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Involving young people with intellectual disabilities in planning leisure services

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Background: Young people with intellectual disabilities (ID) from Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the UK experience barriers in accessing leisure services. This paper is based on involving young people with ID from South Asian communities to engage in a dialogue with service providers in shaping the leisure services that they require. This study was conducted in a metropolitan district in England. This involved hearing the voice of young people with ID from South Asian communities and enabling young people to consult with their peers, parents and service providers on leisure opportunities.

Method: This is action research project conducted over a period of eighteen months using participatory research model. This involved recruiting 7 young people with ID from South Asian communities and enabling them to participate in this research as co-researchers through research training, facilitation and support. With the help the co-researchers conducted focus groups involving other South Asian young people with ID. The aim of the focus groups was to hear the views of other young people in relation to their leisure interests and needs. This was followed by focus groups with parents and carers of young people to hear their views about their children's access to and usage of leisure services. Five meetings were convened with the co-researchers and key service providers who are responsible for leisure services in the locality. The theme of these meetings was to engage in dialogue and discussion about the leisure needs of young people with ID from South Asian communities and identify an appropriate action plan for the shaping and development of culturally sensitive services.

Results: The young people and parents involved in this project highlighted a number of barriers which prevented access to leisure or caused concerns about using leisure facilities. They also identified a number of key areas which could help in increasing access to leisure and improve the service provision. Young people with ID who were co-researchers felt very valued because they could contribute to the development and shaping of future leisure services.

Conclusion/ Implications: Young people with ID from South Asian communities have aspirations similar to their non-disabled peers, but they have little opportunity to achieve

them. The study helped to inform and plan leisure services for young people from South Asian communities.