Prior to the first meeting, each was approached by Community Organiser, Sharon Tomlin of Sobus who conducted a series of listenings (conversations). The outcome from these conversations was that each person had shared a passion to address the issues and concerns that had arisen during the listenings as well as determination and confidence to galvanize and mobilise the community into making positive changes. Each decided that they were willing to come together to form a group as they felt that it was evident that they could support the community to help meet specific needs as identified by the local community – the main commonality that brought them together.

The group shared that collectively they had little experience of forming a community group and to mobilise and lead residents to take actions. With support from Sobus, the group was supported through facilitated discussions to understand and build power from within through personal reflections and conducting a power analysis. Information garnered from discussions led to the group to begin to clearly set out the reasons they came together that included the following:

* to try to improve communication with the services the communities utilise and represent
* to give individuals a sense of belonging within their neighbourhoods
* to facilitate liaising with statutory and voluntary agencies as representatives on with residents as well as on behalf of their estate/neighbourhood

The group identified that in order to support the community to achieve these aims, the group will need to formed initially as a voluntary steering group with a view to becoming a constituted group later on. They began with discussions on setting up the group, its structure, decisions on leadership and design as well as the direction of travel of the group. Support to develop group infrastructure was given by Sobus. This involved discussions around empowerment, ensuring that a democratic process was implemented, developing good governance and identifying potential training needs. In addition, share good practices on empowering individuals and groups within the community.

Ensuing discussions focused on how best to engage women with a view to bringing them together from a variety of communities that have shared experiences of integration, assimilation and community cohesion, the impact and felt experiences. This would involve developing a community action plan that was not static, but summarises a process that they could repeatedly go to that enabled them to move more towards their goals.

During 2016, the group organised a series of meetings that were held in Fulham, the main outcomes from these meetings were as follows:

* To minimise isolation: isolation was identified across the generations, older and younger women especially for those of which English was the second language
* To participate in vocational and physical activities: identified activities that meet their cultural and social needs

In 2017, the group plan to further develop the community action plan.

For more information, visit

http://sobus.org.uk/community/community-organising/

Sharon Tomlin,

Community Organiser