



Dementia Event

Opening Doors to Brain Workout

How tailoring engagement to specific communities leads to more effective engagement.

Engaging with the public and communities helps us to understand the perspectives of people who access health and social care services and helps shape future services. In Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan there is an incredibly diverse population, with people from a variety of ethnic groups, socioeconomic circumstances and a wide age range. This means there can be different challenges to engage due to diverse needs and beliefs of people.

Tailoring engagement events to specific communities can help us to understand the cultural nuances within those communities. This can lead to a better understanding of how communities experience the health and social care systems, cultural taboos, differences in language and what people in different communities place value on.

For instance, research suggests that BAME communities often face delays in dementia diagnosis and barriers to accessing services, therefore engaging with these communities is important to understand the “why” and to overcome the challenges. However, the BAME community is not a homogenous group, with people from different ethnic backgrounds included within it, so tailoring engagement to each group is crucial to understand specific challenges within each community.

We spoke to **Versha Sood**, Dementia Lead for Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board about an engagement event developed by the Ageing Well Programme in August 2023. The first in a series of events focussed on dementia was tailored to the South Asian population of Cardiff.

The series aims to include those under represented within the programme including rural communities, LGBTQ+ and other communities whose input is needed to enhance the service provision.

Why is tailoring engagement events to population groups important?

Effective engagement should go beyond us, as professionals, offering something for the public to receive, it should be reciprocal and tailored to the community so they feel safe and valued in that engagement. With this in mind, I suggested developing tailored engagement events to different communities, that are co-produced with partners from across health, social care, the third sector and people from within those communities. By taking a co-production approach, not only is the engagement a more worthwhile experience for the communities being engaged with, it also develops relationships and partnership working, which enables further engagement to organically grow.

How did you make the event happen?

I always wanted to engage with different communities and I've attended different engagement events but they didn't quite land where I expected them to. Reflecting on this, I felt for multiple reasons that people need to be in their safest place and engagement should be tailored to them. It shouldn't just be us offering and someone receiving, and we're not going to get to know diverse communities unless we go to them, get to know the communities and encourage coproduction through co-creation and co-design. We put the idea forward to 30 partners across health, social care and the third sector. We also invited people from the community to be involved in developing the event, as individual events should be unique to the community.



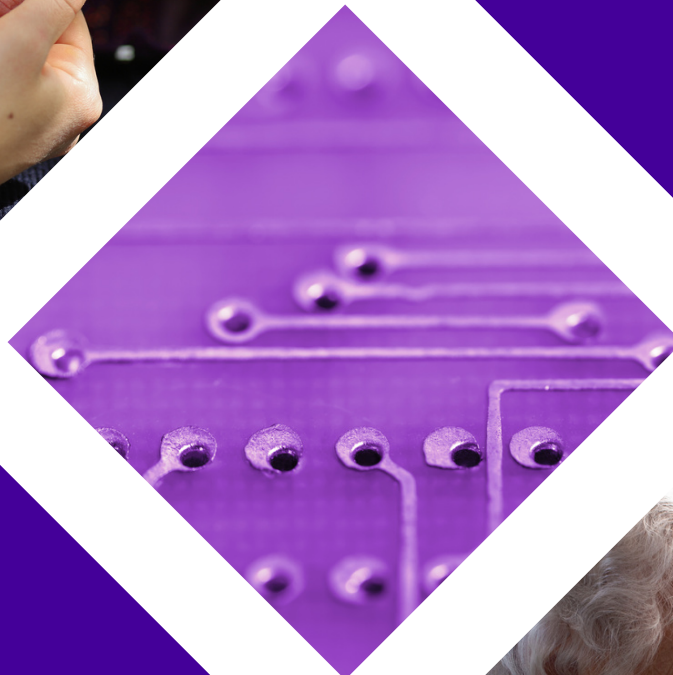
**'Actively
involving
people and
communities
in our work
is what is
most
important'**

