

# Hints and Tips

## Making your group friendly for BME people

### Why we have written these hints and tips

People are living longer. By 2029 it is estimated that 40% of the population will be over the age of 50. The population of Scotland is gradually becoming more diverse as more people from different places settle here. Currently about 4% of the population are from a Black or Minority Ethnic community (BME) and another 4% from places like Ireland, Italy and Poland.

This is a very diverse group of people with a range of different cultures, religions and backgrounds.

Many older people from BME communities have experienced discrimination during their lives, from public services, at school and work and also from their local community.

Older people from BME backgrounds live in every part of Scotland and a crucial part of our communities. They want to be involved with their communities, sharing and using their skills and experiences and making a difference to other people's lives. And just like everyone else, when they get a bit older, they may also need more support and help.

Organisations and groups can do a few straightforward things to become more BME friendly and welcoming. These things will help all the older people who come to your group and may encourage new members too.

### What do we mean by BME?

BME is an abbreviation for 'Black and Minority Ethnic'. BME is used to describe people from minority ethnic groups, particularly those who have suffered racism or are in the minority because of their colour and/or ethnicity. Not everyone will agree with this term. Sometimes the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) is used instead. There are as many differences between and amongst BME groups as between and amongst other ethnic groups.

**"I may have been born elsewhere but Scotland has been my home for a very long time and my children and grandchildren were born and live here."**

**"We live in a small village and we are the only family from a different place. That doesn't matter, we take part in everything that goes on here and have made wonderful friends – I can't imagine living anywhere else now."**

## **Our tips for becoming more BME friendly**

### **Making it easy for people to join**

We often think that everyone knows all about our group, when it meets, what it does and how to be part of it. But we may be missing some people who might be interested and some people may not be comfortable just turning up and would like to be invited. Here are some things you can do that may help make it easy for people to find out more and to join in.

#### **Information stands**

Display information about what your group does and display it in different community settings, such as community centre, hairdressers and barbers, doctors and dentists, local supermarket, village notice board

#### **Taster sessions**

Invite people to come and see what you do and take part in your activities things

#### **Local service providers and businesses**

Talk to people who come into contact with older people as an everyday part of their job and tell them about your organisation. Good people to talk to include, health visitors, home helps, doctors, churches and other community organisations, local shops, hairdressers, and pubs.

**"The community centre had an open day where all the groups and organisations had a stall and some information about what they do. I went along and had a good look round. I had no idea so many things were happening locally."**

**"We heard that there was a group for older Asian people meeting not far from us. So we sent them some information about our group and invited them to a coffee morning. It's been such a success because now we have new people joining our group and we also have shared activities. It couldn't be better and we are so glad we made that first step"**

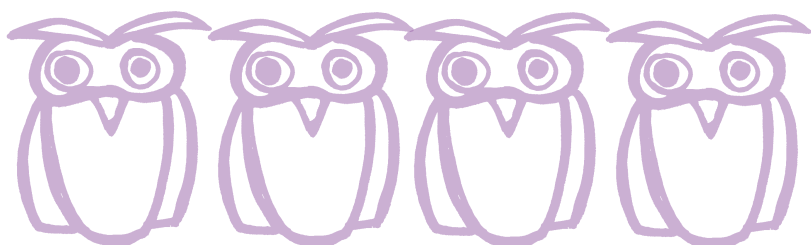
### **Flyers, posters, leaflets and notices**

Another way to encourage and support new people coming along to your group is to have a leaflet or a flyer for your group. When you are developing the leaflet it can be helpful to think about the language and images used - so it works well for everyone.

- Use images of a wide range of people - people you would like to be part of your group. Don't assume everyone is white, include images of people from different places and cultures, along with pictures of couples, single people and both men and women.
- Write things in a way that is easy for everyone to read, such as short simple sentences and use a larger writing size.
- Sometimes it can be useful to have information available in different languages too.

### **Celebrate diversity**

Being welcoming to new people joining your group and to people from different backgrounds is likely to mean that more people will get involved and will help out with things. People live their lives in many different ways. And with a changing population mix and an increasingly mobile population, many people have lived in different places at different stages of their lives and some people move to a new place when they retire. It can be helpful to ask people about their lives and what things they have experienced and what they celebrate at different times of the year. You might end up with more activities and celebrations, rather than less.



**“One year in the run up to Christmas we talked about different winter celebrations and festivals. I told everyone about how we had celebrated Diwali - the festival of light when I was a little girl.”**

**“At our lunch club we always celebrate Chinese New Year - the date changes but it’s always in late January or February. This is such a quiet time, it’s after Christmas but still winter. We have an extra special lunch and decorate the room in red and have red balloons. We also find out about which animal the year is. It’s all good fun and we learn something new each year.”**

**“We all have more in common than we think – for a start we are all growing old in Scotland.”**

## **Ask people what they find helpful and welcoming**

People experience life in different ways and have found different ways of dealing with things. If you ask a few people what works well for them you will be able to build up a clear picture.

**“We wanted to be welcoming and friendly so we began asking everyone what we could do differently - we got some great ideas, mostly simple things that we could do. It’s made such a difference and it was no effort.”**

**“We talked about things like using a second language as you get older and how this can become harder. People made suggestions to help, like having notes about the speakers and discussions before we meet, taking more breaks and trying to have just one person talking at a time - that’s the tricky one because we all like to talk. But these things have helped everyone and we all feel more included now.”**

## **More Information**

**Getting older and feeling valued** - Older people in BME Communities is one of the discussion papers from the Wisdom in Practice project. It explains the difficulties many BME people face and the way groups led by older people and care services can give good, inclusive support.

[www.wisdominpractice.org.uk/useful-resources](http://www.wisdominpractice.org.uk/useful-resources)

## **About Wisdom in Practice**

Wisdom in Practice is a project which supports and promotes the development of services and other activities led by older people. It is funded by the Scottish Government through the Equalities Programme and is run by Outside the Box. There is a range of resources for groups, including publications, how to guides, events and development support for individual groups and projects.

This is one of a series of Hints and Tips on topics which groups led by older people have said help them in starting their groups, getting organised, keeping going and finding funds.

There is more information at [www.wisdominpractice.org.uk](http://www.wisdominpractice.org.uk)



**Outside the Box**  
Unit 23, 150 Brand Street, Glasgow G51 1DH  
T. 0141 419 0451  
E. [admin@otbds.org](mailto:admin@otbds.org)  
[www.otbds.org](http://www.otbds.org)