

## Report from BME consultation event, January 2008

Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership held three BME consultation events in Rugby, Nuneaton & Bedworth and Warwick District.

The focus groups concentrated on five key areas:-

1. Mental Capacity Act Information
2. Barriers and Issues of Community Concern
3. Capacitybuilding and Funding
4. Scrutiny / Advisory Role of Forums
5. Communication

WREP examined how an effective approach to consultation and developmental opportunities is about enabling BME individuals and organisations to both progress their skills and support the development and sustainable growth of the services they provide, while at the same time broadening their opportunities. The workshop(s) also included examination of key workforce development issues and priorities for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people.

### Mental Capacity Act

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Participants discussed that the BME community needed to be better educated regarding mental health and associated health matters affecting specific communities. It is essential that information be clear and directive. There is a perception that because BME communities are not accessing services or asking for information than they do not need it. Information gathered at the forum suggested that the information be disseminated into other languages and for relevant contacts to be listed at the back of the Mental Capacity Act booklets. Mental health especially may be perceived as a stigma in some communities and so therefore services should be designed with cultural sensitivity in mind.

Individuals at the forum expressed there is a lack of specific support, especially for the elderly members of the community in the area of Mental Health and especially at George Eliot Hospital where they have found it difficult to access interpretation and translation services.

### Summary

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1. Information to be disseminated into other languages and promoted locally.
2. Mental Health support services are not being accessed by BME communities in the initial stages of development and diagnosis.
3. Mental Health issues can be perceived as a stigma within BME communities. Services to be culturally sensitive to a variety of needs.

4. There has been a lack of support in this area and especially within the elderly BME community.
5. To ensure better communication within the education sector regarding mental health issues.
6. Key contacts to be listed at the back of the Mental Capacity Act booklet.

## **Barriers and Issues of Community Concern**

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One of the main barriers has been the lack of easily available and affordable translation and interpretation services across Warwickshire<sup>1</sup>. Forum participants reiterated anecdotal evidence and told of various complications to accessing healthcare and other services. This was especially pertinent where the individual concerned was unable to speak English. In Nuneaton the community were angry at the withdrawal of the Interpreting & Translation service at George Eliot Hospital that had been in place for eight years. This decision was made with no prior consultation with local BME communities. Even though a petition was lodged in regards to this matter by the Nuneaton Muslim Women's Group they received no acknowledgement or correspondence from the PCT.

A large proportion of forum participants in all three areas expressed that it was difficult to access services due to a lack of information and because of cultural, religious and language barriers. The perception is that services are not culturally sensitive and are not supportive to BME health and other needs. There was a concern in the Warwick district forum that social welfare should take into consideration the cultural and ethnic background of clients and especially of BME elderly people who find it incredibly hard to access services without the support of bilingual workers and outreach staff. It was expressed at the Rugby forum that many elderly parents are left alone with little or no support. Elderly people's homes are not seen as culturally sensitive and in tune to community needs and the BME elderly community discussed that they were reluctant to go into nursing homes or day care. Many of them also felt quite isolated and were not aware of the wide range of service provision open to them. Forum participants expressed that the traditional extended family was giving way to elderly individuals being placed at greater risk when living alone. As an action point it was suggested that Independent research be carried out on this section of the community to ensure how services are being provided and if additional resources are required.

Participants at Warwick forum felt that some 'local authorities' were not interested in BME community activities and felt that there were some communication barriers that existed between local organisations and public agencies. Many of the organisations were not aware of projects and initiatives by public agencies that were taking place across Warwickshire. Individuals wished there was a wider dissemination of information to ensure small and local based organisations are aware of events and

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<sup>1</sup> Update 1. – Page 6

projects taking place in their community. Participants did feel that the IAG played a crucial role in bridging communication gaps and ensuring community individuals were able to contribute to decisions being made.

Individuals at all forums felt that there was little knowledge and understanding of other cultures living and working in Warwickshire. They wanted events regarding health, education etc to include all minority ethnic communities rather than focusing on particular communities, for example the new and emerging community needs and issues.

