

The “Herefordshire 100”

A review of the project after completion of Phase 1 (April 2009)

Background

Given the low proportion of minority ethnic groups in Herefordshire, the county’s citizens panel (known as the Herefordshire Voice) does not allow for analysis of feedback from minority ethnic groups or migrant workers; all of whom are communities whose feedback is vital for effective public service delivery, to meet the needs of such groups.



The aim of the “Herefordshire 100” is to provide a systematic mechanism to regularly consult with key minority groups in Herefordshire. This will complement the work of the citizens panel that has been in operation since 2001 and allow people from minority groups to give feedback on their experiences in the county.

A number of consultation models were looked at, but we were

encouraged by the successful use of this method by Wakefield Council.

We sent out a brief to a number of specialised research organisations to bid for the work, as we felt that we currently do not have the capacity or expertise within the organisation to dedicate to this project.

The project has been split into 3 phases and the role of the West Midlands Improvement & Efficiency Partnership has been to provide financial support for the first phase of the project - the pilot phase. If this is deemed successful we will continue with the project.

- **Phase One:** January 2009-March 2009 (pilot)
Target groups: Settled migrant workers/BME population and LGBT community
- **Phase Two:** May-July 2009
Target groups: Seasonal migrant workers/BME/LGBT/ Travellers
- **Phase Three:** Travellers/
BME/LGBT/settled migrants

We appointed QA Research to deliver the project, who specialise in qualitative research of this kind.



How the project works

- Communities are asked for a volunteer to be a link or "community researcher" who will be trained to do about 10 interviews with people from their community about 3 times a year. Ideally these researchers will have relatively good English skills to minimise the need for interpretation.
- Questions will be discussed and decided with the community researchers **before** being finalised to check if they are appropriate to ask in a **briefing session**.
- The community researchers will then complete as many interviews as they can given other work and family commitments. Interview sheets are posted back or collected.
- Community researchers meet together for a **feedback session** to discuss how the process went and wider issues that arose.
- The community researchers are paid a set fee to attend the briefing and feedback sessions.
- A Council representative to be present at each training and feedback session to hear views directly and show support to the volunteers.

Objectives for phase one

- Establish Herefordshire 100, a group of volunteer community researchers who will do research within their respective communities.
- Recruit and train 10 volunteer researchers from the following groups:
 - Settled migrant workers
 - Ethnic minority people
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people (LGBT)
- Provide reliable data that can be used to inform decision making.
- Consult with the above communities about:
 - Accessing and using services
 - Equality of access to services
 - How services could be improved

- Explore differences and similarities in views, experiences and needs of communities as part of a wider discussion, rather than a 'tick box exercise' for a single purpose or service.

The survey also included questions about the local area, including some used for National Indicators from the Place Survey. Volunteers were given an electronic version of questionnaire to translate if needed.

Successful results of phase one

11 community researchers were recruited of 8 different nationalities. After attending a training session, the volunteers successfully completed 100 interviews.

After completing the fieldwork, volunteer researchers attended a focus group discussion to feed back key themes which emerged from the research, and for a debrief about the research process.

As much of the data collected was quantitative data, the completed report contains charts and headline findings for the Herefordshire 100; ie. the 100 interviews that were completed. It is not appropriate from a statistics perspective to derive confidence levels for this data as the sampling was not random. However this type of consultation yields very useful indicative and

qualitative information. The final report also highlights key differences between ethnic minority/migrant worker groups, but it is important to note that these are not statistically reliable and should also be treated as **indicative only** due to low base sizes.

Generally, the researchers found that people were willing to participate in the survey.

All of the researchers said they would be interested in continuing the research in the future. They gave positive feedback about their experiences (see panel on right)

Researchers were interested in seeing the research findings, and most were also interested in what action will be taken as a result of the findings.

- Most researchers commented that they had found out others' views, had got to know friends better or developed their understanding of others' experiences
- Enjoyed meeting people
- Felt that they were doing something meaningful that could improve things
- Representing their community, self-respect and motivation
- Appreciation of the benefit of being able to speak English, their own resourcefulness and that they were not alone

Community Researchers
Herefordshire 100

Issues to resolve

- Usual barriers to engaging people in research, eg. feeling that nothing will change anyway so what's the point (encountered at volunteer recruitment stage and from a few people who researchers approached for interviews).
- Limited opportunities to recruit LGBT people.
- Changes in personal circumstances can affect the ability to complete the work.
- For most researchers, the most difficult aspect was finding time to interview people.
- Some researchers found that it was difficult to keep people's concentration and encouraging them to think about and expand on their answers.
- Some researchers found the quantitative survey difficult to use.





Key findings of the research

- The top three services identified as difficult to access by the Herefordshire 100 were the dentist (49%), the GP (30%) and the post office (20%).
- The top three things in need of improvement were 'wage levels and local cost of living' (33%), 'job prospects' (30%) and 'affordable decent housing' (27%). Respondents were less likely to say that race relations (5%) and education provision (6%) need improving.
- Three quarters (76%) of Herefordshire 100 respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
- Half of the Herefordshire 100 respondents did **not** feel that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood (50% said not very or not at all strongly). Only 37% felt they belonged very or fairly strongly to their immediate neighbourhood.
- More than half of Herefordshire 100 respondents said they agree with the statement that people from different backgrounds get on well together (61%).
- Of all statements relating to perceptions of public services, overall the Herefordshire 100 were more likely to *agree* that local public services are working to make the area safer (82% said 'a great deal' or 'to some extent'). The statement they were most likely to *disagree* with was that public services treat all types of people fairly (29% said 'not very much' or 'not at all').
- Herefordshire 100 respondents were more likely to have used GP services (80%), and less likely to have used fire (3%) and police services (24%).
- Of all the above mentioned services, Herefordshire 100 Respondents were more likely to say that they were satisfied with their GP (65% said 'very satisfied or 'fairly satisfied') followed by Herefordshire Council services (55% said 'very satisfied or fairly satisfied').
- Most Herefordshire 100 respondents did not feel that they had been treated differently (positively or negatively) when using public services because of their ethnicity or nationality.
- Three quarters (76%) of Herefordshire 100 respondents found it easy to find out about local public services.

Visit www.herefordshire.gov.uk/research for the full report when it's published.

Carol Trachonitis (Equality & Diversity Manager)
Herefordshire Council Corporate Diversity Team

01432 260616 • diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk • www.herefordshire.gov.uk/diversity