

# **Community engagement: The role of statutory, private and charitable organisations in the provision of care**

**(Middlesex University Professional Doctorate project summary)**

**Stephen Moreton**

## **Background**

The project considers the role of statutory, private and charitable organisations in engaging the community in supporting the delivery of care in England. The project seeks to establish the extent community engagement is relevant or desirable for organisations responsible for delivery or supporting the delivery of care in England, and how joint-working can be developed in a way that aligns with the needs of each organisation. Work is needed to develop a coherent landscape for community engagement, and an opportunity arose to explore different volunteering organisation's perceptions within a healthcare environment – all working in the same locations but with different purposes, strategies and cultures. So, by exploring how different volunteering organisations perceive and approach community engagement, some insight should be gained in how discretionary effort is encouraged from the community.

There is a backdrop of idealism for community engagement, supported by legislation; but with limited clarity of purpose or progress, and a climate of cynicism and confusion. Clarity is needed on how patient and public involvement interacts with delivery of volunteering services – and how these combine to encourage community engagement. Community engagement lies between social action and volunteering. Further investigation is needed to explore these relationships within a healthcare setting.

## **Aims:**

- (i) To provide insight and guidance on how statutory, private and charitable organisations involved in health and social care, can embrace community engagement in a way that aligns with their respective missions and working cultures.
- (ii) To establish where good practice in this respect currently exists,

## **Methodology**

The critical theory paradigm embraces participatory approaches to inquiry including action research, and encourages the development of insights that can promote change. The research setting will be selected from statutory and private care providers that engage with charitable organisations in urban and rural settings.

The methodological approach of 'positive deviance' will be applied as follows:

- (i) Research sites to be supported by participating organisations.
- (ii) Those responsible for engaging with the project will be treated as an associate – with a one-to-one relationship with the researcher.
- (iii) The findings of the literature review to be presented and discussed in a user-friendly way to key individuals, to nurture a clear remit for the study.
- (iv) Identifying different groups' overt and covert practices and behaviours that facilitate community engagement.
- (v) Each group has the authority to apply learning and monitor progress as they see fit. The researcher facilitates this process.
- (vi) Each group decides what they intend to do as a result of the findings. The researcher encourages the sharing of this where appropriate.
- (vii) The researcher works with key individuals within each group, to review the effectiveness of various initiatives.

An online questionnaire will be designed to capture perceptions of community engagement. Key stakeholder and informant interviews will be used to gather the perceptions and relevance of community engagement across participating organisations. Analysis will focus on how these perspectives impact on individual behaviours and organisational practices as a way of exploring relationships of volunteering and community engagement.