



Let's talk – Your Rights A Communication Event For Refugees And Asylum Seekers

The Challenge:

To encourage refugees and asylum seekers to raise issues regarding their rights and other areas that are important to them, in an environment that is comfortable to them.

The Participants:

The Racial Harassment Forum
Suffolk County Council
Crown Prosecution Services
Suffolk Criminal Justice Board
CSV Media
Suffolk Constabulary
Refugees and Asylum seekers
Primary Care Trust
Suffolk Community Refugee Team
Refugee Council

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The Response:

Drawing up the objectives

The local Crime and Disorder Partnership and Racial Harassment Forum action plans identified the need for a communication/information event about issues that are important to refugees and asylum seekers. A consultation meeting was held with Suffolk County Council, Crown Prosecution Services, Suffolk Criminal Justice Board, CSV Media, Suffolk Constabulary, refugee and asylum seeker clients to seek ideas on the best way to plan and present the event.

The following objectives for the event were drawn up:

- To provide an informal communication event for refugees, asylum seekers and representatives of the Racial Harassment Forum and Criminal Justice Board.
- For those attending to increase their understanding of issues which are of particular importance to refugees and asylum seekers around individual's right and access to services.

Promoting awareness

The event was scheduled to run from 4 until 6.30pm during Refugee Week 14th - 20th June 2004 at CSV Media Clubhouse in Ipswich. The venue was chosen due to its location and because its facilities were used by refugee and asylum seekers for training, music and access to internet services. This also made it easier to distribute the invitations and to reassure them that the event would only be attended by those wishing to inform or be informed of their rights. An informal dress code was decided upon, as uniforms can make people feel uncomfortable and not encourage them to speak out about issues concerning them.

The programme included:

- Introductions and overview of the day
- Icebreaker exercise ' Do you feel able to report a crime?', 'Do you know how to report a crime?'
- Issues important to those attending, exercise
- Discussion, regarding issues important to those attending
- Rights information
- Summary
- Validation questions (as per Icebreaker)

Providing resources

Resources at the event included displays for the Suffolk Criminal Justice Board and the Racial Harassment Forum with information on third party reporting for Hate Crime. Pens with the Racist Incident Helpline phone number on them were given out, along with versions of the Racial Harassment Forum information leaflet in English, Kurdish and Farsi. Participants were informed that the Racial Incident Helpline could be used in the language of their choice to report incidents and an independent social rights advisor and interpreters were made available to allow participants to ask questions.

The Icebreaker Exercises invited those attending to indicate their response to the questions by placing face stickers on posters containing the questions, to indicate how confident they felt. Smiling face = very confident, Straight face= indifferent, sad face = not very confident. It was then explained that these and other issues would be discussed during the event. The participants were invited to talk about the issues they would like to discuss further by writing them on to post-it notes and placing them on the white board. During the break, the topic areas were then translated prior to the breakout sessions.

The event met all the objectives set out, and although scheduled to finish at 6.30, at least half of those who attended, remained for a further half an hour, discussing specific issues with the facilitators. Several people asked for a further event to be held to discuss education, housing and asylum issues in more detail. The Racial Harassment Forum has agreed the need to hold further events, and a sub group will be set up including 2 people who expressed an interest at the event in being community contacts. A subsequent event would also provide a more reliable assessment, indicating whether the refugees and asylum seekers were able to apply the information that they had been given.

Diversity Learning Lessons:

- Share information about action points from your action plan, others may be willing to work in partnership with you.
- Draw up a list of objectives for the event.
- Choose a venue that is comfortable for your clients to speak out in. If possible, use a venue they already know and make the event invitation only.
- Dress according to the atmosphere you wish to create.
- Use facilities where your clients go to promote your event.
- Plan ahead to provide the resources you will need for the event.
- Use different activities to gain feedback e.g. symbols.
- Use further events to assess if clients have been able to use the information that was previously given.