Looking to make your project more accessible or inclusive? Read our learning from other BAB projects to help you reflect and improve.

Physical accessibility

- Ensure you are aware of how physically accessible your venue is. Do you know if it has any of the following…?
    - A hearing loop
    - A ramp (permanent or temporary)
    - A lift
    - Suitable lighting
    - Accessible toilets
    - Disabled parking spaces
    - Automatic doors
    - A changing facility

- Sharing information about venue accessibility in advance can improve participant attendance levels as some people may not feel comfortable making enquiries about accessibility or may simply assume it will be difficult for them to access the venue.

- Similarly, consider the accessibility of the venue's immediate surroundings for example whether the car park has loose gravel or whether there are dropped curbs nearby.

- Ensure that *accessible actually means accessible* – if your venue is not fully accessible, be explicit about what you are able to provide. Do not label it as accessible if this is in fact only partly the case.

- It may be useful to identify a back-up venue which you could use if needed (e.g. due to certain accessibility requirements or the number of people attending).

Cultural considerations

- Remember to take cultural and religious holidays into account when planning your project delivery. People may prefer not to attend events during cultural and religious holidays or they may be restricted in the times of the day they are available. Similarly, extra sensitivity during these times can help participants to feel welcomed and included (e.g. not holding a food-centred event for Muslim participants during Ramadan).

- There are culturally specific differences in familiarity with therapy and wellbeing. Mental health terminology, in particular, may be unfamiliar to many people,

particularly if their first language does not include terms for conditions such as depression (as is the case with Somali, Punjabi, Urdu and a multitude of other languages).

- When a project is delivered by someone from the same cultural background as the participants, it can help to foster trust and engagement because the worker will understand the specific cultural context of their experience and worldview.

- There is also a stigma surrounding mental health within some BME communities. When this is the case, it can be useful to frame the topic in an alternative way, for example discussing the symptoms of emotional distress (such as low mood, anxiety, stress, panic attacks etc.). Similarly, if an individual understands health in a holistic way, they may believe interventions using the biomedical model are not relevant or beneficial for them. Adjusting how a topic is framed/approached can increase participants' engagement and make them feel more comfortable with discussions of mental health.

- As with all participants, it may work well to access BME communities through a person or organisation who already has a relationship with these groups. This can help with both access and trust.

Keeping diversity in mind

BME communities are not a homogenous group - the barriers to accessing your project can be significantly different both between and within communities.

If your project aims to focus on people from a specific community, it is valuable to involve members of this community in developing your project in order to ensure it is culturally appropriate, relevant and accessible.

Languages

- Delivering a project in multiple languages can assist with accessing a wider range of participants. Individuals may feel more comfortable seeking support if they are able to use their first language.

- When using an interpreter, it is possible that the interpreter will be familiar to the participants. This may make some people feel at ease (especially when discussing taboo subjects), however others may feel uncomfortable and less likely to share personal information. In some circumstances it may be useful to check with the participant which interpreter they would prefer.

- Similarly, if you are using an interpreter you should factor in time for the interpretation to occur. It may also be useful to speak to the interpreter beforehand to discuss how the activity will run, to clarify the pace of the interpretation and to see if there are any terms which they do not understand.

- It may be useful to provide translated versions of key documents used within your project (for example key information or some basic notes for participants to take away). Similarly, CMF forms are currently available in sixteen languages – Arabic, Bengali, English, Farsi, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, Somali, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Individual support needs

- Sessions which strike a balance between being structured and having flexibility are key to meeting individual support needs. Activities often take longer than expected as individual support needs cannot always be anticipated in advance. Similarly, individuals may require additional support in-between sessions (for example in order to feel comfortable continuing to participate).

- Participants will have different levels of confidence participating in activities and it works well for different levels of participation to be offered. Progressing through these different levels of participation can be a useful method of building participants' confidence.

- If the project involves delivering a group activity, having two facilitators can be useful. An extra pair of hands can help to ensure individual support needs are met, and thus keep the activity on schedule. It also adds value to the activity by providing participants with a different perspective and a different way of explaining things.

- Participants' attendance and engagement can be significantly affected by health difficulties. It can be useful for projects to plan for this possibility in advance and to develop a way to re-include participants into an activity once they have returned from a period of absence.

- If a project involves one-to-one appointments, it is possible that a high percentage of these appointments will be missed (for example as a result of health difficulties, the participant forgetting or other priorities arising within their lives). Projects can try to minimise these 'no shows' by sending reminder texts, letters or phone calls, however some will still occur and staff should make contingency plans for when this happens.

- Those who are very lonely and isolated may need additional support to engage with the project before they feel able to do so on their own (for example somebody to take them to activities and introduce them, meeting the facilitator beforehand in order to recognise a familiar face etc.).

- Before delivering a session or activity, ask people beforehand if they have any additional requirements or support needs. Listing some examples can encourage them to provide this information and thereby give them a better experience of your project. Examples may include providing documents in large print, in a different language or printed on paper of a certain colour.

Logistics

When providing food, make sure it caters for common dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, halal, kosher) and that you actively offer to cater for more specific dietary needs if needed.

Where possible, offering activities/sessions at several different times of day can increase the accessibility of your project by making it more likely people will be able to attend at a time that is convenient for them.

It is useful to assign a portion of your project budget to accessibility (for example in case you need to purchase translations of certain documents or in case an interpreter is needed).