**Living in Harmony forum**

**10th December 2015 at Pilton Community Health Project**

**10am – 12noon**

1. Hannah welcomed everyone and people briefly introduced themselves
2. **Presentation:** Eleanor McKnight from Elite Linguists gave a presentation about Overcoming the Language Barrier. She has given permission for us to share her slides which are attached to the email.
3. **Discussion**: Granton Nepali residents and community volunteers Dil and Muti spoke to the rest of the group, with Fulmaya Harris interpreting. We asked them how they find out about things, what the best way is to communicate with them, what are the hardest parts of not speaking much English.

**GP appointments**

They highlighted the difficulty in getting a GP appointment. Often they will go in to try to make an appointment, which is much easier than over the phone. However when they go into the practice, they are asked to call in the morning the next day. It is then almost impossible to communicate over the phone. A useful discussion followed about how GP surgeries in the area could make the process of booking an appointment more straightforward for speakers of other languages. For example: making it possible for people to book appointments in person, flagging up on the person’s file that they will need an interpreter and in what language, using language line etc.

**Information networks**

Dil and Muti also said that they find it difficult to get information about what is going on in the area. There other Nepali people who will pass things onto them, but many people are very busy with work and families. The best way of making arrangements with them is face to face, or by calling one of their friends or family to pass a message on. (This is only appropriate in some contexts. In others, such as going to the doctor or dealing with the council or police, it is good practice to provide an interpreter).

Someone asked whether they would use the internet to find out what’s on, and the answer was no. This highlighted possible reasons for the fact that speakers of other languages or recent migrants often say they have difficulty accessing information about what’s on, even though many community centres do send out information or put it on their website etc. Word of mouth and face to face communication can be a lot more important.

**ESOL classes and their limitations**

Surita pointed out that it is not simple to just attend an ESOL class, because some people may not have literacy skills in their own language. So although ESOL classes are very important, we need to hold in mind that some members of the community are likely to remain limited in their English speaking, and we need to find ways of communicating.

1. Next we split into groups and discussed what people find helpful in getting over language barriers in their work or everyday lives, and what we could do more of in the area to make things easier.

**What helps overcome language barriers?**

* Pictures
* Language line or other telephone translation services, i.e. ‘Happy to Translate’ initiative
* Find ways of getting back to people that won’t be confusing
* Reception staff – speaking slowly, using the present tense and not overly complicated language
* Relax and be as straightforward in your language as possible
* Attitude, taking the time to listen
* Third party reporting of crime – the ability to report a crime at a community centre or library where people may feel more comfortable.

**What can we do?**

* Local centres register to become third party reporting centres
* Simplifying making appointments at GPs – local practices coming together to think this through
* Training specifically for reception and frontline staff as they are gatekeepers to many services.

We agreed to follow up the actions identified.

1. AOB:

Julie Smith: The chat café will start again on the 14th January at PCHP, 12.30 – 2. This is an opportunity for people to socialise and practice English, share information and eat together.

Hannah Kitchen: The Burns Night Community Ceilidh will take place on Saturday 23rd January 5-9pm at Royston Wardieburn Community Centre – all welcome!

The next forum meeting will be in February, date to be confirmed.