

BME (Black and Minority Ethnic Community) Consultation Forum

The BME Consultation Forum is a formal bridging structure – a collaborative partnership between statutory, voluntary and BME community organisations - that aims to improve public services and reduce inequalities for BME communities and individuals living and working in Warwickshire.

It works by bringing together different individuals, groups and organisations from the statutory and community sectors who are encouraged to attend and participate in workshop discussions.

The Forum is located within WREP's internal strategic structures. It operates as a sustainable mechanism for dialogue and communication and as a champion of innovative and effective methods of collaborative community engagement and public service change management. The Forum is founded on a commitment from all agencies to listen to BME communities' experience of services and to find ways of improving services to BME communities. Through work within and beyond the Forum, the BME communities in Warwickshire and other statutory and voluntary organisations share responsibility for achieving the aims and objectives of the Forum.

Aims and Objectives

The Forum(s) aims both to empower communities to engage effectively in debate with the public agencies and to provide a conduit for statutory services to hear, understand and respond adequately to the needs of BME communities. The BME Consultation Forum focuses both on the strategic policy issues and initiatives within public services and on the grassroots issues and concerns of the diverse BME communities in the area.

The aims of the BME Consultation Forum are to:

- Ensure that the needs, views and experiences of BME residents have been addressed effectively and robustly in public service developments and proposals for change.
- Identify areas of service review and development with a view to developing specific pieces of work and/or task groups focused upon them.
- Work closely with other statutory and voluntary organisations to ensure collaboration, sharing of information, joint work and partnership development, and to work in partnership with existing forums, networks and sub-groups relating to health and social care issues.
- Work with Public Agencies and other professional bodies and academic institutions to encourage further research and development on BME community needs and changes in BME population and migration patterns.

- Provide a model of good practice in partnership working between the statutory sector and BME communities.
- Represent BME communities in the sector and statutory sector forums and networks.
- Engage with BME communities in Warwickshire to assess and support individual support needs in health, community safety, education and local services

WREP have worked hard in building confidence and rapport between organisations and groups through developing communication and support between the Forum participants and public agencies. This has been to develop and initiate knowledge and an understanding of the diverse range of BME communities in Warwickshire and to be responsive to the different priorities and cultures of statutory authorities.

The Forums were held in Rugby, Nuneaton & Bedworth and Leamington Spa and took place in the urban areas of Warwickshire in response to the needs and location of BME communities. Individuals from the rural areas were encouraged to attend Forums and were supported to do this. The Forums identify particular issues and services of concern or projects which are working in these areas. We actively facilitate the involvement of BME Forum members in planning processes and identifying areas of good practice in developing and enabling BME groups to engage in policy issues related to planning, equality impact assessments and reviewing services.

Health

Problems about accessing health services were mentioned by 10 organisations and in particular by new and emerging communities such as the Polish and Portuguese. Interpretation and translation services are a necessary and important service delivery across the county but needs to be made uniform and easily accessible for BME communities. However, overcoming the language barrier cannot be dealt with in isolation of the other aspects of access to services, i.e. interaction with GPs and registration. The fact that access is still a major health issue to so many BME communities' shows that without adopting a holistic approach to this issue, real change will remain out of reach.

Mental health and elderly wellbeing is the most pressing health concern that was raised at the forums. Other health concerns include diabetes, high blood pressure, substance misuse and heart disease.

Lack of interpreting services has been an ongoing issue for BME communities and can provide problems for individuals in trying to access services. was the single most important access issue.

Summary

Aims and objectives

To encourage attendance of BME communities and identify BME individuals and organisations who have not participated in BME consultation forum. To obtain the perceptions of BME organisations regarding the issues that concern their communities.

Methodology

Over forty groups attended the three urban Forums. Participants from rural areas were invited to attend.

Consultations

Our results showed that many organisations were confused by the word 'consultation'. We need to make clear what the difference is between information giving sessions and consultation.

Recommendations

- Ensure the priorities of BME communities, especially regarding access to services, are properly catered for when designing and delivering information and awareness sessions.
- Develop structures for feeding back and demonstrate that participation in consultation influences policies and decision-making.
- Inform the community about all outcomes of consultation(s) and the effect on local services.
- Proactively engage with Community-based groups and organisations as for many BME communities their community-based group is their gateway to accessing public services.
- Support BME organisations to hold a BME forum to actively support and develop community cohesion initiatives.

