

Information for community leads on engagement & communication with advice providing organisations/agencies/entities for/on behalf of their organisation & community members



NOTE: UKNFS can support & assist, if & where needed, on establishing the necessary connections from community to advice providing organisations through the context of the advice project connections already established.

Key advice providing organisations/agencies/entities, contacts for community leads and Nepali organisation representatives. In many cases direct contact & strong relations will already exist, but in others as responses from the advice project evidenced, these were lacking and did not exist. The list below is 'open'/can be added to, and based on the advice project advice-providing organisations.

List of advice providing/dispensing organisations and agencies approached and/or taking part in the project:

Project local area locations organisations*:

*Most of the organisations below contacted at CEO and/or Equality lead / Customer Services lead levels.

- **Citizens Advice Bureaux:** Shepway, Woolwich-Greenwich, Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole, Rushmoor
- **Police Forces:** Kent Police, Hampshire Police, the Metropolitan Police, Dorset Police
- **Local authorities (general but with departments – housing, social services, electoral services, Anti-Social Behaviour, etc. – emphasis):** Rushmoor District Council, Greenwich & Woolwich Borough Council, Bournemouth Council, Dorset County Partnership / Dorset County Council
- **Adult Learning:** Skills & Learning (Bournemouth Dorset & Poole) -- Kent Adult Education & Hampshire Futures were also approached
- **Councils for Voluntary Service:** Rushmoor, Shepway, Poole, Woolwich & Greenwich
- **Wessex Crown Prosecution Service**
- **DWP** -- Job Centre Plus Greater Wessex (covering Hants, Wiltshire, Dorset, IOW)
- **Other:** Greenwich Community Directory

Advice providing/dispensing national organisations & agencies*:

*The listed organisations contacted at CEO/Director General level.

- DWP / national Job Centre Plus
- HMRC
- Local Government Association (LGA) Independent Group
- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- UKVI (Director General)
- HMCTS Immigration Tribunal (President / Lead)
- Westminster (Parliament) Community Outreach & Engagement Team
- National Assembly of Wales, Communications & Educational Team
- Equality & Human Rights Commission [EHRC]
- Hansard Society
- Runnymede Trust
- National Citizens Advice (CAB)
- Census / Office of National Statistics (ONS)
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
- Banks: Lloyds Bank

In regard to the above, depending on the scope/purposes of your organisation, are you aware of any Panels, Boards, consultation groups & mechanisms [online review of policy and services implementation, processes, etc.] you should be represented on at national, regional, local level, for the Nepali community through the relevant/given organisations/agencies/entities?

If so, have you contacted them (and if so which organisation/agency/entity)? How? and with whom (their title/rank, post)? and have formal engagement relations been established?

Ways of effecting strategic level engagement and communication on behalf of your community:

The advice project has provided this directly in some key cases, and in others alerted the given organisation/agency/entity to the need to do so, to the extent of making requests for assistance in engaging effectively, directly with the Nepali community.

In some cases, organisations/agencies/entities actually already have officers, staff, volunteers from the Nepali community. In such cases these can assist in effecting or deepening the strategic-level relationship needed between the community and the lead(s) of the given organisation/agency/entity, if given the right guidance on making approaches to the latter's lead WITH the direct authority & backing of yourself as head of your community organisation.

In others, to email or write to the organisation lead. This should include:

- a) Characteristics of the [Nepali] community in regard to use of the given advice service
- b) Guidance on the community's size -- large; 1000+ or small 50 – 100+ -- remembering that a very small community can have members that consequently have higher than average additional needs and challenges in using the advice-providing organisation/agency/entity
- c) That your own community organisation can provide the direct guidance on the advice provider overcoming communication and engagement issues, that commonly mean whilst unmet, it is failing in discharging its functions effectively (very important if funded by the general-public, including the UK Nepali community, funded by Council Tax or Business Rates, and a democratic election-based entity such as parliament or a local authority).

The follow-up meeting with an advice-provider lead: ... Sharing examples of good practice on engagement, communication and listening to requests, suggestions, concerns, is highly valuable in such meetings. It is a diplomatic approach to tackle poor performance, indicating that working together is very productive for both community and advice provider. Ensure you secure dedicated officers to work with you/with your organisation, whilst at the same time not losing or have distancing regarding organisation/agency/entity lead/CEO/Chair.

Have any national or regional or local level organisation/agency/entity officers contacted you in regard to your organisation and Nepali community involvement? If so how has this engagement & communication been established with you, and by whom (their title/rank, post)? If this is the case please reflect on the benefits, or lack of benefits, delivered to the Nepali community through this engagement & communication.

