



MOSAIC – COMMUNITY CHAMPION RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

What is a Community Champion?

A Community Champion is a volunteer from, or linked to, a Black or Minority Ethnic community with a growing passion for National Parks. Community Champions promote the National Parks in their community.

Community Champions promote the National Park that is most local to them through various activities such as organising visits for members of their community; giving out information about the National Park informally; giving formal presentations; working with National Park Authority staff on stands at urban events. Some community champions have become board members of the YHA, National Park Societies or members of Local Access Forums.

The Campaign for National Parks found that, as a group, Community Champions were far more involved with the National Parks before they joined Mosaic than is typical for ethnic minority groups. Just under half of all Community Champions report that they were regular or frequent visitors to the National Parks before becoming involved in our Mosaic project. Over half of Champions had rarely or never visited before Mosaic.

How much time did Champions give to Mosaic?

By the end of the three-year Mosaic project in 2012, there were 223 Community Champions. Quarterly timesheets show that Community Champions contributed over 2,900 days to the Mosaic project and National Parks during project period. While some Champions put in several days per month, others might only attend one event a year. Mosaic's flexible approach to this has been identified as a key reason for the project's success.

How many people did they introduce?

While the actual number of people they have introduced is difficult to quantify, the final evaluation of Mosaic estimates that at least 28,000 people have been introduced to the National Parks by the Community Champions during the life of the project. This includes at least 9,000 people who have been taken on visits to the National Parks for the first time (Gilfillan, Mosaic Final Evaluation, April 2012).

How did we recruit Community Champions?

What worked?

- ✓ Extensive media coverage for the project in the ethnic minority media and in the general media (including a feature in *The Times*, a series of features in *Emel*, a Muslim lifestyle magazine, features in community publications and specialist environmental publications, interviews on local radio and community radio);





- ✓ Networking and personal contact from the Mosaic project officers – for example, through community groups, primary care trusts, non-profit organisations. Face-to-face contact worked best;
- ✓ The Mosaic website was optimised for key search terms such as ‘ethnic minority’, ‘BME’ and ‘countryside.’
- ✓ Community Champions recruiting new champions through their own networks.

Many active Community Champions proactively approached the project after hearing about it through word of mouth, reading articles in newspapers or magazines and searching the internet. This is repeatable by the National Parks and emphasises the need for articles and features about the UK’s National Parks in urban media.

What didn't work?

The methods of recruiting champions that worked least well were:

- ✗ Cold calling organisations, charities, local authorities.
- ✗ E-mailing community organisations.

What encouraged retention?

Flexibility

The Community Champion model worked equally well for people who were very busy and for those who had more time, because the approach is flexible. Community Champions agreed minimum time commitments and targets with their Mosaic project officers, based on what they could and wanted to do with the project.

Community Champions appreciated the flexibility that the Mosaic project team showed in supporting their involvement in project activities - for example in allowing some residentials to include children when it was impossible for some participants to arrange childcare.

Networking with other Community Champions

Community Champions report that networking with other Community Champions has been one of the most valuable ways to build confidence and get enthusiastic about what National Parks can offer. The Campaign for National Parks organised large annual events in a National Park for all Community Champions and Mosaic project partners to facilitate this.

Financial Assistance for the First Visit

During the last year of the project, the Campaign for National Parks set up the *Lets Do It!* fund, where Community Champions could apply for up to £250 as a contribution towards organising a visit. It was an important catalyst for helping newer Community Champions to start organising group visits to the National Parks.



Project officers' interpersonal skills

The Mosaic project officers brought strong interpersonal skills, which have been cited by several Community Champions as an important reason why they became involved in Mosaic.

Enjoyment

Fundamentally Community Champions are proud to be part of the Campaign for National Parks' Mosaic project and of their role in it. They enjoy being Community Champions.

What problems did we encounter with recruiting and retaining Community Champions?

Distance from urban centres

Some National Parks are far from the nearest urban centre and difficult to reach by public transport. Where this is the case, it was more difficult to recruit and retain Community Champions, for example the closest urban area to Exmoor National Park is 42 miles from the nearest National Park visitor centre. Northumberland and the Lake District are 31 and 30 miles away respectively.

Project officers covered huge geographical areas

The three full-time Mosaic project officers covered nine National Parks and the YHA between them. For example, one covered the cities of Manchester, Preston, Leeds, Bradford, Newcastle, Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough and others. This made it very difficult to fully cover all target urban areas, particularly those located further from where the project officer was based.

In some cases, this made it difficult to support less confident Community Champions adequately. Where the Campaign for National Parks has been able to provide this support, people who initially lacked confidence have become some of the most vocal and active Community Champions.

The recession and reduced funding

Most of the 30 Community Champions interviewed during the final project evaluation believed that the recession and public spending cuts had negatively affected their role as a Community Champion. The biggest impact was the reduced capacity of people to pay for trips to the National Parks. Champions also reported that it had become difficult to find funding from other sources to subsidise the costs of group visits, even though the amounts of funding required to facilitate group visits are relatively small. Consequently, Champions reported that they are scaling back the frequency and types of group visits that they organise, taking smaller groups less often and planning fewer residential or activity-centred events.

How does Mosaic help Community Champions actively promote the National Parks?

Training and mentoring

The Campaign for National Parks provided training and mentoring to Community Champions, which for many was essential for preparing them to promote the parks to other people. This included group training in organising a visit and fundraising as well as sponsoring individual Champions to attend training according to their own needs and interests. This has included, First Aid, minibus driving, public speaking skills and map reading.

Group Leader Visits

Community Champions attend a Group Leader Visit when they first sign up to the Mosaic project. This is usually a residential weekend for up to ten new Community Champions, organised by the Campaign for National Parks and the National Park Authority. It is an opportunity for Champions to meet staff and members of the National Park Authority and each other, as well as learn about a particular part of the National Park. For many Champions this mixture of learning about the place and meeting people who they can work with to organise visits was a key moment.

Personal approach and flexibility

Project Officers took a personal approach, introducing Community Champions to people, places and organisations according to their interest, or put together a training programme suitable for that individual.

Each Community Champion started from a different position in terms of experience of the countryside, knowledge of the National Parks and confidence in their own organisational or leadership abilities. This is reflected in the different lengths of time that Community Champions have taken to become 'fully fledged'. Some stated that they could have been a Community Champion immediately, but became better after taking part in a Group Leader Visit. Other Champions felt it took them longer, perhaps a year or more, before they felt confident to be active Community Champions.

What difference has being a Community Champion made to people?

“Mosaic has taken the initiative and has sown the seeds between ethnic groups and National Parks. As a Community Champion I am proud to be part of this development and I look forward to the future with Dartmoor and Exmoor nurturing the seeds we’ve sown, as they grow into fruitful trees.” Sunder Braganza, Community Champion, Plymouth