



Improvement

Customer led transformation programme

Case study – Devon County Council

The Devon Grapevine

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The Customer Led Transformation Programme

Devon County Council's work has been funded under the Customer Led Transformation programme. The fund aims to embed the use of Customer Insight and Social Media tools and techniques as strategic management capabilities across the public sector family in order to support Place-Based working.

The Customer Led Transformation programme is overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by the Local Government Association).

The fund was established specifically to support collaborative working between local authorities and their partners focused on using customer insight and social media tools and techniques to improve service outcomes. These approaches offer public services bodies the opportunity to engage customers and gather insight into their preferences and needs, and thereby provide the evidence and intelligence needed to redesign services to be more targeted, effective and efficient.

About Devon

With its attractive landscape, including the World Heritage Coastline and the Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, plus numerous seaside resorts, Devon is usually seen by the outsider as a rural idyll.

This picture is supported by statistics showing that unemployment is comparatively low, people are healthy and life expectancy is above average. Indeed, a recent survey showed that in Devon 88 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live – well above the national average.

However, this rurality does have its down side. Devon is the third largest county in England and, once the two unitary councils (Plymouth and Torbay) are discounted the large majority of the 750,000 people receiving services from Devon County Council (DCC) live in small towns and villages with all the associated difficulties of an elderly population, low wages, isolation and services that are difficult to access.

The population of Devon is mostly white, with low numbers of black and minority ethnic (BAME) people compared with the regional and national average. However, there has been considerable growth in BAME numbers in recent years to an estimated six per cent of the population and local research has provided clear evidence that some of these BAME groups suffer disproportionately from the problems of isolation and difficulty in accessing services as well as suffering from racism, discrimination and hate crime.

Through the use of Social Media, the Devon Grapevine project set out to address these BAME issues.



Background

Although it is traditionally mono-cultural, Devon's BAME community has grown by over 300 per cent in past ten years to an estimated six per cent of the population. Local partners have worked hard to build relationships with minority ethnic communities to ensure equal access to services and promote inclusion.

There is, however, still a lot of work to do, particularly in rural Devon, where populations are scattered, and also with harder-to-reach BAME communities, e.g. the Chinese, Bengali, Turkish and Filipino communities, where the 3rd sector support infrastructures are still in their infancy.

It may be a surprise to some that racism and discrimination are rife in Devon. A report published by CLG in 2010, *Tackling Race Equality – A Statement on Race*, specifically highlighted the problems of racism and isolation in rural parts such as the South West.

In an attempt to identify the scale of the problem the Hate Crime Prevention Task Group launched the Community Safety Mapping Project (CSMP). This group is part of the Safer Devon Partnership (SDP), a multi-agency partnership involving Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon County Council, District Councils, the PCT and representatives from key third sector organisations.

With 5 bilingual workers making over 250 visits to rural BAME businesses, groups and families, this initiative provided clear evidence of this problem locally and made a number of recommendations on the need to overcome marginalisation and mistrust, give a stronger voice to BAME concerns and increase levels of reporting of racism.

As a direct result of CSMP, an on-line, private social network, called Devon Grapevine, was set up to help give marginalised and vulnerable BAME populations a clear voice and directly improve their access to information and support. It will also provide community safety service providers with a medium for ongoing community consultation and enable Devon CC and its partners to better target their services based on customer insight and as a result minimise the cost of serving these minority groups.

The SDP was particularly interested in the harder-to-reach groups which are widely scattered and lack points of congregation. These groups are also particularly vulnerable to Hate Crime, the under-reporting of which has been clearly identified as a priority for the partnership. However, it was important to make sure that Devon Grapevine was open to all of Devon's BME communities. For this reason the site is tagged as being for 'people from other cultures living in Devon'.

"Rural racism is currently an issue and is flagged up as an issue for the future unless it is addressed."

**Tackling Race Equality –
A Statement on Race (CLG, 2010)**

Objective

The Devon Grapevine project aimed to continue the work, started by CSMP, of reaching out to vulnerable BAME communities while making ongoing consultation and engagement sustainable in the current economic climate by:

- improving customer insight through a range of tools and techniques, including the use of MOSAIC Origins, individual interviews and surveys, to help to finish the mapping that had been started and, by feeding all the data already collected into the programme, to establish a clear profile of Devon's BAME communities that will enable accurate targeting of resources
- experimenting with the use of social media such as Ning and Twitter to maintain communication with these communities and reach out to new arrivals
- reducing feelings of isolation and marginalisation among ethnic communities in Devon
- improving communication and engagement with, and within, ethnic communities, while simultaneously reducing their costs.

This project has had a clear quantifiable impact on a number of specific local priorities.

