

## Adapting self-management support for seldom heard groups



Kent Association for the Blind (KAB) working  
in Partnership with **self management uk**

**Self management uk** developed a programme with Kent Association for the Blind (KAB). KAB is a local Kent wide charity established in 1920 which aims to support sight impaired people to live independent lives via a range of services including rehabilitation, one-to-one support, social clubs, talking news and training. The development of the “Peer Support Programme” was funded by Kent County Council and was specifically developed for people with long-term conditions who also have impaired sight.

The collaboration required strong client engagement to develop a robust and credible programme suitable for this group of people.

Using the **self management uk** course, “Self-Management for Life” and a case study provided by KAB, a focus group looked at the impact of sight loss, as well as the services, resources and equipment available to people with sight impairments. The focus group tested some materials and delivery methods to determine the best way to provide the programme to potential clients, recognising that one of the challenges of designing the programme was to make it suitable for volunteers and attendees with varying levels of sight loss. Traditional training methods had to be challenged and tested, for example the relaxation exercises were put into audio format and tactile props and answer buzzers were sourced.

In line with other courses delivered by **self management uk**, the programme is delivered by volunteer tutors who have a long-term condition. For this programme, the volunteers are sight impaired people facilitating courses for sight impaired people. This approach contributes to the emphasis of client engagement and ensures a sharing experience between peers, communicating ideas and techniques that have benefitted them.

KAB can deliver the programme to clients who use their service and **self management uk** have trained KAB staff in order that they can support the programme across the KAB Kent area.

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Evaluation of the courses proved the success and satisfaction of the attendees with an average score of 3.8 out of a maximum of 4 relating to the organisation and delivery of the course.

Outcomes reported by attendees include increased confidence in communicating with others and sharing emotions, greater access to social and leisure activities and improved personal independence. Specifically, individual attendees were able to travel by bus independently using action planning and breathing techniques to reduce anxiety, manage their frustrations using relaxation techniques and learn about talking newspapers and new technology.

Katherine Barr, Rehabilitation Manager for Kent Association for the Blind, feels the collaborative approach taken was beneficial on both sides in terms of learning and development.