. Acknowledging intersectionality helps ensure non-dominant voices are heard.

The CVG requested NHS Sussex and relevant Brighton & Hove City Council departments factor intersectionality considerations in planning service provision and decision making. They would like to see demonstrable evidence that public services understand intersectionality and that there is appropriate implementation embedded across respective provisions.

- ### 3. **Language and communication:**
- The importance and significance that language and communication plays in effective access and engagement between culturally and ethnically diverse communities, NHS, and Brighton & Hove service provisions.

The CVG asked NHS Sussex and relevant BHCC departments to undertake action to minimise the impact and possibility of not receiving appropriate services or support for service users who struggle with effectively communicating in English.

4. **Consultation with diverse community groups:** The importance of an appropriate approach to consultation when considering implementing new or amended services that will impact the lives and access to services for residents of Brighton and Hove.

The CVG members asked NHS Sussex and relevant Brighton and Hove Council departments to ensure a broad and systematic approach is adopted to community consultation, research, and engagement. Further, consideration is given to the identification and implementation of principles of best practice in their community consultation, research, and engagement.

5. **Awareness of, and access to, mental health services and support:**

How can ethnic and culturally diverse communities ensure they know about the full range of mental health service and support available? What are the options and ways they can find information on mental health services and support they might benefit from? What action is being taken to support communities who struggle to engage with mental health services due to cultural stigma or language barriers?

There was concern amongst CVG members that despite much information being produced, activities and initiatives being developed and delivered, many people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds were still failing to be aware what support and services they could access

- **ESOL Classes, courses and opportunities.** (Discussed Nov and Dec 22)
How can the City Council ensure there are assessable and affordable ESOL opportunities that take account of the different needs and circumstances of all who want to improve their English? What is there on offer and how can people access it?

A good command of English was acknowledged as the key factor in integration, access to opportunities and good well-being. Although there is a recognition there is ESOL provision in the City, many felt there was little flexibility, with most adopting a standard literacy-based approach. A more diverse offer is being requested, one that accommodates the spectrum of people and circumstances.

Response and discussion between the group and commissioners

Representatives from NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council are invited to attend meetings with CVG members. These sessions provide an opportunity for staff from NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) to directly hear the detail and real-life examples of issues of concern from the CVG members. Although there are key named contacts and attendees from NHS Sussex and BHCC, also invited to these sessions are members from departments relevant to the topic discussed.

These meetings are now followed up by a subsequent meeting between the project partners and NHS and BHCC representatives where work is undertaken to refine the subjects discussed and explore the extent to which they are to be addressed.

To facilitate this process a monitoring and review process has recently been introduced. This documented process has been designed to keep a record of the topics discussed. The process asks for an initial response from NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council representatives and an indication on how the topic will be followed up or likely to be addressed. The project partners then periodically request what progress, if any, has been made on specific issues brought to the attention of NHS and BHCC. Once the update has been received it is recorded and communicated to the CVG members. This process provides all parties with a record of how subjects and solutions are progressing.

This review and monitoring also helps address the negative perception commonly held by some people that despite their engagement with services providers, matters do not appear to change.

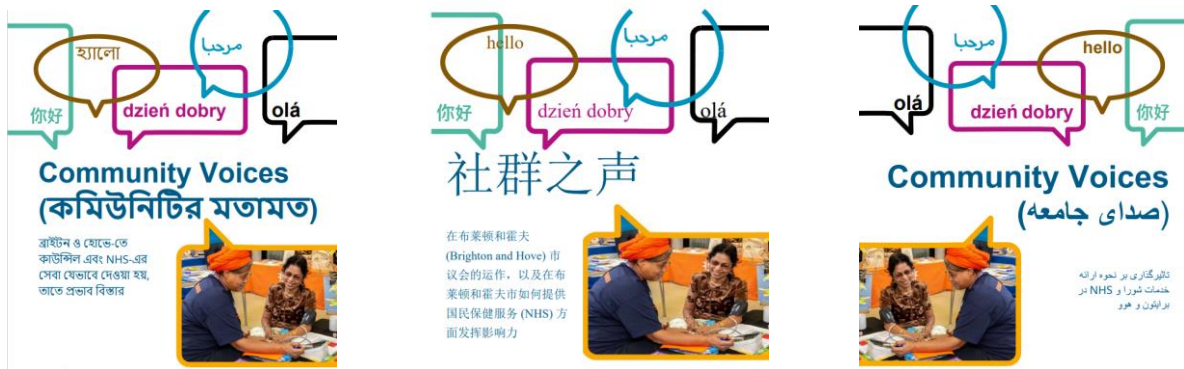
This process is still in its early stages, and it will be reviewed after six months. This assessment will seek to establish the extent to which the process is achieving what it has been designed to do. Any changes to enhance its effectiveness will be implemented at this stage. However, there is a good example of how the monitoring and review form has been completed by NHS Sussex. This review highlighted projects and initiatives currently being undertaken or in the planning stages by NHS that directly reflected concerns raised by CVG members.

