

Cultural Awareness Training with Age UK

The organisation

Age UK is a federation of independent charities working together to promote the well-being of all older people and help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience.

The need

Age UK recognises the significant diversity that exists amongst older people and aims to reflect this in all its work. The National Minority Ethnic Network (NMEN) is one of several practitioner networks across the federation aiming to develop network members and federation policy with and on behalf of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities that Age UK serves. Whilst some Age UK members deliver regular training addressing diversity issues and training on specific cultures, the members of the NMEN identified a need for on-going basic cultural awareness training, and to increase Age UK's internal capacity to deliver such training nationally.

What we did

The project team itself was very diverse, with four members from NMEN and Age UK England's Training & Development Officer. The materials were developed through a series of workshops, firstly exploring the team's preferred team roles and learning styles in order to build team cohesion and identify implications for the design of the training course, then focusing on the desired outcomes of the course, both immediately following the course and in sustaining the learning. This provided a framework within which the team members could pool their knowledge and experiences to develop individual sessions to meet the desired outcomes. At the same time the workshops highlighted best practice course design, facilitation and evaluation techniques.

The training course was designed to increase awareness of the nature and importance of culture and enables participants to:

- Explore their personal reactions to people from cultures different to their own
- Identify aspects of their own culture that are important to them
- Generate curiosity and excitement about learning and exploring cultural differences.

A pilot training course was run for members of the NMEN, and two further courses were run for a wide range of Age UK staff with members from the north and southeast of England. The project concluded with a thorough evaluation of the training course itself and its development.

Benefits

Age UK now has a Cultural Awareness training course, endorsed by the NMEN, with staff capable of running it in-house, and criteria with which to evaluate the impact of the course in achieving its longer term aims:

- The course appeals to all staff from all backgrounds and participants are enthusiastic about recommending the course to their colleagues
- The project team members have increased confidence and competence in delivering the training, and other members of NMEN have expressed a keen interest in learning how to deliver the course

- Jacqueline brought experience as a Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) volunteer and trainer, her interest and passion for the subject, and her ability to pass on training skills to the team.

Comments from Age UK

“Jacqueline’s input has far exceeded the expectations of the project team. Jacqueline brought invaluable knowledge, design experience and insights as well as enthusiasm and commitment.”

Christine O’Leary, Training & Development Officer