

Ready...Set...Engage...!

Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector Health & Wellbeing Forum Briefing - December 2018

Voluntary, Community, and Faith Sector (VCF) organisations need to engage effectively with their beneficiaries in order to understand their needs, but also to demonstrate to funders the importance of their support.

What is meant by engagement?

How do you give communities a voice in order to influence the work you do?

What are best practice approaches?

In the last VCF Forum of 2018, Healthwatch Sheffield wanted to discuss what effective engagement looks like, and how the work done by VCF organisations can improve health and social care services.

We brought together health and care professionals, VCF representatives, and members of the public, to share best practice and ideas for improvement. You can see the presentation [here](#).

The VCF Forum included a Q&A with an expert panel:

Tina Ball, Trustee, City of Sanctuary Sheffield

A recipient of the first round of our #SpeakUp small grants scheme, City of Sanctuary Sheffield used the funding to listen to the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

Becky Joyce, Programme Director for Sheffield's Accountable Care Partnership

A newly formed partnership of health and social care organisations, the ACP aims to bring about improvements through closer working between organisations.

Peter Foyle, South Yorkshire Community Foundation

South Yorkshire Community Foundation raises and distributes grants to support community and voluntary groups across the region.

The Q&A discussion touched on topics such as diverse involvement at the decision-making level and on boards, how to make sure engagement results in action and not just listening, and a proposal for engagement to be part of NHS training, giving staff the opportunity to hear people's stories.

During the session, we also looked at examples from our #SpeakUp small grants scheme, which this year funded community organisations to lead their engagement work within their own communities.

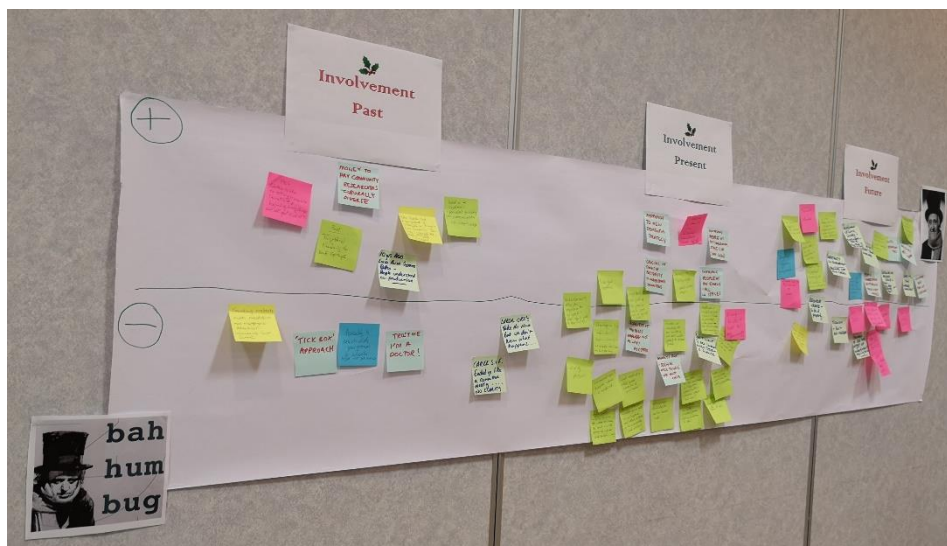
Tina Ball shared the impact the funding had on her organisation, as well as the outcomes – with the work being presented to Sheffield City Council and NHS Sheffield CCG, work is now underway looking at how to improve understanding of the NHS for new arrivals, and a mental health and asylum seeker/refugee network is being set up.

Becky Joyce shared her thoughts on the findings, and how VCF organisations and the health and care sector can work better together to maximise the impact of engagement work, ensuring that services are hearing from a larger and more diverse group of people.

Ghosts of involvement past, present, and future

Attendees were asked to think about engagement and involvement in Sheffield. This included reflecting on what involvement used to look like, what it looks like currently, and what they would or wouldn't like to see in the future.

We then mapped this out, separating the negative (bah humbug!) and positive examples. A summary of themes is presented below.



	Bad	Good
Involvement Past	The perceived attitude of funders and services – a ‘tick box’ or ‘trust me I’m a doctor’ approach instead of listening to communities. A lack of follow up for the people involved.	Reflections on funding that was previously available – particularly for diverse communities. Specific examples of good engagement, such as the Carers Strategy.
Involvement Present	Practical issues in getting people’s voices heard, e.g. funding, and the difficulty of presenting qualitative methods to services which use quantitative data. A lack of diversity, both at senior levels within services, and in terms of the funding that is available for ‘grass roots’ groups.	A perceived move towards greater inclusivity – such as involving people at the pre-commissioning stage, and being more aware of jargon. Specific examples of good engagement, for instance the Safeguarding Advisory Group.
Involvement Future	Don’t become ‘tokenistic’ or forget that health and care doesn’t exist in a vacuum – there are wider social factors to consider.	More creative methods to include more people – for instance art, digital, visual opportunities. A push to reach people who don’t feel comfortable in committee-style meetings. A focus on consulting ‘with’ people rather than ‘to’ them, with consistency in involvement, and a way for people to understand the difference their input makes.

#SpeakUp small grants scheme

To close the session, Healthwatch Sheffield launched the second round of our #SpeakUp small grants scheme. The aim of this scheme is to award grants to not-for-profit, community, and voluntary groups, to enable them to run projects that help local people share their experiences of health and care services in Sheffield.

We award grants of up to £500 to community groups to carry out engagement work. Larger grants of up to £1000 will be considered for projects with significant scale.

Applications are open until 10pm on 17th February 2019.

Guidance on how to apply, as well as more information about the previous round of the #SpeakUp small grants scheme, can be found on our website: <https://www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk/speakup-small-grants/>