



Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector: raising ethnic minority families' aspirations about FE and HE

Workshop Facilitator:

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 **Weblinks
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Workshop Context:

Working with families in partnership with the community and voluntary sector gives the Further and Higher Education sectors an opportunity to access 'hard to reach' families who are traditionally under-represented within post compulsory education.

This workshop provided insights from two different multi-agency projects that have engaged parents in HE within a community setting.

- Lancaster University family learning action research project funded by Lancashire County Council's Adult Learning the 'Lancashire Intergenerational Multicultural Education' Project (LIME).
- Aimhigher Lancashire 'Working with Families' Project (2005-06) and involved working in partnership with Lancashire County Council Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (EMASS).

 For information about the LIME - 'Lancashire Intergenerational Multicultural Education' project



<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/edres/cap/projects/completed/lime.htm>


 For information about EMASS - Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service




<http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/projects/ema/index.php>



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 For information about Aimhigher Lancashire 'Working with Families' including family activities and workshop outlines:



<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/index.htm>



<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/practitioners.htm>



Top Tips & Key Issues

1. Accessing Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Community & Voluntary Sector

Within the BME Community and Voluntary Sector there are a wide range of umbrella organisations that work with all BME communities and groups that work with women, specific faith communities or cultural groups. It is important to take this into consideration whilst thinking about the target group of parents you wish to access. The amount of support and time a BME organisation can invest in an Aimhigher activity will vary considerably depending on staff availability, organisations objectives and financial capacity. Early planning is therefore vital.

2. Utilise Role Models

When delivering workshops for parents, guardians and the extended family within a community setting use 'role models' from the community you are targeting. For instance try to find a student from the local community or try to match the faith or Minority Ethnic Community you are targeting. This can include utilising links from the community organisation you are working in partnership with, or current ethnic minority students.

3. Assess the accessibility of parent and family workshops

When organising a parent workshop it is important to take into consideration issues around provision of childcare, timing of workshop, language (written and verbal language used during the event) and cultural sensitivity of resources and activities planned. For further information on these issues refer to recommended further reading section.

4. Appropriate methods of promotion and publicity

Who is promoting the parent workshop and where are you promoting it? If you are using community workers to promote your parent workshop, be aware that voluntary groups can have wide networks and that they are likely to attract parents with a diverse range of educational experiences and with young people of varying ages and academic ability. It is important to allow sufficient time to promote and publicise parent workshops as often the personal touch (telephoning and face-to-face contact) is needed to encourage parents from 'hard to reach' communities to attend.

5. Set honest and realistic parameters

Be honest and realistic in what you say you can offer to community groups and parents within your workshop. It is also important to inform people of the timescale any outcomes can be delivered and give regular updates on the progress to achieving any outputs promised.

6. Take small steps with parents

What seems like a small step to an organisation can feel like climbing a mountain for a parent with no history of Higher Education. Asking a parent to attend a campus visit can be a huge step; to make this transition easier it is important to provide transport where possible and to organise a group visit so that parents and guardians attend with a familiar and supportive group.

7. **Rapid response to identified needs**

Often when working in partnership with the community and voluntary sector, there will be unplanned events and opportunistic requests for support with an activity they are organising. Responding to these requests from a community or voluntary group can help to develop trust, breakdown perceptual barriers of them and us and develop a working relationship between the different partners. In addition, it can provide unexpected opportunities to organise parent workshops or deliver advice surgeries at a time and place that is convenient to members of the community.

8. **Long term commitment to working in partnership**

Where possible it is important for FE and HE to look at long-term strategies of commitment to working in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. Examples of how this can be embraced, involve the inclusion of the community and voluntary sector when projects are being planned and funded. Inclusion of their ideas from the outset gives a greater sense of ownership and increases the likelihood of activities being relevant.

9. **Agencies networking with each other**

To avoid duplication of work and overburdening community and voluntary groups it is important that the education sector liaises and networks with each other. For example, working with an existing Family Forum can enable several organisations to work together. This type of collaboration allows co-ordination of activities, pooling of resources, sharing of information, expertise and leads to effective partnership working.

Recommended Further Reading



Sethi J and Houghton A (2005) *Lancashire Aimhigher Families Staff Development and Family Resource Portfolio*, Lancaster University, Lancashire Aimhigher.

- ✓ Briefing Sheet 1: Engaging Families
- ✓ Briefing Sheet 6: Working in partnership with the Community & Voluntary Sector
- ✓ Briefing Sheet 7: Working with Families within the Community & Voluntary Sector



<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/SDBriefingPapers.htm>

Prepared on behalf of Aimhigher Lancashire

For other Information Sheets

This is one of 5 Information Sheets prepared following the 'Valuing Families, Valuing Diversity' Lancashire Aimhigher National Families Conference. For further details see: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference06.htm>

For further information about working with families, or copies of other resources, contact:

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☒ <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/index.htm>



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<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference06.htm>