



Celebrate Dorset Multicultural Lunches Evaluation Report

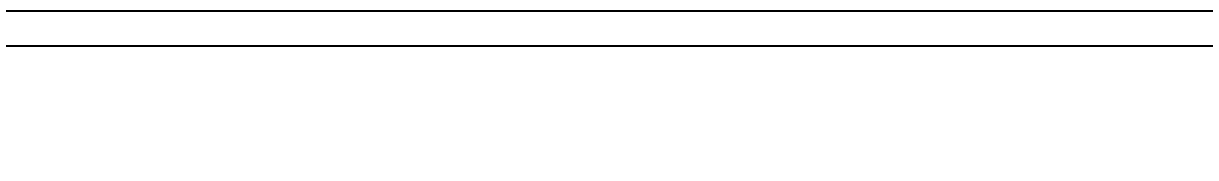
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Summary

Based on funding from Celebrate - Big Lottery Fund, Dorset Race Equality Council, together

1.0 Introduction

This review of the Celebrate Dorset Multicultural Lunches emerges from collaboration between Bournemouth University and Dorset Race Equality Council through the Refugee and Migrant Leisure Network (RMLN). RMLN connects Bournemouth University academics working within the Centre for Events, Leisure, Society and Culture with Dorset-based organisations working with refugees and migrants.



appropriate amount of food. The space provided seating at 9 tables with space for up to 12 at each. This meant participants had to sit and interact with others leading to conversations over food. For example, Tina describes:

“you I R X Q G \ R X U V H O I V R U W R I V L W W L Q J Q H [W F W R Y S H R S Q H W
with them. ><0047047o><00eito><00ewa-1.3. t T(<004E0051.e()-1839 ()TJ 25t -38d62 (0047>]TJ

4.1.3 Event promotion

Events were promoted through an established network of community organisations, many aligned to religious itiw3917 60.2d 0 Tc 8.05tany

4.2.1 Family focused

Family groups dominated the event at Weymouth, though there were some individual participants. Children were seen to interact widely across cultural groups and represented a prop for parents to socialise. Providing activities for children was therefore important with Weymouth providing a bouncy castle and organising a piñata. At Kinson and West Howe families were also present, but less dominant. Individuals are welcome to attend the events, but as Tina explains, this would not be for some, particularly young single male migrants. Researcher 2 (see above) also identified herself as an outsider to the overtly family orientated gathering at Weymouth, however, this event was purposely built on an established family event so this was not surprising. Given the family focus these events will not suit all potential participants.

4.2.2 Gendered roles and opportunities

In general, female volunteers took

4.3 Transformative elements

Various components of the events came together to achieve a variety of positive outcomes referred to here as transformative elements.

4.3.1) R R G D Q G R W K H U μ S U R S V ¶

) R R G D Q G R W K H U μ S U R S V ¶ W K H U μ S U R S V ¶ ~~It is an inanimate~~ object that enables people to ask questions that might otherwise seem intrusive. For instance, in meeting a refugee, participants might feel reluctant to enquire about their past, however, it is easy to ask about the food they have prepared, where it is from and how it is made. From this other conversations open up. Food has strong associations with memories of growing up, places you have lived or visited. It is also affective and sensory as people react to the taste, smell and appearance and verbalise their responses to others. We all need to eat to live and meals are a family event. As a human necessity it provides a shared understanding. While discussion of food was not essential for some, particularly some of the men accompanying their wives, everyone visibly enjoyed tasting the range of food. Therefore while food preparation and serving at an event presents some organisational challenges, it is a critical element.

Other props were also evident at the events. For instance, at Kinson a community group brought a large selection of Middle Eastern and African clothes for participants to try on.

& K L O G U H Q ¶ V D O P R Q J L D J L M G H D / G X O W R Q U R H U S A D W Q R Q D R / X W K H O S H played a more minor, but nevertheless important role in facilitating interaction.