There has been conflict between youth groups based in Nuneaton, most notably that there is a lack of volunteers and staff supporting these groups. Young people wanted support to be regular and sustainable. At present there is no youth group in Nuneaton catering for girls<sup>2</sup>. Previous problems at the group have been due to the *Crescent Youth Club* causing issues and problems within the girls group.

Participants at the Nuneaton and Warwick district forum expressed concern that multiple language skills are not valued in schools. Schools are offering European languages such as French and German at GCSE level rather than languages already spoken by children such as Portuguese and Polish. Participants felt there was a negative pull factor between educational achievement and the loss of individual culture, heritage and language. There is also a lack of support and accreditation for activities that young people are involved in outside of school hours.

## Summary

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1. Young people want to have a group where they can meet and get involved in local activities. Culture and faith has been identified as a minor barrier to participation as some young people from minority ethnic backgrounds are involved in faith and religious evening activities e.g. attendance at Mosque.
2. Identifying barriers within communities should combine a 'partnership approach' and be part of the cultural ethos of organisations.
3. Individuals at all forums felt that there was little knowledge and understanding of other cultures living and working in Warwickshire.
4. To respect the existing bilingual skills of BME young people at school.
5. Sustainable support for elderly BME individuals to be provided.

## Capacitybuilding and Funding

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The WREP Forums identified gaps in infrastructure capacity in BME Voluntary and Community organisations across Warwickshire. This has been major issue for community groups across the three urban areas and especially in the Warwick

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<sup>2</sup> Update 2. Page 6

District and Rugby area<sup>3</sup> where organisations have found it increasingly difficult to secure and apply for funds.

The main barriers to development were identified as:

- Skills shortage
- Inadequate premises and/or equipment
- Fundraising
- Funding information
- Funding support and advice
- Securing public and advice
- How to complete funding applications

Over the last 10 years there has been a lack of provision to accommodate the needs of the Sikh community in Rugby. A plan to extend the Sikh community organisation has been rejected. Discussions have occurred with Rugby CVS and Rugby Borough Council<sup>4</sup>.

## Summary

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1. To develop organisational sustainability through staff and volunteers.
2. Encourage partnership work with organisations.
3. Support a funding system which does not endorse negative competition for resources.

## Scrutiny / Advisory Role of Forums

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Participants are wary of getting involved as they are unsure of which particular role or issue they would get involved with. Information should be available in a variety of formats e.g. workshops, one-to-one support, peer group support etc.

There was a suggestion to provide incentives to support individuals to volunteer in this role as participants were worried about having enough knowledge in the relevant thematic subject. Participants however would like to be empowered and given support to understand the work of public agencies and to work with them to support issues on equality and diversity.

There is a need to map the current mechanisms in place to avoid duplication. It would be beneficial for WREP to play a role in setting up a BME hub to ensure that participants understand their role and are representative of community views and members. The hub would endeavour to include BME representatives who are not just the 'usual suspects'.

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<sup>3</sup> Update 3. Page 6

<sup>4</sup> Update 4, Page 6

WREP and Warwickshire Police have agreed to discuss WREP becoming permanent members of the community confidence group<sup>5</sup>.

Participants raised concerns that small BME organisations could be discriminated against because they did not have the resources to engage fully in public sector consultation exercises. There was a perception that funders preferred to deal with “known” organisations which were tried and tested in their capacity to deliver. Smaller BME organisations need to encourage funders to work with smaller organisations to grow capacity and work in partnership with other organisations to ensure better delivery of outcome objectives.

## Summary

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1. Increase BME engagement in scrutiny / advisory role panels.
2. WREP to support the development of a BME hub to participate in public agency scrutiny.

## Communication

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Some services, are able to provide an interpretation and translation service and will request individuals to bring along a family member or friend. This can be difficult for individuals if the nature of their inquiry is confidential. This issue was picked especially in Warwick District and the N & B forum.