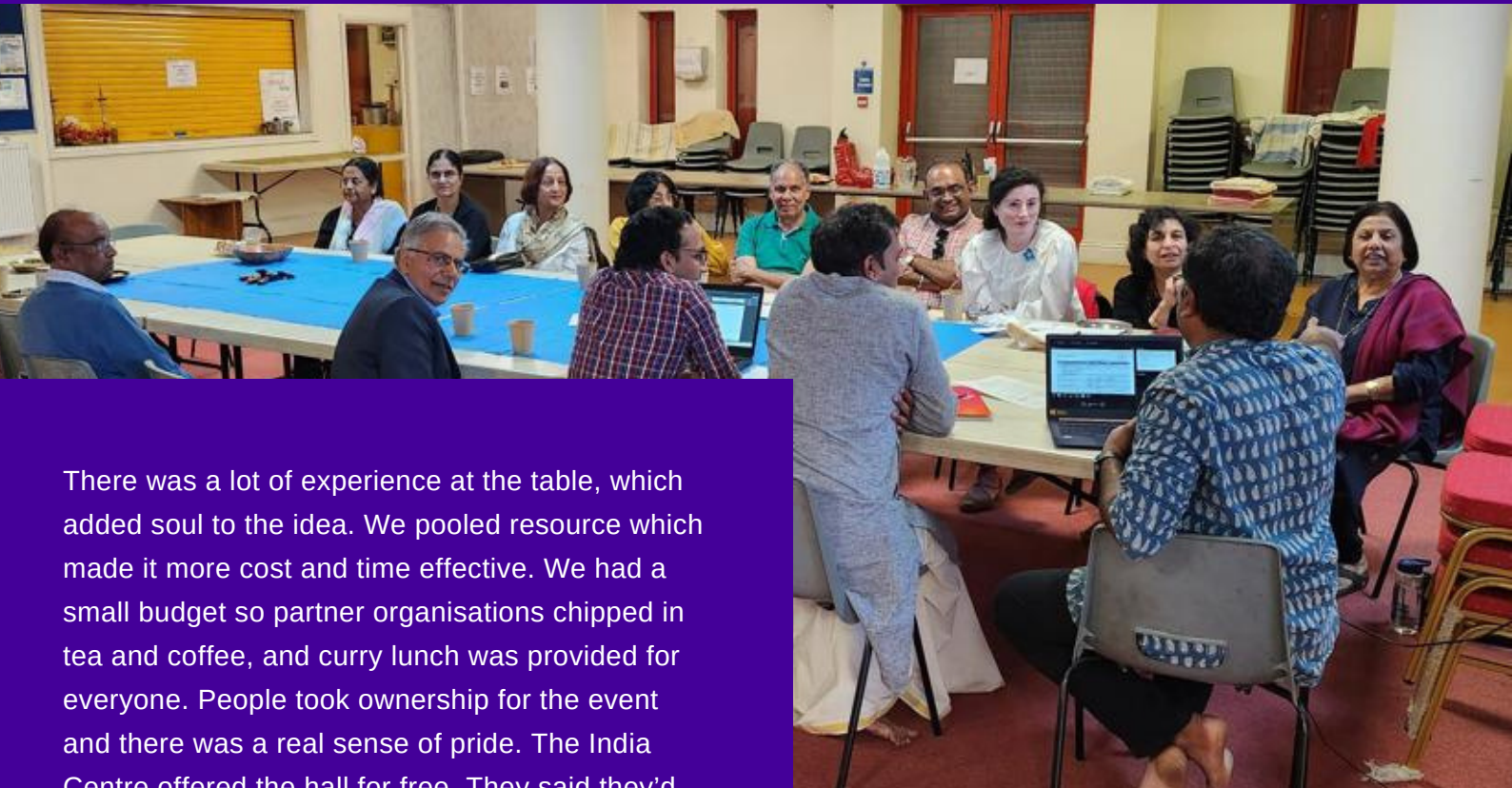
Versha Sood

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Opening Doors for Brain Workout has been such an incredible opportunity. Being able to connect with other third sector organisations to work towards the common goal of improving the lives of those living with Dementia has been a privilege. The often innovative ways in which we work together has been hugely inspiring and I have nothing but complete faith in this series - I sincerely believe that we are at the forefront of something radical.”