- The under reporting of Hate Crimes/ Incidents was identified as a major issue in Devon. For example, CSMP interviews with 147 people from BAME communities in rural Devon over the past 6 months revealed that 56 of them had experienced a racist incident within the past year but only 18 per cent had reported it to anyone – police, employers, etc. This project aimed for a 10 per cent increase in the number of reported Racist Hate Crimes and incidents.

- The CSMP survey showed that only 39 per cent of BAME respondents had ever met their neighbourhood beat officer and that less than 50 per cent would feel confident about contacting their local councils. This project aimed to raise these figures to a minimum of 75 per cent as a basis for empowering people from BAME communities to feel that they can access support when they need it.
- Increasing numbers of people accessing English language classes by providing a one-stop source of information about both statutory provision and free, community-led English classes.

In addition, the project aimed to have a qualitative influence on a range of other local priorities, including:

- improved access to information technology, ensuring dignity and respect for all
- working towards the economic inclusion and social integration of vulnerable populations
- encouraging the full adoption and exploitation of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve productivity, social inclusion and environmental performance
- ensuring that the people of Devon feel both safe and are safe from harm.

Approach

Ethnic Diversity in Devon

Whereas the 2001 census offered a picture of a largely mono-cultural community across Devon, with only 1.24 per cent identifying themselves as BAME, the Safer Devon Partnership had come to believe that this position had changed significantly over the last decade.

This belief was based on evidence from numerous sources. For example:

- The population estimated by ethnic group for local authority districts and higher administrative areas in 2006 (Office of National Statistics) suggests that 22,400 residents in Devon were of BAME origin. Considering that the total population of Devon was 740,800, this would suggest that roughly 3 per cent of the population were from BAME communities.
- By 2009 Devon County Council had procured Mosaic Origins which estimated the numbers of people in Devon with a first language other than English at 6 per cent - around 40,000 people.

Other sources of information, which supported the belief that BAME numbers were increasing, included:

- Multilingua, Exeter's Community Interpreting Agency which has trained interpreters in over 60 languages on their books; in the financial year 2009/10 they carried out more than 1000 interpreting and translating jobs in Devon
- The Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) Service had 543 referrals from schools during 2009/10, looking for support with pupils whose first language is not English. The Schools census carried out in January 2010 lists 122 first languages spoken by more than 3000 children in Devon's schools

- there are currently (2010) 2508 non-European students studying at Exeter university – many of them studying towards their Masters or PhDs
- there are more than 30 Voluntary and Community Sector BAME organisations and projects listed in the second edition of the Devon BAME Service Directory produced by Devon County Council.

These sources of information clearly indicated the extent of growth of the BME population in Devon but there was no clear evidence about the issues facing these rapidly growing communities.



Consultation

Consequently, in an attempt to understand the nature and distribution of BAME communities across Devon the Safer Devon Partnership initiated the CSMP.

This involved bi-lingual project-workers visiting restaurants, care homes and community support groups across the county to meet members of harder-to-reach BAME communities. Between November 2009 and May 2010, they conducted over 265 interviews in 44 towns, listed below.

Axminster, Barnstaple, Bideford, Brixham, Braunton, Bovey Tracey, Budleigh, Chagford, Chudleigh, Crediton, Cullompton, Dartmouth, Dawlish, Exeter, Exmouth, Hartland, Hartland Point, Holsworthy, Honiton, Ilfracombe, Ivybridge, Lifton, Kingsbridge, Kingsteignton, Newton Abbot, Northiam, Okehampton, Ottery St Mary, Paignton, Salcombe, Shaldon, Sidmouth, Teignmouth, Teigngrace, Tiverton, Totnes, Tavistock, Torrington, Torquay, West Hill, Westward Ho, Willand

A questionnaire was designed to be used during the interviews but the main focus was on collecting qualitative data rather than quantitative; if someone wanted to talk about one issue then that was regarded as more important than completing the entire questionnaire. The primary focus was on community safety but the work has also provided insights into areas such as education, language needs, immigration status, health, community cohesion, employment and the role of the third sector.

Demographics and segmentation

Led by the Safer Devon Partnership, the Devon Grapevine project aimed to build on the success of the CSMP and ensure sustainable engagement of these groups by using MOSAIC Origins (which uses financial based data from credit cards, supermarket loyalty cards, etc) to complete the segmentation mapping to profile households into defined demographic groupings.

This segmentation mapping would enable them to better identify and then target those groups who would benefit from the support to be provided by the Grapevine.

MOSAIC Origins was chosen specifically because of its interactivity: allowing the input of locally collected information to build up clear community profiles that would not be achievable using either source of information by itself.