Widening membership and reach

A range of ethnic and cultural groups are already represented in the Community Voices group, including, Indian-sub-continent, South-East Asia, West and North Africa, West and East Europe, South America, and the Caribbean.

We are keen to widen the membership of the Community Voices group, especially in terms of intersectionality. For speakers of other languages the Community Voices leaflet is now available in several languages including

Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Czech, Farsi, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Simplified and traditional Chinese, Sorani and Spanish.



We have met with and invited key voluntary sector partners to share information about the group with their contacts. These partners are

- Amaze
- Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard
- Friends Families & Travellers
- Healthwatch Brighton & Hove
- Network for International Women
- Possability People
- Refugee and Migrant Forum
- Sanctuary on Sea
- Speak Out
- The Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove
- The Clare project
- Voices in Exile

We are working with a range of community groups of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We support these groups with their activities, governance and funding and encourage them to connect with the Community Voices group. These groups include

- Albanian Community group
- Egyptian Coptic Christian Association
- Hangleton and Knoll Multicultural Women's group
- Jasmine Women's group
- Learn around the World (weekly drop-in for refugees and migrants)
- Mosaic
- Moulsecoomb Bangladeshi Women's group
- Noor al Hooda Women's Group
- Racial Harassment Forum
- Sikhs of Sussex
- Stand for Ukraine
- Sudanese Young Men's group
- Sussex Syrian group

We are planning an in-person review meeting open to anyone interested as well as personal invitations to everyone who has attended the group. We will explore together what is working well about the group, what could be improved and how to engage more people at the meetings of indirectly.

Temperature Check – Health Conversations

We carried out a health and wellbeing conversations in culturally and ethnically diverse communities in April and June 22.

We explored

1. The extent to which the Covid-19 pandemic may have prompted long-term changes in health-related considerations affect eating or exercise.
2. Experiences and perceptions of accessing the NHS in the past 12 -18 months.

This consultation was undertaken exclusively with residents of Brighton & Hove's culturally and ethnically diverse communities. It was qualitative in nature consisting of one female only focus group, one mixed gender focus group and four in-depth interviews (3 male, 1 female),

Finding 1: Covid-19 impact and implications on exercise, healthy eating and diet

Respondents experiences varied. Most respondents did not change their diet to be more healthy whilst some respondents sought to make improvements

Our eating habit depended on what was available at that time at the foodbank. There was no choice to eat healthy... put on weight... I have vulnerable children and rely on food bank

Stress made us eat more unhealthy food and buy more snack for the kids to distract them and reward them to do their homework

We learn to buy what we need, look after our health, help our children to do some exercise, learned together as a family to work on how we cook healthy food, stop bad habits in relation to food and our culture

After I have got ill, we gave more attention to healthy routine such as: food, exercise, eating vegetable and fruits

Some respondents tried new forms of exercise during lockdown but this didn't continue afterwards

Some of my friends went for walks together, It became a habit. But, now we don't do this so much

A lot of people have taken up the swimming, before they did not do it but now they do... But to be honest, I don't do this

I have to work, and it is not easy doing exercise because of my work, I don't have time

Finding 2: Experiences of Accessing the NHS

- There are generally positive attitude to the NHS
- Mental health is a priority
- People have had negative experiences
- Increased responsiveness and flexibility in service provision is needed
- There are additional challenges for those with English as an additional language
- Accessible and culturally sensitive communication is needed
- More timely appointments and treatment are needed

Please see our full report for more details.

Temperature Check – Linguists

SIS held a focus group of 12 linguists on Friday 10th June 2022. Linguists speaking Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Farsi, French, Hindi, Hungarian, Mandarin, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Spanish, and Urdu participated. They have a collective wealth of experience having attended approximately 900 interpreting sessions between them since the end of the Omicron lockdown in January 2022.

The focus group looked at two key areas and we have drawn together the themes and trends represented by their comments and insights.

What has the impact of the pandemic been on your community's health and wellbeing?

