



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  
**November 13, 2013**

## **Section 1 Introduction**

A one day Housing and Welfare Benefits Workshop was organised on 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 at the Salvation Army Hall in Plumstead, London. This workshop was attended by 84 people from Nepalese/ Gurkha community people. The workshop was started at 10 AM and finished at 3 PM.

Laxman Sah, Chair person of CESI welcomed the participants, resource person and provided a brief introduction of the project funded by The Big Lottery Fund - Reaching Communities. Chair person explained the objectives, outcomes and the activities of the project.

CESI organised this community event especially for the Nepalese Gurkha people, as part of "Greenwich Nepalese Integration project" awarded by Big Lottery Fund - Reaching Communities. The community 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 speakers were Ms Caz Colclough and Jane Hayball and from 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 Rights;
- 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.

### **Registration, Tea & Coffee**

During registration participants were given a pack which consisted of a set of event agenda, copy of handouts of presentation and event evaluation form. Refreshments were served.

## 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.

### Presentation session

Ms Caz Colclough and Jane Hayball from Royal Borough of Greenwich were the main speaker of this community event. They talked about areas of Housing and Welfare benefits. In their presentation they also briefly talked about the types of benefits they can get depending up on their situation and circumstances. After their presentation, the participants were divided into two groups: The group one consisted of participants having issues related to Housing and Council Tax benefits where as the group two consisted of issues related to Welfare benefits. Caz dealt with issues of Housing and Council tax benefits and Hayball dealt with the issues of Welfare benefits. Both of them tried to answer/solve their queries and concerns instantly and in case if they need to see additional documents, they were given appointments to see them at the council office.



*Presentation by Ms Caz Colclough of Housing department, Royal Borough of greenwich*

Project Administrator prepared the appointment details and accompanied them to the council office with the required documents. He also acted as translator during the appointment at the council. Name list of people who made appointments to see Council officials to help solve their issues are presented below:

### 1. Appointment with Hayball - Welfare benefits Officer:

SN.	Name	Issues
1	Til Bahadur Gurung	Pension Credit and Housing benefits - backdating
2	Ram Lal Thapa	Pension Credit and Housing Benefits
3	Surya Man Gurung	Pension Credit and Housing benefits - Eligibility to remain outside of UK in one time
4	Chhalli Kumari Thapa Magar	Housing Benefits and Pension credit
5	Bhim Bahadur Gurung	TV Licence
6	Indra Devi Gurung	Carer Allowance

7	Nar Bahadur Rana magar	Attendance allowance and Care Home
8	Gam bahadur Gurung	Pension Credit, Army Pension, Carer Allowance
9	Babar Singh Gurung	Need Psychiatric treatment help. Depression
10	Bishnu Gurung	Pension Credit - Back dating

### 3.4 Question and Answer (Q&A) Session

A 30 minutes Q&A session took place at the end of the presentation. Most of the participants raised their issues and concerns related to Housing and Welfare benefits.

#### Who can claim Housing and Council Tax Benefits?

Housing Benefit is paid to people who are claiming benefits, have low wages or who have little money to live on. Your income and savings are compared to the amount of money the government says you need to live on. So the amount of help you get will depend on:

- Your Income- the money you and your partner have coming in
- Your savings and your partner's savings
- Your circumstances such as your age, ages and size of your family, any disabled members of the family, whether anyone who lives with you can help with living costs.
- Your rent

She further clarified that It did not matter if some one are on a benefit, such as Job Seekers Allowance or Guaranteed Pension Credit, or if working. If someone are on a low income, they may be able to claim Housing Benefit.

They will need to supply evidence of their wages and pensions but most of the information about their benefits we can get directly from the Department for Work and Pensions. We may also ask for information and evidence of their partner's income and the income of other people who live with you.

It is very important that we know about all the people who live in your home. It is especially important if people move out or new people move in. We may be able to reduce the amount of Council tax you pay by awarding discounts or exemptions. Some people, for example those who live alone and people with disabilities, qualify for Council Tax discounts. If you have other adults living with you who are on a low income other than your partner, you may be able to claim a second adult rebate

We also need to know if the people who live in your home are your partner or dependant children, or other relatives or friends or if they are other joint tenants or your landlord.



*Workshop Participants*

## **Your Rent**

We need to see proof of their rent so that we know how much Housing Benefit to pay to them and to check that they are liable to pay rent. It is often very difficult to get details and evidence of rent especially where people rent rooms from other tenants. If they rent a house, flat or room we will need proof such as a letter or tenancy agreement from the person they pay rent to confirming:

- How much your rent is
- How often you pay rent.

If they rent a room from another tenant we will also need to check that the person who gave them permission to stay had a tenancy agreement or letter themselves.

If they want their money paid to them we will need a letter from the person they pay their rent to confirming that their rent payments are up to date. If their rent is 8 weeks or more in arrears we are required in nearly all cases to pay first payment to their landlord. In most cases it is safer and quicker to make payments of Housing Benefit directly into their bank account.

## **Your Bank Accounts and Capital**

Your savings or capital includes:

- Any savings you have in a bank or building society
- Savings certificates, stocks and shares,
- Property except the home you live in
- Tax refunds.

If they have Savings up to £6000 that will not affect the amount of Housing Benefit they get. They must tell us how much they have and their account details but they do not need to show us any evidence. People of pension age are allowed to have up to £10,000 before we take their capital into account.