The UKNFS can support you in regard to establishing direct links with organisations/agencies in your local area, and with national agencies & organisations, that may not be included in the lists above; doing so by liaising with your organisation, such as NRNA, BGWS, Tamu Dhee, UK Sherpa Association, etc. to give some examples.

Not missing out on consultation & representation opportunities: ethnic minority (and other minorities) commonly miss out on being involved in these. This can be from indirect discriminatory sources, or purely through the non-minority communities, majority community members who largely institute and run such consultations, do not understand the particular additional needs of minority communities, for involvement in consultation.

Making effective representations: in some cases' community members can encounter very poor customer / service-user care, which can even come from indirect discriminatory & racist perspectives of staff & volunteers of advice providers.

Remedies for bullying & abuses of process:

In some cases' bullying may just involve one individual, and is therefore easier to intervene on directly if you are able to remind the given advice-provider of the legal & customer care obligations. In the case of abuses of process (UK immigration services are the current classic example) are different to and much more serious than individual isolated instances of bullying. They indicate a 'culture' of disempowerment, built on the victim having as little information as possible about actual processes and protections against abuses of the latter: this most negative phenomenon can result from unstated process abuse strategies, and operational, management leads directly condoning or encouraging process abuses.

Options for redress & remedy include but are not limited to, recourse to:

- The victim's ward councillor, portfolio holder, head of the council
- Member of Parliament
- Select Committee (if clear large-scale abuses of process are involved and can be evidenced: again, the Immigration services and the Home Affairs Committee are examples)
- Ombudsmen
- Independent complaints mechanisms (IPOC for police matters)
- Police & Crime Commissioners
- Charity Commission
- Advocacy organisations (Healthwatch is an example for health & social care)
- Media campaigns

Guidance on approaching these organisations/agencies/entities, and others that are revealed to take minimal to no contact approaches to Nepali [and other comparable minority communities] community engagement on the advice related services they provide:

- A. Dealing with organisation or agency leads that on the basis of printed & website material, clearly have adopted a minimal helpful access & accountable contact approach: [the immigration services are the current main example] with commonly huge gulfs between stated practices & processes and what actually can take place at operational level, with transparency, good/easy direct communication, and accountability deficits being all characteristic.

The approaches to such organisations and agencies, depends on their size, record on public accountability: in some cases the only possible approach is to alert community members to specific examples of abuses of process that are clear and well-documented, to alert them against taking for granted the apparently straightforward use of their services [as presented in statements and on websites and information leaflets, with in certain cases after exhausting complaints procedures, if still not satisfied, to record what has been taking place against community members, with MPs, independent complaints mechanisms, and airing in the Nepali media, and perhaps local media.

Where there is less evidence of endemic abuse of process, and the given agency or organisation more local [rather than national] a meeting should be sought with the head of customer care and/or the CEO, or in place of this email engagement. In this, avoiding a judgmental approach against the organisation/agency per se, but instead highlighting concerns on what the given frontline staff member or volunteer has done against Nepali community members, should be supported by sharing examples of good practice on engagement, communication and listening to requests, suggestions, concerns, is highly valuable

- B. Regarding pro-active organisations/agencies/entities that demonstrate enthusiasm and readiness for direct Nepali community engagement on quality of their advice service provision.

These at all times, should be praised – in the Nepali media or to the local media from respected Nepali community leads – and encouraged by certificates of appreciation for support to the Nepali community, presented to their leads/CEO/Chair, and including where appropriate at major and symbolically important Nepali community cultural & social events.

Community organisation support to and involvement in all major community-relevant consultations on the advice-providing organisation & entity's review or improvement of services & programmes, should be undertaken, and as much direct community involvement in such consultations be made ahead of any consultation meetings or questionnaire completions, so that the community is well educated on the topics involved. In addition, as the UK Nepali community is still largely a first generation one, any offers to the organisation/agency to provide free or minimal cost [donation] for translation or interpretation support on the details being consulted on will pay dividends to community members.

The role of and involvement with councils for voluntary service, and 'adult learning' organisations:

These two cover, respectively, opportunities for involving in a wide range of community engagement and community supportive activities with both majority indigenous British, and different ethnic & other minority communities of all ages and genders, and in the case of adult education crucial real-life contexts level technical and English language skills with the purpose to develop to further education jobs and training – essential for those with English as a second language, as new community members seeking to involve in mainstream employment, education and society participation. It was for these reasons the advice project included voluntary service & adult learning.

The role of Citizens Advice Bureaux in advice & advice signposting provision:

The CAB is an institution developed in the Inter War years of the first half of the 20th Century, and as such is still working to enable its staffing & volunteer demographics to catch up with modern early 21st Century multiracial & diverse Britain. The national CAB website has particularly valuable information resources on a wide range of advice & signposting topics: they are a major starting point for community members who need support on issues, complaints and needs, and because in English may need to be supported by community members with good written and spoken English skills, for their benefits to be made real.

