

Grampian Health & Diversity Network

Executive summary, 2nd phase of implementation (August 2021-March 2022)

Grampian Health & Diversity Network (GH&DN) is a project implemented by Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC). Its 2nd phase of implementation between August 2021 and March 2022 was funded by NHS Grampian. The project aimed to empower community members from ethnic minorities to become health champions for their communities by:

- 1) Increasing awareness on information around mental health and wellbeing, how to keep active, screening programmes, Covid-19 and other key health messages and;
- 2) Increasing participation in designing and improving health services in Grampian.

GH&DN planned outcomes:

- Ethnic minority communities continue to be informed and included around COVID-19, while NHS Grampian and partners are informed about community issues, concerns and suggestions as to what needs to be changed or improved in local services.
- Communities increase participation and are included in identifying key health issues and inequalities that need to be addressed, while NHS Grampian and partners are better informed about communities' experiences, needs and priorities, particularly for the Plan for the Future and equality outcomes.
- New approaches to community engagement and health improvement are tested, while new opportunities are explored to support ongoing dialogue and relationships between health services and communities. NHS Grampian and partners are better informed about health issues and how to improve health outcomes and services.
- Volunteers (health champions) feel empowered and confident to share information and engage on health-related issues, wellbeing and prevention within their community, and both are informed and aware of opportunities to influence services directly. NHS Grampian's Plan for the Future is also informed by engagement with communities that tend not to be heard.
- NHS Grampian have tested and learned from new ways of working collaboratively with GREC as means of engaging with and hearing views from seldom reached communities. New opportunities for future partnership working have been explored that will support the development of ongoing dialogue and a closer relationship between health services and communities. NHS Grampian has a better understanding of the barriers to engagement and experiences of using local health services, strengthening the implementation of the Plan for the Future and the elaboration of equality outcomes.

What was done and achieved:

- An innovative way of engaging with communities was implemented. 4 community connectors (sessional workers) who were members of the communities themselves worked with a focus on Polish, African, Muslim and other diverse communities developing the network of health champions (volunteers).

- Health champions periodically received adapted health information on key topics they expressed interest in (mental health and wellbeing, how to keep active, and prevention and screening programmes). Opportunities to engage were also shared with health champions, who circulated all the information to the wider community to increase health literacy and participation.
- A network with 93 health champions was developed, including representatives with over 21 national/ethnic origins.
- Connected people from seldom heard communities with NHSG and provided an opportunity to share experiences, needs and priorities to feed into the Plan for the Future via a focus group (15 participants) and further engagement.
- Feedback and qualitative evidence coming from 1-2-1 engagement with community connectors and other community activities was presented to NHSG in a final report with evidence to feed into the Plan for the Future and other relevant forums (e.g., Mental Health & Learning Disabilities Public Empowerment Group, NHSG Staff Equalities Network, etc).
- Specific interests coming from seldom heard communities were presented to NHSG and ACHSCP engagement officers and clinicians, which resulted in further collaboration to plan informative and consultative events in relation to accessibility to screening programmes (breast and cervical screening sessions in particular), improvements on healthy eating, gathering feedback for public consultations, etc.
- Improvements in levels of confidence in sharing health information and participating was shown by participants. A positive example was the opportunity to plan a “taster” yoga session for women at Alhikmah Mosque, which was planned together with health champions. This resulted in the Mosque organising a Health Hub project for women and successfully applying for funding for this.

The project’s model of engagement provided an enhanced and flexible way of reaching out to ethnic minority communities to include their input for policy development and evaluation of service provision. The support of NHSG to implement the project in 2021-2022 laid the foundations for further development as we have continued to implement this initiative with the support of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund.

During 2022 we continue strengthening our collaboration with NHSG, planning activities and research regarding the breast and cervical screening programmes, engaging with people to gather feedback in different ways (e.g., for the ACHSCP Carers Strategy through 1-2-1 engagement with community connectors), delivering adapted SAMH mental health training for community connectors and health champions (how to support others, how to improve your wellbeing, and different workshops for parents and carers), and sharing adapted information. We have expanded the network to Moray and Aberdeenshire and as of December 2022, 137 health champions are volunteering with the network. GREC’s Grampian Health & Diversity Network represents a clear first point of contact for NHSG, partnerships and other key organisations, to engage with and involve ethnic minority communities in designing policies and practices that are inclusive and tackle pervasive health inequalities.