If they have capital or bank accounts worth between £6000 and £16000 they must tell us how much they have and their account details and we will need to see evidence. We can accept:

- Last 2 months bank statements
- Building Society books
- Savings Certificates
- Share certificates

They cannot usually get Housing Benefit if they have savings or investments over £16,000, unless they are receiving Guarantee Pension Credit.

If they are entitled to Guarantee Pension Credit, Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based), Employment Support Allowance (Income Based) or Income Support we do not need any information or evidence about their capital or bank accounts.

### **Identification and National Insurance Number**

If they make a claim for Housing Benefit they may be asked to provide:

- Their Passport stamped with your leave to enter or remain in the UK,
- Their HM Forces discharge book

They may also be asked to show that They have applied for a National Insurance number.

### **Making a Claim for Housing Benefit**

To make a claim for Housing Benefit they must fill out an application form. Please complete as much of the form as you can. If we need further information or evidence we will contact them but this may take time.

If they claim Pension Credits or Job Seekers Allowance they can claim Housing Benefit via the Pension Service or Department of Work and Pensions. This means that they may not need to complete a separate application form for Housing Benefit. If they want to check on the progress of their claim and they make a claim via the Pension Service or DWP they can contact them and they will let them know how their claim is going.

As the rules are complex we advise them to make a claim and we will let them know if they are entitled.



Ms Jane Hayball of Welfare Benefits Department of Royal Borough of Greenwich dealing with individual participants for welfare benefit issue

## **Changes of Circumstances**

It is very important that they tell us as soon as possible about any changes in their circumstances such as:

- Rent increases
- People who join or leave your household
- Changes in your income

There are also two new short forms they can complete if:

- They move house
- Their income changes.

The new forms help us collect all the information we need to make changes to their claim without collecting information we do not need.

## **How we can help you.**

If you need help or advise with your claim for benefit or if you want to hand in evidence or application forms you can come to either the Woolwich Centre which is situated opposite the Town Hall in Wellington Street or the Eltham Centre in Archery Road Eltham SE9 1HA

Woolwich Centre opening times:  
Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm

Please make an appointment for Benefits enquiries. To make an appointment or speak to an advisor, call 020 8921 4147 for Council Tax or 020 8921 4900 for Benefits.

## **Eltham Centre Opening Times**

Monday: 9am to 7pm  
Tuesday: 9am to 5.30pm  
Wednesday: 9am to 5.30pm  
Thursday: 9am to 7pm  
Friday: 9am to 5.30 pm  
Saturday: 9am to 5pm  
Sunday: 10am to 4pm

No appointment necessary  
Eltham Centre Opening times

Monday: 9am to 7pm  
Tuesday: 9am to 5.30pm  
Wednesday: 9am to 5.30pm  
Thursday: 9am to 7pm  
Friday: 9am to 5.30pm  
Saturday: 9am to 5pm  
Sunday: 10am to 4pm

If you need help with English we can arrange an interpreter who can help you discuss your claim

If you find it difficult getting into our offices you can ask us to visit you at your home. Contact the service on telephone number 020 8921 4900

If you prefer to send information or evidence by post please send it to:

Royal Borough of Greenwich  
The Woolwich Centre  
35 Wellington Street  
London SE18 6HQ

## **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 good deal of discussion particularly 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 encouraged that you are working towards building a better community -keep going"

“This is the first event of this kind organised for Nepalese Community- very useful”

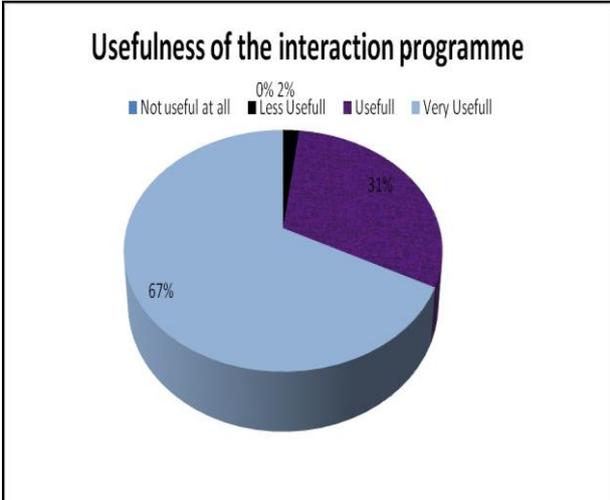
“We need to have such kind of event organised on a regular basis”

“CESI should do some programmes/activities to improve the life of Nepalese elderly and also for youth and women”

#### 4.2 How did participants rate the day?

From the feedback forms received, the majority of attendants rated the event as “very useful” (68%) while a 30% considered it “useful”. The rate of less useful was quite low at 2%. Similarly the majority of participants (72%) rated that they have very well understood the event, while a 26 % considered it understood well. The rate of less understanding was quite low at 2 %.

Similarly the most of the participants (22%) have recommended that similar type of programme should be organised regularly in the future. They have also recommended that programme such as information on state benefit system, programme related to culture, women, elderly and youth should be organised in the future.



# ***Event Schedule***

November 13, 2013

“Housing and Welfare Benefits”

## **Programme**

11.00 - 11.30	Participants Registration and Tea/Coffee
11.30 - 11.35	Welcome to the participants and Objectives of the programme– Mr. Laxman Sah
11.35 - 12.05	Presentation by – Ms. Caz Colclough, Department of Housing, Royal Borough of Greenwich
12.05 - 12.35	Open Discussion
12.35 - 13.10	Presentation by Hayball, Department of Welfare benefits, Royal Borough of Greenwich
13.10 - 13.40	Open Discussion
13.40 -14.10	Programme Evaluation
14.10	Lunch