Engagement

The BME Consultation Forums have been successful in reaching out to BME communities in Warwickshire. However, there are some communities who have not been sufficiently involved in the Forum activities. WREP are collating appropriate data with which we can widen participation.

West Indian Community
South Indian Community
Nepalese Community

Reasons for not participating

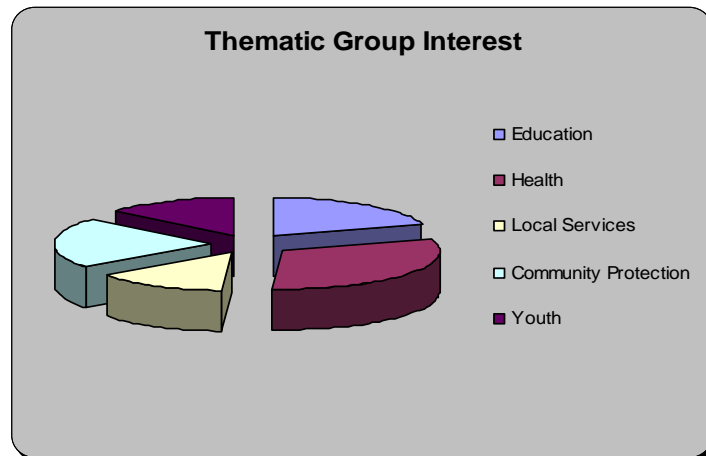
The organisations who did not attend the forums said they did not have the capacity to attend (including lack of staff, time and funding), there was a lack of interest in engaging and also because they lacked the necessary information. A

number of organisations said it was due to a lack of resources and could not see the benefits of participating in the forum(s) and a few gave other reasons.

Barriers to involvement

- Lack of confidence
- Lack of Interest from the community/ Privacy issues
- Lack of materials
- Lack of time
- Lack of staff
- Lack of training
- Language barrier
- Limited or no understanding of subject matter

Local Participants were interested in supporting and being involved in subject areas listed below.



Rugby Forum

Locality Agenda (WCC)

Large strategic based grants are available to support community groups and organisations of up to £7,000. Community organisations are resolute that they need to be informed of all funding streams available and also to be supported through the application process, for example recognising the criteria in applying for funds. Support should be available on a personal one-to-one basis.

The locality agenda should focus on engaging marginalised communities to participate in local issues and concerns. Areas of engagement include crime hot spots, leisure activities for older people, travel to health clinics, allotments, age discrimination and social outings.

The Council may consider visiting schools to explain and distribute information about the locality agenda in order to engage and receive input from young people living in the locality areas.

It is important to raise awareness amongst lead organisations such as Local Skills Council and local authorities to develop and support community organisations to deliver their targets and fund resources that support equalities. Information should be distributed to BME elders on how and where to access services appropriate to their needs. A lot more funding and culturally sensitive services should be available to this community including training opportunities for senior citizens.

Young People

There was a discussion of how a balance between younger and older people can be offset. For example in Stratford District Council there is an intergenerational project which has successfully brought together people of varying ages.

Young people discussed how they wished to be involved in the BME Youth Council and how it was important that they had their own forum where they could discuss issues pertinent to them. Young people believed that different communities had issues separate to those of other communities and young people and strongly felt they were not taken seriously. The Youth Council has to be local and operate on a monthly basis. It is important that an external facilitator support the running of the group on an independent basis. This would ensure that information and knowledge regarding external initiatives and projects would be shared.

This forum would also support the Recording and Reporting of the Racist Incident Protocol, for example if there is a problem in school than this would be dealt with immediately and effectively. The group suggested that Recording Points could be positioned in youth centres and clubs. Outside of schools young people would lodge a complaint at the Police station if they felt it was serious enough. However minor issues were not recorded anywhere and young people did not know who to turn to with issues that were not criminal in nature. Young people lacked confidence to report incidents in school.

BME role models need to be identified and meetings organised between the Youth Council and local role models.

