



Inclusive Research Case Study 7

Engaging people from ethnic minority communities in physical activity and nutrition research

Staff: Sandra Agyapong-Badu

College: College of Life and Environmental Sciences

School/Department: School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences

Overview

This case study demonstrates the importance of community engagement and trust-building when conducting research with to improve health outcomes through physical activity engagement. Despite initial challenges in participant recruitment through traditional media, the researcher successfully engaged the community by building relationships directly with individuals and community groups. Maintaining involvement required sustained communication, respect, and flexible engagement strategies. By involving community members in co-production and data dissemination, the researcher addressed trust issues and past negative experiences. Continuous networking and hosting events for feedback and updates further strengthened the research's impact and sustainability. Leadership training, ongoing education and awareness were key to improving researcher confidence and skills in working with underserved populations to ensure collaborations transcends individual projects. Research engagement and involvement should not be restricted to projects on ethnic minorities but become a routine part of general UK population research, recognising ethnic minorities as an integral part of the UK society.

Research Area: Supporting individuals from ethnic minority communities to engage with physical activity and nutrition research to address health inequalities

Population: Ethnic minorities

Research Methods:

- Conducting community-based/participatory research to gather evidence for intervention development to improve health outcomes

Facilitating Participation:

- Initiatives such as lunch clubs and boxing clubs to build relationships from scratch
- Direct interaction within communities to establish trust and rapport
- Co-production

Known Participants/Organisations:

- Individuals from ethnic minority communities
- Community representatives
- Various community groups/clubs
- Age UK
- Voluntary Services Organisation

Outreach Activities:

- Initially tried using adverts in newspapers, radio, and public libraries, but these methods had limited reach
- Building relationships and trust within communities proved successful



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Barriers to Contact:

- Public scepticism due to previous research not leading to tangible changes
- Difficulty in accessing participants due to a lack of trust in research and its impact

Addressing Challenges:

- Involving community members at all stages of intervention development, preparation of research outputs (publications; conference posters) and data dissemination to ensure individual voices and lived experiences are heard and valued
- Developing trust through direct community engagement and demonstrating the impact of research

Maintaining Involvement:

- Community clubs played a crucial role in maintaining participant engagement
- Creating a space and enabling long-term relationship building
- Investing significant effort initially to build strong relationships
- Being flexible in involvement to accommodate participants' availability
- Maintaining open and respectful communication
- Acknowledging, respecting and rewarding the participants' contributions, time and experiences

Research output: Building trust and increasing inclusion in public health research: co-produced strategies for engaging UK ethnic minority communities in research, <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/490063/>

Research impact: research engagement, community wellbeing, co-production of public health recommendations, co-dissemination at the UK Houses of Parliament, and enrolment of 51 active patient and public involvement partners.