However, once the project was underway, Grapevine grew faster than expected and the team decided, as far as possible, to let it grow organically – by word of mouth – rather than targeting particular communities. Thus, although Mosaic Origins has proved extremely useful in helping to update community profiles, it has not been used quite as originally envisaged.

Partnerships

A key component of the project was the use of existing partnerships with BAME support groups. Paramount amongst these was The Olive Tree Association.

For more information see www.diversedevon.org/index.html

The Olive Tree is a grassroots community association, based in Exeter but working across the whole of Devon, which is at the heart of a growing multi-cultural network.

We help to set up and support projects and activities among Devon's minority ethnic communities: educational projects, cultural activities and social events. Our aim is to bring people together to share experiences and ideas and to develop further opportunities for participation. We can offer advice and guidance, support with funding bids and introductions to other agencies.

Social media

As a result of the above research officers were able to build on the findings – namely that Devon's rapidly growing BAME populations are:

- isolated and marginalised
- have poor levels of access to local services, support and advocacy
- show poor levels of integration and participation.

Whilst it is recognised that no single channel would provide a universal solution to these problems, the CSMP recommended that the use of social media should be investigated to see if it could make a significant and affordable contribution.

The project experimented with putting a Twitter link on to Grapevine but this was hardly used at all leading to the conclusion

that Twitter did not appear to be a popular medium with the target members. However, linking up with Facebook members and Facebook groups proved to be more successful: for example there is an active link between the Devon Grapevine and a Polish network on Facebook.

The consultation ended in April 2010 and project workers were then asked to help identify members of the target communities who may be prepared to participate in and / or help co-ordinate the use of social media networks.

The Devon Grapevine project thus aimed to build a sustainable, cost-effective and user-led network by creating a social media infrastructure, based on Ning (see below) to give people access to support networks in their own home as well providing a network for consultation and engagement that is not dependent on a large team of bilingual workers.

The project established 'private' networks on Ning (with password-protected access limited to 'members') and created structures which hard-to-reach groups were able to use to communicate both within their own communities and with participating partners. The intention was that this should help to reduce the feeling of isolation of many members of ethnic minorities who are scattered in small groups over such a large rural area.



Ning is an online platform for people and organisations to create custom social networks. Ning offers customers the ability to create a community website with a customised appearance and feel, feature sets such as photos, videos, forums and blogs, and the service layers in support for “Like”, integration with Facebook, Twitter, Google and Yahoo!.

There are over 90,000 (as of June 2011) social websites, known as Ning Networks, running on the Ning Platform. As of June 2011, Ning has 65 million monthly unique visitors globally on its platform.

The addition of specialist applications to the basic ‘ning’ network structure enabled any member to draw the attention of other members to news items, websites, blogs etc. of interest, to ask for help and advice on practical matters, and to publicise events. A further service, requiring a small monthly payment per network, removed advertisements, ensuring that inappropriate advertisements did not appear.

In this way, members of hard-to-reach groups, widely dispersed in small numbers across one of the largest counties in England, were actively involved in creating their own communications networks (by producing blogs, running on-line radio stations etc), using social media to overcome the barriers created by geography. They were consulted using media which allowed swift responses, and provided with information which enabled them to increase their participation and involvement in a range of activities.

To counteract possible low take-up of the proposed media, the project included the following communications programme and the delivery of suitable training courses to improve access to the relevant new technologies.



Communications

The project also used some of the contacts established by the CSMP to try to identify the communication preferences of local BME populations in order to allow Grapevine to begin tailoring communications according to the preferences of the communities concerned. This helped the team to focus more attention on mediums such as Facebook rather than Twitter.

Initially, high levels of involvement were achieved through a mixture of:

- face-to-face promotion at community events (e.g. Exeter Respect festival, International Women's Day, Exeter Mosque) and at community groups
- distribution of leaflets and cards
- existing contacts – e.g. through Devon BAME directory.

A number of presentations outlining the project were delivered at sector workshops and seminars:

- Devon Grapevine led presentations and workshops at 3 Community Safety Mapping Project events in North Devon, Exeter and Torbay to inform potential partners and organisations
- 3 webinars delivered informing others about the development process
- Devon Grapevine presented a workshop at Local Government Group conference 10th March 2011.

Project workers also distributed packs, translated into key languages, that contained information about local community safety issues – how to contact the police, how to report Hate Crime and domestic violence, etc.

Training

To support the launch of Devon grapevine, the team utilised various approaches to increase activity:

- delivering 'Master Classes' to show members of the network how to get the most out of the Grapevine (9 members attended)
- providing free 'Introduction to IT and the Grapevine' classes (12 members of the network attended)
- setting up an online ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) group linking to voluntary English classes in Devon (18 members).

