

## Hibbert Community Regeneration Centre

### Hibbert Electoral Awareness Project (HEAP)

The Electoral Commission established the New Initiatives Fund to support and promote new ways of raising awareness about voting and democracy. We have awarded grants to local, community and national organisations working with different target audiences across the whole of the UK.

This evaluation report provides information about Hibbert Community Regeneration Centre's Hibbert Electoral Awareness Project funded by the New Initiatives Fund. In the report we highlight the aims, objectives and achievements of the project, and lessons learnt by the Hibbert centre.

#### Introduction

The Hibbert Community Regeneration Centre delivers projects and programmes to empower local people in Bolton. Current activities include training workshops and seminars, art exhibitions, film making, community magazines and outings.

#### Aim

The aim of the project was to increase awareness and/or understanding of the elections and government in the UK among Asian women.

#### Funding

The organisation was awarded a grant of £19,000. The project started in January 2006 and ran for 12 months.

#### How successful was the project?

The Hibbert Electoral Awareness Project included training workshops to 200 local Asian women, an open day, community newsletter and DVD produced in English, Gujarati and Urdu. The project was delivered to residents of the Crompton Ward in Bolton.

An informal open day was held which enabled local Asian women to learn about the aims of the project and check their understanding of elections through discussion and questions.

Two hundred local women attended 40 workshops which were held on a weekly basis, covering elections and government, voter registration, the importance of political engagement, democracy, the right to vote without coercion and how to complain when things go wrong. Participants received electoral awareness packs to reinforce their learning and enable the peer education of friends and families.

A community newsletter was produced and distributed to 2,000 local households. The newsletter provided recipients with basic information on wards, councillors and their roles, the importance of voting, how to register to vote, and voting at polling stations. The newsletter also included explanations of the types of elections including the difference between local, national and European elections, and general

information including how to contact the Local Government Ombudsman and how to get involved in local decision making through area forums.

Five hundred DVDs were produced and distributed to local households and Asian community organisations. The DVD included contributions from beneficiaries of their experiences, helping to inform others who were unable to attend the sessions of their rights and the voting process.

The project was evaluated internally with assistance from Thinkers Forum Ltd Group. The evaluation took the form of a quiz after each workshop, mainly to evaluate the attendees' learning. A feedback form was distributed at all events and was also included in the newsletter. The evaluator also considered numbers attending each event. The evaluation indicated that 75% of participants felt encouraged to vote, 100% felt that they have a greater understating of the voting system and 40% of those who had not previously participated in the voting process indicated that they would do so as a result of the project.

The project met its overall objective of raising awareness of the electoral process in the UK. The project had the knock-on effect of the wider community generally taking an interest in the project, and

speaking about it at local community venues and with other community members. Feedback from beneficiaries suggests that the project made an impact on the perceptions of Asian women in Bolton of the electoral process. In addition, observations made by the project staff indicate that the project has had a wider impact through cascaded learning throughout the community.

### Good practice

- Marketing the project through outreach work directly targeting Asian women helped to raise awareness of the project.
- Providing the workshops at existing training venues increased interest in the project and participant numbers.
- Producing translators at all events as well as easy-to-read literature in multiple languages ensured that the project was accessible to those with ESOL needs.
- Beneficiary's participation was also encouraged through the use of volunteers helping with the translations during the workshops, artwork on the newsletter and stories for the DVD.

### Lessons learnt

Projects of a similar nature can learn from the following lessons:

- Planning to ensure that every aspect of beneficiary

involvement allows for feedback on their experiences and coordination of the monitoring.

- Separating each element of the project and planning accordingly would have enabled the project to be delivered more easily.

### Further information

For further information about this project please contact:

Mohmed Hanif Alli  
Hibbert Community  
Regeneration Centre  
Hibbert St  
Bolton BL1 8JG

[hibbertscentre@gmail.com](mailto:hibbertscentre@gmail.com)

Further information about the New Initiatives Fund and the wider work of the Electoral Commission can be found at: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)