

## **Breaking Through the Language Barrier**

Hertfordshire County Council has launched multi-lingual CD promoting services in response to feedback from some of the county's black and minority ethnic ( BME ) communities on how services can be improved.

*'An excellent tool ensuring that language needs don't mean individuals are unable to get support or feel isolated when receiving it', is how one professional recently described the CD.*

The CD which is being promoted within the council but also through regional and national networks comprises of two informative videos, '10 key words' and 'Getting in Touch'. The video's are in various languages which are commonly spoken by some of Hertfordshires Asian communities.

**'Getting in Touch'** is a video aimed at carers, showing them how to access the council for advice and support. The premise of the video is that language should not be a barrier to accessing services, and it encourages carers to take advantage of both language line and interpreting services.

Mystery shopping has been taking place to ensure that the service provided by language line is of high quality and that all call handlers are trained to respond to specific language requests.

'10 key words' has been piloted so frontline staff can learn a few words in various languages. Research in Hertfordshire has highlighted increased satisfaction from service users who speak in minority ethnic languages when staff learn a few words in their preferred language.

Shazia Butt, the BME Involvement Worker for Adult Care Services said: *'service users feel valued and respected when staff learn a few words in their language. Nobody expects frontline staff to learn a whole new language, but a few words can make a real difference'*.

The CD has been sent to the relevant places of worship and community organisations to gather feedback – if this continues to be positive there could be opportunities to produce more videos in other languages.

A community leader from a local Sikh temple said about the 'Getting in Touch' video:

*'I had no idea about all the help Adult Care Services can provide. After watching the video in Punjabi which is my only spoken language I now know how to ask for help should I need it'*.

Both videos can be viewed on line at [www.hertsdirect.org/carers](http://www.hertsdirect.org/carers) under BME carers. For more details or a free copy of the CD please contact Shazia on 01707 280659.

The CD was developed using Beacon reward money made available to Hertfordshire County Council as part of its Carers Beacon Status in 2005/06. There is also work under way with other Beacon councils to develop a DVD video tool focusing on carers assessments.

### **Shazia Butt**

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