



Get Heard!

Have A Say in the 2006 National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2006



What is the 'Get Heard' project?

The Get Heard project has been set up by a group of anti-poverty NGOs and the government Department for Work and Pensions to promote the Get Heard Toolkit, which contains a workshop outline designed to enable people living in poverty to have a say in national policymaking – and especially the next National Action Plan on Social Inclusion.

The Get Heard Toolkit has been designed based on the understanding that people living in poverty have expert knowledge of the issues raised by living in poverty, and they have a right to enter into dialogue with their government.

The government has an obligation to listen to people living in poverty when it puts together its National Action Plans every few years, and has stated a commitment to listen to people in poverty before putting together the 2006 National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (NAP).

Through the Get Heard project we hope that hundreds of people living in poverty will have the chance to give their views on which anti-poverty policies work, which don't work, and what policy changes they'd like to see the government make.

Who will use the Get Heard Toolkit?

The toolkit is for any group of people living in poverty who want to give their views on government anti-poverty policies.

Because the NAP is a UK-wide government report on policies to combat poverty, the Get Heard project is happening all over the UK too. In Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England, grassroots and community groups of people living in poverty or experiencing social exclusion will hold Get Heard workshops to give their views on the government's policies to combat poverty. And because the NAP will address policies that affect particular groups of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion – such as women, parents, homeless people, older people, people from Black and other ethnic minority communities – groups with a special interest or particular experience of poverty will be holding their own workshops across the UK, too. The Get Heard project is working with umbrella organizations and other partners across the four nations to spread awareness of the NAP and the Get Heard Toolkit, and try to get the message out to people in poverty wherever they are in the UK.



How will the Get Heard project get people's views into the NAP?

Grassroots groups supported by umbrella organisations or by the Get Heard programme, will hold Get Heard workshops all during 2005.

Workshops address the questions: "What is working?", "What is not working?", and "How should things be done differently?". The views and conclusions expressed in the workshops will be sent back to the Get Heard project.

The Get Heard project will collect feedback from the workshops, and in the autumn of 2005, the Get Heard project will hold regional events in the four UK countries to begin the process of bringing together the feedback from all the workshops. Then through a national event at the start of 2006 we'll feed the information back to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for inclusion in the NAP.

(We also have an information sheet on how to get your feedback into the Get Heard project.)

How will getting heard make a difference?

People who are excluded are often sceptical about whether it is worth getting involved in politics. They may have been let down before, or feel that in recent years they've been "consulted to death" without seeing much difference in the resulting policies. How do we know it will be different this time? One thing that will make a difference is that this time the voluntary sector is working in partnership with government through the DWP; the government has given a

commitment to take on board the issues raised by people through the Get Heard workshops. But we can't guarantee it will work; the government is asking us to have faith in this project and we're asking people living in poverty to have faith in this project. It's up to us at the Get Heard programme, and to you the Get Heard partners, to believe in the process, support its integrity, and lobby each other – NGOs and government - to keep to our different sides of the bargain.


We know that grassroots input can improve policy outcomes. But we also know that groups that take part in this process can benefit in other ways. All the groups that take part can use the outputs from their workshops to engage in policy and advocacy work with regard to local issues, inform local campaigns, and be empowered to become involved in other processes.

So this project aims to have two outcomes: improved national and European policies on social inclusion, and increased capacity of excluded people to be involved in policy making processes on the part of excluded people. Your organisation is an essential part of this process to Get Heard.


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