



“Out of Sight” More Accessible Summary of Henshaws Community Services Equalities Board Research Project

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AFA = Ambition for Ageing
= a new Greater Manchester programme that aims to make communities more age-friendly and improve older people's quality of life

BAME = Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic
= anyone in the UK who does not identify as White British

Commissioning
= choosing someone to do a special piece of work

EB = Equalities Board

Equalities Research Co-ordinators
= the AFA staff supporting the Equalities Board

Henshaws Community Services
= part of Henshaws - the north of England charity supporting visually impaired people - that does outreach in the community and training

LDL = Local Delivery Area: the areas around Greater Manchester where the Ambition for Ageing community development projects are working

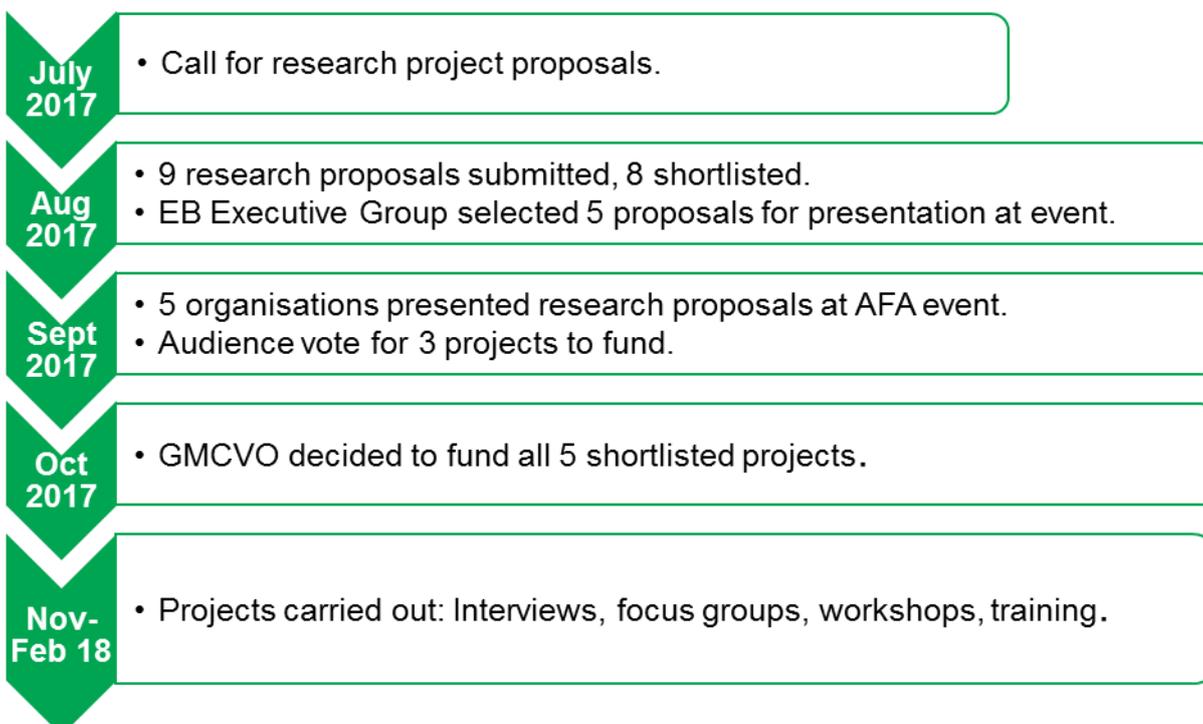
marginalised
= not noticed by the majority, or treated as if they are not important by the majority

VI = Visually Impaired

Background to the research projects & timeline

In 2017 the Equalities Research Co-ordinators visited the LDLs and noticed that there were gaps in how well the projects were reaching people from Black and minority ethnic (BAME) and other very marginalised communities.

AFA gave £1,500 each for research by community-based organisations into issues that they wanted to understand better. The Equalities Board held a commissioning process to decide which research project ideas should get funding.



“Out of Sight”

Henshaws Community Services accessibility research project

What did Henshaws want to find out?

- How aware are non-sight loss specialist organisations of the support that VI staff, volunteers and service users need?
- Can VI awareness training make organisations better at supporting VI staff, volunteers and service users, and would this really help people with VI?
- Is Henshaws VI Awareness Training (VIAT) for organisations with VI staff, volunteers and service users good?

What was the context for this research?

Simple things like correct prescription glasses, can make a big difference to many older people with VI. Organisations that work with them need to know how to identify and deal with correctable sight loss.

The numbers of older people and VI people are increasing, but support services are being cut under austerity. This is causing problems that are likely to get worse, especially in Greater Manchester because of various risk factors:

- A larger population of non-white BAME people at a higher risk of certain sight-loss conditions;
- Poverty
- Diabetes increasing
- Associated lifestyle factors
- Low sight testing rates

How did they do the research and what did they find out?

First, the researchers carried out a survey with 17 people from 15 organisations. The results showed a high awareness of sight loss and the practical measures that can be taken to support people with visual impairment (VI). All the same, 83% of participants said they would benefit from more VI awareness training.

Next, Henshaws ran 2 half-day training workshops. 21 people came to the training from more than 10 organisations. At the end of the workshops, the trainers asked people questions about how much they felt they had learned and found out:

- 96% of participants said they were more aware of sight loss and how to identify it
- 93% said they now understand how to address hidden sight loss.
- 96% said they now understand how to make changes to improve the quality of life of older people with sight loss.

These are some quotes from people who came to the training:

- “I am much more aware of how to recognise signs of sight loss and how to guide those with sight loss and point them towards help. Much more confident.”
- “I learnt how it can feel to have a variety of types of sight loss. Ways to identify sight issues which may present as a different issue and how to guide someone.”
- “I learned to have patience and curiosity when someone is taking times or does things unusually – it may be due to sight loss.”
- “I will suggest eye tests to older people, I know how to recognise signs of sight loss conditions and not [assume they are] mental wellbeing related”
- “I will be more aware of those with VI and less afraid of helping them”

One month later the researchers went back to the people who had been to the training to ask them some follow up questions. This follow up research found out that:

- 100% (all) of the people who had training said they were aware of the issues around sight loss in service users
- 15% said some of their older service users and families had reported a difference in the support they were getting from the organisation
- 15% said they had directed more people for an eye test
- 43% said they had directed more people to organisations that can help with sight loss
- 14% said they had improved accessibility of their organisation to people with sight loss

The authors of the report recommend further research to find out more about which organisations support older people and how well they reach people with VI; and sharing the positive evaluation of the training and the findings of the research to encourage other organisations to take up Visual Impairment Awareness Training.

Main conclusions

Training organisations in Visual Impairment awareness does make a difference to older people with VI getting the support they need.

What next?

At the end of their report the researchers conclude that their research results show that providing a short training course “can make a significant difference in raising awareness around sight loss”. This makes a big difference to older people’s lives and supports their greater independence, social inclusion, and personal health. Since completing their research and their report, Henshaws have begun to adapt the training to be able to offer it to companies as well as community organisations.

You can find out more about Henshaws Community Services at: <https://www.henshaws.org.uk/>

Equalities Board next steps

Sharing the research results

We aim to make the research results accessible to people who can use them to improve life for older people in their communities, and people who can use them to improve the work of Ambition for Ageing. All the full reports and accessible reports will be available to read on the Equalities Board website: <https://lgbt.foundation/ambition-for-ageing/publications>

More community-based research

These projects showed that community-based research is an important way to find out about the needs of the most marginalised people. AFA will be funding more research like this later in 2018.