



MEAD evaluation report

May 2013

This Project is being part-financed by the Scottish Government
and the European Community Rural Tayside LEADER 2007-2013 Programme



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MEAD Project is a partnership initiative in Perth & Kinross and part of PKAVS' Services for Minority Communities
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Introduction

In 2013, MEAD (the Minority Ethnic Access Development department of PKAVS, Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Service) decided to commission an external evaluation. The objective was to complement the detailed project evaluation reports MEAD had been making each year to its funders.

The purpose of this evaluation was to reflect the views of service users. For this reason, it was decided to employ an independent, external organisation to undertake the evaluation.

Outside the Box Development Support, a Scottish charity, was approached in March to conduct the evaluation. Meetings with users of MEAD services were held on 18, 23 and 26 April and 1 May.

In total, Outside the Box met with over 100 people from the minority ethnic communities of Perth. The views of many of these people are included below – both in the summaries under the main topics and in the many direct quotations.

The background and evaluation approach for this report are described in more detail at the end of the report.

Main themes

Users of MEAD services

The main ethnic groups using MEAD services are Polish, Chinese and South Asian. Whilst there is great diversity within these ethnic groups, it is possible to make some generalisations.

Polish people in and around Perth are mostly younger (this excludes the smaller group of older people from an earlier migration) and are most interested in issues around employment. At the same time, many Polish people have strong views on their experience of the NHS, often relating to children and babies.

In contrast, Perth has many older Chinese people who have been in Scotland for decades but who continue to encounter a language barrier and for whom the NHS may be the most important public service. Younger Chinese people in Perth have grown up in Scotland and do not have the language and other barriers that remain such an issue for people of older generations.

DID YOU KNOW?

A total of 7,583 enquiries and 1,202 clients were served by the MEAD team between May 2010 and December 2012. For every year since 2008, Perth and Kinross has recorded the fourth highest number of migrant workers of any area in Scotland.

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When English is not good enough, you need to have an interpreter for doctor or dentist so as to translate what is in the heart. The interaction can be very hard without that.”

The other significant minority ethnic group in Perth is of South Asian people of both Indian and Pakistani origin. Many members of this group, and particularly many of those using MEAD services, are quite newly arrived in UK.

The views and experiences of minority ethnic users of MEAD services are not to be taken as representative of minority ethnic communities in Perth in general, for two reasons. Firstly: the people we met are users of MEAD services rather than being chosen at random from the relevant population. And secondly: very many minority ethnic residents of Perth (most obviously individuals who have been educated in UK) have few if any cultural or language barriers to using public services and hence are less likely to use the services of MEAD.

Language barrier

For some new migrants, and also for some long established individuals from minority ethnic communities, the language barrier is an ever-present obstacle to everyday life in Perth. Users of MEAD services are much more likely to have poor English than other members of minority ethnic communities. The language support and cultural awareness available through MEAD is of most help to those least able to help themselves, whether that be for language or other reasons.

Respondents expressed appreciation of the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes provided by MEAD and other partner organisations in Perth. Many expressed a strong need for interpreting when accessing NHS and other services and valued the language capabilities of MEAD staff in providing advice and liaison services.



“The classes on Saturday and Sunday are very important to learners... it’s quite unusual that a college could manage that.”

“I am very pleased to attend classes. It’s like relaxing and we are learning a lot.”

“The extra ESOL classes for beginners arranged through MEAD are filling a gap and the Sunday class is useful as it’s a time that suits some people.”

“My English is still very bad...I want to learn more but that does not seem to be happening.”

“Because MEAD is there to help those of us who don’t speak English, now we feel very happy, very happy.”



Accessing services

Users of MEAD services are full of praise for the support that they have been receiving from MEAD staff in accessing a variety of public services.

One person said that MEAD was very helpful in the process of “generally assisting in settling in and getting access to council services”. The status of the MEAD office was said to help in liaising with public services for the community.