Reporting and Recording of Racist Incidents Protocol (WREP)

Reporting Points need to be publicised a lot more and this will happen as the programme goes live in October. Current and additional reporting points should be placed and made available on the WREP website. *The Indian Association* on Edward Street expressed an interest in becoming a reporting point (WREP will talk to the Association). There was a suggestion that reporting could also be done online, for example through Facebook. The Promotion of the Protocol should also take place through the media, local press, the radio and newspapers. In addition recording forms are to be translated into other languages (primarily Polish).

The community have felt that the police are not effective in supporting community safety issues, for example a member of the community received literature from the *BNP* and was afraid to leave their home. The community are worried that *BNP* councillors will single out BME individuals in the area. There have also been a number of incidents which involve knife crime in the area and in particular a stabbing which occurred in the Polish community. In Rugby there is a need for widespread understanding of the new & emerging community and settled communities by professional and support workers and public and voluntary agencies. However integration has occurred between communities through specific community organisations in Rugby. Participants felt that the Police Community Support Officers should work in pairs and have greater presence in the community. They should also be awarded more powers. CCTV should be considered in specific areas.

Street crime and violence has increased and the community feels less safe in the evenings. The perception is that crimes are reported to the police but nothing is done, for example a few months ago men in a white van tried to kidnap a young child who managed to escape. This was reported to the police who couldn't do anything. The local school informed parents. The van appeared back in the area a few months later.

There should also be procedures in place where Reporting Points are protected case of attacks. Again the protocol should be put into schools as more often than not teachers and schools do not have time to deal with cases.

A lot more guidance is required to support community individuals to understand how the judiciary system works, for example *Stop & Search*. There is no minimum age for *Stop & Search*. Participants did not realise this and feel that people do not fully understand their rights. *Stop & Search* leaflets should be circulated around Rugby. At times Indian people have been stereotyped as 'Muslim terrorists' and have been stopped and searched. The media and the general population do not know the difference between Asian groups and communities. People are simply branded as terrorists because they are Asian. A positive measure has been where schools have introduced a policy which has improved the situation for Asian young people at school. Muslims and Indians can be at odds on occasions but this is primarily because of background historical reasons.

Education

School Governors should be recruited from the BME community and this should include race awareness and equality training for all Governors. Teachers should also have integrated and appropriate equality and diversity training. Children should be taught about different cultures and religions to negate stereotypes.

It is also felt that teachers are afraid of Black boys and tend to streamline them into Sport Institutes rather than core academic subjects such as Maths and English. A greater awareness is also required around dyslexia and dyspraxia for young people from BME communities.

It is felt that the school system fails its young people and do not provide adequate support when problems occur. As each school has their own individual policies regarding race crime and bullying there is no central system to respond to racial discrimination issues. Again it is felt that schools tend to focus more on bullying. When young people express their problems to teachers, many do not receive a response and therefore have to live with their problems. The Education system should have parent advisors who can give advice to parents in topics such as school selection etc. Schools should be involved in the reporting process.

There are a number of Young people in Rugby who wish to take classes in their own language and do not wish to lose their culture or identity. Teaching a language can be time consuming and very difficult to recruit volunteer teachers.

There has been a successful intake in adult sewing classes, ESOL, cooking and citizenship classes. However a lack of funding for Adult Education has had an adverse effect on BME communities and has stopped some groups providing courses to get people back into education. There should be concessions for community groups in accessing course at colleges.

Local Concerns

Community organisations still require a lot more resources for community development initiatives and for communities to become healthier and stronger. Funds are especially required for health based projects and participants discussed how Warwickshire PCT should be working with the voluntary sector on health based activities for communities.

There is a lack of parking in urban areas and the removal of 'cattle market' car park.

The prescription service which delivers medicines to the elderly has improved. The community should be informed of who to complain to about health and welfare issues.

Nuneaton & Bedworth Forum Locality Agenda (WCC)

There are 33 Safer Neighbourhood Teams across Warwickshire and seven locality panels in Nuneaton & Bedworth. The Council and the Police are working more closely with communities in talking and listening to provide better services to meet the needs of the community.

The locality agenda will aim to create tailor made services which meet the needs of individual communities. Partnership working will ensure that all community voices are heard. The structure will commence in the Autumn and will be set up with a local based team for each area. The Community Cohesion Strategy also needs to promote positive messages to all communities.

