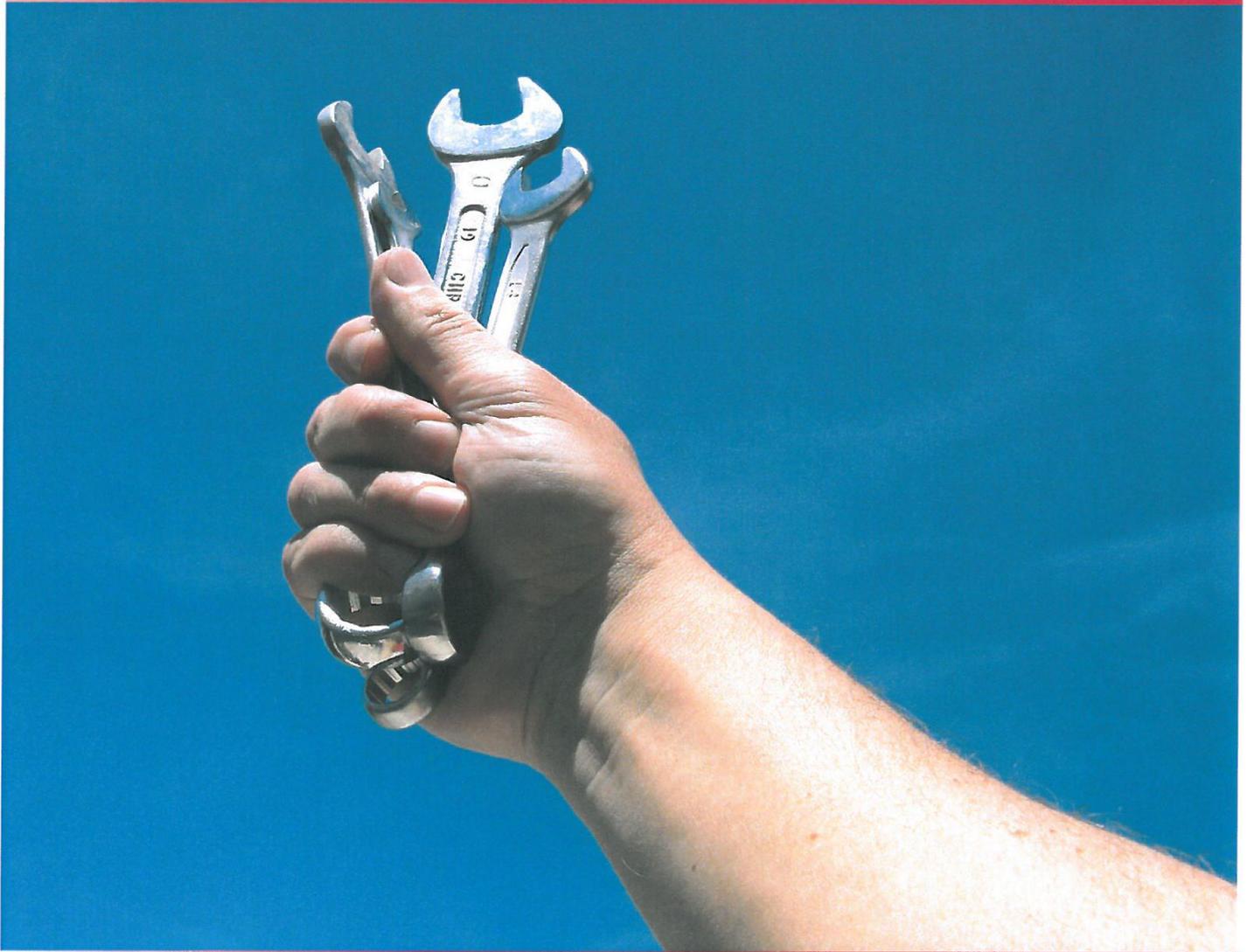


Fact Sheet Number 6
**Methods of Working with
Hard to Reach Groups**
January 2010



Promoting Wellbeing Team

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If you or your Service Users require this information in a more accessible format or in another language please contact the above address.

Who are considered “Hard-to-Reach”?

Hard-to-Reach groups represent sections of the public that are traditionally more difficult to engage or consult with than the rest of the population. Frequently it is these groups who do not access services to which they are entitled, and often need.

Below is a list of groups that may be classified as hard to reach, although this list is not exhaustive:

- Anyone who is disillusioned with, or has had a bad experience of a service
- Minority Ethnic Communities e.g. Travellers, migrant workers
- Different nationalities
- People with a disability
- People with a Learning Disability
- Children and Young People
- Older people
- Carers
- Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-sexual people

The list above includes many of the Section 75 Groups identified under the NI Act 1995. It is important to remember that each community will have sections in it that are hard-to-reach – or rather, harder to reach. These will change over time with demographics and, to some extent, community development and similar locality work.