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MEAD has been: **good for newcomers... there could be a list of things that we were not able to do before MEAD started”.**

“It’s easier just to go to MEAD for help when you are encountering issues such as mortgages and debts and eviction and arrears of rent rather than trying to research things yourself.”

“There are not enough employees and they need more. There is often a waiting list of about three weeks and it is often not possible to get an emergency appointment. Staff are sometimes working on Saturdays due to the volume of work.”

“It would be very difficult for the community if the MEAD office closed...if letters come then, people would still need an interpreter.”

“Services are very generic and do not meet the needs of migrants.... So just referring people to mainstream services does not work as those services are sometimes hostile.”

“As a migrant you have different difficulties... you are new in this country and you are starting from the beginning.”

“There is no Muslim graveyard in Perth so people have to make regular visits to the graveyard in Dundee when they want to visit family graves each week.”

“The nationality test is very hard. I need lots of help with that.”

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Volunteering and employment

Service relating to applying for and obtaining employment were valued by many respondents. For instance, people from the Polish community

have obtained help in preparing for job applications and interviews. Others have been helped to address issues relating to current employment (bullying by an employer) or self-employment (accounting matters).

Younger women, who had come to Scotland from India quite recently, were able to start volunteering for MEAD and PKAVS after just a few months of living in Perth. In at least one case this had led to full-time employment.

DID YOU KNOW?

A key barrier for minority ethnic communities in accessing mainstream services is English language skills. During 2012, the MEAD team provided language support to 774 individuals (95% of Chinese clients, 93% of Eastern European clients and 26% of South Asian clients) to access services.

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“I didn't know about MEAD until I had been in Perth for two to three months. And then I started volunteering with MEAD and now I won't be coming to the walking group any more as I am starting a job with NHS next week. I got help with creating a cv for that and in preparing for the interview.”

The volunteering with MEAD and PKAVS

“is good to get to know more people from your community and other people from Perth”.

“I suggest that MEAD gives more help for people in looking for a job and more direct help in finding employment.”

“We need more intense English classes and places to go and have a trial job for three months. It is difficult to explain what you can do (and my old employer won't do that for confidentiality reasons) and it would be good to have the chance to show what I can do instead. What I would really like is a scheme of work placement.”

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Health services

Polish people (who have generally been in Scotland for just a few years) are used to a very different health service and to a very different culture around access to health and medication. They feel frustrated at a system

which requires them to visit a GP before they can be referred on to a specialist. Many people also get frustrated at the reluctance of doctors to prescribe medication requested by the patient.

In the Chinese community, interpreting is essential for many older people when accessing NHS services. Face to face interpreting is preferred.

DID YOU KNOW?

MEAD contributes at national level to improve the quality of life for all minority ethnic and migrant communities through improving access to services (including social welfare, health, employment, housing, education and carers support) through its engagement with the Scottish Migrant Network, the Black Leaders Network and Ethnic Minority Third Sector Network, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland and the Carers Reference Group.

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“As for NHS services, for Polish people there can be a clash of expectations. There are very different experiences of health care in Poland where there seems to be more of a preventative approach. There are medical check ups there every three months through work.”

“Lots of Polish people are self medicating even with antibiotics. They know of course that doctors here are not happy about that.”

“The NHS is a big subject as wide as the sea. We could talk about it for hours!”

“I am not happy with telephone interpreting and really need face to face.”

“There are great differences between health services in Poland and Scotland. Here waiting times are long and in Poland you can just go to see a specialist whereas that is not something that you can do here.”

“I would like there to be more resources going to interpreting and to translation of more information about health.”

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“It’s nice to know that the MEAD staff know about employer discrimination.”

Getting active and engaged

One older Chinese man was very keen to have a permanent community centre where Chinese people can get together on a regular basis. Some Polish people on the other hand considered that there were already more than enough pubs and other social facilities that they would be happy to use. They also reflected that the services in Polish at a local Catholic church were an important part of life for many Polish people in and around Perth.

DID YOU KNOW?

