

Encouraging a Diverse workforce :

**Changing Lives Through Passion,
Commitment, and Mentoring**

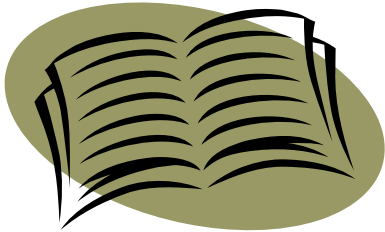
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Aims of the workshop

- To share our experience of a working with people from BME communities to facilitate access to social services education
- To highlight key learning in involving potentially excluded BME learners
- To identify benefits for learners and service providers

Background



- The work of Satnam Singh with BME students in the 1990s demonstrated the value of individual and group support.
- It was realized that the programme must be embedded in mainstream practice.
- Relationships were developed with MCFB and with partner universities.



Programme Goal

- To facilitate supported access for people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities into social services training and education

“If it hadn’t been for the consultancy I wouldn’t have completed the OU DipSW, and I want to take this experience on to others and into the black workers group at the City of Edinburgh Council.”

Black social worker



Programme Partnership

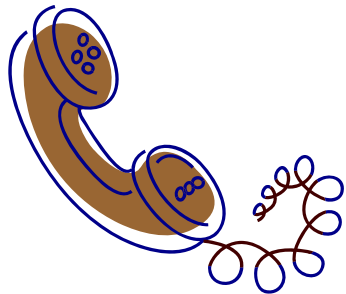
- ❑ Open University in Scotland
- ❑ Multi-Cultural Family Base (MCFB)
- ❑ University of Edinburgh
- ❑ Stevenson College



The Pilot Programme

- We wished to widen the access to social work training for BME individuals.
- Singh (2005) identified the need to build relationships with Black voluntary organisations.
- Funding was obtained from a community forum for a 2-year pilot programme for supported access to higher education.

What the Programme Provides



- Participation in 20-week Open University courses
- Telephone tutorials supported by OU tutors who had themselves taken the course or other social work courses
- Integrated mentoring
- Language support



Example Social Work Courses

- “Open to Change”
- “Understanding Children”
- “Understanding Society”

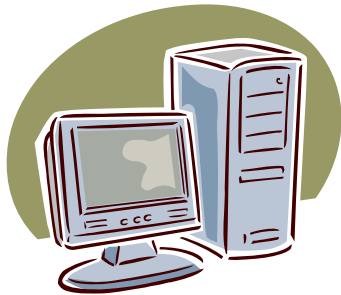
“I enjoyed Understanding Society because it made me think, read and write in English, but I could not do this course without the language support.”

Black learner

“The Understanding Children reader was really good. It’s been useful for my own children and for my job as a crèche worker”

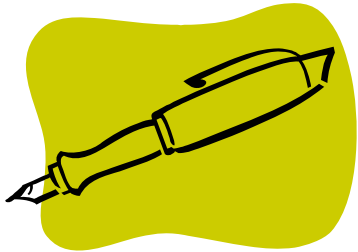
Black learner

Key Learning Points



- ❑ Information and supported access
- ❑ “Preparation for study” group sessions, including computer access and child care
- ❑ Mentors from BME backgrounds
- ❑ BME language tutor for ESOL and study skill support
- ❑ Free access to a range of Open University Openings courses

Key Learning Points (continued)



- Involvement of students and mentors in evaluation of Openings courses
- Influencing institutional change
- Opportunities to influence the content of future courses
- Careers and course choice support for BME Openings students at MCFB



Participation

- November 2005-March 2006
 - 9 participants in the first short course
- September 2006-January 2007
 - 11 participants in the second series of courses
- June 2007-October 2007
 - 6 participants in the third services of courses

Service users include 26 individuals from North African, Asian, and Polish backgrounds



Positive Outcomes for Participants

- Visible changes in confidence and self-esteem of participants.
 - For the first time a student used the telephone to communicate in English.
 - A very shy woman now comes regularly into MCFB and communicates with Project staff.

“It was a very positive experience that D learnt to speak English on the phone and his language skills developed. It helped him to find out what his level of academic English was.”

Mentor

Positive Outcomes for Participants (continued)

- Women have been able to continue with education despite family opposition and domestic violence.
- Participants are serving as role models of the ability to progress via education.

“One of the students used the mentor as a cultural interpreter to navigate between different educational systems.”

Tutor



Positive Outcomes for the Programme Partners

- For MCFB, the programme further enhances the development of a learning culture between staff, volunteers, and service users, reflecting Codes of Practice obligations.
- For the participating universities and colleges, the programme enables rich opportunities for learning how to better meet the needs of BME students, including institutional cultural change



Positive Outcomes for Scotland

- The programme contributes to efforts to build a social services workforce that more comprehensively reflects the ethnic profile and needs of the wider community.
- It begins to attack the underlying causes that inhibit the development of a culturally diverse workforce
- Further learning derived from evaluation of the programme will significantly enhance the development of cultural diversity in the social services workforce in Scotland.



The last word...

- I couldn't have done it without all the support but I did do it.....