

Broadway Homelessness and Support – ‘Let’s Get Political’

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 Broadway Homelessness and Support’s ‘Let’s Get Political’ project funded by the New Initiatives Fund. In the report we highlight the aims, objectives and achievements of the project, and lessons learnt by Broadway.

Broadway is a leading London homelessness charity. They work with over 2,000 homeless and vulnerably-housed people every year, and their vision is to ensure every single person finds and keeps a home.

Broadway provides a range of services including street outreach, daytime care, hostels, supported housing and other services to cover financial, social, health, welfare and employment needs. One of their key aims is to provide homeless people with a voice.

Objective

The objective of the project was to raise awareness of the democratic system amongst homeless people in London and increase their participation in the political process.

Funding

The Electoral Commission awarded Broadway a grant of **£7,399** in June 2005. The charity was experiencing staffing shortages and an internal review and restructure that would severely impact on their ability to deliver the project, so it was agreed to cut the project length by a month, to

five months, and to reduce the grant amount to **£1,214**. The project was delivered through training modules, a democracy toolkit, and supporting information published on Broadway’s website, www.broadwaylondon.org

Target outcomes

The target outcomes of the project were:

- to disseminate information directly to the homeless, front-line workers, and partner agencies in order to increase awareness and routes to political involvement
- to write, publish, and distribute a democracy toolkit to encourage Broadway projects and services to run local events and to use the toolkit as a training resource
- to devise and incorporate a training module for homeless clients to increase awareness of the political process and involvement in democracy
- to organise and deliver events for homeless clients to increase awareness and understanding of the routes to involvement

How successful was the project?

Key objectives

The project achieved its key objectives modestly. Several events were convened, including a tour of the Houses of Parliament.

Assessment of the project

Self-assessment was undertaken by each of the participants before and after the sessions, demonstrating significant increases in their understanding of the electoral process, especially among the group visiting Parliament. All of the participants gave positive feedback on the events, and all were given an information pack with details of how to follow up the event through their own activities.

Exit interviews

Exit interviews were conducted with several of the project's participants; all had positive experiences and intended to encourage others to take part in the democratic process. Key points noted from the interviews included an increased understanding of which organisations to approach to solve particular problems or raise issues, and a new more coherent understanding of the political system as a whole. However, several respondents would have preferred more publicity of the events and an emphasis on how democratic participation can directly relieve the problems of homelessness.

Results of evaluation

The project was evaluated by Broadway's Research Officer, who was not involved with the project. It was concluded that the project may have benefited from increased publicity and that there were some misunderstandings among the participants about the scope of the project for solving the problems of homelessness. However, each of the participants completed the project with an increased understanding of and interest in the democratic process.

Good practice

The following areas of good practice were identified:

- Having a wide base and experience of London homelessness, the project was able to go directly to those who felt disenfranchised or occupied with other priorities, especially substance misuse.
- The project trip to Parliament scheduled at the end of a series of events encouraged participation, and was seen by those involved as a reward and reinforcement for the learning undertaken.
- The participants felt directly involved with the political process, and intended to continue being involved. Several participants expressed an interest in contacting their elected representative or forming pressure groups.

Lessons learnt

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

- Future meetings should include direct engagement such as further visits to democratic institutions, a meeting with an elected representative, or a specific activity, such as writing to an MP.
- Similar projects should be planned to take place over several weeks, to encourage debate and participation over more than one issue and to create a feeling of consistent interaction with the political process.
- This particular target group expressed a desire for practical solutions and advice, and it may be advisable that similar projects focus on how democratic participation can help solve the particular problems of the target group.

Further information

For further information about this project contact:

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Further information about the New Initiatives Fund and the wider work of the Electoral Commission can be found at:

www.electoralcommission.org.uk.

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