During 2012, as a result of MEAD's support: 29 individuals have found employment; 203 have improved employability skills; 23 have accessed volunteering placements; 392 have enrolled in education; 226 have improved financial health; 744 have improved physical and/or mental health (many by joining walking, swimming and other activities); 686 participated in new social activities.

A number of individuals had enjoyed the celebrations that are organised for a number of cultural events including Chinese New Year, Diwali, Eid and St Nicholas Day. One party at a Perth hotel with Scottish singing and dancing had been "very very nice".

The activities provided by MEAD had helped one person who now felt "all happy". The activities and classes that she and her friends had been able to access through MEAD included: "badminton, judo, walking, food hygiene, first aid and career awareness". There are many courses and "there are certificates for completing all of these courses".

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“Life is now colourful and full of activity.”

“We knew nothing about computers.”

“I don't know about other people but I am a very sporty person, very keen on sports. So I would like to have opportunities for different sports, like badminton and netball.”

“I would like something to build my personal confidence, and I would like to have opportunities for swimming and yoga.”

“I am really happy [to help]. If you need my hand then I can do that.”

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Improving mental wellbeing

Many respondents commented on the challenge of settling in to a new environment in Perth and of meeting new people. The activities provided through MEAD help to address issues of isolation and loneliness and to improve wellbeing for many people. MEAD work around access to services and ESOL classes also plays a key role in helping new arrivals become part of the wider society and thereby lead happier and richer lives.

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“In our community there is a lot of isolation, this really gives people a chance to come out of the house.”

“On first arrival you don’t know the people and you don’t know the society and the language and it takes a long time to understand the people. They are nice and very quiet.”

“For the first few months, until I heard about the groups, I was really just sitting in the house.”

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Communication and information

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“One thing that is important for new migrants is having enough information about services. However, there is also a need for information about new migrants for the host community.”

“It’s a great source of information, all sorts of information covering everything, which is very useful for when you first come and everything is different from Poland, i.e. in Poland there is no need for a TV licence or to register with the GP.”

“There is little visibility or profile for MEAD so not everyone will hear about it when they first come to Perth – the first few months may be quite isolated in the house.”

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Views from the MEAD steering group

This report is primarily a vehicle for the voices of users of MEAD services. The following summary of points made by some steering group members is offered as a complement and point of reference.

- Over the short period of its operation, MEAD has become a mainstream part of PKAVS. This has helped PKAVS to become a more diverse organisation.
- Parallel to that, there has been a change in the profile of people using PKAVS services – for instance, an increase in people from minority ethnic groups using services for carers.
- Rather than aiming to provide lots of separate services for the minority ethnic communities of Perth, MEAD seeks instead to encourage the effective use of mainstream services.
- Over just a few years MEAD has played a key role in increasing ‘cultural competence’ in public and voluntary services in Perth – helping service providers to understand minority ethnic communities and to provide a more effective service to them.
- MEAD has been able to put forward the needs and views of minority ethnic communities in a way that has an impact on the council and NHS and on the way in which their staff interact with and understand those communities.
- The intelligence available through MEAD is a valuable resource for public and voluntary organisations in planning services.
- MEAD provides a two-way channel for communication with minority ethnic communities: for instance, the procurator fiscal is communicating its services and a better understanding of the justice system via MEAD.
- The role of MEAD will continue to change as communities change.

“Everyone in the public and voluntary sectors is eagerly awaiting the detailed results of the 2011 census so that we can understand more about our local population.”

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“MEAD has been able to advocate the needs of the community, put forward that case and understand that point of view.”

Conclusion

Outside the Box was commissioned by MEAD to listen to the voices of the users of its services. Through the six meetings attended, we encountered about 100 individuals.

The words of many of these individuals from Polish, Chinese, Pakistani and Indian origin are the main content of this report. These verbatim (via translations for the most part) quotations reflect the benefits brought to individuals and groups by the intermediary and direct services provided by MEAD. They also reflect the continuing challenges faced by some citizens of Perth.