All of these are successful in a small-scale way, and have increased the activity of the members of the network who attended.



Findings

For Devon County Council and partners, Devon Grapevine was a timely project in relation to budget cuts and reorganisation. It has demonstrated that social media offers new methods of carrying out consultations, engagement and disseminating information.

The potential of social media to create, direct and sustainable links to what were previously seen as hard-to-reach communities, has also created lots of discussion about the intermediary role of local consortia and infrastructure organisations. In particular, it has raised the question of whether social-media networks can provide some of their functions at lower cost. As a direct consequence, Devon County Council has been actively looking at the role that Devon Grapevine can play in supporting and improving the work of existing BAME consultation and engagement forums.

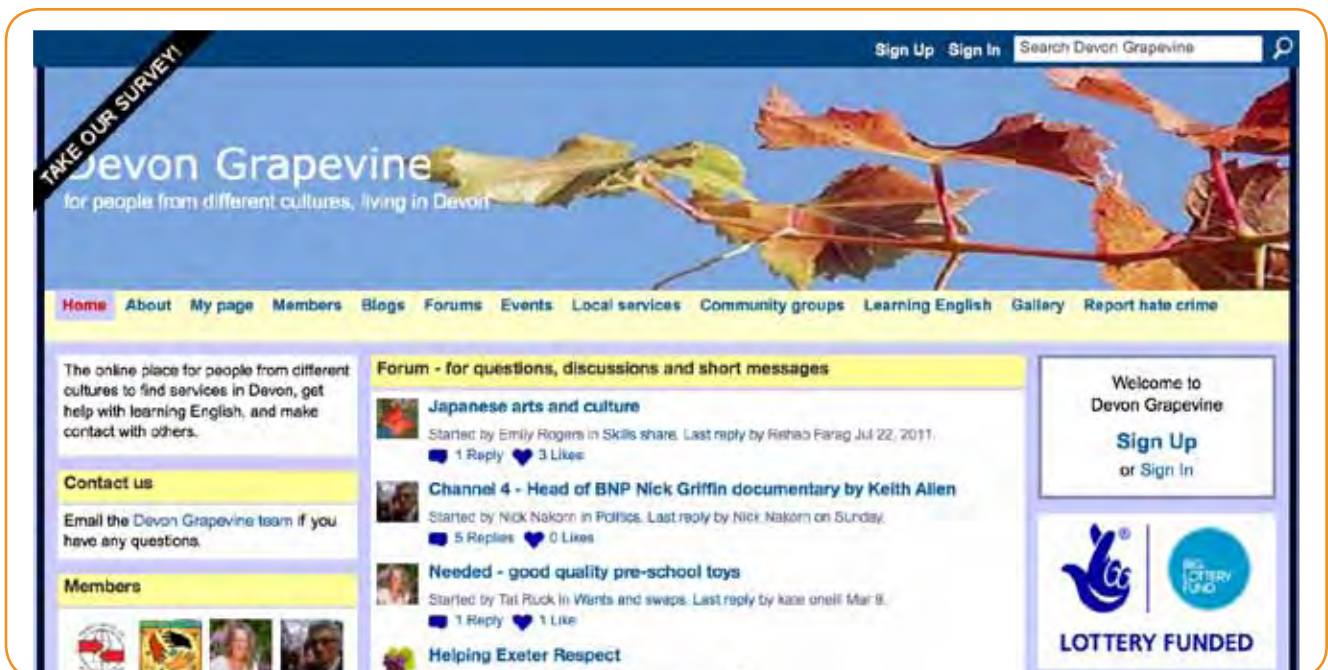
The project built on the findings from the CSMP – namely that Devon’s rapidly growing BAME populations are isolated and marginalised, have poor levels of access to local services, support and advocacy and show poor levels of integration and participation.