When planning personal and public involvement it is essential that you identify your “hard-to-reach groups” and involve as many as possible. You need to be proactive and may need to be inventive in how you do this. It is not enough to say “*we invited them but they did not come*”

What if you don’t involve hard-to-reach groups?

There are several implications in failing to consult with, and engage with isolated individuals. If we only involve those whose views we already know and who use our services regularly, it is possible that we will only continue to provide more of the same. This could potentially mean that those currently excluded, because of inappropriate and inaccessible services will continue to be excluded. By seeking to engage we may start to address some of the basic issues that exclude individuals, and start to close the circle of inequality.

Methods of Working with Hard-to-Reach Groups

Although we use the term “hard-to-reach” we could sometimes substitute this term to mean more “expensive-to-reach”. In theory it is possible to reach any group of people however, reaching groups that are normally excluded for whatever reason may take additional resources in terms of planning, staff time, translating and transport etc. However in some cases it may be as simple as going to where the particular group of people are rather than expecting them to come to you.

It is vital that when working with “hard-to-reach” groups any predictable barriers such as communication and access are removed. It is also important to ensure that the “hard-to-reach” community sees the benefit and value in engagement, that aims and values are shared, and that work is clearly focused.

PPI activities need to be innovative and creative. Success will not necessarily come through a predictable postal questionnaire or invitation to a meeting. It may be useful to ask some of the following questions:

- Is there a community profile available?
- What work is being carried out with this section of the community locally?
- Who has links into this group of people? (e.g. care workers, health professionals, voluntary organisations)
- Where does the group you are targeting go? (community centre, playgroup, clubs etc)
- How do the people in question communicate? (e.g. language, translation, literacy etc)
- Many “hard-to-reach” are disillusioned and disinterested – what can be done to overcome these barriers, if they apply?
- Have previous attempts at engagement met specific physical barriers for this group? (e.g. transport, access for wheelchair users, women only meetings for some groups etc)
- Do you tend to get the “usual suspects”; i.e. people that regularly turn up to participate in involvement activity? Following from this, it is worth considering that a small group of very vocal people with a specific interest or concern could significantly influence the results of a workshop, questionnaire or consultation exercise. Please remember, the more inclusive your involvement activity or engagement method the richer your results will be and this will impact on the success of your project.

Southern Trust’s Race Equality Forum

The establishment of the Trust’s Race Equality Forum provides opportunity for consultation that enables Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in the Southern Area to enter into dialogue and influence policies of the Trust on issues that are identified by the Race Equality Forum participants and others. A full progress report of the Race Equality forum is available on the Trust website. For further information on the Race Equality Forum please contact Lynda Gordon, Head of Equality Assurance Unit Email: Lynda.gordon@southerntrust.hscni.net Tel: 028 3741 2643.

Advocacy Information Booklet

This guide has been designed to help improve staff understanding of what advocacy is, its role in the health and social care context and to provide a list of advocacy services currently available within the Southern Trust area. It will also be of interest to existing advocacy service providers, service users and their carer’s as well as advocates themselves. You can access the booklet under the Involving You section of the Trust website or [Click here](#) to download a copy.

Useful Contacts

- NI Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM can put you in touch with groups who offer support to people from minority ethnic groups and can also help with racial discrimination) Tel: 028 9023 8645
- Equality Commission NI Tel: 028 9050 0600
- STEP (South Tyrone Empowerment Programme) Tel: 028 8772 9002
- WAH HEP (Chinese Community Association) Tel: 028 3834 7162
- Craigavon Intercultural Partnership www.craigavonintercultural.org Tel: 028 3839 3372
- An Tearmann (Traveller Project) Tel: 028 8774 8556
- Armagh Traveller Support Group Tel: 028 3752 0553
- Craigavon Traveller Support Committee Tel: 028 3834 2089
- Newry Traveller Support Worker Tel: 028 3083 4200
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender Forum Ext 2481 (LGB&T) Leanne McMullan, Forum co-ordinator Leanne.McMullan@hscni.net Tel: 028 9032 1313
- SHSCT Equality Assurance Unit Tel: 028 3741 2509
- Fergal O'Brien (BME Lead within Promoting Wellbeing Division) Tel: 028 3083 4368
- Deirdre Magill, BME Drug & Alcohol Coordinator Tel: 028 3083 4271
- Community Development Workers, Promoting Wellbeing Department SHSCT:
 - Armagh & Dungannon PWB Team Tel: 028 3752 0576
 - Newry & Mourne PWB Team Tel: 028 3083 4368
 - Craigavon & Banbridge PWB Team Tel: 028 3831 1491
- Pat McAteer (Head of Services for People with a Sensory Disability, SHSCT) Tel: 028 308 25120
- The Protect Life Group has produced a guide to [Useful Contacts for Mental & Emotional Wellbeing](#) which is widely available.

For further information

If you would like any further information please contact the PPI Team – details on front page.

Web: <http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/about/1593.htm>

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