

Community Information Event 18th April 2007

Overview

The event was well received and an overall success with approximately 75 people attending. It began at 2pm, finishing at 8pm. Of those that attended they were predominantly Polish but with several other nationalities, including Portuguese, Hungarian, Slovakian, Russian and Thai (see below for breakdown of numbers).

The Upper and Lower Guildhall were used; the Lower Guildhall was used for all the 17 agencies to exhibit and display information. The Upper Guildhall was used for refreshments and for children's workshops facilitated by Andover Family Learning. The upstairs space was also used for individuals wanting a confidential conversation with an agency representative (plus interpreter if required).

Who attended?

Visitors were greeted in the entrance and asked to indicate their nationality by placing a ball in the relevant bin identified by their national flag; Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, United Kingdom and 'Other'.

Numbers collected throughout the day by the method above indicated the following number of individuals attended the event and of which nationality.

Nationality	Number of people
Polish	30
Slovakian	4
Portuguese	7
British	9
Other	9
Total	59

Whilst the above figures give a good indication of those attending the event, it was reported that people were missed as they came into the Guildhall via the open fire exits (which were open due to the warm weather). In the evening, several of the interpreters reported speaking to groups of people who were not accounted for. Therefore this raises the estimated number of attendees from 59 to a possible 75.

Which agencies attended?

- Tourist Information
- Test Way Housing
- Test Valley Community Services
- Jobcentre Plus
- Andover Family Learning
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Andover Advocacy
- Workforce Plus
- Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)
- Hampshire Constabulary
- Hampshire Children & Families Forum
- Housing Advice, TVBC
- Environment & Health (Recycling), TVBC
- Revenues & Benefits, TVBC
- Neighbourhood Wardens, TVBC
- Hampshire Fire & Rescue
- Andover Library

Other organisations were asked to attend but were unable to e.g. Cricklade College, Valley Leisure. Several other organisations attended with a view to obtaining ideas for similar events they are organising e.g. Winchester City Council, Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) and St Mary's Catholic Church.

What did people want to know?

Agencies which received the highest numbers of queries were:

- Jobcentre Plus
- Workforce Plus
- Housing and Council Tax Benefits (TVBC)
- Andover Advocacy
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Andover Family Learning

Each organisation was asked to complete a generic monitoring form throughout the day, recording whether they were approached by a male or female, their nationality and what the nature of the enquiry was.

The most common queries were:

- seeking employment
- specific training and further education courses

- childcare and parent and toddler groups
- volunteering
- housing benefits
- information on work permits

For those enquiries which were not able to be answered on the day, people were asked to leave their details and the information would be forwarded at a later date. From this information collected, we know that people came from as far as Tidworth and Over Wallop to the event. Sample enquiries include information regarding recruitment within the Army, specific education courses, information regarding Connexions.

Approximately seven adults and children took advantage of the workshops facilitated by Andover Family Learning, their evaluations were positive in terms of enjoying the activity and getting ideas for activities for their children.

Lessons learned/recommendations

The visitor tally shows there was a steady flow of people attending from school finishing time 3.30pm onwards and the evening from 6pm onwards became busier. Therefore, possibly hold any future event from 5.30–7.30pm.

It was arranged for 15 interpreters to attend, consisting of the following; 8 Polish, 4 Portuguese and 3 Slovak. Some of these were bilingual and spoke Czech and Russian amongst others. Future events would require fewer interpreters as a relatively small number of people attend the event at any one time, and three Polish people involved in the steering group were at the event and happy to interpret and help out where they could.

Some concerns were raised about publicity of the event and details possibly not reaching as many of our target audience as we would have liked to. Publicity was distributed to the following;

- *large employers across Andover
- *local shops and newsagents in the town centre
- *letting agents
- *recruitment agencies
- *hospital & doctor surgeries
- *Andover Library
- *St John the Baptist Catholic Church
- *numerous voluntary agencies
- *Hampshire Constabulary
- *Cricklade College
- *Job Centre
- *TVBC Website
- *Word of mouth

Requested that representatives from local Banks attend to discuss loans and mortgages etc. However, this would not be appropriate as it would mean

commercial/financial gain for that particular company – the Credit Union? Inland Revenue attending would also for several present.

could possibly invite have proved useful

Overall it was a successful day; attendees were able to seek answers to questions. People were signposted to other or event also proved a good networking event for the agency seemed to be a constant buzz throughout the day. We have feedback of a Polish couple asking when the next event is

advice and organisations. The es present, there ince received to be held.

The future

We now need to concentrate on the future and what this event has highlighted;

For example;

- *The need for better communication channels with our different communities
- *Should we have a designated Polish webpage for Frequently Asked Questions on TVBC website?
- *Is there a need to set up another international group? Previously was a group which met monthly but unfortunately it had to close due to lack of resources – is this something TVBC could support? Perhaps have different reps and orgs to go down and answer questions, arrange social events as well.
- *Linking in with other key agencies and producing a bi-monthly newsletter with details about the Council's Services and other key services in different languages etc?
- *Providing a fortnightly drop in where we have interpreters in-house to deal with customers queries? Two people raised this on the day – all correspondence is sent out in English and they are unable to interpret, if they come into Beech Hurst it's much easier to discuss a query face to face rather than through Language Line.
- *Is there a need for frontline staff to learn some basic phrases in different languages – as some of the other key agencies are considering in a bid to do so?
- *Should the event be replicated in Romsey?
- *Consider reinstating the language bank – looking at the language skills of those within TVBC?

A 'wash up' meeting is being held in the coming weeks to gather feedback from the event. There will no doubt be further recommendations and outcomes from this meeting which will be put together in an action plan and be added to this report in due course.

Marianne Piggin, Community Support Officer, TVBC
24.04.07