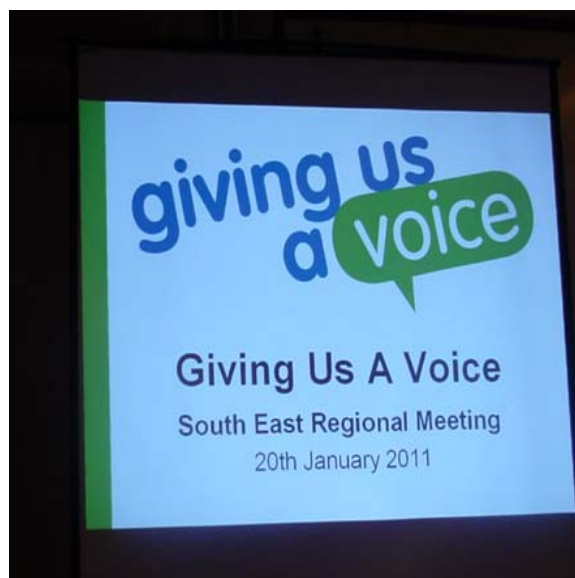




## Involvement in Giving Us a Voice National Project.

Engaging with People with learning  
disabilities from Black and Minority  
Ethnic Groups In Brighton and Hove

March 2011



# Engaging with people with learning disabilities from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups



## Involvement in Giving us a Voice Project

The Giving us a Voice Project is a National Project to gather feedback from people with learning disabilities from Black and Minority ethnic groups, their carers and professionals to look at addressing issues raised and meeting their needs.

Following events held in all the regions, a report will be compiled for government around the needs of this group based on their experiences and stories.

The Giving Us a Voice project is a joint collaboration between advocacy and learning disability organisations Bild, Mencap and ARC.

Speak Out met with those promoting the south east regional event to advocacy organisations and took on supporting the promotion of this event to encourage as many people with learning disabilities from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups to attend.

As an advocacy organisation Speak Out is aware its services need to be reaching and meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities from BME groups. This national work provided an opportunity for us to learn about the issues faced by this group of people and what support we can give.

It also provides us with an opportunity to look at what are the local issues in supporting this group.

## Speak Out's Aims were:

- To support the involvement of people with learning disabilities from BME groups locally in the national project Giving Us a Voice.
- To find out what are the issues facing people with learning disabilities from BME groups and to find out if there is an additional need for  
Advocacy on top of the services we provide
- To encourage local services to support people from this group to be part of the giving us a voice project.
- To feedback to local services what we have learnt



## Promoting Involvement

Speak Out arranged a preliminary meeting to prepare local people for the Giving us a Voice Regional Meeting in January 2011. Two people from the National project led the meeting.

Speak Out promoted the meeting with a flier and this was sent by email and post to

- Council Day Services
- Grace Eyre Services
- Community support Services
- Residential services, council and private, and housing associations
- Advocacy and Support Organisations
- BME organisations, Mosaic and BMECP
- Speak Out users



### **In the process of promoting the meeting it became clear there were some difficulties for Speak Out and other services:**

- Difficulty in knowing how to talk to people with learning disabilities about their cultural background.
- Hard for people with learning disabilities to understand what the giving us a voice meetings were about
- Not knowing how people identified themselves culturally and whether this was important to them
- Not being sure who was from a BME group
- Brighton and Hove having such a relatively small proportion of residents with learning disabilities from BME groups and these people being dispersed in a number of services.
- In some young people's services there was a lack of flexibility around people missing college and an attitude expressed that the young people using their service would not have anything to contribute..
- With the timing co-inciding with changes to day services and new people attending the day centres there seemed to be difficulty in having the time to speak to people. Also not being familiar with new people was an issue in talking to them about their cultural identity.
- Family resistance to someone attending meetings was brought up in one case.



## **Makeup of preliminary meeting**

5 people with learning disabilities attended the preliminary meeting which was disappointing. Of these only 4 were from Brighton and Hove. All of these had previously been or are currently using Speak Out's advocacy scheme. Familiarity with Speak Out and advocacy was likely to support the choice to attend and perhaps deter others who have not used Speak Out.

2 people who were supported to come by Grace Eyre  
1 person from a Speak Out Advocacy group  
1 person with a Speak Out advocate supported by CMG  
1 person from Worthing Speak Out



In addition two teachers from St. Johns College attended to check out whether the regional event would be appropriate for students they support.

Two people who attend council day services had wanted to come but changed their mind on the day.

## **Discussion in the Meeting.**

The meeting was led by Ola Odeyemi, Project worker with learning disabilities and his support worker.

Most of the meeting was centred around telling people about the giving us a voice project and what the regional meeting would be like.

Interestingly there was no reference made to cultural background and identity or facilitation to encourage people to explore what their cultural background means to them, or what is important and what support they need that is related to this..



In the last part of the meeting, people were given a chance to tell the group about what was important in their lives.

Independence through having a job, being paid and support to travel on own was brought up as important for several people.

Two people talked about being called names. Victim support helped one person which they found useful.

Much time was spent looking at photos from previous regional events rather than beginning the process of getting people talking about their life stories. The meeting highlighted the need to give people time and space to talk about their lives and issues that have arisen.

