

the ethnicity training network:

addressing the health needs of people from minority ethnic communities

Hala Abuateya and Ghazala Mir discuss a recent initiative to raise awareness and skills among health and social care practitioners that promises to make training easily accessible and to create productive links between voluntary and statutory sector services

Ethnic minorities represent a significant part of the British population; the most recent census showed that minority ethnic communities form nine per cent of the general population of England and up to 48 per cent in some areas of the country (Office of National Statistics 2004). There is abundant evidence that people from ethnic minorities experience inequalities and face discrimination and disadvantage in accessing health and social services (Acheson 1998, Modood 1994, 1997, Nazroo 1997). The causes include a poor knowledge of available services, poor standards of communication, delays in diagnosis and treatment, isolation, discrimination in access to services and benefits, high levels of stress among carers and significant unmet needs. People with disabilities in these communities face even greater barriers in accessing services (Chamba *et al* 1999, Mir *et al* 2000).



The Department of Health report on learning disability and ethnicity (Mir *et al* 2001) concluded that, despite considerable evidence about the needs of people from ethnic minorities, there is still a need to translate this into service development. The report highlighted the need to improve access to services by reviewing policies to make them inclusive, recognising the cultural needs of service users and their families and empowering individuals and communities (Mir *et al* 2001).

Training on ethnicity and health has been recognised as a way forward in service development (Aspinall and Jackson 2004, Audit Commission 2004). This is because it raises professional awareness and can equip service providers with the skills and knowledge needed to deal with the diversity of a multicultural society. Accepting the need for training and participating in a training event can contribute to the institutional culture change that is necessary for service development to take place (Betancourt *et al* 2002).

trainers and an appropriate training style are equally important to raising skills levels and challenging the stereotypes often associated with ethnicity and disability. This article describes the development, implementation and assessment of an initiative that aims to offer such training: the Ethnicity Training Network.

The network

The network is a group of individuals and organisations who are interested in improving health and social care for minority ethnic communities. It offers good quality information and training for staff and service users on health and ethnicity and has a special focus on learning disability.

The network's aims to:

- improve the quality and availability of training on ethnicity and health for both service providers and service users
- create connections that help share knowledge and skills between service providers, service users and family carers
- contribute to professional development courses for health and social care staff
- support practitioners to deliver government policies to people from minority ethnic groups.

At present, the network is building a database which includes trainers and people who are interested in receiving training on ethnicity and health. It provides continuing support for its members through making links between different service providers, and assesses the quality of the available training. In the near future the network will begin to assist in arranging training events, conferences and workshops for health providers, service users and family carers.

Development of the network

The process of building the network is based on an incremental and systematic approach involving regular reviews of progress. The network strategy is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the several stages of the network plan. It starts with the preparation period. During this time the network will make contacts, establishing a database of

'Creating a safe environment in which people can test and develop their thinking or traditional practice is a vital element of training on race equality'



Recent evidence shows that there is some training available on ethnicity, but the impact of such training on people's attitudes and behaviour is still limited (Ahmad 2000). More importantly, poor quality training on ethnicity can reinforce negative stereotypes and assumptions about people from ethnic minority groups (Betancourt *et al* 2002). Equally important, there is not enough attention given to involving service users, such as people with learning disabilities, in the service development process (DH 2001).

Creating a safe environment in which people can test and develop their thinking or traditional practice is a vital element of training on race equality (Audit Commission 2004). High quality training materials, skilled

people who are interested in ethnicity and health, with a special focus on learning disability. A website with links to courses and other useful resources will be established.

In the next stage, the project team will assess the needs of those who are interested in being trained, facilitate the setting up of training events and create links between service providers and trainers, some of whom will be service users. Network staff will assist in organising seminars, conferences and workshops for health and social care providers and will contribute modules on ethnicity, health and social care to professional development courses. Meanwhile, a bank of good quality training materials will be created, which will be available to trainers who are registered with the network.

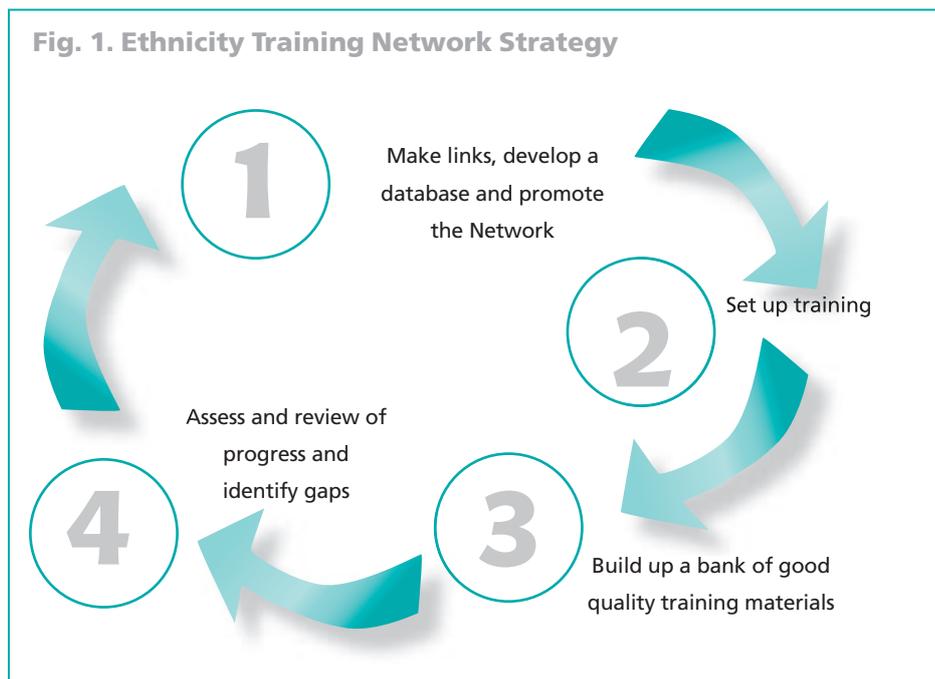
The network will assess its own progress and the impact of its activities at regular periods. This will involve following up trainees to identify how the training has affected the way they provide services; as well as identifying gaps in the database. These reviews of network activity will point the way forward to further action needed as the process continues.

