

Chances for All Project



Project launch 25th March 2012

Project background:

Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood (HR&EC) have historically worked with people from Black & Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds over the years. The main work was around giving advice and information on benefits, welfare, health, housing and immigration.

We realised that there were many women from BAME backgrounds not engaging in wider society. They were socially inactive outside their own families and seemed to lack confidence and skills to help themselves.

After much consultation and talks with some of these local women, the key findings indicated that the women wanted to:

Improve their and their families health, become more active in wider society, learn vital skills including ICT and English language, learn about other cultures and make friends with women of other backgrounds.

HR&EC applied to the Big Lottery Fund for a 5 year project (October 2012 to October 2017) to work with BAME women on the following 4 aims. This report captures the successes of the project over the last 4 years. We have a further year to go with the project due to end in October 2017.

Project aims:

- 1) Improved attitudes towards healthy living
- 2) Improved awareness of issues facing their families and an increased knowledge of how to address these.
- 3) Increased numbers of women actively undertaking community and society development roles
- 4) Improved representation and increased cultural integration locally.

We have produced a report highlighting some of the work and successes of the last 4 years.

Year One

Loughborough in Bloom



Local women took part in the Loughborough in Bloom initiative.

They decorated a street, where there are no front gardens, with hanging baskets and included the local mosque.

Another gardening project they were involved was a community allotment project working with the local Transition Loughborough.




The project focussed on diet and exercise.

30 women got involved in health sessions at our local leisure centre.

Talks on health and nutrition were delivered after the exercise.


We ran two - 6 week sessions during the year.




HR
EC
All Different All Equal

Chances for All

Healthy Living 6 Week Course




LOTTERY FUNDED





WOMENS' ONLY


- Exercise & Lose Weight
- Different Exercises Every Week
- Learn About Healthy Eating
- Weekly Weigh In & Measurements
- Talk From Specialist Dieticians
- Prizes Given on Completion of Course



Where: Loughborough Leisure Centre
Monday 4th November – 10am-12pm
6 Week course £10 but you will receive £5 back on completion of course
Contact: Tahmena Gul & Minara Rahman
01509 261651, Email: Tahmena@btconnect.com
Please note there is a waiting list – Get your name down TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!







in partnership with
Charnwood fusion

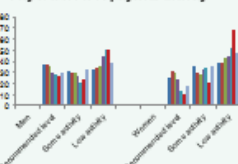
Promoting Physical Activity among Bangladeshi Women in Charnwood

Ishrat Islam

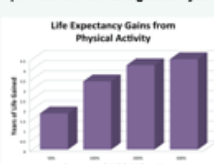
Supervisors: Prof B Boglin and Dr F Munir

Background

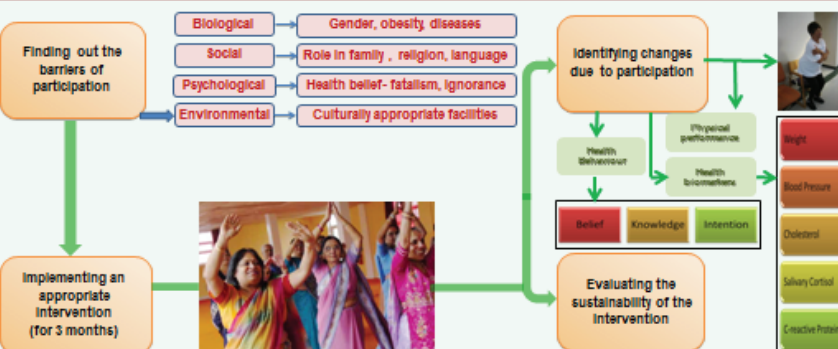
Bangladeshis, especially women have very low level of physical activity



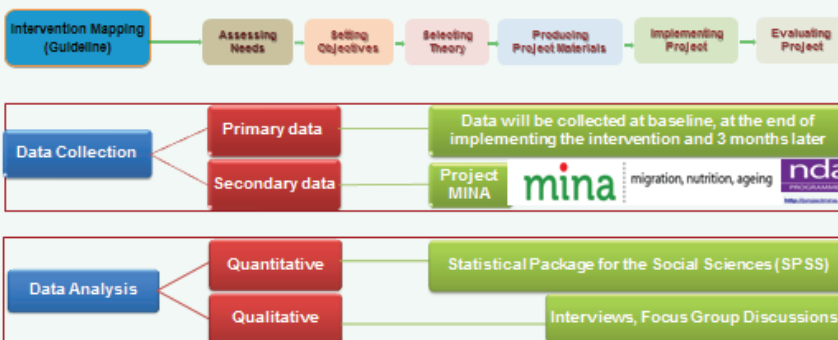
Promoting physical activity can prevent disease and gain life-years.



