



## **INCLUSIVE EXETER**

### **Better Connections Project - Year One Wrap-Up Steering Group Meeting**

**Date:** 25 February 2025

**Venue:** St Luke's Church Rooms (Main Hall), School Lane, EX2 6LB

**Time:** 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

**Present:** Mahi Ahmed, Neomi Alam, Kate Hannan, Muktar Ahmed, Alan Quick, Arlene Lewis, Joy Okumbor, Hakimi, Shahar Lashkor, Mishkat Alam, Edith Chinnah, Aga, Chloe Whipple, Jino Baby, Fiyas P.K, Said Gholam, Mahsin Mahbub, Mathew Jose Mangatt, Ion Abuzatoaiei, Kit, Sonia Rashid, Emdad Aziz, Shirley, Dennis Mak, Prem Sivlal, Emir Emre, Bernice Endacott, Rachel Gilmore, Zoe Hughes

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **1. Welcome & Introduction**

Kate Hannan chaired the meeting at 6:30 PM, welcoming all attendees and outlining the agenda for the evening. The meeting was structured into two sections:

- 6:30 PM – 7:15 PM: Discussion with directors of partner organisations under the Better Connections (BC) project.
- 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM: Engagement with community builders, councillors (who were unable to attend due to a full council meeting), and representatives from the CRED, Hindu Cultural Centre, and Turkish community in Exeter.

A light refreshment break was held between the two sections.

#### **2. Year 2 Terms & Conditions and Memorandum Signing (6:30 PM – 7:15 PM)**

Kate presented the Year 2 Terms and Conditions for the Better Connections (BC) project to the six partner organisations:

- Exeter Kerala Community
- Afghan Community in Exeter.
- Nigerian Community in Exeter
- Filipino Community Association
- Devon Bengali Association
- All Souls Day



Each community had two representatives present to sign the memorandum of understanding for Year 2. The exception was the Filipino Community Association, where only Arlene Lewis was present. The form was handed to her to obtain the second representative's signature and return it for final processing.

*Feedback Form Concerns:* Shahar from the Devon Bengali Association raised concerns regarding the clarity of the organiser feedback form. He suggested improvements to make it easier for members to understand.

The session concluded at 7:15 PM, followed by light refreshments.

### **3. Community Engagement Session (7:30 PM – 8:30 PM)**

Yoga Session : Sonia Rashid led a 10-minute light yoga session, which was well received by the attendees.

Year One Video Presentation : A 7-minute video was shown, highlighting:

- 10 events conducted in Year 1.
- Various physical activities, including yoga, badminton, volleyball, and martial arts.
- Testimonials from beneficiaries discussing the health and social benefits of participation.

Year Two Event Calendar Overview : The 2025 Events Calendar of Inclusive Exeter was presented, detailing:

- Better Connections events supported by the National Lottery.
- Heritage Fund-supported events.
- Events supported by Devon County Council (DCC) and Exeter City Council (ECC) funds.

Finance Report : Muktar Ahmed presented the finance report for Year 1, detailing expenditures and fund allocations.



Community Workshop : An interactive workshop was conducted to generate ideas on how Inclusive Exeter can attract more people from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Topics discussed included:

- Expanding events to additional neighbourhoods.
- Effective community outreach methods (WhatsApp groups, newsletters, posters, etc.).
- Barriers to participation and strategies to overcome them.
- Creating welcoming environments for first-time attendees.

Workshop responses were collected for further analysis, the results of which are reflected in the next section.

#### 4. Feedback & Next Steps

Feedback forms were collected from attendees, and the workshop responses have since been analysed. The key insights from the structured feedback assessment include:

- **Broaden Outreach:** Expand events beyond the city centre by identifying and using additional neighbourhoods (leveraging demographic data and Community Builder insights) to reach more people.
- **Enhance Promotion:** Utilize WhatsApp groups, social media, flyers, local newspapers, and local TV/radio (BBC, ITV) to promote events. Ensure promotional materials clearly state that events are open to all communities, not just the hosting community.
- **Address Participation Barriers:** Secure affordable, appropriately sized venues (e.g., schools, community centres), offer food and cultural showcases, and consider transport assistance to improve accessibility and encourage attendance.
- **Increase Direct Engagement:** Have Inclusive Exeter representatives attend community meetings and collaborate with local organisations (including universities, student groups, and local councillors/business groups) to strengthen outreach and relationships.
- **Create a Welcoming Environment:** Make events more welcoming for newcomers by greeting attendees upon arrival (e.g. meet-and-greet sessions before events),



providing clear information or leaflets at entry, and fostering personal connections to help first-time attendees feel comfortable.

For the full feedback assessment, [click here](#).

Partner organisations are expected to implement these feedback form improvements and adhere to branding requirements (e.g., acknowledging National Lottery and Inclusive Exeter logos on event materials) for upcoming events. Additionally, all signed memorandums will be finalised, including obtaining the pending second signature from the Filipino Community Association.

## **5. Closing Remarks**

Kate Hannan thanked all attendees for their participation and contributions. The meeting concluded at 8:30 PM.