

Delivering health information sessions to diverse community groups

Good practice guidelines

Introduction

The barriers that exist in health service delivery means that not all communities have the same opportunities to achieve a healthy outcome, and as a result may not feel engaged with health promotion.

It is important to take time to build up trust with diverse community groups and talk about the issues that are important to them, their experiences with health services, and their access needs. This will support their understanding of health services, improve accessibility and allow health services to make changes according to what the community wants and needs.

To give people the same opportunities to access good healthcare, we must design and deliver health promotion messages and information that take into consideration people's needs, their diversity, and acknowledges their life experiences.

This is not a definitive checklist for running health information sessions but useful pointers to support staff and practitioners about how they can do this better.

When planning a health information session

Things to consider:

- What does the group want from the training?
- Who is coming and why?
- Does your idea of the area of focus match up with the group's idea?
- Use clear information and key messages.
- Be creative about how best to engage. People learn in different ways.
- Plan in advance and be well prepared - know your subject matter.
- Supporting staff and group leaders can input into the planning stages and advise on how to frame your information.
- It could take time to build a relationship with a group before they feel ready to allow you to run a health session with them.

Key point: Remember that running an information session is a learning opportunity for you as well.

- You can learn about the group's perception of your service.
- Ask them:
 - Are they using the service now, if so, what has gone well? What didn't go well?
 - What is stopping people getting help about the health issue or accessing your service?
 - What should you do differently?

Before the session

- **Consider meeting the group before the session:** Organise an informal visit to introduce yourself and find out more about the group.
- **Prepare:**
 - **Do your research** on the community/organisation but do not generalise or assume that all cultures are monolithic.
 - **Who is the audience?** Be aware of potential cultural differences, stigma, taboos, or preferences. Find out what language needs there might be.
 - **Why are people coming?** Have you scheduled a specific time for people interested in this topic to attend, or have you been asked in at a recurring meeting time? This could affect interest levels.
 - **Find out** what the group already knows and what previously has been done. Gather the most important questions from the group in advance.
- **Think about timings and venue.** Consider access needs for both online and face to face sessions - is the venue suitable and comfortable for the group?
- **Food or walking events** are a good way to start conversations about health.
- **Interpreters. Ask the group what they prefer.** If needed think how that will work in your session. We recommend the English Unlocked training session on working with interpreters if you feel unsure about this.
 - If you are going to use an interpreter, make sure you prepare them for the session in advance.
- **Content:**
 - **Do you need to change slides/information** to accommodate cultural needs? Are pictures diverse and representative? Think about the language you are using and deliver information appropriate to a specific group.
 - **Use case studies** and stories that people can resonate with.
 - **Think about health literacy.** Keep the information easy to follow and do not overload with information or use too much jargon. What are the key messages you want to get across?
- **Trusted staff support.** A member of staff can help facilitate the session.
 - Ask the staff if is there anything you need to know and their ideas for the focus of the session
 - Explore ways that the staff can prepare the group ahead of the session
 - Support staff are important as the group will know the person and trust them so let them set the meeting up and introduce you.
- **Promotion.** Think about how you will promote it. Use your existing networks to share information and raise awareness. Ask the organisation to help promote it.

During the session

- **Interpreters.** Give interpreters time to translate/interpret- and check for understanding. Sometimes the group might translate for each other or the staff might interrupt to check for understanding or ask you to pause.
- **Utilise staff:** Work with the staff to facilitate the session and take their lead. Work with them to alter the pace or content and to encourage participation.
- **Starting the session.** Think about how to start the conversation off. Make it fun to help break the ice: You could ask them what they know about your service/health issue

- **Frequently check in.** Ask staff and the group how they are doing, if they have questions, if the pace is ok, etc.
- **Listen.** The session is a listening process for you, and a starting point to build confidence in what you are delivering. Be patient with people and understand that some people want to observe and listen. Help to build trust and confidence
- **Make the session conversational and interactive**
- **Information:**
 - Visuals/animations are a good way to get information across
 - Bring in tools or equipment to demonstrate or show.
 - Don't make promises you can't follow through with
 - Case studies and personal studies are important
 - Read the group and be flexible if the format isn't working
- **Questions.** Allow time at the end of session to allow people to come up and ask questions in the group and individually. If they have follow up questions, how will they contact you?
- **At the end of the session.** Ask them: now you know about the service would you use it, or encourage others to do so? If not, why not? If yes, what reassured you? This will help you look at the barriers that may exist in your service delivery.
- **Remember:** Better to have a session where everything is understood than rushing through all the planned material-take your time.

After the session

- **Information** Follow up with any information or actions promised and send your contact details and any publicity/handouts.
- **Provide further offers of help** and support and signposting.
- **Feedback.** Gather feedback to understand if anything more needs to be done. and how engagement was received - this helps staff understand as well.
 - Be ok to respond to feedback and redesigning what you are delivering.
 - Evaluations can be done by survey or follow up directly with staff.
 - It might be better to ask organisation to collect feedback from a group.
 - Continue to be open to feedback after the session as some people will feel more confident giving feedback anonymously.
- Be prepared that that you may not get to discuss all the things you want to about your service - offer to come back and do additional sessions or follow up. sessions. This will help with building closer relationships and trust over time.
- If the group provided information that helped change service delivery/policy make sure you feed this back to them.
- **Consider hosting the group at your service.** Arrange visits for outside of normal hours/during business hours to let the group see the space and become more familiar with procedures. This will decrease barriers and build confidence.

Final point

- It takes time to build trust with groups; however, this is not always factored in when awarded grants/funding. To have a successful outcome for health improvement or change in behavior, we need time to work with a group, and the resources to make that happen