The role of Nepali businesses in effective community support:

UK Nepali businesses are de-facto community hubs, so are ideal points for information on advice & related signposting. As such their involvement in sharing advice-provider topics and knowledge will always be invaluable.

Online searches on advice topics:

Such searches are a common starting point for community members in regard to advice, and on tackling discrimination & perceived issues.

Community partnership working:

This is a very important strategy and approach to maximise the Nepali community voice, especially until the ONS enacts much more strongly effective engagement and opportunity for the community and its voice to be counted. It means working with relevant other organisations, and in some cases on broader projects that the given organisation/agency/entity is involved in. It also means the Nepali community with shared areas of interest or need, engaging with other communities in pursuit of shared goals. In terms of funding, partnership working is indispensable for success. Such partnership working also builds the reality of multicultural, multiracial, diverse Britain, and gives tangible mechanisms for sharing Nepali culture with others, which is the surest foundation for enabling our Nepali community to be counted, known, respected.

Through the medium of boosting effective advice related support for community members, major goals for Nepali community empowerment are accomplished.

Information for community members and community leads on engaging with advice-providing organisations/agencies/entities & related needs

NOTE: If one's spoken and reading English skills are not as strong as you would wish, you should consider asking Nepali friends with greater skills and experience in advice-provider experience access, to accompany to meetings, interviews, and help with translation and interpretation, study forms, documentation and website content. It will be helpful to consider how such community member's closest Nepali community organisation can signpost to such potential support, if not known by the community member with limited English skills needing such assistance.

Useful concepts, phrases & words relating to advice provision and advice access:

Bullying: this unpleasant phenomenon involves being persecuted/ 'picked on' [made to feel unwelcome and uncomfortable, etc.] as a whim of the bully/bullies, but usually because they are not comfortable with anyone who does not accept their conduct, influence, views, and prejudices, and especially if you stand up against their conduct. It is often regarded as a crime, and organisations/agencies are required to prevent it and either remove from employment the wrongdoer or have them retrained to change their behaviour.

Abuses of process – what they are and what to do about them: Abuses of process involve breaching/ignoring or distorting/pervverting processes that organisations and agencies use to carry out their functions. All processes are supposed to be free of discrimination, prejudice and bullying, be implemented fairly and transparently, and to be consistent (not vary) in how they are carried out. Processes are described on the given organisation/agency/entity website, and in information documents and flyers; there should always be notice given of means of making a complaint if you as a service-user/customer of the given organisation/agency/entity, feel the standards that govern implementation of the processes, have been breached or abused.

Inclusion and equality definitions – why they matter and why you need to know what they mean in real-life terms: feeling you are treated the same as anyone else and your distinctness as a minority community member recognised with supportive engagement (such as on translation/interpretation, etc.)

Accountability of public and voluntary services organisations/agencies/entities: all of the latter have standards they are committed to uphold when service-users/customers engage with them and use their services. This is

Empowerment – what it is/means, and are you empowered or not? Feeling listened to & valued, and your issue or question addressed.

Disempowerment – what it is/means, and are you disempowered or not? Feeling ignored, not listened too.

Exclusion: relating to disempowerment (compared to non-minority / majority population members), it means being excluded for unacceptable reasons and reasons for exclusion not explained to you.

Racism & related -- noting behaviour & what to do about it (community & statutory: NOT only a police matter, but a local authority matter, and one for Human Resources [if it takes place in an employment context] and Customer Care services, and potentially others. Racism takes the form of verbal or physical aggression and unpleasantness due to your race/ethnicity, culture, language, name, accent. It also takes form in direct & indirect discrimination on the same grounds.

Discrimination & related -- noting such behaviour (being felt to be treated in an inferior and unprofessional way compared to non-minority community people), & what to do about it (reporting and recording to community leads as well as the given organisation/agency customer care lead, to Citizens Advice, etc).

Non-discrimination behaviour and processes: being listened to with patience and your question and/or issue addressed effectively and to your satisfaction

Customer care: this relates to minimum expected standards for customers/service-users of advice-providing organisations/agencies/entities services.

Making complaints & giving feedback: bad and abusive & bullying practice must be recorded and reported, to protect other community members who may have been having, or could have, similar unpleasant experiences. Similarly, it is most important to record and share when you encounter above average help and helpfulness from accessing an advice-providing organisation/agency so that if it emerges other community members have had similar positive experiences, the organisation/agency can be commended, including in the UK Nepali news media and the local media.