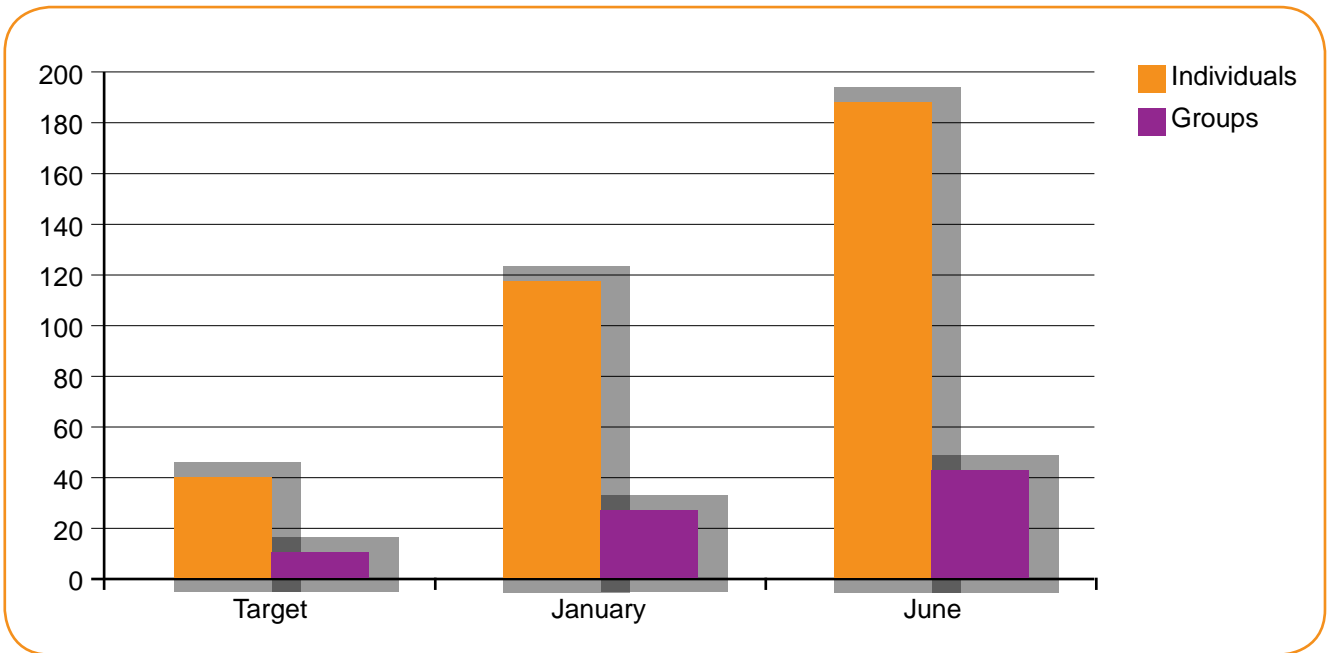
As mentioned earlier, Race Crime is a specific issue for Devon. A particularly worrying statistic found by the CSMP was that only 18 per cent of victims of Race Crime reported the incident to the police. The research identified that this under reporting arose because of a number of barriers, including:

- lack of knowledge of available resources and routes to support services
- language barriers
- lack of confidence
- lack of knowledge of mechanisms of reporting
- low expectations of positive outcomes

It is hoped that Devon Grapevine can make an affordable and practical contribution to dealing with these issues.

The most obvious deliverable from this project is the web site. This has been a great success and can be seen at: <http://devongrapevine.ning.com>





The project set targets to engage with 40 individuals and 10 BAME support groups (i.e. about 50 per cent of the groups listed in Devon BAME Directory) through social media networks. The project exceeded this “sign-up” target within 6 months. By the end of January 2011 there were 144 members in total, including 27 community and statutory organisations. To date (end June 2011) 230 members have signed up, including 42 organisations and community groups.



Member activity on the Grapevine has increased as membership has grown; by June 2011 members had added 179 blogs, 249 photos, 44 videos. The Grapevine team greets all new members and puts them in touch with other members with overlapping interests. Members are encouraged to introduce themselves and update their profiles.

Three Community Safety partners have also signed up (Exeter, Torbay and North Devon).

Membership continues to increase through word-of-mouth with

- members inviting their friends
- English language teachers telling students and
- conversations between colleagues.

The project team developed promotional materials (leaflets, cards and a display sign) and attended events specifically to promote the Grapevine. This was fairly successful with a handful of sign-ups after most events.

Interestingly, a less corporate approach appears to be as successful.

Rehab Farag, a member of the Devon Grapevine Support Team, relates that:

“One of our team attended a multi-agency migrant worker meeting, as part of a different job role. He mentioned the Grapevine to several people – who all swiftly signed up within hours of the meeting. Although the Grapevine is based online, there is nothing like personal contact to create a sense of community.”

Outcomes

Ethnic communities in Devon are widely dispersed across this large county, making it difficult to establish and maintain contact with them.

The CSMP involved the staff concerned doing an enormous amount of travelling, which is clearly both time-consuming and expensive. Return journeys of 100 miles to visit a single family or business were not uncommon. This resulted in a total cost of £67,000 over six months. The CSMP work was extremely successful but was heavily dependent on manpower and its cost and labour intensiveness made it unsustainable in the longer term.

Customer insight and Social Media have provided a cheaper, sustainable alternative to help identify and engage with this customer group, which has also enhanced the service providers' knowledge of these communities and improved levels of engagement and empowerment.

The customer insight gleaned from this project and its forerunner, the CSMP, identified the BAME population as one which might benefit from having the option to engage via a website. Consequently, the Devon Grapevine has helped improve engagement with these communities and helped overcome the difficulties posed by geography and demographics.

As with all social-media networks, most of the content is contributed by the members themselves. Every time someone posts a blog entry or a video clip, they are contributing to the running of the project. The day-to-day interaction can best be seen by looking at a quantitative summary of the current content:

- 230 members
- 219 photos
- 44 videos
- 22 discussions
- 70 events
- 179 blog posts

“One example of this user driven content came when a member offered to start online radio broadcasts. She pointed us in the direction of the necessary free software and, in March, Radio Grapevine was born.

We advertise the sessions to all members with instructions on how to tune in. Sevil plays a programme of international music and members can either just listen or can join in with the online chat.”

Rehab Farag, a member of the Devon Grapevine Support Team

One important task for the project was to improve access to online services amongst the target group because a lack of IT skills presented a barrier for BAME people wishing to use an online social-media network. Hence, as part of the work with different community groups, the project has piloted free Introduction to IT workshops. These workshops help participants to gain confidence in using computers and the internet and introduced them to Grapevine.

“Grapevine has certainly raised awareness across Devon of the breadth of activity related to BAME issues. Members report that they have found out about events and met people that they were not aware of before.”

Tat Ruck, Project Manager

National Institute of Adult and Community Education (NIACE) in their national report ‘More Than a Language’, highlighted the fact that access to ESOL classes is one of the main contributors to economic inclusion and social integration.

There is strong evidence that Grapevine has the potential to have a significant impact on numbers finding and accessing appropriate English classes. In Exeter, for example, the OTA community ESOL classes that were advertised on Grapevine attracted an average 60 per cent increase in student numbers over the past year. Many of these have found their way to the classes after they or their partners have seen them advertised on Grapevine.

Overall, this pilot project has been a clear success and has shown enormous potential for the future, provided funding can be secured to continue the initiative. The speed at which the site has grown is indicative of the underlying need, here in Devon, for an effective networking system that can bring together isolated BAME individuals from different communities and service providers.

“A member mentioned to one of the team, in a private chat room, that a friend of hers had had an upsetting incident which she believed to be racially motivated. We were able to give her information about third-party reporting mechanisms (which we now have direct links to on Grapevine home page), and put her in touch with her local community safety contact. “

Rehab Farag, a member of the Devon Grapevine Support Team

Quotes from users of Devon Grapevine include:

- it's an essential service
- I've found it really useful
- The website is clear and easy to use and a great asset to the community
- (I was) put in contact with a range of local groups and services I otherwise wouldn't know about
- links to the BAME Community are very helpful, it feels like a safe place for the BAME Community to socialise
- I found out and attended the inter faith forum at Oldway through the events page on the grapevine
- I think the grapevine is a great, growing web site reaching into the ethnic communities - well done all of you who created it
- a very helpful network



Race hate

As mentioned at the outset, Race hate is a significant issue in Devon and the CSMP identified numerous cases:

Case study 1

T (Eastern European) and J (Black, Afro-Caribbean) were drinking in a bar in Devon when they were physically attacked, without provocation, by a group of men and women. Both victims needed hospital treatment. Police arrested 8 people including some identified by victims. After interviews, no charges were made and two weeks later T and J received letters telling them that the case was closed due to lack of evidence.

Both are dissatisfied and wondering why CCTV footage in the bar wasn't examined.

T's English is poor, yet he wasn't offered an interpreter. No clear explanation was ever provided as to why the case was closed.

Case study 2

F owns a kebab takeaway in a coastal town. He frequently reports incidents to the police but, as far as he knows, no action has ever been taken.

his shop sign was broken by a girl who threw her handbag at it. The incident was caught on the street CCTV. Reported to the police. Crime reference lost – no action.

the sign was broken again by someone else, the incident was reported to the Police and the name of the perpetrator passed on. F was informed that the Police did not view the CCTV and no action was taken.

F was racially attacked in his takeaway, his nose was broken and he sustained a large cut under his chin. He was attacked by someone he knew. The Police attended and F gave the name of the perpetrator and his address. As far as F knows, no further action was taken.

Case study 3

“Three drunk white males entered my house unannounced, entered my room... opened cupboards and behaved in a threatening manner... Police spoke to offenders outside the house and sent them home in a taxi! Police response was inadequate... sterner measures should have been taken against the offenders – not reward them by paying for a taxi, giving them the incentive to do it again... feel the situation was threatening... fear for my wife... vulnerability in my absence.”

The CSMP survey shows that:

- only 18 per cent of victims of race hate crime report it to the police
- only 39 per cent of BAME respondents have ever met their neighbourhood beat officer
- less than 50 per cent would feel confident about contacting their local councils.

The project aimed to raise these figures to a minimum of 75 per cent as a basis for empowering people from BAME communities to feel that they can access support when they need it.

Devon Grapevine has improved access to information on Hate Crime, Domestic Violence, Fire Safety, etc.

In fact, the 2009/10 figures for Racist Hate Crimes reported to the police showed a drop from the previous year. However, Devon had also introduced a 3rd party reporting system and over the length of the pilot project six racist crimes/incidents were reported through Devon Grapevine, representing more than 10 per cent of all third party reporting.

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence from Grapevine members that Grapevine has helped to improve understanding of, and confidence in, local services including the police. At the end of the pilot stage the number of members was not yet high enough to form the basis of a comparable survey. However, now (Nov 2011) that the membership exceeds 250 the partners are planning to undertake a survey of members to establish whether progress is being made. This is planned for early in 2012.



'Eat & meet' event organised as part of this project

Benefits

The success of Devon Grapevine has helped Devon County Council to recognise the potential that Social Media has in the areas of engagement and social inclusion. In October 2011, DCC organised a Digital Conference with representatives from different departments and partner agencies. This included a presentation on Devon Grapevine and a chance to discuss the potential applications.

The use of social media by partner agencies is on the increase and this project has contributed to that growth. For example, a number of police stations (e.g. Launceston) are using Facebook at a local level and linking into Devon Grapevine.

As demonstrated by the quotes listed above, the Devon Grapevine has clearly delivered beneficial outcomes to a number of individuals within the BAME communities.

The tangible benefits that this project delivered include:

- increased engagement with these widely-dispersed communities (e.g. on corporate consultations)
- a reduction in feelings of isolation
- an improvement in community cohesion
- the creation of easier, cheaper and more effective methods of informing, consulting and listening to ethnic communities
- increased networking between statutory organisations around BAME issues
- enabling members of the target communities to communicate with one another
- raising the awareness of elected members about events and people that they did not previously know about.

This project has proven that customer insight data can help enable contact with ethnic communities both in helping to identify them and in helping providers to tailor the engagement to their communication preferences. It also helped the council to avoid unnecessary and inappropriate contacts as well as reducing the costs of reaching hard to reach groups.

The CSMP work was extremely successful but was heavily dependent on manpower and its cost and labour intensiveness made it unsustainable in the longer term. The CSMP resulted in a total cost of £67,000 over six months.

The Devon Grapevine pilot has demonstrated that the use of customer insight combined with social media has helped identify this customer group and provided a cheaper, sustainable alternative to consultation and engagement as well as offering stronger networking between different sectors, districts and ethnic communities.

The next stage, after the success of the pilot, will be to secure funding to develop the functionality of the site; to grow the membership further and to link Grapevine more closely to a network of English and IT classes in order to ensure that it can be genuinely inclusive.

Governance

The project was instigated and jointly supervised by the Prejudice and Hate Crime Prevention Coordinator of Devon County Council and the Diversity Officer of the Devon Basic Command Unit of Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, with the assistance and active participation of the Strategic Intelligence Manager of the Devon Strategic Partnership (DSP). Progress was reported to the Delivery Board of the DSP on a regular basis but overall the governance was relatively informal and 'light touch'.

Members of all Devon councils had an element of oversight by virtue of the project being overseen by the Devon Strategic Partnership. In addition, a Devon County Council member was appointed to act as 'sponsor' to the project.

The partnership included Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and 3rd sector partners - The Olive Tree Association (local BAME support charity). Both Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and NHS Devon have become involved in the project with the FRS becoming very active, posting regularly and visiting events across the county. They also contributed to the cost of publicity materials since the end of the pilot project.

Once the pilot stage was over, the steering committee made the decision that the future development of Devon Grapevine would best be placed within the 3rd sector and management was passed over to the Olive Tree Association, the BME led community organisation that had originally been commissioned to deliver the CSMP project and which had subsequently partnered the county council in developing the site.



Resourcing

The community mapping work was extremely successful but was heavily dependent on manpower at a total cost of £67,000 over six months. Its cost and labour intensiveness made it unsustainable in the longer term.

The use of social media tools and techniques, such as Ning, enabled two-way communication to be maintained with scattered members of ethnic communities, whilst also allowing them to communicate easily and quickly within their own communities, especially where these are widely separated. It created a system in which communication is direct, quick, cheap and two-way. It also served to increase engagement and participation, and reduce feelings of isolation and marginalisation.

