

Involving staff

One of the things we've been doing to try and improve staff confidence in community engagement is trailing a range of different approaches.

So, for example; an induction process which involves community engagement is part of that induction.

For all new staff and volunteers, there's an expectation that we all do it, and also going out into the community.

We went on a cultural tour as well.

So it's very important that we do these tours because then you open relationships, you dispel any barriers or disbeliefs that other people have by doing that but you have to have one understanding that you have to build relationships and this takes time.

It cannot be done on a one off.

Sometimes it may take many months, many years to build those relationships but it is so worth it because the outcomes is that you're learning about the community and their culture and the community

will in turn work with you
to learn more about what you do
and what you represent.

Another thing we've done is to roll out
a series of interviews with all staff,
well we've covered about 70,
which is at least half the staff,
across all different areas of our service.

So by doing it in a one-to-one interview situation,
staff were able to articulate
some of their fears and anxieties,
without being criticised for
that for their approach.

And actually gave them confidence
to talk more openly about it
and realise there is a lot of engagement
going on across the organisation
and they were able to share that.

We've been looking at that
and seeing if we can devise some training
to meet their needs,
so they feel part of the process,
rather than having it imposed on them.

Out of those interviews we've identified
specific training needs
that staff have identified for themselves.

So that includes cultural awareness training

and also some softer skills.

So, in order to address those, we are using
a range of different methods to encourage staff
to be trained in things like;
equalities training from the council
or peer to peer learning,
sharing good practice amongst the staff teams.

As well as external trainings
where we need it and also working with
our community partners who have expertise to share
and all of that helps boost
the confidence of staff in terms of community engagement.