Engaging CALD Carers & Communities

Building partnerships with CALD Community Organisations and Networks

This resource is part of a series of resources in the online Diversity in Disability Toolkit.

For further information, see:
diversityindisability.org

What will this resource cover?

Building cross sector relationships and networks are an essential way to build capacity and knowledge within your organisation, and also understand how to connect with CALD communities on a deeper level. This guide will introduce reasons why it is important for disability organisations, multicultural organisations and ethno specific organisations to work together in order to increase access and inclusivity to services for CALD people with disability. Some practical tips will also be outlined, ending with a case study that will elicit some questions for consideration.

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Essential information

Partnerships and networks with ethno specific organisations and multicultural structures are essential in aiding the process of engaging with CALD individuals and communities, and information sharing regarding best practice. It can also build reciprocal knowledge sharing that can aide both yourself and the CALD structure you are engaging with, where you gain more knowledge of a community, and the CALD organisation may learn more about disability for example.

The word partnership can mean an array of different things, however one succinct description of a partnership which has been developed by Vic Health can found here: http://www.nada.org.au/media/14537/vhfactsheet_ partnerships.pdf

- **Networking** – involves exchange of information for mutual benefit

- **Coordinating** – involves exchange of information for mutual benefit and altering activities for a common purpose

- **Cooperating** – involves exchanging information, altering activities and sharing resources for mutual benefit and a common purpose

- **Collaborating** – involves all of the above plus a willingness to increase the capacity of another organisation for mutual benefit and a common purpose.

The above four elements show that partnerships can come in different formats, and can be ranked in terms of their level of involvement and input of time and energy. These partnerships can occur at a senior managerial and strategic level (such as strategic interagencies), or be more operational and grass roots (operational information

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sharing and client referrals). Both levels can feed into each other also.

Essential good practice tips

You may find that in some communities, there may not be a large amount of organisations that service that community, or there may be too many organisations to contact that you may not know who to contact.

Finding out who to contact requires an assessment. It is worth taking the time to investigate an organisation's services, governance and clientele, for example;

- What services does the organisation or structure provide?

- What does the organisation's governance structure looks like? For example, how many workers does the organisation have?

- Who are the clientele the organisation works with?

After you have completed the above, it is then important to think about the best way to approach these organisations. For example, a formal email may not be the right mode of contact for some organisations. Learn from approaches that don't work, and amend your engagement style accordingly. Continuous learning is the key to engagement. Faux pas are commonplace, and shouldn't feared but instead viewed as a learning experience;

Some additional examples to help start the process of enhancing connectivity between disability service providers, multicultural organisations and ethno specific organisations include;

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- Research relevant community events that your organisation could attend in order to make connections with communities;

- When collecting data around CALD demographics you may find that clients from a particular community are not accessing your service, however your service is located right in the middle of a high density population of that particular community. Building relationships from analysis of data can also form the basis of a targeted engagement strategy. You could get in contact with the local ethno-specific organisation servicing that particular community, set up a meeting and work with them to identify engagement ideas;

- Place importance on meeting people at networking meetings, workshops and other opportunities where you may informally make contact, and build a meaningful working relationship down the track.

What these partnerships would look like, or produce could consist of the following;

- A formalised interagency that meets regularly, and is made up of ethno-specific structures, multicultural organisations and disability service providers. This interagency could be developed at a localised level, or be cover a broader area;

- One off disability focussed forums that bring together a range of people working with CALD individuals and communities with the purpose of sharing best practice examples and updates;

- A targeted project that brings together a specialised group of people from different organisations. This type of partnership would more than likely require an amount of funding and formal agreements between partners;

- Combined training opportunities that bring together

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disability workers and people working with CALD communities into a shared learning space. This can help participants learn in an environment where different perspectives are shared and appreciated;

- A development of an online resource 'hub' where staff can update a list of events, and connect with each other online. This would require a certain amount of time, resourcing and continuous review in order to be feasible and relevant;

- A combined event where workers across sectors come together to organise a small event, e.g. a small multicultural feast day for people with disability.

A few important points to be mindful of when developing partnerships include;

- Making sure that relationships and partnerships are built on mutual respect, where expertise is valued and shared;

- A focus on building trust is imperative, yet can take time to establish. It is worth taking time to make sure that you are meeting with the right people, and are entering conversations with a community in a respectful way. Ethno specific structures or multicultural organisations who have nuanced expertise in how to approach communities, and knowledge of who the right people to contact are in those communities could be a good first port of call;

- A review of the purpose of a partnership, network, interagency etc should be undertaken at various intervals to ensure that it is still relevant and purposeful;

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A note of person-centeredness and community

It is also worth exploring the nexus between choice, person centeredness and community. When working with CALD people with disability, it is important to move beyond an assumption that person centred approaches automatically encompass an understanding of cultural needs.

Moving beyond partnerships with ethno-specific structures and multicultural organisations and delving into developing relationships within communities directly, it is important to consider the following points;

- As mentioned earlier, building relationships with CALD structures can take time and a build up of trust. This is especially true when working within communities. Building relationships within communities takes time, respect and may not yield measurable outcomes in the first instance;

- The use of bilingual workers, and recruiting workers who have detailed knowledge regarding their community will also aid the process of engagement. It is also worth a quick mention that when matching bilingual workers with clients and community, there shouldn't be an assumption that a client will automatically want to work with a staff member from their own background. There also could be boundary concerns that need to be monitored where bilingual workers could feel professionally challenged when working within their own community;

An assessment of an individual's capacity to direct person centred care

Three considerations can help in assessing a person's competency in getting the best out of person centred care.

1. What are the person's information skills?

2. What are the person's information access skills?

3. So they feel that they have the right to determine the direction of their own future?

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The notion of individualised choice could also be a foreign concept in some communities. For example, a young Muslim girl with disability may wish to participate in a range of risk taking activities, yet the wishes of her family and the wider community – including the local mufti may be placing pressure on her not to partake in these activities. Understanding the nuances of community, culture, collective societies and individual choice are important to unpack and be perceptive to when working with individuals with disability and their community.

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Case Studies

Sue is working with Fatima who is 34 and has an intellectual disability. Fatima has expressed that she would like to participate in some sports activities and social events. Fatima feels as though she has been making real progress with Sue's guidance, and she also feels as though she may be ready to move into independent living in the next year. In the next appointment with Fatima, her mother and father also attend. Fatima's parents express grave concerns about her moving into independent living, and also explain that the Mufti has mentioned that he believes that Fatima's ideas about the activities she wishes to participate in are inappropriate.

Sue doesn't quite know where to start to try and work with

Fatima to achieve her goals.

Key Questions

How should Sue address these issues with Fatima and her family?

Should Sue think learning more about Fatima's community to understand the reason's why the Mufti feels as though Fatima's wishes are inappropriate?

How should Sue work with Fatima to achieve her goals within her cultural context?

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