Objective



A Mixed Method Approach



Year 1 The Mina Project was a study on the fitness and health of the Bangladeshi women in Loughborough carried out by Loughborough University PhD students.

Women engaging in our project took part in this study which looked at diet, exercise and bone study.

The project looked at comparisons in mothers and daughters both locally and compared them with a similar study in Bangladesh.

Health Fair

Throughout the project we have continued to raise awareness of health issues, e.g. diabetes, heart diseases, blood pressure and mental health to name a few.

We helped promote healthy lifestyles by organising health fairs and events at local community centres, GP's practices and health centres.



Pictures are of a Health Fair held at John Storer House in conjunction with our men's Improving Lives Project and lots of other local partners. We had professionals from different health bodies including Charnwood Borough Council.



Girls' and Ladies' Only TAEROBICS

Want to get fit, learn basic self-defence skills, and meet new people while having a laugh? You can do it all at our Wednesday mornings Taerobics class!



A mixture of tae kwon-do and aerobics, Taerobics teaches you the fundamentals of tae kwon-do in an informal fun and friendly environment where the focus is on getting a good workout.

The sessions will be led by Sheryl Freer (pictured on the right) – a heavily decorated 5th Dan black-belt instructor who will ensure you receive the best possible self-defence advice and guidance.

Everyone is welcome! No membership fees, booking or commitment required!

When:
Wednesdays 11:00 – 12:00
Price:
£4.00

Where:
Loughborough Leisure
Centre Studio 2,
Browns Lane, LE11 1HE

For more information contact:
Sheryl Freer
james.freer@sky.com



Year Two

Dress Making, Sewing and Knitting



A local champion from the South Asian community, who had good dressmaking and sewing skills, started to teach other local women the art of dress making.

These sessions were well attended with 10 women going on to setting up basic home sewing and dress making businesses.

This initiative in Year 3 worked with Youth Shelter, a local homeless charity to raise funds for their work. During Year 4 the women helped re-brand stolen goods confiscated by HMRC which were then sold to raise funds for the Shelter.

Basic IT Classes with Computers, Laptops and Smart Phones

Our project officer teaching local women basic IT skills and how to use their smart phones and tablets.



Parliament Week



Throughout the 4 years of the project, we have tried to involve the women during Parliament Week in November each year. We have organised trips to the Houses of Parliament, where the women have had a tour of the houses, met with our local MP Nicky Morgan and heard about how the Parliament operates. Some of these women had never been to London and would not have dreamt of seeing where major political decisions are made.

We have had awareness raising sessions on voting, elections, the roles and manifestos of the different political parties.

During 2016, the women were informed about the EU referendum and helped to find out the facts for themselves so they could make an informed choice.

Over the years, we have increased the number of women who actually go out to vote, something most women thought wasn't worth bothering with.

They now understand better why their voice and vote matters.



Left

Women visiting Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament 2013.

Below

Meeting attended by our local MP Nicky Morgan talking about politics and family life.



Celebrating International Women's Day



Celebrating International Women's Day

Each year the women come together to celebrate International Women's Day.

Initially our project staff used to organise the event and promote it to the women, however in recent years, the women engaging with the project lead on the organising. They help choose a venue, a programme of what happens during the event and sort the refreshments and food.

This brings a range of women of all ages and backgrounds together. Music, activities, food and a lot of fun are key to these celebrations.





International Women's Day celebrations 2015 at Fearon Hall.
Over 100 women of all ages and backgrounds celebrated this event.
Some of the local women performed in front of an audience for the first time.



Year Three

Driving Theory Workshops



Local lady delivering driving theory sessions.

This lady took a career break to start a family and raise her small children. After 12 years out of work, this was her first stepping stone back into the work life and building her confidence. She went on to secure a home school liaison job at a local primary school and eventually was recruited by the Chances for All Project as one of the project development officers.

Since we started this, 3 women have passed their theory tests and have applied for the practical tests.

Cooking Sessions

Food is one of the best things for bringing women together. They all love cooking and eating and wanted to share recipes as well as learn how to cook more healthily.

