

# Community Access Points (CAPS)

How to identify and use CAPS  
with groups vulnerable to social  
exclusion

# What is a CAP?

- These are places where people experience **informal** public life
  - Not a home
  - Not a workplace
- A place where there is **social interaction** such as conversation
- Where people feel **welcome and equal** to others also using the place



# What sorts of Places?

- Good places for CAPS are diverse, and can be best **identified** by your **target group**. They might include:
  - Cafes
  - Parks
  - Markets
  - Launderettes
  - Libraries
  - Small, local shops



# Why are CAPS important?

- People need safe places where they can **socialise** alongside managing their daily lives
- CAPS allow people a safe place to explore **ideas and relationships** they might not otherwise engage with
- CAPS can **signpost** people to new opportunities
- CAPS help with **community cohesion** and development
- Having access to a CAP may improve **well-being**



# What is Social Exclusion?

- Individuals or groups in society unable to fully access the **rights, resources and opportunities** that others in their society take for granted.
- Rights, resources and opportunities might include education, employment or housing



# Defining Social Exclusion

- ‘Groups that experience a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the general population. Ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, the homeless, those struggling with substance abuse, isolated elderly people and children all often face difficulties that can lead to further social exclusion, such as low levels of education and unemployment or underemployment’ (di Nardo, Cortese and McAnaney, 2010).



# How can CAPS Help?

- Resources that can help people become less socially isolated can be located in a CAP.
- Many CAPS already act as an **informal information exchange** for users, through providing a place of conversation
- Once CAPS are identified they can be approached to take part in initiatives aimed at reducing social exclusion



# Identifying CAPS in Your Community

- A good CAP is somewhere that is **affordable**, is socially and physically **accessible**, has a convenient **location** and is available at **times** suitable to the target group.
- Different target groups, **even if living in the same community**, will almost certainly require different CAPS



# Suggested Route for Identifying CAPS

- Work closely with a trusted, local **gatekeeper** who has some access to your target group
  - **Schools** in local community
  - **Charities** working with target group
  - Existing **community groups** in the local area



# Discussions with Gatekeepers

- Arrange to meet your local gatekeeper
- Explain **what** a CAP is and **why** you want to identify them
  - Your gatekeeper may enthusiastically suggest a number of local places for CAPS
  - Thank them for this, but **explain the importance** of the target group feeling ownership of the CAP. Input in making the choice of CAP means they are more likely to make use of it



# Involving your Target Group

- Your local gatekeeper can help you meet with **already-engaged people** from your target group
- These people will hopefully help you identify the most **effective** CAP(S) for your project.
- To do this we suggest setting up a **workshop** (with refreshments) to explain what help you need.



# What Sort of Workshop?

- See our workshop plans available on [www.elemental.org](http://www.elemental.org)



# Working with Community Researchers

- Hopefully **one or two** people from your workshop will **volunteer** to do some research amongst their community to identify CAPS
- On our project we had many more volunteers than needed.
- All your volunteer needs is some **guidance** (provided at the workshop) and a means of **collecting information** and sending it back to you.



# What do Community Researchers Do?

- Talk to their **friends and family** and either record or jot down some notes of the conversation
- Take photos of places where people in their community feel **comfortable** chatting to others
- Get the **information** back to you



# Identifying Community Places

- Using the **information** provided by your community researcher you will be able to make a short-list of CAPS
- Arrange to visit these sites and **talk** to the people responsible for the CAP about your project and **how** they can help



# Working with CAPS (1)

- CAPS can help with accessing **target groups** in a wide variety of ways.
- At the most basic level they can be places of **information exchange**
  - Leaflets and Posters
  - Community Noticeboards
  - Verbal information via the person or people responsible for the CAP



# Working with CAPS (2)

- Some CAPS can offer **spaces for meeting** representatives from target groups
  - Particularly cafes, indoor markets, larger shops, schools
  - They might need to charge for this though
- Some CAPS can offer spaces for **training or education**
  - Community centres, libraries, schools, some larger cafes or community health facilities
  - Again, they might need to charge



# Working with CAPS (3)

- Some CAPS can share **facilities** with your target group
  - Computing, telephone, copying printing
  - Equipment for children, for DIY or for carers
- CAPS have also provided **mentors** for people in our target groups, and supported our project with **advice**



# Final Thoughts

- CAPS can be a **great way** to work with groups vulnerable to social exclusion.
- They offer **flexible, safe spaces** that allow people to develop **confidence**, meet with others **informally** and learn new skills
- The **potential** of a CAP is only limited by your imagination. Be **creative** and make use of this great resource.



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