A large proportion of people do not know what the term 'BME' means.

Reporting and Recording of Racist Incidents Protocol (WREP)

The majority of Indian people on Edward Street are abused without reason, for example every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening there are problems in the area including eggs being thrown at houses. Individuals are also causing trouble in the area and are coming from different localities. There is also the perception that knife crime is quite serious in the area.

People are more comfortable speaking to someone in their own language. A lot more support is also needed to boost confidence in women and for them to take an active part in community safety initiatives. Language and communication is also an issue and participants expressed that they would like Gujarati or Urdu speakers.

Community participants are also worried that the BNP party are becoming more visible in the area through leaflet distribution and organised events.

Education

Schools have a duty to help young people yet young people distrust schools as they do not believe situations and issues are resolved. As young people do not wish to escalate difficult situations many complaints are left open. Without support young people will not complain. Young people are not empowered and are afraid to complain in case they are thrown off a course, for example.

Young people still experience the "Why are those Asian kids hanging out in the playground together" syndrome. Yet nothing is said when white pupils 'hang about' together. More resources should be put into working with young people.

The Polish community suffers from a lack of facilities. They wish to have access to schools for extra-curricular activities including the wish to hold a conference. They wish this Saturday school to help Polish young people keep up to date on their Polish language, history, identity and culture. They have received funding and will hold the Saturday school once a month.

There is a lack of reporting because pupils are afraid to lodge racist or discrimination incidents. It is felt that staff and young people do not know what their school policies say. There is a brief talk about this in the first year of high

school. Young people are mentored by older pupils at high school but can be intimidated at having to approach them if they have any issues. Some of the older pupils only offer this service in order to look good rather than to help.

Staff and young people need to be made aware of policies and actions that need to be taken and all policies need to be implemented. A surgery service held by a knowledgeable person on school premises could be a possibility in order to report racist issues.

WREP should also visit schools in order to promote themselves and the services which we offer. Racism has a different kind of stigma in schools and there is the perception that campaigns against bullying are better promoted. Teachers need to be informed about racism so they do not confuse it with bullying. Young people at the forum told that conversations centring around racism are ignored by teachers, for example one attendee explained there was an incident involving a white male pupil promoting the BNP in front of an Asian female.

No-one at school takes note of Asian girl issues, i.e. if an Asian girl is removed from school and married off.

Adult Education classes should be located where BME communities can have easy access to them. Outreach provision has worked quite well. However a lot of the outreach provision requires the filling in of enormous amounts of paperwork.

Edward Street Day Centre provides ESOL classes and the *Nuneaton Women's Multicultural Resource Centre* also provides ESOL, computer classes and help in filling in CV's etc.

It is important in some cultures for women to be taught by women who recognise their religion and culture. There is a need therefore to train more diverse tutors from BME groups so students can easily access information, learning and resources.

Local Concerns

Reporting and Recording of Racist Incidents Protocol (WREP)

Training for Reporting Point staff will take place from September 2008. The launch will consist of posters, press releases, translated documentation and in-depth training.

At the moment Advice Sessions are held by WREP in Nuneaton at Edward Street Day Centre and Nuneaton Women's Multicultural Resource Centre. These are held on a monthly basis.

Young people are not aware of where to go to report incidents and expressed that Youth Centres are ideally placed to be involved in the reporting process. Park House Youth Centre were mentioned to bring on board as a reporting point.

Incidents

1. At 12.30pm two men with golf clubs hit 4/5 cars and homes which were situated on the side streets off Edward Street. The Police arrived 2½ hours later and were informed about the situation. Nobody was caught.
2. Someone knocked on the front door of a house in Bermuda Road. Jewellery was stolen. Following this stolen jewellery was being sold on Edward Street. A lady was asked if she could buy the jewellery. The lady was frightened.
3. There are problems with alcohol on Edward Street which is especially distinct at the weekends. People drinking on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening are creating more noise.
4. Eggs from the mobile fish and chip van on Edward Street have been thrown at people. Eggs or drink cartons have also been thrown on cars. No-one is sure of the age of the people who are doing this. The windows of the Edward Street Day Centre have had eggs thrown at them.
5. A driver squeezed fairy liquid on a pedestrian's face.
6. An individual's car has been stolen three times.
7. A white male is advertising door to door and will remain at the door talking for as long as possible. This has been especially disturbing for the elderly people.

