



ENGAGING STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Staff and volunteers often work within aged and community care because they want to support older people to live fulfilled and enriched lives. For a mainstream group to be inclusive of people with low English proficiency it is essential to have the commitment and support of the staff and volunteers.

This may be challenging for some as it introduces new ways of working – from basic cross-cultural communication skills to more complex changes in the dynamics between staff and clients (see Help Sheet #8 'Mountain View Cottage - Learning to Let Go'). Staff and volunteers need support to be able to develop the skills necessary for this work or improve on their existing cross-cultural skills.

Organisations need to model and encourage the flexibility and creativity required for changes to happen with full engagement from staff and volunteers. For those who have been working in a certain way for a long time, this may represent an unwelcome stress.

'A lot of (our staff) are very old school, and say things like: 'They will just eat what they're given'. Or 'It's quicker and easier if I do it'. They just do what they've always done.'

- SSG Coordinator

One way of doing this is to revisit the values that motivate staff and volunteers to work in the aged and community care sector: compassion, empathy, desire to help those in need... Offering equal access to services to all people, including those with low English proficiency, is an illustration of those values rather than an extra demand that sits 'outside' them.

From managers, staff value permission to 'trial things' (and sometimes fail), particularly around attempts to give clients more opportunities to

participate in the running of activities. The main concern may be around risk management, and staff needs to ensure these concerns are addressed through detailed planning. Activities organised by clients may include cooking, outings, or exercise classes – all activities that include a certain element of risk. However this should not deter services from investigating the possibility of clients running them, if they so wish.

Managers also have a leading role to play in ensuring that staff are trained in cultural competence and that the organisation and the SSGs have a diversity policy. Without policies in place, staff and volunteers will rely on their own personal value systems and beliefs, which could interfere with their ability to work inclusively.

Tips
As with any change, allowing time and providing training helps bring people along on this journey.

- Ask clients of CALD background with good English to share their experience of joining a group or navigating health systems, to increase workers' ability to see the SSG through the eyes of new participants
- The work of SSGs will be more effective if they acknowledge and work with clients' cultural knowledge, prior experience and frames of reference. This can be achieved by gathering as much information as possible about a client's preferences and wishes from the client

themselves, their family, carers and Access & Support Workers. If a client has had a previous negative experience of a mainstream service, their trust in the process may be low, and this will need to be acknowledged.

- The Service Plan developed for each SSG client may incorporate cultural and language considerations. It is agreed with clients and families and may be amended with their input. This may include a diet plan, prayer times, self-care needs, gender relationships, etc.
- A pro-forma of how to ask questions and obtain information in simple English is developed for staff and volunteers to use when talking with clients with language barriers.
- Data about local CALD communities is collected, easily accessible and regularly updated
- Information about cultural norms is collected and easily accessible (the Migrant Information Centre provides this information on their website) in whatever form suits the needs of the SSG workers.
- Cultural competence training, training in client-centred methods such as Montessori, and updates on changes in the agency's approach to CALD clients are offered regularly. Training deals with issues of risk-management and embraces a positive attitude to change.

- Key to the ability to innovate is recruiting the right people - not everyone will be suited to the approach of your service, where flexibility and a willingness to work with clients' strengths rather than their deficits are essential. It is just as acceptable to screen volunteers on that basis as it is to select paid staff. Services needs to look at their recruitment practices, including job descriptions, selection criteria, questions asked at interview, where positions are advertised, who is on the interview panel (invite a representative from a CALD client group), etc.
- Review your induction and training to make sure they clearly outline the principles of your person-centred approach and its possible challenges.

Who needs to be involved?

- Agency management
- Human Resources (for recruitment and training)
- Clients (to share their experience)
- Access & Support Workers
- Local partners (involved in training, knowledge-sharing)
- Agencies with expertise in client-centred approaches (eg Alzheimer's Victoria)

Case study

For an example of a radical change of approach to working with SSG clients, see case study in Help Sheet #8 'Mountain View Cottage - Learning to Let Go'

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health at the North Richmond Community Health Centre offers practical and specialist training to help organisations and individual staff to be more responsive to clients from migrant backgrounds. <http://www.ceh.org.au/training/> It also provides a range of fact sheets available on its website to increase cultural competence at the individual and systemic levels.
- The Migrant Information Centre (East Melbourne) provides extensive information about CALD communities in the Eastern Region, including community profiles - <http://miceastmelb.com.au/our-clients/cultural-profiles/> - and multilingual information about Aged Care - <http://miceastmelb.com.au/resources/multilingual-information/> They also run general cultural awareness training and secondary consultation.
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria aged care resources: <http://www.eccv.org.au/aged-care/aged-care-resources/>
- Alzheimer Australia runs training for professionals working with people with dementia, including using the Montessori model of care: <https://vic.fightdementia.org.au/education/dementia-training-australia>
- The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing offers a range of resources, from practice guides to census data and multicultural resources: <http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/resources/practice-guides/cultural-awareness>
- The EMR Alliance youtube channel is a collection of videos covering diversity, person-centred care and wellness-related topics: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNjNartUMt2N3odUaDBW6rA>

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