The network is a two-year project and has an exit strategy which involves exploring ways of making the project self-financing and identifying national, regional or local organisations that are able to take over its management.

Building the database

Details of individuals and organisations are being collected from different sources such as the internet, academic institutions, other networks in the voluntary and statutory sector, conferences, public meetings, workshops and from the existing contacts of the project team. The information obtained from these different sources is entered into a database.

Membership of the network is free of charge and open to everybody. However, all potential trainers will be assessed to ensure they are able to offer high quality training and are committed to real change. The following criteria have been developed



for including trainers and training materials in the network.

Trainers

The network will recruit trainers with a track record of delivering courses on race equality, who are flexible and able to adapt their training materials and their training style to the needs of trainees. The network will ask trainers to provide a sample of their training material to be assessed. In addition, trainers will be asked for references from recent employers or training contractors. For training on learning disability and ethnicity, trainers will also be expected to have a clear understanding of relevant issues and, if appropriate to the audience, provide accessible materials for trainees.

The network team recognises the need for more people with learning disability and family carers to contribute to training and will support people from these two groups who wish to become trainers. As part of this process we will negotiate 'Training for Trainers' courses that can be tailored to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities and carers. The network will subsidise the cost of such training where necessary. The project team also hopes to establish a mentoring scheme between trainers with

different levels of experience to develop capacity in areas where the number of trainers is insufficient to meet demand.

Training materials

A bank of training materials will be built from the samples offered by potential trainers as part of the quality assessment process. In return, trainers will have access to all the materials held by the network. Training materials accepted by the network will be relevant to current issues in ethnicity, health and social care. There will be a focus on materials relating to ethnicity and learning disability and a section of the materials in the bank will be accessible to people with learning disabilities. It is anticipated that the bank will offer a range of materials and include practical examples and case studies to illustrate more abstract concepts and ideas.

Requests for training

Potential trainees can be either individuals or institutions who are willing to gain skills and knowledge about issues relating to ethnicity in health and social care. They should be willing to discuss and change flawed attitudes and assumptions about people from ethnic minority communities. In addition,

people requesting training should demonstrate that they are able to implement knowledge gained in a practical setting. A member of the project's advisory group will discuss each training request in detail to make an accurate assessment of training needs.

Depending on the kinds of courses that trainers can deliver, the project's advisory group hopes to be able to offer training at various levels:

Level 1: Raising awareness of the needs and rights of service users from minority ethnic communities. This level is suitable for service providers who want to lay solid evidence-based foundations for race equality work in their organisation.

Level 2: Engaging with local minority ethnic communities and developing the information base. This level is appropriate for service providers who want to know how to work in partnership with these communities, and find out more about their local picture.

Level 3: Developing services for minority ethnic communities – action planning for change. This level is for services that want to make the services they offer appropriate and accessible to people from minority ethnic communities.

Level 4: Evaluating and reviewing service provision for minority ethnic communities. This level is for those who have made some progress and want an objective evaluation of their achievements.

Level 5: Assessment of cultural competence (in conjunction with Level 4). Once organisations have carried out a review and implemented any recommendations, this stage will be used to grant an Award of Cultural Competence. The award will recognise good practice and compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

This model has yet to be consolidated but the network team are keen to consult with service providers and trainers on the possible effectiveness of this approach. It is also hoped that the Award of Cultural Competence will be developed with national bodies to ensure it is prestigious and widely recognised.

Assessing progress

In terms of the courses delivered through the network, an evaluation form has been designed to assess the quality of each training session. This will cover training materials, the performance of the trainers and the organisation of the training event. In addition, follow-up work will be conducted with trainers and trainees after the training to assess its impact and relevance to the needs of the organisation.

Assessing and reviewing the progress of the project itself is a continuous process. However, each stage of work will be assessed and used to determine or modify future plans. The advisory group is an important part of this process; its main responsibilities are to oversee the network and provide suggestions and direction. Membership of the advisory group is voluntary, however members are selected from well-established organisations and include individuals in the fields of ethnicity, disability and professional development. The advisory group has 15 members from diverse backgrounds including education, social services and the voluntary sector. The group will meet formally twice a year to review progress and participate in planning for the next stage. However, informal contacts with advisory group members will be maintained between these meetings ■

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What you can do

The Ethnicity Training Network is still in its early stages and welcomes suggestions on how it should develop and achieve its aims. We encourage anyone who is interested in this area, either as a trainer (or wanting to become one) or an organisation that needs training, to contact us at: The Ethnicity Training Network Centre for Research in Primary Care University of Leeds 71-75 Clarendon Road Leeds LS2 9PL Tel: 0113 343 6903 Fax: 0113 343 4836 Email: medcben@leeds.ac.uk