Trust and confidence needs to be built within communities and ad hoc visits are not enough. Communities expressed that they can be accessed through cultural media channels, radio and newspapers. Individuals felt that a booklet of community organisations should be compiled across the five districts. A way to break down barriers between public agencies and communities is to provide regular feedback to communities. Another way of reaching isolated members of the community is through working with voluntary and community organisations. Community individuals expressed that it would be positive thing to have inter-community relations between Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims and that this would also encourage knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

To encourage people from different backgrounds to learn English, free ESOL classes should be provided.

## Summary

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1. BME communities to be involved in consultation.
2. Interpretation and translation services to be provided when required.
3. BME communities to interact with each other

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<sup>5</sup> Update 5, Page 6

## Recommendations

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1. WREP agreed to facilitate a meeting between community individuals in N & B and Warwickshire PCT.
2. Promote community cohesion from partnership working amongst all ethnic groups.
3. WREP to develop leading role in the support and set up of the scrutiny / advisory panels.

## Updates

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1. The Interpretation and Translation meeting took place at Nuneaton Town Hall on the 26<sup>th</sup> February at 6pm. Approximately 40 members of the community attended the meeting. A mix of representatives from a wide variety of communities were present. A report of the issues and concerns raised by the community was written and presented to the NHS Equality and Diversity Meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2008.
2. WREP supported with the reestablishment of the girls group in Nuneaton with the recruitment of a sessional worker and relocation of premises. The group have now met three times and have a regular youth worker linked to support their group.
3. A meeting was facilitated between Warwickshire County Council and local community organisations at Warwickshire College on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008 regarding the Race Equality Budget that organisations can apply to funds for. It was agreed for WREP to sit on the board alongside the council to decide where funds would be allocated. It was also decided that the REB would remain in place and that more support and feedback would be given to organisations during the application process.
4. A meeting between the Sikh community in Rugby and WREP has resulted in the decision of a feasibility study to be carried out to ensure provision is made available to this section of the community. WREP has been involved in these discussions over a number of months and have supported the organisation to voice their issues and concerns to the borough council.
5. This is in the discussion process. WREP and Warwickshire Police are in the process of agreeing to WREP becoming permanent members of the community confidence group.

Minutes, reports, papers and presentation materials concerning the above updates are available on request.

## Appendix

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### Appendix 1

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Feedback of key points from WREP Forum - July 2007
  - Scrutiny Role of Forums
  - Public Agencies work on BME initiatives
  - Barriers to community cohesion
  - Young People engagement
3. Focus Groups
  - i. Mental Capacity Act Information
  - ii. Barriers / Issues / Concerns
  - iii. Funding / Building Capacity of BME organisations
  - iv. Scrutiny Role
  - v. Communication
4. Feedback from Focus Groups
5. Close of meeting

## **Appendix 2**



The poster is divided into several sections. At the top left, it reads 'WARWICKSHIRE RACE EQUALITY PARTNERSHIP—PROMOTING EQUALITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP'. Below this is a grid of 16 colorful icons representing various groups and issues. To the right of the icons, the text reads 'WREP BME CONSULTATION FORUM'. Below the title, the location and date are listed: 'Large Conference Room, Rugby Centre, Warwickshire College, Lower Hillmorton Road. CV21 3QS Wednesday 23rd January 2008 6.00pm–8.00pm'. At the bottom left, contact information for WREP is provided. At the bottom right, there is a diagram of concentric circles representing stakeholder levels: Public, Voluntary & Community Sector, Stakeholders, and Public Agencies. The WREP logo is also present in the bottom right corner.

**WARWICKSHIRE RACE EQUALITY PARTNERSHIP—PROMOTING EQUALITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP**

**WREP BME CONSULTATION FORUM**

Large Conference Room, Rugby Centre, Warwickshire College, Lower Hillmorton Road. CV21 3QS  
Wednesday 23rd January 2008  
6.00pm–8.00pm

Public  
Voluntary & Community Sector  
Stakeholders  
Public Agencies

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