The Police cannot help if they do not know who is throwing eggs etc. These problems have become worse over the past 5 years. Participants felt that it would be useful to place cameras on Edward Street. Definite action is needed and action needs to be taken against the perpetrators. One of the participants feels that there are racist undertones to these incidents.

Warwick District

Locality Agenda (WCC)

The Locality Agenda due to commence in October 2008 will develop localised initiatives. Community participants felt that there was a lack of communication and 'community' in the district. Unless you already belong to a group/organisation there is minimal participation in community cohesion initiatives. There is £100,000 of funds available to each district with £400,000 for Nuneaton & Bedworth from the *Narrowing the Gap* fund. The Warwick Partnership covers three areas: Health & Inequalities; Affordable Housing and Employment.

The Warwick Area Committee also provides a Community Development Fund of £39,840 which is available from the 1st September. The deadline for funding proposals is the 10th October 2008. Other funds include a small grants scheme with funds of up to £18,000. This is available from Warwick District Council. The upper limit for a project is £2,000 and the deadline is the end of September.

Sustainable support is becoming essentially required for BME ethnic groups and communities to access.

Employers are taking advantage and exploiting BME workers, for example by paying low wages. It was felt that employers should offer language classes to their employees. There are also Afghan individuals (old and young) who are working on local farms. However when manufacturing jobs were available employees did not need to speak English although it is worthwhile understanding the terms and conditions of your employment.

There is discrimination in the workplace and employees face difficulties with their supervisors because of the language barrier. Organisations such as *Welcome Break* who provide cleaning have low paid employees whose money is taken from them to provide uniforms. Need to know where people are in order to engage with them. Service delivery also needs to improve with greater information dissemination into communities and organisations working with BME individuals

Reporting and Recording of Racist Incidents Protocol (WREP)

Local Concerns

Neighbourhood problems are quite prominent in Sydenham with noise being highlighted as the worst culprit.

The Portuguese community have difficulties in engaging with public and voluntary agencies because of language and cultural barriers. It is good practice for English Language classes to be made freely available for this community. It is a stigma that the community have to bear when they are unable to easily communicate in the workplace and in requesting information and advice. There are no Polish Community Centres in Stratford which can make it difficult for individuals to link into mainstream provision and seek advice and guidance. Support agencies need to recognise that communities have different needs and issues especially the Portuguese and Polish community.

Young people are feeling alienated and require additional support in accessing services. There is a perception that 'authorities' are to blame for negative issues concerning young people. There is very little happening for young BME people in Stratford.

The workshop discussed having a Diversity / Unity event where a 'committee' could be made up from different sections of the community. It would create an environment and build support networks for people living in the locality.

There are no female focused organisations or groups in Warwick District.

Education

There should be extra funding at schools to support children with English language difficulties. In Warwick Gates there is a lack of proper schools and not enough school places. Organisations should go into schools to address issues in the area.

There should be free courses for English (ESOL) and intensive courses in speaking English. BME people should also be encouraged to become school governors.

Organisations

Rugby

Rugby Sikh Community Association
Sikh Social & Welfare Association
Benn Partnership Centre
West Indian Association
Gujarati Cultural Association
Rugby Disability Forum
The Rainbow Over Fifty Club
West Indian Caribbean Drummers
Rugby District TUC
WREP Director
West Midlands Faiths Forum
New Bilton Community Association
Milaap Women's Association
Rugby West Indian Community
Rugby Centre for Indian Classical Music

Warwick District

Hindu Samaj
Senior Citizens Activity Group
Baha'i Community
Portuguese Community
The Parenting Project
West Indian Group
Ahmadiyya Association
Elderly Asian Men's Group

Sydni Centre
Wise Up Group
Warwick District Faiths Forum
Bromford Support
Community Alcohol Service
Indian Workers Organisation

Nuneaton & Bedworth

Crescent Youth Association
Youth 7 Community Service
Edward Street Day Centre
Nasz Dom
Nuneaton Girls Group