In the first few years of the project we gave a lot of food and nutrition advice to the women. Some went on to sign up for food and hygiene courses which enables them to cater at community events and small functions.





During Year 3, we applied to our local county authority for a grant to help the women produce a healthy cookbook.

This enabled them to have cookery sessions attended by over 20 women each week, to share healthy recipes and learn from one another.

The cookery sessions were cross cultural with Gujarati women and Muslim women showing each other food from their cultures. This gave the women an opportunity to not only share recipes and learn from one another, but also a chance to meet women from different backgrounds and cultures.

The women are learning ICT skills by writing up their recipes and taking photographs of the cookery sessions. We will help them put this together in Year 5 of the project to produce a localised healthy cookery book.



Year Four

Following these cookery sessions, in year 4, some of the women organised a community lunch and served to over 80 people.

They came up with a social enterprise catering business initiative and gave a Dragon's Den style pitch to funders.

The project staff will be supporting the women with this initiative in Year 5.



Job Interview Skills



A representative from the careers service came to our Bangladeshi women's group and delivered a workshop on job interview skills. The workshop was well attended and appreciated by many.

The ladies had lots of opportunities to discuss the various techniques for job interviews.

A good number of ladies are in touch with the careers advisor and have had their CV's updated or created.

They are all part of a mailing list for the careers service representative who gives them regular updates on techniques and other careers advice and help.

Community/Interfaith Events



One of the aims of the project is to bring women of different backgrounds and cultures together.

Each year we get involved in local events during One World Week, Inter Faith Week and religious and cultural celebrations for the various faith groups in Loughborough.

The women take turns to organise cross cultural events to celebrate each other's religious festivals e.g. the Muslim women organised an event for the Gujarati women to celebrate Diwali and the Gujarati women organised an event for the Muslim women to celebrate Eid.

Tea is a lovely way of bringing people together.



Left Picture
Women holding a "Charnwood Chai" Stall at Loughborough Mela 2016.

Our Chances For All Project were proud runner ups at the Charnwood Sports Awards 2016 for the Best Community Sport/Physical Activity Project. Well done to the project officers Minara Rahman and Yesmin Choudhury and all our ladies who took part.



Project staff Minara Rahman and Yesmin Choudhury receiving the award and certificate (below) for our swimming group .



Profiles

Throughout the project we have tried to capture profiles of some of the women to map the difference engaging with our projects has made to their lifestyles. We have included three of these.

Case study 1

Mrs M is a mother of three, arriving in the UK from Italy 2 years ago. Her level of spoken English was low but had basic written and reading skills in English. Since arriving in the UK Mrs M attended many of the Chances for All workshops and events. She attended driving theory lessons regularly and went on to successfully pass her test first time round. These sessions were held at the Aspire Tuition centre. Through the help of the CFA project and advice from the project officers, she has attended the Entry Level 1 and 2 English. She has been a regular attendant at the healthy cooking sessions and has shared some of her own recipes from her native Bangladesh.

Mrs M showcased some of her singing skills at our International Women's Day event with her being one of three women who sang and entertained our audience.

Whilst living in Italy, Mrs M was working in a chicken factory in the packing department. However since arriving here in the UK she feels if it wasn't for the Chances for All project and all the workshops and sessions we hold, she would not be out of the house at all as she has small children. Her future plans are to pass her driving test and be able to go into care work, as care work remains dependant on carers being able to drive. She also developed enough confidence through her attendance at all the sessions we hold that she is now working as a Bengali school teacher on a voluntary basis.

She would also like to see more gym equipment available in future exercise related sessions.

Mrs M has also been an active member contributing towards the healthy cook book.

Case study 2

Mrs C is from the Bangladeshi Muslim community, aged 38 and has been attending the Friday mentoring groups on a regular basis since 2013. She is a homemaker and mother of three, actively involved in making the Friday group as successful as possible. She attended the swimming group when it ran in the first couple of years of the project. She also attended the crocheting group at the SRK centre when it was up and running in the first year of CFA.

Since being involved in the CFA project, Mrs C has successfully completed a college qualification for TA and has done a fair amount of voluntary work at Rendell Primary school. Her fellow mentoring friends all motivated her to go to college and upskill herself in order to become more independent. Her confidence has improved immensely with participation within the CFA project and her personal work environment. After achieving the NVQ teaching assistant qualification and volunteering at Rendell School, Mrs C has been offered a paid Teaching Assistant post at Rendell Primary School.

