

Our Space (Deaf Community)

The Centre for Deaf Studies (at the Centre for Community Engagement, University of Sussex) has engaged with community, third sector and academic communities to create sustainable solutions to support Deaf people's health and well-being.

The products created by the Our Space project have included: the Sussex Deaf History website (reminiscence as therapy), a cultural event (community and cultural expression), workshops (knowledge transfer), and a Community of Practice (action research).

The dissemination phase of the project was designed to bring the conclusions of the project to a wider audience and to influence national policy in this area. It included:

1. Support for Deaf Diaspora event

The bid indicated that local community developments would be supported whereby the outputs of Our Space are encouraged to establish themselves independently. The Deaf Diaspora event is a spin off from the Deaf Culture Day which was organised in May 2010. The CoP provided expertise and on line resources to support the organising committee to establish the event. More information can be found here: http://www.sussexdeafhistory.org.uk/category_id_51.aspx

2. Support for a Social Enterprise

DeafCOG A group of professionals have come together to create a social enterprise to provide services to deaf people on individual payment (personalisation agenda). John Walker has been supporting the group to reach clear aims and make their first bid to the East Sussex council. The bid was not successful but the group is more committed to establishing the social enterprise.

3. Literature review on subjects associated to Deaf Space

Literature was collated around the themes expressed in the Our Space project and current Deaf Studies research. It provided an excellent opportunity to look outside of Deaf studies or Occupational Therapy and identify themes that support the work of Our Space project. It was identified that Bourdieu's 'Capital' was a motivator for the Deaf community to come together and develop opportunities. The activities provided the space for the community to explore social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital.

4. Deafcapital.blog.com

A new website created to flesh out the topics in an academic and narrative description of capital. It referred to notions of capital in actual events and news. The reactions from the viewers were gauged through Google statistics and a comment section. The three main areas of interest included the changing economics of Deaf people's sense of worth, especially in the current climate; the impact of technology that heighten or lower the worthiness of the Deaf community; and the creation of symbolic artefacts, such as a Deaf flag.

5. Journal article

John Walker is in the process of completing a journal article on Deaf Capital and will use the outcomes from the Our Space project to support this discussion. He aims for it to be published in the Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, published by Oxford University Press. As part of the process, he has held consultation meetings with each of the strands, including DeafCOG, Deaf Diaspora, Sussexdeafhistory.org.uk and the Our Space Community of Practice.

6. Relationship with Stephen Lloyd MP

John Walker met with Mr Lloyd. Mr Lloyd's interest was not so much on the academic or policy development but more to the practice of supporting community initiatives. It was more appropriate to support Mr Lloyd to communicate with the DeafCOG (sited in his constituency) and they have adopted him as their Patron.

Contact: John Walker – Project Lead J.Walker@sussex.ac.uk