

LUCY TSIKIRA: COMMUNITY CHAMPION CASE STUDY

Lucy Tsikira is a Community Champion for the South Downs National Park. She became a Community Champion in April 2011 and promotes the South Downs National Park in her local community in Worthing.



Mosaic Community Champion Lucy Tsikira (S Wilson)

Lucy's Journey with the Mosaic project

'My friends would describe me as an honest and easy to talk to individual, always making time to help others, extremely empathetic, but most of all they would say my positive and lively personality is infectious to those around me.

I heard about the Campaign for National Parks' Mosaic project through the South Downs National Park Project Officer Sarah Wilson. She called me at my place of work and explained the aims and objectives of the project and the benefits of becoming a Community Champion. As much as I could gain from being a Champion, I was very enthusiastic about what I could give back by involving the wider BME community in West Sussex. I just felt and believed that this was the chance for me to show my people that there was something interesting awaiting us to see. From that day, I signed up and became a Mosaic Community Champion and have loved each minute of it.

I missed being in open spaces to just enjoy the countryside. I knew through conversations with other members of ethnic minority groups, that I was not the only one missing out on

seeing the special landscapes of England. So naturally when Sarah introduced me to the Mosaic project, it was like getting an answer to my community's loneliness.

From the first time I visited the South Downs, it reminded me of my home in Zimbabwe, where I grew up. When you go to the South Downs, you just feel so relaxed because it reminds you of home.

I can proudly say that I have led several groups totally over 80 people, both young people and adults from Worthing and Bognor Regis, and recruited two Community Champions from different ethnic groups. All the people I took enjoyed every minute of it. One child wrote on her feedback form, 'When is the next trip?' This alone shows how much children enjoy being in the South Downs National Park.

Personally, I have gained a lot through training, meeting others and doing walks. I have also seen a lot of new places. The Mosaic project has helped me to build on the confidence I already have, enabling me to gain more leadership skills in planning visits through 'Group Leader Visit' training. I have also made many friends from different parts of the United Kingdom, and met and worked alongside staff from the South Downs National Park Authority, the South Downs Society, the Youth Hostel Association and the Campaign for National Parks. Mosaic has also given me the chance to communicate with others through networking.

My biggest achievement as a Champion has been introducing more than 150 people to the South Downs National Park within months of becoming a Champion. I'm also proud to know that all the young ones we have taken to the Park, will one day become elders and they too will know where to go with their families and friends. So I have planted a seed which will continue to multiply, year after year, generation after generation

This particular Mosaic project will come to an end, but it has opened the doors of outdoor activities and most of the project's work has broken down the barriers of exclusion based around culture and race! We all know that we are considered part of the community and can access the South Downs TOGETHER!