



Community Empowerment and Support Initiatives (CESI)- UK
Greenwich Nepalese / Gurkha Integration Project
(Funded by The Big Lottery Fund- Reaching Communities)

Report on Housing and Welfare Benefits Event



Venue: The Salvation Army Hall, Plumstead, London

March 23, 2015

Section 1 Introduction

A one day Housing and Welfare Benefits Workshop was organised on 23rd of March 2015 at the Salvation Army Hall in Plumstead, London. This workshop was attended by 65 people (male 21 and female 44) from Nepalese/ Gurkha community people. The workshop was started at 11 AM and finished at 3 PM.

CESI organised this community consultation event for the Nepalese Gurkha people, as part of "Greenwich Nepalese Integration project" awarded by Big Lottery Fund - Reaching Communities. The community consultation event was organised to provide Nepalese people with an opportunity to discuss issues related to Housing and Welfare Benefits with the Statutory and Voluntary organisation officials.

The main speaker was Ms Caz Colclough - Housing Benefit Officer, Royal Borough of Greenwich. The event was facilitated by Arka Raj Timisina- Project Administrator of CESI.

Event Aims and Objectives:

The main aims and objectives of the workshops were:

- to provide a forum for Nepalese people to air their views on the issues related to Housing and Welfare Benefits;
- to provide service of translator/interpreter to make participants fully understand their queries and concerns over issues raised;
- to encourage discussion and consideration of all viewpoints;
- to accurately record the response of event participants.

Agenda for the community event was prepared taking in to account that effective consultation/discussion should recognise that individuals will have different interests and concerns which they will want to explore and everyone should have the opportunity to express their views and have these recorded.

Section 2: Event Presentation

Project Administrator gave a brief introduction and objectives of organising this event and also discussed the agenda for the event. It was also explained that a Question and Answer session would take place at the end of the presentation.



Project Administrator Briefing about the event

Presentation session

1. Presentation by Ms. Caz Colclough:

The speaker Ms. Caz from the Royal Borough of Greenwich presented a brief report on the process and procedure of applying for council house and houses of the private housing association in the borough. She was happy to say that she had been able to solve the housing issues of many Nepalese and Gurkha people through the support provided by the project. She also said that she would continue to see them on every Monday afternoon at her council office if they had any issues.

Ms. Caz further explained that the council pays house rent and council tax to eligible people irrespective of their types of accommodation (council house or private house) and they do not need to be only in this borough for five years to be eligible for the benefits. They have to be in this country for the last five years. She also informed the participants to tell this message to their friends who are not present here and in case of any issues come to Council office on any Monday at 1 pm and their issues will be resolved.

After presentation by CAZ, some of the participants shared their success stories before the workshop participants. They clearly said that CESI through this project had helped them to solve their Housing problems. They also further said that they are now fully confident that they can help support other people regarding any Housing issues and asked the participants to contact them if they need any help.



One of the participants sharing his success story



Another participant sharing his success story

Section 3. Questions and Answers:

1. The housing benefits given by council is not enough to pay the rent while living in private house. we have to add extra money to pay the house rent. This was the case of the most of the participants living in this Borough.

Ms. Caz clarified that Council had its own criteria for house rent and it applied to everyone. However, she asked them to come and see her if she can do something to sort it out.

2. One of the participants Mr. Karna Bahadur Pun Magar said he is receiving housing benefit and pension credit but he did not receive the benefit from the date he applied and he only got after three months. Ms. Caz, in this regard asked him to come and see her on the following Monday at her council office and promised she would look into the issue carefully.



Participants asking questions

Section 4 Participant's Views - Feedback and Analysis

This section records the results of participant's views and feed back of the event.

As noted in question and answer session, there was a number of people putting their issues during the discussion sessions and it was very encouraging to see so many points of view aired, reflecting different opinions of the local community.

At the end of the event a feedback form was distributed to participants, 60 of which were returned.

In general most of participants found the event interesting and useful. Some remarked on the lack of time and the need for more detailed information on a variety of issues.

4.1 General comments:

“I am really happy to say that CESI has solved my housing issue which was pending for months and working towards building a better community -keep going”

“We need to have such kind of event organised on a regular basis”

Event Schedule

March 23, 2015

“Housing and Welfare Benefits”

Programme

11.00 - 11.30	Participants Registration and Tea/Coffee
11.30 - 11.40	Welcome to the participants and Objectives of the programme– Mr. Arka Raj Timsina
11.40 - 12.30	Presentation by Caz Colclough, Training Officer, Housing and welfare benefits, Royal Borough of Greenwich
12.30- 14.00	Open Discussion
14.00 - 14.15	Programme Evaluation
14.15 - 15.00	Lunch