



Roma-Net

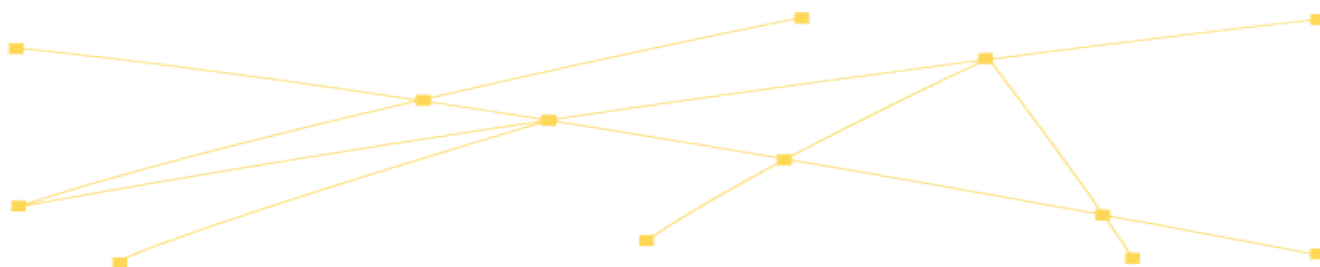
Integration of Roma Population



Case Study :

Challenging stigma and discrimination:

thesocialmarketinggateway





Background note from the ROMA-NeT Lead Expert

This case study has been prepared by the Thematic Experts from the Social Marketing Gateway to showcase that a campaign can help to challenge the negative and stereotypical views that society have about a minority population. Although the case study is not about Roma people, but about another hard to reach group, it provides an example and steps that ROMA-Net partner cities can follow. It provides examples of tools and techniques that have been successfully used elsewhere to effectively challenge and reduce discrimination. These are actions that can be tailored to local circumstances and used by the ROMA-Net partner cities.

Introduction

A group of five mental health NGOs receive funding to run Scotland's national campaign to combat stigma and discrimination against people who have experience of mental ill health. The campaign, which uses social marketing methodology, began in 2002 and is still running.

Understanding the issue: Insight-gathering

Gathering insight into individuals' experience of stigma and discrimination was an essential first step to developing an anti-stigma programme. Rather than rely on anecdotal evidence, 'see me' carried out individual interviews, ran focus groups and consultation events across Scotland. More than 200 people affected by mental ill health were consulted. This painted a picture of

how stigma affected people in the family, in the community, at work, in education, in services like health and housing, and in the media.



Further surveys, focus groups and interviews later in the life of the campaign found that 'self stigma' or 'internalised discrimination' was declining, with people feeling more able to 'admit' to having a mental health problem and feeling less ashamed and embarrassed about it.

A major Edinburgh employer takes the anti-stigma message right across the capital on its staff bus



At the same time, the campaign team gathered insight into the perceptions, assumptions and attitudes of the general public to find out why they were likely to stigmatise and discriminate against people with a history of mental health problems. Insight was gathered through a national survey of a representative sample of 1200 adults across Scotland and through focus groups to provide more in-depth information. Follow-up surveys showed improvements in awareness, understanding and attitudes within months of the launch of the campaign.

A surprising finding

Many mental health professionals, including the representatives of the five NGO's who were members of the campaign's management group had believed that the root of the problem was that the general public were profoundly and often aggressively prejudiced against people with mental health problems. While this was true for some people, the majority were not instinctively hostile but they were wary, uncertain about how mental health problems affected people and often sympathetic yet fearful of doing or saying the wrong thing in case they 'made matters worse'.

The survey did however confirm that many people did associate mental ill health with a high risk of being violent or a danger to others, including complete strangers. The media was a significant source of information, yet many respondents believed that the media did not portray mental ill health accurately or fairly.

As a result, the programme of activities developed by 'see me' was not confrontational and accusatory in its tone but was instead informative, constructively challenging and appealing. The key fact that one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some time in their lives underpinned the campaign's message that we are all likely to have to deal with a mental health issue, either our own or that of someone close to us, in the course of our adult lives.

Making the issue real

In order to combat the myths and misunderstandings, 'see me' recruited, trained and supported a pool of individuals prepared to speak out publicly in media interviews about how stigma and discrimination had affected them and their families. This approach was taken because social contact theory, based on evidence from around the world, tells us that such indirect access to personal testimony is second only to direct personal contact in breaking down the beliefs, views and attitudes that lead to stigmatising attitudes.





A range of tactics

The 'see me' campaign employed a range of tactics to tackle stigma and discrimination with different target groups and in different settings as well as reaching and influencing the general public.

The legal context is an important foundation for all anti-discrimination work. Discrimination, the practice of treating one section of the population in a less favourable way on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, sexuality, religion etc, is against the law across Europe (although legislation differs from country to country). Individual citizens need to know about their legal rights and entitlements and what to do if they are denied their rights. Although 'see me' did not provide legal advice or support to individuals, they did raise awareness of the legal situation among those with a responsibility to operate within the law such as employers, service-providers and government departments.



Former England football captain and successful manager, Terry Butcher does his bit to help the campaign

Implications for Roma-Net

The following tools and techniques have been successfully used by 'see me' to combat discrimination and are equally relevant to addressing discrimination against Roma people.

Leading by example through good organisational policies and practice – ensure that organisational policies of the municipalities and any organisations that they work with or support, are checked for direct and indirect discrimination. Policies would include staff recruitment and workplace policies, and policies and practice in delivering services so that Roma people are not excluded.

Training for staff - to improve attitudes towards Roma people and to ensure that municipalities' own staff understand what they need to do to avoid discriminating against Roma people.

Training for staff in other services - such as the police, health care and social services to improve attitudes and combat discrimination.



Services to support inclusion – ensure that existing services are provided in a way that does not exclude Roma people and provide services specifically for Roma people. This would include housing, health and social care, education (at all levels), skills training, work experience/apprenticeships, support for Roma-led community groups and projects.

Lead by example – municipalities raise awareness of what they are doing to improve the inclusion of Roma people and combat discrimination and exclusion by speaking out publicly through their own communication channels and through the media.

Media volunteers and models of good practice – support Roma people to speak out about their personal experiences of discrimination and of achievement individually or of projects that they are involved in, including cultural activities. This not only combats discrimination but also helps tackle 'self stigma'.

Media watch schemes – challenge negative, misleading or unfair media reporting by writing letters for publication, contacting individual journalists, providing Roma media volunteers, engaging directly with reporters, editors, TV producers, film-makers and media celebrities.



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