
Secretariat memorandum

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Local Community projects with Black and Minority Ethnic women to encourage transport use

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide members with about a local initiative to increase usage of transport by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That members note the report.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 Following recent discussions with the British Transport Police and apparent gaps in communication/understanding between Transport for London (TfL) and British Transport Police (BTP) and BME populations, one of the key groups to have emerged as the biggest “losers” to accessing transport are BME women of middle age. Characteristically they are less confident (and therefore more vulnerable). These women often face a series of hurdles to accessing London’s transport systems, ranging from fears of socio-cultural racism/prejudice and language barriers to unfounded fears stemming from local “myths” (especially those concerning sexual assault).
- 3.2 Following works conducted with various BME projects in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, it is apparent that there whilst there are lots of programmes and projects geared to building up the confidence of this sector to begin usage of London’s transport modes, they lack the crucial back-up and information that would be available if TfL and BTP were to be involved (e.g. true figures regarding sexual assault would in fact diminish fears). It is vital this gap be bridged so that a vast yet “silent” sector of London’s population are not continually negated and discouraged from using the transport modes available to them.

4 Case Study: Limehouse Project (Tower Hamlets) Passenger Assistant Training-to-Work (PAT) Programme

- 4.1 The Limehouse Project (LHP) is a community based organisation which delivers advice, training and development programmes to all local communities in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). It not only deals with thousands of local people on a one-to-one basis, but having been established for over 25 years,

has extensive partnerships with local schools; colleges; GP practices; Local government; and other Third Sector/charity organizations. It is supported and funded by several bodies, including the Big Lottery Fund and European Union.

- 4.2 Having noticed an ongoing gap in the employment and training of BME men and women for job opportunities within the Tower Hamlets Community Transport Services (THCTS), LHP decided to develop a programme which would deliver a tailor-made Training-to-Work programme which would encourage women to not only use, but work for local transport services. In partnership with THCTS, the programme aims to train up to 20 local BME women (its core client group), aged 18-40, for a Passenger Assistants role within each training round. Through this training programme, women progress from learning the basic skills of how to speak and communicate with different members of the public, understand and write reports, use/handle manuals, know how to assess job opportunities, conduct themselves in interviews and communicate with future/employers.
- 4.3 The need for LHP's PAT project was identified both through LHP's current work with women through its existing advice services, and various studies carried out on the current position and needs of BME women in relation to travel, employment and training. Much of its consultation work in identifying the specific needs of women was carried out on an informal basis through the use of coffee morning sessions and cultural and religious events in order to enable women to disclose their needs in an informal environment. Ongoing contact through other services provided by LHP such as its advice and education services, enables LHP to engage regularly with service users and the wider community whilst enabling it to develop a deep and detailed understanding of local community issues and how to deal with these issues sensitively.
- 4.4 It is at this crucial stage that TfL and BTP have the opportunity to make their presence felt. By introducing themselves in an informal environment which is continued in the course of a training programme, a huge impact could be made upon women's understanding of the security measures in place to help and protect them in relation to the most public forms of transport. This could in turn, help dispel unfounded fears, and give women the confidence they need to use whichever transport service they need to get from A to B.
- 4.5 The LHP's PAT programme is delivered in partnership with THCTS who offer work placements for trainees and even offer trainees the experience of working on their minibus services (LHP are the only organisation THCTS permits to undertake this action as part of a training programme). The training course is delivered from LHP's office sites and is structured as follows :

Training Hours: 1 day per week, 5 hours per day
Work Placement: 1 week

Course Programme

Unit 1 – Learning Styles & Team Building

ESOL units covered : Speaking & Listening / Talking about Yourself
Communication with Employers

Unit 2 – Communication Skills & Work Experience

ESOL units covered : Reading & Writing / Communicating in a Social Care Environment

Work Placements : With THCTS, Sutton Street depot.

Unit 3 – Finding Employment

ESOL units covered : Common phrases in a social care setting / Introduction to Social Care / Language

Unit 4 – Positive Communication & Disability Awareness

Acceptable and unacceptable terminology / Causes of learning disabilities / Record keeping / Report writing / Manual handling

Unit 5 – Health& Safety and Security

Safe Working Practices / Health & Safety hazards / Minimising challenging behaviour / First Aid / Work placement sessions in how to deal with “extreme attacks”/ Visits to external care organisations e.g. Age Concern

Unit 6 – Action Plan to Employment

Individual Action Plans / Further skills training / Interview training and prep sessions / “Where next” interviews / Assistance with applications / Recruitment cycle for LB Transport Services begins.

4.6 For the period June 2009 to March 2010, the PAT will train 20 BME women as Passenger Assistants and prepare them to secure posts within a transport care setting.

4.7 Having recently completed the delivery of PAT project directly in partnership with THCTS, 9 women out of the 15 trained were offered full time employment as a Passenger Assistant. All 15 trainees completed their work experience with the employer.

5 Evaluation

5.1 The programme run by LHP is currently unable to cope with demand (it costs approximately £16,000 per round to train up to 20 women) but despite limited resources has proven a huge success. Aside from the obvious benefits such as women using transport and having a direct path into employment, there are of course, a series of long-term unquantifiable benefits e.g. the women who went on to gain employment with the THCTS have inspired other women to come forward to participate in the course / use transport services, and are also acting as role models to their children etc. If TfL and the BTP were to invest in participating and supporting such community-led projects, the impact upon mobilising minority populations would be immediate and long-lasting.

6 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 6.1 Usage of public transport should be encouraged across all groups of society particularly currently under-represented groups.

7 Legal powers

- 7.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

8 Financial implications

- 8.1 None