The meeting did not give us any specific information about the needs of people with learning disabilities related to their cultural identity apart from being bullied as an issue.



## **Giving Us a Voice Regional Event**

The Giving Us a Voice Regional event took place on 20th January 2011. Giving Us a Voice and Speak Out promoted the event locally. Speak out promoted it to the same organisations.

The event was attended by people with learning disabilities some from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups, plus Learning Disability and Health professionals.

Only 3 people from original meeting came to the regional event but in addition 6 young people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups from St. John's College.



Support workers from Scope inclusion project came with two people with complex needs from BME groups.

In total 10 people with learning disabilities from BME groups from Brighton and Hove services. Again no-one from Council Day Services attended.

There were also people with learning disabilities from other areas in the region.



## **Discussions in the Meeting**

Context was given on numbers of people from BME groups living in the area.

The South East as a region is lower than average 11.3%  
East Sussex is 4.9%

In Brighton and Hove since 2001 census the number of residents from BME groups has grown by 35%.

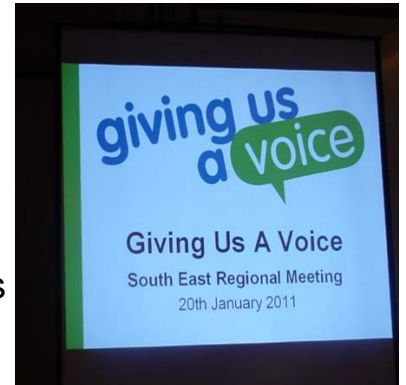
Therefore there will be more people from BME groups needing services.

Four Valuing People priorities were the focus of the day.

- Citizenship and Speaking Up
- Housing
- Health
- Work

For each area a video was shown where people from BME groups talked about their stories of these issues.

Each area was then talked about in small groups and fed back.



## Feedback

Points raised by people with learning disabilities

- Seeing family is important
- Blue Camel club is good. Need to have more club nights.
- Going to work is important. Young people knowing about their future in work was raised.
- People didn't know about individual budgets.
- Being independent important
- Choosing who I live with is important.
- House arranging meetings with girlfriends.
- Getting married and having a baby important.
- Being near people you know is very important



## Points raised by support workers of people with complex needs

- Not having enough places to access
- No hydropool
- Need more changing places to help people get out and about
- More safe places to go. Perhaps this can be linked to Thumbs Up scheme.
- Buying a house using benefits for one person has been very positive

## Points raised by professionals about services

- Look at local safe spaces East Sussex scheme
- People need support to vote in elections.
- Advertising for support workers/Personal Assistants with different ethnic backgrounds.
- More people with individual budgets.
- Difficulties in getting people from BME groups to meet up.
- People become hidden and are not in contact with other people from BME groups.
- What carers' support is there in place. Mosaic was mentioned.
- People having access to non-paid support such as citizen advocates.
- Easy read tenancy agreements needed.
- Information in different languages needed
- There is not enough supported housing
- De-registered housing not being inspected.
- Takes a long time to get adaptations
- Hospital passports and more learning disability awareness in hospitals is good.
- May not be interpreters , therefore may not access treatment.



## Follow Up

### National Charter

**A regional plan will be drawn up bringing together what people have said during the giving us a voice event.**

What people have said at each regional event will be used to create a National Charter. This will be available from the end of March on the giving us a voice website.

Local Authorities and Health Services will be asked to sign up to the charter. People with learning disabilities can use it to make sure services are meeting their needs.

Ideas from the day will go onto the giving us a voice website  
[www.givingusavoice.org.uk](http://www.givingusavoice.org.uk)

## Additional Content of the Day



### Model for engaging with BME community Groups

There was an interesting presentation on the Ethnic Minority Learning Disability Project in Hampshire. It demonstrated a model for engaging with BME groups. They worked with a number of BME groups including the traveller community drawing on the experience of the community development department to engage with people. The project focused on finding out their needs through direct face to face meetings with families. One of their main findings was that people did not understand what all the different services were or how to access them. As a result of the outreach and assessing needs they have set up advocacy groups, access to interpreters and information on advocacy referrals and services.



### Evaluation of Involvement in giving us a voice project.

- Engaging people with learning disabilities from BME groups was difficult as they are dispersed amongst services
- Numbers were disappointing attending the meetings
- The focus in the meetings on the valuing people priorities didn't allow space for people to explore cultural issues and support needed around these.
- Issues raised were generally common to all people with learning disabilities and didn't seem to be culturally specific.
- Speak Out are not clear whether there is an additional need for advocacy for people from BME groups beyond the services already provided as this project did not answer this.
- We would recommend the Partnership Board looked at firstly how we engage and outreach to individuals and families within the BME community and then meet with them to assess their needs for support.
- Within services we need to improve the dialogue we have with people with learning disabilities around cultural background and support related. to this.
- More direct links need to be made with Mosaic, BMECP and other organisations.

### Positive Outcomes from involvement in giving us a voice project

- Locally the involvement of students from St. Johns College is very positive and this link with Speak Out is being continued . They hope to link into the Big Meeting.
- Work feels like starting point for assessing need of this group.
- Nationally the charter will give guidance to government, local authorities and health services.

