

Case study: Everybody Counts

What was the issue to address?

We found that in neighbourhoods with low community cohesion there was little interest in traditional 'equalities' or 'awareness' training.

Everybody Counts (EC) is a programme designed to:

- bring people together from different communities and identities
- reduce prejudice and mistrust
- develop practical alliances

What did we do?

Everybody Counts uses approaches that decrease defensiveness and conflict and so make it possible to work with diverse communities even where there are high community tensions. Methods include:

- Every issue counts – EC welcomes and explores the widest possible range of identities and backgrounds. There is no 'hierarchy of oppression'.
- Personal stories make change – the work is interactive and concentrates on emotional responses and personal stories to build empathy.
- Building skills, leadership and enthusiasm – EC works on the basis that everybody can get involved and make a difference in their communities.
- No guilt/no blame – EC emphasises mutual learning and responsibility over blame for past mistreatment.

The core methods and workshops we use were developed by the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI). We have worked in partnership with NCBI to develop and deliver the programme and train staff and local people.

What difference did we make?

To date we have delivered five neighbourhood-based sessions to residents in different areas of Kirklees, plus one session in a school and one session for frontline workers. People were recruited to neighbourhood sessions via face-to-face outreach work, publicity in local media, leaflets in local venues and via frontline staff, voluntary and community organisations. Between 15-30 people attended each workshop in Kirklees. These workshops have then been followed up in the area by more open 'culture sharing' sessions.

Following positive evaluation and feedback from participants for this approach, funding was secured by Kirklees Council's Community Cohesion Team from the Regional Government Office to organise and commission the NCBI to run a three day leadership event across West Yorkshire in an effort to build local skills and networks and cascade the work further. Forty people from diverse backgrounds including people from statutory, voluntary and community sectors attended this training from across the region.

We have found Everybody Counts an effective programme in building people's enthusiasm and practical commitment to working together on difficult issues. It has managed to tackle tough issues like racism, homophobia, class oppression, sexism and Islamophobia without pitting one person against another. It helps people feel hopeful and useful, and builds very genuine friendliness between participants.

What are we doing next?

Our next step in Kirklees is to support a new team of local people who are developing as 'Everybody Counts' leaders and a set of staff within Kirklees Council who are developing as an 'in-house' team of EC trainers to roll out further workshops to residents across the district. We plan to continue to deliver workshops in at least three areas each year in the future.

Shaping our future Together
Kirklees community cohesion strategy