In undertaking this report, the main purpose was to hear views about MEAD. Outside the Box did not expect to uncover new issues regarding the minority ethnic experience in Scotland. The reality, for example, of language barriers for older Chinese people, of an appetite for culturally appropriate leisure and sporting activities and facilities in South Asian groups, and of differing expectations of a health service amongst newer Polish migrants are issues that have been well explored in previous studies.

In these concluding remarks we will, therefore, simply repeat that these issues and barriers remain a central reality in the lives of many members of minority ethnic populations in Perth as in other parts of Scotland.

Here are some concluding observations:

- Some older Chinese residents of Perth continue to feel very keenly their poor grasp of English and the issues that this can raise. Access to health services is a key preoccupation among this group, and interpreting services are vital for their access to the NHS. They expressed appreciation and enjoyment of Chinese cultural activity that was organised through the council.
- Some Polish people had experienced various employment challenges. The services of MEAD were helpful both in addressing issues around bullying in work and around finding work. Some individuals felt frustrated that more could have been done to resolve their work issues or to get them into work in the first place.
- Some young women of Indian origin much appreciated the opportunities available through MEAD to engage in volunteering and then possibly find employment. Until they heard about MEAD and engaged with it, some of them were just sitting in their homes and feeling isolated.

Recommendations

This short evaluation report was never meant to present a set of recommendations for action. There are, however, two issues that deserve to be highlighted for considered by MEAD:

Communications: New arrivals in Perth sometimes only heard about the services of MEAD after a few months. This is a real pity as the first few months are often the most difficult time for adjustment to a new environment and for accessing essential services. MEAD and its stakeholders may wish to consider how to address this apparent information and communication gap. One reflection relevant to this is the fact that Perth and Kinross – in common with some other Scottish Councils – has produced and distributes a welcome pack in Polish. It is beyond the scope of this project to consider: (a) how effectively such a pack reaches new Polish migrants; or (b) whether there could be a similar pack for other groups of new migrants.

Staffing and management of demand for services: On the one hand, staffing levels in MEAD may not be adequate to meet demand from potential users of the service, particularly in terms of access to individual 1-1 advice and support. MEAD may need to consider increasing staffing to reduce both waiting times for appointments and pressure on certain staff members. On the other hand, the expectations and hopes of some clients around the level and nature of support to be provided may be rather beyond what it is either appropriate or possible for MEAD to provide. MEAD may therefore wish to consider other options to manage the expectations of its service users as to the support that it can and should provide. Another route to reducing waiting times and demand for services could be referrals to mainstream services which may then need to review staff training and cultural competence. Such an approach could also complement the approach whereby MEAD staff will always encourage service users to take as much control as they can of their own lives and their own challenges. (Where the barrier to access is largely a language issue it is, of course, more difficult for people to take control until they are able to speak better English.)

Background to this report

Purpose of the project

Since 2010, minority ethnic communities in Perth have enjoyed support and services from MEAD, the Minority Ethnic Access Development department of Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (PKAVS).

Over this period, MEAD has been funded principally by the Big Lottery Fund with additional funding from Perth and Kinross Council and other sources.

MEAD has made regular progress and evaluation reports to the Big Lottery Fund. These reports contain extensive information on how the services were delivered. They also contain feedback data from service

users in the form of summary analyses of the Quality of Life Questionnaires. These analyses aim to show the extent to which MEAD had helped service users make changes in their lives and to which they now felt confident and able to access services.

However, MEAD and PKAVS themselves believed that there would be value in commissioning a small-scale evaluation from an external and independent agency to be based entirely on qualitative oral feedback from users of the service. (The annual reports to Big Lottery Fund already contain much direct feedback from partner organisations.)

Outside the Box Development Support, a Scottish charity, was approached in March 2013 to conduct this evaluation. Outside the Box was commissioned to

undertake the project in late March and meetings with users of MEAD services were held on 18, 23 and 26 April and 1 May.

DID YOU KNOW?