Mental Health: All participants mentioned an increase in mental health concerns

Access to Primary Care: There were frequent examples given of SIS Service Users not being able to access primary care and NHS dentists during the pandemic.

Domestic Issues: Interpreters reported several incidents of family breakdown and domestic violence as a result of being “locked down” together.

Long waiting lists: Any health care that wasn't covid related or an emergency seems to have been side-lined and postponed during the pandemic leading to a lack of care and attention for patients who are placed on really long waiting lists.

Digital Divide: There is a very big spectrum of Digital Inclusion within our Service User group based on finances, skills and motivations.

What should the future priorities be for the NHS locally?

- Improved Primary Care Provision
- Improved Communication for People with Language Needs
- Improve the options for urgent and emergency care

For the full report and findings please see <https://sussexinterpreting.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SIS-Linguist-Focus-Group-Post-Covid-Temperature-Check-.pdf>

Attendees' comments

The Community Voices group enables people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds from across the city to come together and share lived experiences. Through direct discussions with commissioners and decision makers, they influence how services are delivered in the community.

Members of the Community Voices group are active in their community groups and share information between them.

A member of the Muslim Women's Group joined the Community Voice's group: -

'I'm really glad that this has been set up, for a long time I've been looking to be able to speak to the Council on a number of things that are important to my groups that I work for. This is the great way I can do this so thank you.'

'It's great that you can pop in and out – there is a lot of flexibility, you don't need to attend every meeting. It's a chance to speak to service providers regarding areas which we haven't been listened to about in the past.'

Community Voices members consult with people in their communities and invite people to discuss specific topics. They feel it is a safe space where their views are valued without judgement.

The Community Voices group enables sharing of views and concerns, peer support and a conduit to support from statutory services. One example around mental health demonstrates this. Both the Hangleton and Knoll Multicultural Women's Group and the Moulsecoomb Bangladeshi Women's Group raised the issue of mental health and ways to increase acceptance, reduce stigma and access support. The Muslim Women's Group provided insight on how Islam acknowledges mental health and supports through various hadiths and teachings. Through the Community Voices Group, the neighbourhood groups will be able to speak directly with mental health service commissioners.

By working through Community Voices, these groups feel more united with a collective voice and are working together to influence mental health service provision for their communities. They would like to set up local hubs where people can have conversations around a subject they have identified as of importance and concern to them.

Community Voices Group Delivery plan

Action	October	November	December	January	February	March
Dissemination of project marketing information: Refresh awareness and membership						
Community Voices Group (CVG) members sessions						
CVG members and NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council joint sessions						
Project Partners and NHS Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council meetings						
Community Voices Group (CVG) members and project Stakeholder in person session						
Consultant presentation of findings and recommendations						
Mid-stage project review						
Project Evaluation						

Learning and challenges

Less is more: It has been accepted it is better to focus on one topic in good depth than attempt to cover 2-3 subjects, even though they may be of equal concern for CVG member. Likewise, whilst there is an optimum number for sufficiently broad and in-depth exchanges, of equal importance is the presence of CVG members who are genuinely interested in the subject area.

Meeting type and format of the session. The CVG has worked well in this online format. It does make it difficult for community members with limited English and/or have digital literacy or inclusion issues to join effectively. It is unknown what would be the impact on the project if sessions were held in-person. Different meeting formats will be tested in the future to assess the extent they might enhance the overall success of the Community Voices Group.

Additional resources: As the subjects raised by the CVG engages with different teams, departments and initiatives, more monitoring, follow-up meetings, information dissemination and relationship brokering will be required. There is some unpredictability on what resources will be required to manage and facilitate the consequential work of the CVG but it is unlikely the current resources will fully meet all these likely needs.

Ownership: The partners to this project are responsible for all aspects of its delivery. To promote greater inclusivity it is timely to explore how the project might be led and or delivered by a provider from an ethnically or culturally diverse background.

Plan for ongoing work Oct - Mar 2023

Action One. Ensure this initiative is accessible to all especially those with language needs

We will build on the work of the SIS linguists to broaden the reach of the Community Voices group. We will continue to develop strategies for linguists to advocate and speak on behalf of people with low levels of English and reporting back to the full group on their behalf.

Action Two. Support the Community Voices group towards appropriate leadership representation

Continue the work with the group to explore how the project might be led and or delivered by providers/organisation more representative of the member ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Action Three. Review the format of meetings

Consult with the group about their preferences for meeting format and whether to run online, hybrid or in person meetings.

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