Gabriel Mandal, Mental Health Matters





There was a lot of experience at the table, which added soul to the idea. We pooled resource which made it more cost and time effective. We had a small budget so partner organisations chipped in tea and coffee, and curry lunch was provided for everyone. People took ownership for the event and there was a real sense of pride. The India Centre offered the hall for free. They said they'd never had the opportunity and jumped at the chance!

Everyone had equal power, there was lots of flexibility and lots of ideas. The development of the event was a really good team building exercise in itself. People didn't know what other organisations were doing so it helped other organisations know what is available and they can share that information with others.

We invited people living with dementia, their carers and professionals to attend the event. Over 100 community members attended the event plus 30 service reps from health, social care and the third sector.

Different members of the community spoke, including a GP, a carer of someone with dementia, and we also did a group yoga session. People shared their perspectives and experience.

“An absolute joy to attend the ‘Opening Doors to a Brain Workout’ at the India Centre yesterday. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and thank you to Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board and the many partner orgs for organising such a delightful event!”

**Edward Oloidi - Researcher,
Social Care**

**PhD in sexuality and people
with learning disabilities**

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“Opening Doors is a fantastic initiative in which partners across Cardiff and Vale come together on a weekly basis, to co-produce community engagement activities that raise awareness of dementia to underrepresented communities. We have achieved and learnt so much by working together.”

Sian Biddyr, Alzheimer's Society





“The event was a success because the partners continue to meet on weekly basis, with a common outcome in mind, engaging meaningfully through coproduction. The second event was in rural community Cowbridge and plans are developed for the next one with a high education institute.”

Versha Sood

What happened as a result of the event?

Part of our aim with the event was to let people know what to expect when accessing dementia services or if they or a family member develops dementia. It was about letting them know that the services are there for them. But it also gave us a better understanding of the experience of people within that community when it comes to dementia care and attitudes to dementia. People shared their stories and services are taking that on board. Groups at the events and people attending the event collaborated organically as a result of being in the same room in an informal environment.

“Following on from the event, groups such as [Platform](#), Cardiff Local Authority’s outreach work, Alzheimer’s society, Ethnic Minority Research Advisory Group and WAST have continued to get involved with the India Centre.

It’s led to relationships to build events in the future. There are plans for a defibrillator to be outside the India Centre and for training to be given, it’s really created reciprocal relationships with the community. There is a ‘Chai Club, that has started to bring isolated people from the community to come together, again tailoring it the community, ‘chai morning’ instead of ‘coffee morning’.

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Co-production from a personal perspective is the first rung on the ladder towards self help. Co-designing services in equal relationships and shared power increases wellbeing, through valuing and respecting my experiences and my knowledge. Raising confidence, esteem and overall, increasing psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing. Co-production is more than improving services, it's about building relationships and improving culture that cannot be achieved in isolation. Nothing about us, without us.

Ceri Higgins, Person with Lived Experience



So far, the Chai Club has trained volunteers from within the communities and they are working with them, it's a community generated solution. People don't mind chipping in a pound or two to have that quality time together. Though it doesn't come without it's challenges! We've realised there are a lot of people who don't have transport and people might not be able to pay for it, even in an urban area in Cardiff, which is an issue that we need to be mindful of. Another challenge is that we, as professionals, need to be prepared to be flexible, it's hard to let go of control but this needs to happen because there shouldn't be just one or two people doing it all because it's the partners who co-produce it, it's not about "me"!

So, it's led to better connections between the community and partners, and also between the partners. It feels like the start of something, people are connecting directly and communities are working with professionals, so there is personalisation and co-creation.

We also invited people from other communities to the India Centre to show them what we were doing and see if they want the same for their communities. It's led to the development of further events, such as with the rural community in the Vale. Communities have different needs so we want to go out to everyone and tailor our engagement to them.



PLATFFORM