MEAD has facilitated 10 community groups: South Asian Women's Group; South Asian Lunch Club; Chinese Lunch Club; Perth Polish Support Group (now closed); Chinese Women's Group; Eastern European Mums' Group; Multicultural Women Only Group; Antenatal Support Group; Rural Mums' Group; Better Break Fund Advisory Group; Peer Support Group.

During 2012 MEAD brought different communities together through a BME Cancer Awareness Event, a Carers' Conference and 10 other multicultural events and celebrations involving 938 individuals across all communities.

Participants in the evaluation

In total, Outside the Box met with groups that included over 100 people from the minority ethnic communities of Perth (not all of these individuals spoke to us).

Minority ethnic communities are very different from each other. The single largest factor they may have in common is the barriers that they may face in accessing services and taking full advantage of all the opportunities that the city of Perth makes available to its citizens.

Similarly there is great diversity within particular ethnic groups. This is one reason why individuals and ethnic groups are not always directly matched against the many direct quotations in the report. We feel that it is best not to generalise from the views of a very few individuals to thinking that all people from a particular group might have similar views and experiences.

The small scale of this evaluation meant that it was never intended to meet and listen to all users of the MEAD services. However, the six groups/activities that were covered encompass a good representation of MEAD work, both in terms of the type of activity and the people involved (including people of Polish, Chinese, Pakistani and Indian background, these being the four largest minority ethnic groups in Perth, in order of numbers).

The six activities attended were as follows (all numbers are approximate):

1. Midday ESOL class (mixed group of older Chinese people (5) and younger Polish people (3)) attended on 18 April 2013 in AK Bell Library
2. Late afternoon ESOL women only class (6 Polish women) attended on 18 April 2013 in AK Bell Library
3. Chinese lunch club (mixed age group of 30 Cantonese speakers) attended on 23 April 2013 in the Riverside Stadium
4. Beginners computer class (5 South Asian women) attended on 26 April 2013 in AK Bell Library
5. Polish lunch club (30 people of working age, and one baby) attended on 26 April 2013 in the Riverside Stadium
6. South Asian walking group (8 young women, all relatively recent migrants of Indian origin) attended on 1 May 2013 in the Bell Sports Centre

Separately from the meetings with users of MEAD services, Outside the Box also met briefly with some members of the MEAD Steering Group (the chair and vice chair of the Perth Chinese Society, a council officer and the PKAVS Chief Executive, together with the manager of MEAD).

Evaluation approach

All meetings were arranged to coincide with existing activities. Activity co-ordinators and teachers were most helpful in making time to accommodate the evaluation discussions. Outside the Box is most grateful for the warm welcome it received from co-ordinators and teachers as well as from community members.

Before proceeding with the discussion topic, all groups (save for the Chinese lunch club which, due to its size, was not electronically recorded) were asked whether or not they objected to a recording being made in addition to written notes. There were no objections.

Groups were informed of the purpose of the discussion and of the fact that – whilst the report would quote extensively from user feedback – no comments would be attributed to individuals.

Groups were invited to comment on the services provided by or through MEAD. They were also invited to discuss any suggestions for improvement to services or facilities whether to be provided by MEAD or by other parties.

In some groups, some members were not very closely involved with or knowledgeable about MEAD and its services. In such circumstances, more emphasis was placed in discussing individuals' experiences of life in Perth and suggestions for improving public services generally.

In all meetings, save for the meeting with four members of the MEAD steering group, there was some requirement for interpreting from community languages into English and vice-versa. MEAD staff members and other individuals were most helpful in providing this support. The Outside the Box consultant is a Cantonese speaker so much of the discussion with Chinese service users was conducted in Chinese. Most of the direct quotations in the text of this report are therefore the interpreted version of what was said in a community language.

(In one ESOL class, attended by Polish and Chinese people, there was four way interpreting (Polish-English, English-Cantonese, Cantonese-English and English-Polish) to ensure that all attending understood, as far as possible, everything that was being said. In other meetings, the interpreting requirements were more straightforward.)