



## INCLUSIVE EXETER

### Better Connections Project - Year Three Steering Group Meeting #1

**Date:** 09 March 2026

**Venue:** Mint Methodist Church Centre

**Time:** 19:00 to 21:00

**Chair:** Kate Hannan

**Attendees:** Kate Hannan, Mahsin Mahbub, Muktar Ahmed, Bijoy Laksmi Roy, Agnieszka Wanowicz, Arlene Lewis, Jino, Nitheesh Kuttan, Joy Okumbor, Alan Quick

### Meeting Minutes

#### 1. Welcome & Apologies:

The meeting opened with a warm welcome and congratulations on entering the third year of the Better Connections project, and apologies were received from Neomi, Shahar, Mishkat and Hakimi.

#### 2. Review of memorandum for Year 3 of the Better Connections Project:

Kate presented the Memorandum of Understanding for organisations participating in the third year of the Better Connections project.

##### Key points highlighted:

- The project continues to focus on **promoting intercultural and cross-community understanding**.
- Participating organisations must:
  - Attend project meetings.
  - Deliver **at least two community events** during the year.
- Organisations may also apply for **additional funding through city or ward grants** if required.
- Each event should aim for **around 20% attendance from people of different cultural backgrounds**.
- A **designated volunteer should welcome new attendees** at events.
- Organisations must follow safeguarding, GDPR, and risk assessment procedures.
- Project's insurance currently covers **events of up to 500 participants**. Organisations should ensure that their planned activities fall within these limits.

### 3. Independent Project Evaluation:

An independent evaluation will take place during Year Three, conducted by Richard Malfait. Richard may contact participants for interviews, focus groups, or meetings, and members were encouraged to provide honest feedback, including challenges and areas for improvement.

The evaluation will assess:

- Whether the project has achieved its objectives
- The impact of the project on communities
- Key lessons and learning to help inform future funding applications.

### 4. Financial Statement:

Muktar presented last year's financial statement.

#### Key points highlighted:

- The expenditure remained within the approved budget, with a marginal underspend.
- Devon Bangladeshi Association still has **unspent allocations** from the project budget. These funds remain **reserved** and can still be used for planned activities.

### 5. "Real Life in the UK" Project:

The "Real Life in the UK" project aims to support individuals by providing confidence-building opportunities and practical knowledge to help them navigate everyday life in the UK.

#### Key points highlighted:

- The project has secured **funding for two years** to deliver a programme of informative sessions.
- These sessions will focus on topics such as understanding public services, accessing GP and NHS services, housing rights and responsibilities, police and community relations, and gaining a better understanding of everyday systems and services in the UK.
- The project will recruit a part-time coordinator (6 hours per week for 37 weeks per year) to organise speakers and manage sessions.
- Participation will likely require registration, and sessions will be open to a diverse range of community members.

### 6. Future Events:

Members briefly discussed upcoming events, including Easter, Vishu, and Eid, arranged by Exeter Kerala Community on **11 April**, and All Souls St. Thomas on **25 October**.



#### **7. Actions:**

- Mahsin will send the Memorandum of Understanding to Arlene.
- Mahsin will also contact the Devon Bangladeshi Association and the Afghan Community in Exeter to sign the Memorandum of Understanding.
- Inclusive Exeter will also send an invitation to councillors for Easter, Vishu and Eid, which is scheduled on 11 April, and create a risk assessment form

#### **8. Meeting Close:**

Kate thanked everyone for their participation and contributions. The meeting concluded with appreciation for the continued collaboration among community organisations.