Due to arriving in England in her early teenage years, Mrs C had missed a fair amount of her foundational education. After being married for over 15 years and having 2 children and with the immense support of her mentoring group, she went on to complete NVQ level 1 and 2 in teaching. This achievement is an asset to the CFA project as it has allowed women to motivate each other and empowered Mrs C to surpass her own expectation, leaving her empowered, integrated and more employable.

Mrs C feels that CFA has given her the confidence to go onto higher education and abled her to become more independent. She has also expressed the desire to keep the mentoring group ongoing to be able to encourage and mentor other women like her who need that extra push to strive for success.

Case study 3

Mrs H came from South Asia 16 years ago after marrying a British Citizen who had previously been married and divorced. After 11 years of marriage and 3 children and after suffering domestic violence for years, she had decided enough was enough. She picked up her children and an overnight bag and left her home. She moved town and took shelter with her relatives in Loughborough.

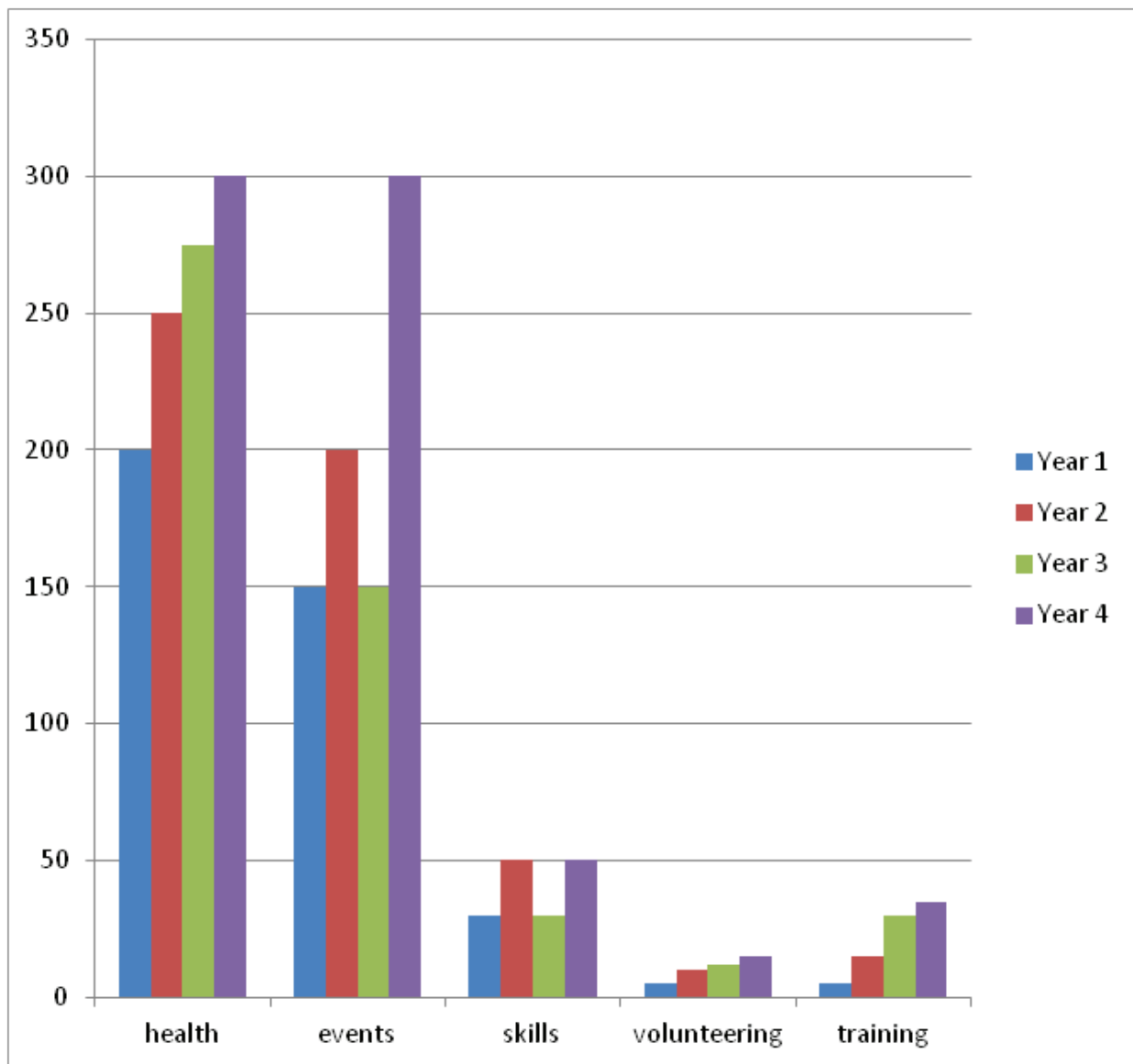
Once arriving here, she discovered that her immigration status was in a mess and she had no financial support due to it. HR&EC and other community support services supported her through all her legal dealings of the divorce, finance and immigration.

She has attended many of the Chances for All workshops and events throughout the first three years. This has helped her in gaining immense confidence as when she arrived to Loughborough she was nervous and mentally unstable. Her confidence level was at its lowest; her level of English was very poor. Whilst she was leaving home she had to take support from her 10 year child to help with English to get on the bus and book her tickets to Loughborough.

Now 5 years later she has successfully passed her driving test and is working full time in a nursing home. She is easily able to hop on to public transport to get to Leicester and Nottingham for work and personal reasons. She privately rents her home, owns her own car and is financially secure. Her children are doing exceptionally well at school with outstanding results. Coming from a broken home has not affected them due to their mother who has picked herself up and moved on and showed her total support to her children and attended all the parents' evenings and allowed her children to attend relevant after-school clubs.

Attending the healthy living workshops and advice given in the earlier years of Chances for All has allowed her to live a healthier life style as well as losing weight and being a comfortable weight which she is happier with. She attended the ESOL classes held by Loughborough College which we promoted to our ladies. She found out about the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes by attending the Chances for All sessions which we use to promote other avenues in which our women can enhance their living standard and employability prospects.

Mrs H was an active member in attending a lot of the social and cultural celebratory events that we held at various centres as part of the Chances for All civic events.



The above chart shows the number of women engaging with the project each year. We have summarised it in five categories.

Health – this includes swimming and fitness sessions, health fairs, awareness raising workshops on topics such as diabetes, mental health & well being, nutrition and dementia.

Events – this includes cross cultural events, celebrating Eid, International Women's Day, Loughborough Mela, cookery classes. These bring women together from different faiths, cultures and background.

Skills – this includes ICT, English language, driving theory, sewing, arts and craft, sharing recipes and gardening.

Volunteering – women are volunteering at schools, charity shops, community centres and other voluntary bodies.

Training – women have attended and passed courses on food & hygiene, first aid and business management. We have signposted and encouraged many to sign up to mainstream ESOL and other training courses provided by external partners.

Feedback from Partners and a Beneficiary

"Working with Chances for All has helped greatly in many different projects.

Both Tahmena and Minara are great at promoting activities/sessions happening in the local community which allows more BME women to hear about the sessions and therefore attend the session. Working together allows sharing of different ideas and what has worked well in the past and what has not worked well, which is extremely helpful.

Sharing workloads and working together on projects is also very beneficial. By both working to promote and deliver activities for the BME community, it gives them more opportunity to participate in activities, such as exercise and activities related to a healthy lifestyle".

Catherine Devonshire

Community Sport and Physical Activity Development Officer

Chances for all has helped with feeding back to us information on the women's cultural needs that have helped shape our current BME Swimming lessons and Zumba classes. Their support is extremely well valued and has been essential for the development of our BME offers to this target group over the past 12 months.

Thank you for all your support, we look forward to working with Chances for All on more activities in future".

Many thanks

Nathaniel Leney

Divisional Sports and Community Development Manager

I have been a part of a group of Bangladeshi women that have been meeting for years at the Bangladesh Social Association, usually to have a social get together. Since our group has been involved with the Chances For All project, we are doing more activities. We are involved in growing vegetables in allotment and sharing our skills and learning new ones.

We are getting an opportunity to meet other people of different backgrounds. We have been involved in growing baskets for "Loughborough In Bloom" and are very proud of our achievements.

We have made friends with women from other cultures and come together to learn about politics, credit unions, safety in the home and other interesting and important subjects.

All this is helping us to develop new skills, making us feel more part of local society and we feel more confident to go to events and other things that happen in Loughborough.

Recently we helped organise a trip to London (where some of us had never been) and saw the House of Parliament and other interesting places".

Anon (beneficiary)

Our contact details

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