

Notes from the BAME Disproportionality forum hosted by VAC held 1st July 2020

The following issues were highlighted by organisations during the discussion

Information Access

- Language barrier, lack of tech ability and ownership of smart phones or access to online appointments for GP.
- Many older service users did not have access to broadband, and could not afford it, which meant the use of laptops and tablets within the home was non-existent.
- Many service issues as to the use of Smartphones and technology.
- Sharon Gordon at WEP: offer free IT training to those who are digitally excluded because of poor IT skills when the centre reopens- advised organisations to remain updated via their newsletter.
<https://www.westeustonpartnership.org/about-us-2/newsletters/>
- Digital divide is not just an issue of providing the equipment. 70% of our over 60s don't have e mail and can't be supported via Zoom etc.
- With young people, it's about home conditions and access to WIFI as well as just having the equipment, especially in crowded living conditions.

Engagement between Camden and BAME organisations and communities

- Organisations would like to know which organisations are commissioned to work with BAME communities- the Council doesn't engage with the service users of, and grassroots organisations. Some organisations feel they offer information to Camden about their work but are ignored, which makes them feel demotivated.
- Census from 2011 ignored issues the BAME community and organisations raised, including the educational needs of adults as well as children and health inequalities. Issues Camden could've picked up on and didn't.
- Small grassroots charities are always placed on back burner so it's time for change. The BAME VCS Network needs to be better organised and prominent, as well as accessible means of contributing to the council's work, which there isn't a way to do at present due to Council's top-heavy structure.
- Old data from CINDEKX indicates that 10% of organisations in Camden are BAME organisations, when dealing with 40% of the population
- Council needs to engage BAME organisations when commissioning work. Pocket funding and short-term grant-based system for projects are not enough to ensure these organisations are sustainable. Commissioning need to reflect policy and decision making that reflects the socio-economic,

housing, education and health inequality of the BAME community and the actions taken by the council to address this

- The disproportionate impact on BAME communities, especially Somali children, is a major concern coming through the Cultural Advocacy Project, with potentially dire consequences in the short and long term.
- It is felt the bigger organisations get commissioned. Not the BAME-led ones. The funding pots for BAME are tiny and funding trickles down, which does not lead to change or empowerment.

Health and Well-Being

- It was stated natural food is too expensive for food parcels, which means a lack in meeting dietary requirements
- Many residents do not have access to outdoor space or public/ appropriate outdoor spaces nearby.
- Some service users clothing does not allow for much natural absorption of sunlight; therefore, Vitamin D supplementation is recommended by NHS.
- A final point on health impact from Healthwatch: As lockdown starts to ease, BAME residents in our survey are more likely to report anxiety about the risks associated with the changing government guidelines. On-going dialogue between the NHS, council and grassroots groups is going to be essential to ensuring we minimise the disproportionate impact of Covid-19. Particularly understanding health seeking behaviours.
- Somers Town CCG previously provided the interpreter sessions and it was reported that these were removed without notice on 30.06.20- this needs looking into as elderly Bangladeshi are now trapped in their home.
- Organisations have been asking for HealthWatch Camden to make the health survey accessible, - they suggested a paper form translated in Sylheti and Somali with reply stamped envelopes and are still awaiting a response. This survey cannot be communicated in the current online format.
- Organisations have received feedback from Carers who are worried about the end of lockdown and exposing those they care for to COVID-19; carers=unpaid carers/family/friends.

Suggestions for themes approaches to future meetings

- VAC (or Healthwatch) could facilitate another specific conversation around health seeking behaviours.
- For real change things need be done differently. That power is shared more equally, that people can take part meaningfully in decision making processes where people feel heard and involved in planning and that things change as a result in a way where people notice that. It means taking time to work in different ways and to different timeframes and in different settings.