4.3.2 Celebrating heritage

Many participants valued the opportunity to celebrate their heritage not only through the food, but also through taking pride in wearing traditional clothes marking themselves out as different. This gave the events a sense of occasion. There was a joy in sharing traditional food and evident pleasure when it was all eaten. Volunteers bringing food also frequently brought traditional objects associated with the food related to serving or simple decoration. These also provided a platform for discussion. The volunteers providing food seemed very proud of their culture, which was very positive and uplifting. Potentially this provides a form of (unconscious) resistance to the tabloid press shaming of migrants and refugees.

Interviews reveal the importance to participants of making connections for their children to their heritage. Researcher 2 noted:

³It seemed important for the Chinese woman to ensure her children, who were born in England, could learn Chinese, explaining they speak Chinese at home. She said they ca Q V S H D N E X W F D Q ¶ W Z U L W H R U U H D G W K H O D Q J X D J H

Many participants were from mixed families with one British parent and there was concern about them losing touch with their non-British background.

Participants also took pleasure in celebrating other cultures. For example, at the Weymouth event, a British women and her granddaughter made Swedish savoury cakes. They were not Swedish, but had taken a holiday there. The granddaughter loved the culture of Sweden and wanted to go to university there. It gave an opportunity to share a family memory through food. British participants were also keen to share their regional heritage. A Scottish women Researcher 1 met at Kinson made a haggis for the later event at West Howe, while a British women brought soda bread which she makes for her Irish husband.

There can also be some uncertainty about celebrating heritage. Both Muslim participants interviewed expressed concerns about how their faith might be misrepresented in current times. The food events presented them with an opportunity to challenge this image. The traveller community, represented at the West Howe event, also have concerns and there can be a stigma for young people from this community who can seek to hide their heritage due to concerns about jobs and social status in other aspects of their life. The events provide a space to celebrate.

4.3.3 Positive atmosphere

The multicultural lunches temporarily transformed the event spaces and there was an overwhelming sense of positivity at the event. Even those who positioned themselves a little outside the event, for example, accompanying husbands, seemed to enjoy the food and atmosphere. That said, all participants came with a willingness to embrace a multicultural activity and it might be anticipated that this would be positive. Importantly the events do not embrace everyone. Many refugees are single young men who might not seek out an event like this. Tina suggested it is difficult for some to step out of their comfort zone and there are challenges of going to an event full of strangers. In moving forward this is something organisers need to reflect on in relation to the wider range of opportunities available.

Similarly, while the events provided a positive shared space, there was less scope for some to interact. For new arrivals to the UK there were language barriers and, though difference was celebrated, a sense of otherness marked o.322 58

positive opportunity to give and it was clear that volunteers who provided food benefitted substantially.

Many recent migrants and refugees are well educated and seek opportunities to practice English. For women, in particular, these opportunities may be limited, so lunches provide an opportunity to try out English in a social setting. Some migrants were seen to struggle with English, but showed determination and a willingness to engage. The lunches therefore provide a vital opportunity for exposure to language while observing behaviour.

) U R P D O R F D O S R S X O D W L O X Q F K S H W J V S H F W D S Y A S R e s e a r c h e r 3 describes:

³Unlike my stereotype (shame on me), xxxx seemed very cheerful. She was bright and engaging « [[[[was wearing a fancy coat and sun glasses. When she took off the glasses for the picture, I noticed she was wearing a really nice make-up. Stylish lady.´

The stylish look of the Syrian refugees challenged her views and enabled her to recognise that this group is well educated and has not come from a situation of poverty.

4.3.5 Suggestions for the future

During the lunches and interviews participants were asked about ways to improve the events and ideas for other events. Music was the top suggestion as this is another way that people connect. Other ideas included hands on activities that could be done as a group like a beach clean and games for children derived from different cultures. Also, given the link to religious networks an interfaith event was suggested. Art might also be successfully deployed as a shared activity.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendation s

The multicultural food events are without doubt successful. They attract diverse cultural groups and provide a platform to build friendships. While meeting the needs of participants who attend, the lunches will not be for everyone and organisers need to be mindful of the range of other activities available to groups who might not feel comfortable in an overtly family orientated environment. There was evidence from participants that benefits extend beyond the immediate event experience, however, repeat attendance is needed to consolidate the positive outcomes. Lunches are a successful bridge to build collective and individual social capital.

In taking the lunch events forward the following are recommendations for organisers:

