

MHCLG Community Champions Programme Case Study

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Name of scheme:

COVID Community Champions

Local area(s) covered:

Bradford & District

Contact details:

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How does this scheme support your local COVID-19 response? Are there other priorities for your champions?

COVID Community Champions aims to increase knowledge and awareness around COVID-19 (including vaccinations) in local Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Central and Eastern European (CEE) communities.

Overall, we have recruited 300 champions who have engaged with these communities to deliver public health messages, address queries / concerns and tackle misinformation.

We work with a range of grass-root and faith partners (see more below) to deliver the work. These partners are well established within their local communities and are best placed to know how to connect and engage with them.

How did the scheme come about? When did it first come about?

COVID Community Champions was funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and facilitated by Bradford Council. REN were commissioned to undertake the project, based on their links with and wide reach into local BAME and CEE communities. Another local organisation, Equality Together (ET), were also commissioned to deliver the work with learning disabled groups and communities.

Prior to COVID Community Champions, REN was already delivering the COVID-19 Prevention Project in Bradford & District, the aim of which was to raise awareness around prevention of COVID-19 and relevant public health guidance amongst BAME



and CEE groups. As part of this we worked with four key anchor institutions and a range of local grass-root and faith partners, i.e. small organisations or groups working at a hyper-local level.

COVID Community Champions has built on this work and we have further grown and expanded our base of grass-root and faith partners through targeted outreach and engagement (we now have 48 in total engaged in the work).

The programme started in April 2021 and will run for six months until the end of September 2021.

Please briefly describe your local population. Does your scheme target any specific population groups?

COVID Community Champions covers Bradford & District. This includes areas outside of the City of Bradford, including Ilkley, Keighley, and Baildon. Bradford is ethnically diverse with 63.9% of the local population identifying as White British. The district has the largest proportion of people of Pakistani ethnic origin (at just over 20.4%) in England. Of the remainder, around 3.5% are White, 6% are Asian, 2% are Black and 2.5% are of mixed ethnic background. In terms of faith, 45.9% identify as Christian, 24.7% as Muslim, 1% as Sikh, 0.9% as Hindu, 0.1% as Jewish and 0.1% as Buddhist, with 20.7% stating that they have no religion.

As already stated above, REN's remit was to work with local BAME and CEE communities. We have a good relationship with local grass-root and faith partners that reach into these groups. Our champions come from a range of diverse backgrounds and reflect the diversity of the local population.

How does the scheme work? Which organisation or groups are involved?

The overall project lead for COVID Community Champions sits in Bradford Council, who have commissioned REN and ET as delivery partners for this work. Project coordinators in both organisations are required to recruit a total of at least 300 champions between them (this is an output set by the commissioners). We carry out regular mapping exercises with the project lead, which allow us to identify and then focus on areas (both geographic and demographic) where there are gaps. There are also meetings (attended by the project lead and both project coordinators) focusing on co-production and co-design.

REN has its own comms team. We also work in partnership with a couple of local infrastructure organisations, CNET and CABAD, as part of this work. These organisations aim to create a bridge between service providers and communities and are assisting with monitoring (CNET) and volunteer expenses (CABAD) for the programme.

As stated above, our champions come from a range of diverse backgrounds and speak around fifteen different community languages between them. They carry out



engagement work with their local communities, delivering key public health messages. They attend and help out at local events, using tools and resources such as leaflets, posters, banners, lanyards and t-shirts, to make people aware of their role and to get messages across. They also make use of social media, including WhatsApp groups, to cascade messages and share information. They are provided with training (see more below), which allows them to address queries and concerns, tackle misinformation and signpost people to accurate information. Champions have also helped to develop and participated in the filming of a number of videos in local community languages focusing on the vaccines, e.g. there is one that explores concerns around Delta variant and how it spreads.

How are champions recruited?

We have developed a range of marketing and promotional materials, e.g. posters, leaflets, to help raise the profile of the work and aid in recruitment of champions. These have been disseminated via key local partner organisations (e.g. Bradford Council, local NHS trusts) and cascaded via a range of comms channels (incl. social media, newsletters), as well as by word of mouth.

We have also worked very closely with our network of grass-root and faith partners (see above), who have been able to use their contacts, existing assets (e.g. volunteer networks) and reach into local communities to help promote and recruit champions. As part of their involvement in the programme, there is an expectation that these partners will help to recruit a minimum of between four and six champions each, of which one will be a 'lead champion'. Lead champions assist and support other champions in their patch, attend co-production / co-design meetings and attend clinician Q&A sessions. They are also expected to feedback any queries and/or insight from their local communities for discussion.