Cost breakdown (excluding manpower)

MOSAIC Origins (12 month licence)	£14,500
Training in the use of social media for key partners (including staff from local authorities, the police, fire service and NHS)	£13,000
A temporary post (9 months) to establish ning networks (this figure covers salary and all other costs for 9 months)	£28,500
Removal of advertising from 'ning' networks	£ 2,500
	£58,500

Once established, it was envisaged that ensuring ongoing input and maintenance of the social media network, probably via a dedicated Community Safety website, would require approximately one day a week's work – which would be sustainable within existing SDP budgets.

In some ways this was overly optimistic; as use of the community has grown increasing effort is needed to moderate, plan and support the facility and by the end of the pilot stage it was recognised (a) Grapevine had the potential to become much bigger than originally envisaged (b) that the network would require longer term developmental funding if it is to realise its potential.

Some funding, to maintain and moderate the site until November 2011, was secured from Devon and Cornwall Police and from the Migration Impact Fund. This has given time for partners to develop a Big Lottery bid to fund the Devon Grapevine for the next four years.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Customer insight

The use of Customer Insight has enabled the Devon Strategic Partnership to identify a particular hard to reach customer group and to target them in an effective and efficient way.

Social media

This project has clearly demonstrated that Social Media tools and techniques can be invaluable to provide information and to support widely dispersed groups in an efficient and effective manner.

Overall, this pilot project has been a clear success and shows enormous potential for the future, if funding can be secured to continue the development. The speed at which the site has grown is indicative of the underlying need, in Devon, for an effective networking system that can bring together isolated BAME individuals from different communities and service providers.

A virtual network, which people can access in their own homes and offices, is particularly appropriate to the demographics and geography of Devon (a small and scattered population spread across a very large county) but the model is potentially replicable in different parts of the UK and within different communities of interest.

The experience with Devon Grapevine suggests that keeping it 'local' is an important part of the successful formula; the team involved do not believe that Devon Grapevine should be stretched to regional status and recommend that anyone following this pattern elsewhere should focus quite clearly on local needs.



Recruitment

Face-to-face contact increases engagement as well as recruitment. Customers are much more likely to contact someone they've met. For this reason, the Devon Grapevine team want to continue offering master classes, providing social opportunities, and visiting community groups and events.

Barriers to development

In the short term, while functionality is still in the development stage and membership is growing, an increasing amount of time is needed for management and moderation.

It is envisaged that the Devon Grapevine will continue to grow, and it will be increasingly important to maintain moderation so that it is a safe place for people to network online.

There is also an ongoing need for promotion and attendance at events – partly to promote the Devon Grapevine, but also to maintain a public face and strengthen the community aspects of online networking.

These issues lead to a need for ongoing resources – hence a bid has been made to the National Lottery.



Barriers to engagement

There are a range of barriers for individuals who might sign up and get actively engaged – including lack of access to IT (although provision of broadband in Devon is not a particular problem), lack of fluency in English, unfamiliarity with social networking. Some members start uploading content like professionals, while others sign up but are then 'silent'.

Currently, the online English language learning group is used mainly to maintain links with learners who attend voluntary ESOL classes. Using laptops, the project could:

- provide basic IT training to learners at all levels in partnership with local groups
- develop and upload some online English learning materials.

ICT and English learners can then be encouraged to use the Grapevine as a place to continue developing their English skills, as well as benefiting from the information and social aspects, but this work will depend on securing developmental funding.

Barriers to site development

Social networking is a developing area and new features are becoming available all the time. In order to continue enhancing the functionality and appearance of the site, it may be necessary to buy in additional expertise or training in the future and to consider the use of community volunteers who are confident with this technology.

Next steps

In wider terms, the clear success of this project demonstrates that both customer insight and social media are useful tools that should be considered by the partners for other projects and processes.

With regards to the specific solution developed, given the successes so far and the clear potential of Devon Grapevine, the partnership are now actively looking at how further development and long-term sustainability can be funded.

Although it is clear that the membership would continue to grow organically for some time, without any coordinated effort, it is also clear that there is a great deal more development to do if Devon Grapevine is going to continue to meet the needs of its members.

Limited funding, to continue development until June 2011, was secured from Devon and Cornwall Police and future funding options are being investigated - including securing a long-term grant from the big Lottery and/or setting Devon Grapevine up as a social-enterprise.

To move on to the next stage funding is needed to:

- enhance the functionality of the site
- continue promoting and providing training to individuals and organisations
- develop, update and add content to the English language group
- link closely to voluntary English classes through short IT courses and online activities
- develop the English language teachers' group.





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