

BREAKING BARRIERS



KEY POINTS & DISCUSSION

Reaching out

Reaching out to communities requires targeting and careful relationship building; it takes time to build trust with people and groups we want to connect with.

Information about who is 'out there' can come from census, JSNA as well as the local/observed area.

Communities are not 'hard to reach' ...we're just not doing it right.

Sometimes people are 'hard to reach' as a result of barriers we have put in place. Identifying these is an important first step to promoting inclusion and diversity. (See mention of Equality or Diversity Impact assessments, below.)

You can't expect people to come to you - you have to go to them.

Organisations reliant on referrals need effective communication with referral agencies to see how communities are being targeted and what kind of messages are being sent out.

Recognise that people are not homogenous: even within broad categories e.g. older people. We need to value, respect and engage with people as individuals.

Translation can be a good way to increase accessibility to written information - but translations need to be checked with people from target community.

Themed/cultural events can help to reach target communities - music and food are great ways to bring people together and build bridges.

Acronyms don't help reach out.

Targeting is king. "We welcome everyone" or "we are open to all" sound like warm phrases but don't have a practical benefit in progressing EDI.

Timing - day, times, frequencies - is also important to promoting access.

Digital exclusion: with lots of services going online, this is a big issue. Many people need tailored support to get online; some organisations have provided tablets, routers or other hardware, as well as support in how to use them.

Gathering data, asking questions

Without gathering key diversity data, an organisation is unable to evaluate success or otherwise in breaking barriers or promoting inclusion. Data is crucial to making decisions about EDI.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) or Diversity Impact Assessments (DIA) are useful tools to assess barriers to accessing services, to identify key groups and barriers they face, and to plan to improve EDI in services, projects and organisations.

Questions need to be carefully devised to be non-threatening.

‘Prefer not to say’ answers can be as useful as any other.

Listening to service users is key - and we need to ask individuals how they prefer to be communicated with.

Leadership

Creating a business case can help create buy-in from key decision makers - make it clear how effective inclusion practices can attract more service users, widen the donation base, improve organisational reputation, increase team morale and reduce staff costs.

Board member(s) acting as EDI sponsors can help; buy-in and tacit support from the whole board is essential.

Leadership and support from boards/trustees is important - EDI experts can help raise awareness and develop policy and good practice.

Clear statements about an organisation’s culture and values can create a good basis for developing EDI policies and practice.

Creating a diverse board takes time and can be a challenge - a clear plan of action about how and who to target is needed.

A diversity lead or champion within an organisation can be a useful first point of contact and catalyst; an EDI steering group is another option to raise issues and keep momentum going. But EDI needs to involve and be adopted by all members of an organisation.

Strong engagement and involvement of senior management is needed to make sure EDI work gets integrated and implemented across the organisation.

An EDI action plan can be a useful vehicle for moving things forward.

Training & development

Ongoing EDI training for staff and volunteers is an essential part of raising awareness and developing good practice. Basic online EDI modules need to be supplemented by organisation-specific discussions, policies and systems.

Training and practice need to adapt in relation to gender fluidity, as well as other protected characteristics.

Recruitment can set minimum criteria - anyone from specific protected characteristics who meet these is guaranteed an interview.

Training and comms need to be adapted to take account of language, culture, ability etc. of the target audiences. Inclusive advertising is about finding images that reflect the people we want to reach and communicate with. Positive images on walls etc. can promote a feeling of inclusion.

Organisation & systems

We need to recognise that it is not easy to stand out and be different, to go against the flow. If organisations are serious about change, developing channels and a culture where issues can be raised is important.

We need to provide a safe space to ask questions, share stories and learn from lived experience.

Fear of making a mistake can prevent us from asking relevant questions or raising issues - how do we create a climate where people feel OK to make mistakes, and learn from them?

Regular repetition and clear comms: it's OK to make mistakes. Make it comfortable to correct yourself and move on - we need to normalise EDI in everyday conversation.

People move on at different speeds - organisations need to work at bringing all staff, volunteers, etc. along with policy and practice changes.

Systems need to be addressed and adapted to promote EDI.

How do we celebrate EDI?

Contact

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