Further to the above, we have carried out regular mapping exercises to identify gaps in terms of champion representation. We have then used this data to carry out targeted recruitment with underrepresented groups to address these gaps.

Champions are remunerated to the level of £50 to participate in a mandatory two-day training programme (see more below) to prepare them to undertake the role. Each champion was also allocated an engagement budget of £200 (managed by CABAD). Potential uses for this engagement budget include: -

- travel costs to participate in face-to-face engagement events or opportunities
- mobile data to connect with local communities via social media or WhatsApp
- costs incurred in the production of resources to use with local communities
- other costs incurred by participation in events and activities

How are champions trained and supported?

As part of their participation in the programme, all champions have to be registered with something called Upshot. This is a central council database that holds personal data on champions in compliance with GDPR and allows us to coordinate activity



using this data, e.g. a champion providing their phone number and area of residence could then be linked to a WhatsApp group in that area. Upshot is also used to help in mapping work (as described above).

Champions undertake two mandatory training sessions over the course of a couple of days. The first of these focuses on critical thinking and is delivered by a specialist trainer from Bradford Council. It also covers the core messages and ethos of the council. The second session focuses on COVID vaccines and is delivered by colleagues in the NHS (usually a mixture of clinicians and comms colleagues). It would cover current and ongoing issues and concerns in this regard, e.g. risk of blood clots, impacts on fertility, etc. These training sessions were run on a weekly basis during the first three months of the programme and then bi-weekly until the end of July 2021.

Lead champions have a role in supporting other champions in their patch as well as in feeding back from their local communities (as already outlined above). The project coordinators are also there to support partner organisations, as well as champions on an individual basis where required. Finally, we provide comms support to lead champions (through our comms officer), helping them to plan and develop comms activity / resources and effectively promote events and engagement opportunities.

How do you engage and communicate with champions?

Upshot allows us to create champion WhatsApp groups based around local geography and demographics. We are then able to use these groups to disseminate information and resources to champions, who then use their own comms methods to engage with their local communities. We have a newsletter that is sent on to grass-root and faith partners who then forward it on to champions. A lot of these partners also have events to which champions and local community members are invited. We have Twitter and Instagram accounts that our champions can follow. Finally, we have a section on the Act As One website (see link below), where champions can access information and resources, including comms materials.

As already mentioned above, both REN and ET have monthly co-production and co-design sessions. We use this time to focus on current issues that our local communities are facing, e.g. concerns about the vaccine in CEE communities as a result of a local priest advising people not to take it. We then use this info and discussion to plan future activity, e.g. to address vaccine concerns and increase uptake. At a more strategic level, REN and ET consider key themes that come out of the sessions and use this info to plan future comms in an accessible format and a range of community languages. We also engage with each grass-root and faith partner on an individual basis and work with them to co-produce culturally competent comms for their local communities.

Has the scheme been evaluated in any way?



We have a process in place to monitor all champion activity. All champions are sent bi-weekly reflection logs which are completed and returned via CNET. In addition to this, monthly monitoring is sent out directly to all champions via Upshot and lead champions are responsible for working with the project coordinator to ensure that these returns are all completed and submitted on time.

Monitoring is also carried out on a bi-weekly basis (via CNET) with grass-root and faith partners, to capture outputs and outcomes through both quantitative and qualitative data, e.g. number of active champions, number of individuals engaged, the kinds of engagement activity they have carried out, issues and concerns raised, etc. They are also asked to supply case studies and images from activity and events that have taken place.

Each partner will also be required to complete a formal evaluation of their participation in the scheme and these will be collated and considered by the commissioners.

What outcomes has the scheme led to?

To this point, we have recruited and trained 270 champions, of which 49 are lead champions. We have reached and engaged with around 15k people using 12 different languages.

We have worked closely with BAME and CEE communities, engaging with local community leaders, faith leaders and clinicians to amplify messages and provide a credible voice into local communities. For example, Dr Amir Khan, who is well-known and respected in the area, has worked with us to cascade messages on social media and create video content addressing concerns and misinformation around the vaccine. We also worked with a key member of the CEE community who livestreamed themselves receiving the vaccine via Facebook Live. Finally, we have worked with Bradford Immigration and Asylum Support and Advice Network (BIASAN) to reach migrant and refugee groups and communities (many of whom weren't aware that they were eligible for vaccination) and develop accessible comms materials in community languages.

What has been your key learning from the scheme to date?

We have learnt a number of valuable lessons from our experiences of running this programme, including: -

- The importance of engaging and working collaboratively with partners at a grass-root level. These partners know their local communities best. Through this approach we have been able to engage with communities that we have not previously reached, e.g. Jewish, Rohingya.
- Ensuring that training is interactive and engaging, and that it gives people the knowledge and skills to be able to go out and engage constructively with their local communities.



- Q&A sessions with local clinicians worked really well. Through these sessions we were made aware of issues and concerns that were previously not on our radar, and this allowed us to work with the clinicians to look into these things and put out comms materials that address them.
- We struggled to engage with community organisations working with local Black communities due to lack of interest, which was disappointing. In the end, we focused our efforts on about two to three organisations who were willing to engage and worked well with us. We did find that engaging key individuals (community leaders, faith leaders, health workers, well-known personalities) in communities who were not that responsive at first was helpful in terms of improving engagement.
- There were challenges in terms of misinformation in certain communities which hindered their engagement and uptake of vaccines. It's important to understand misinformation and how it can vary between different groups and communities as this then allows us to tailor interventions to address it. For example, we found that some younger people believed that a good diet and keeping physically fit would allow them to tackle COVID if they caught it and so didn't feel like they needed to get vaccinated. Understanding this then allowed us to better design interventions to target this group, e.g. with local voluntary sports organisations.

How are you planning to develop your scheme moving forward?

As we come to the final stages of the champions work, we are continuing to look at the inequalities associated with COVID and how these might be addressed moving forwards. Mapping work undertaken with Bradford Council has allowed us to explore patterns in the wider determinants of health and how these have impacted on factors such as vaccine uptake. There are also impacts in relation to mental health and long COVID that we are planning to look at in the coming months.

Links to any further information

Race Equality Network Website - <https://raceequalitynetwork.org.uk/>

Equality Together Website - <https://equalitytogether.org.uk/>

Bradford Council Community Champions Website (showcases all of our work so far) - <https://engageourplace.uk/community-champions>

Act as One Website - <https://www.bdct.nhs.uk/about-us/act-as-one/>

Our YouTube Channel -

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM3ayiqPN0kQcDC1FBaJzJQ/videos>

Videos on vaccinations for care staff - <https://youtu.be/nkzDji5NGkl>,

<https://youtu.be/xNWlaFRg5Hc>, <https://youtu.be/8oHCyJAly2s>,

<https://youtu.be/R3CjXlzYAYs>



Videos on hospitals and health centres - <https://youtu.be/TetdsHE45ns>,
<https://youtu.be/-Hq1v0DhV6E>, <https://youtu.be/ZvuBvrXTjZs>,
<https://youtu.be/kr4WzA3UR-g>

Videos with COVID-19 advice for 19th July 2021 - <https://youtu.be/wVau9Xss1jc>,
https://youtu.be/A-2ltxp_2B0, <https://youtu.be/KKnnMVDXo-M>,
<https://youtu.be/K61fuBFcRN8>, https://youtu.be/a9Q6noE_YD8,
<https://youtu.be/y4XN197SAk8>, <https://youtu.be/D1il2Kro1qA>,
<https://youtu.be/r0bs8swmFAA>, https://youtu.be/kFYTk-UG_Wl,
https://youtu.be/dRG4_kjTnXs

Video - Eid Mubarak, July 2021 - https://youtu.be/_kAo9wvYAhM

Videos with updates in May 2021 - <https://youtu.be/bK8wEZrjiwU>,
<https://youtu.be/Cdv7sa187o8>, <https://youtu.be/1dPGLZl1-O8>,
<https://youtu.be/C5qSnJ9Sxvo>, <https://youtu.be/C5qSnJ9Sxvo>,
<https://youtu.be/aBBIQrDxHmc>, <https://youtu.be/yhyTjThP0RI>,
<https://youtu.be/7t5cWEj59BI>, <https://youtu.be/2Z-keRjyp1Y>,
https://youtu.be/7GtsKHCU_70

Video on Delta variant - <https://youtu.be/IDPrQ3F4PPs>

Videos on access to vaccinations for refugees and immigrants -
<https://youtu.be/wE65bwnygu4>, <https://youtu.be/6n6EfSyK8-Q>,
<https://youtu.be/gYNU7HHPMGo>

Videos on concerns around fertility and vaccines - <https://youtu.be/yNaPSYUoMzw>,
<https://youtu.be/55dvWnawI9Q>, <https://youtu.be/OhjBW22D4io>

Videos on concerns around blood clotting and vaccines - <https://youtu.be/o-94Rh3X5S0>,
<https://youtu.be/FXE2hEIVeug>, <https://youtu.be/9jqLf7L-B2I>

Twitter - @Championscovid
Instagram - Covidchatterbox

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For any further information on this collection of case studies or to make a submission, please contact Tom Mapplethorpe, Programme Support Manager, Public Health England – tom.mapplethorpe@phe.gov.uk.