



Warwickshire Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Community Consultation Forum Report

October 2011

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Introduction

WREP's BME Consultation Forums were held on the following dates and venues:

- Warwick and Stratford District forum – 27th September 2011, Bath Place Community Venture, Leamington Spa.
- Rugby forum - 4th October 2011 at the Rugby College, Rugby.
- Nuneaton & Bedworth / North Warwickshire forum – 11th October 2011, Shree Hindu Gujarati Samaj Centre (S.H.G.S), Nuneaton.

The four themes discussed at the forums were:

1. Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership (WREP) – “Local issues”
2. Warwickshire Police – “Burglaries within the Asian Community”
3. Warwickshire County Council – ‘Assessment & Care Management”
4. Warwickshire County Council Youth Service – “Transforming Services for Young People”, (Update)

The ‘local issues’ theme at the consultation forum is one of the key platforms for us to gain an understanding of issues that BME communities are currently facing. Issues identified from the forums are then addressed by WREP officers through an action plan. This is discussed in further detail below.

In addition to the four themes discussed there were a range of additional speakers who fed back from the previous consultation forum and agencies that provided information on current issues.

The Way Forward

Information gathered from WREP's consultation forums together with issues identified from WREP's community engagement events and visits are added to WREP action plans that are used to address individual issues. The action plan feeds into community partnership teams, community area forums, and specific issues will be fed into the relevant area or agency to address. The active use of the action plan allows WREP to keep track of issues raised and consequently feed back the outcomes/progress of the issues at consultation forums and to individuals.

Issues identified by WREP feed into the action plan in four areas:

- Safer Communities
- Health & Well Being
- Housing
- Economy, Skills & Employment

These four areas are in line with many of the Community Area Strategies. This allows WREP to effectively communicate the issues with the area teams in order to get the issues addressed.

The comments in this report are direct quotes and questions expressed by participants at WREP's consultation forum workshop sessions and some of the responses given by the workshop facilitators.

WREP – “Local Issues”. Facilitated by Suleman Dadabhai, (Community Engagement Advisor) & Doreen Wallace, (Administration Officer).

Warwick & Stratford District Forum

Safer Communities

- People are upset about the robberies of Asian gold. They wish the Police to visit their communities to let them know what is happening, how they are addressing this situation and what the communities should do. The perception is that burglars are watching people’s homes and targeting them when they leave the house, some are pretending to be e.g. the Gas man, in order to gain access to homes. This situation is causing fear, stress and illness in the communities. People have been told not to wear gold, which is a problem for the elderly who have been brought up to show their gold. There is a communication issue between the communities and the Police.
- There is crime in the area which is not reported to the Police because the victims are afraid to do so.

Health & Wellbeing

- The Mental Health Service felt that depression could be slowed down if people did voluntary or part time work.

Housing

- There is a lot of noise at Ashton Court, Lillington, Leamington Spa, from drunken people in the flats and the constant ringing of door bells. The lift is dirty with cans and urine. The flats are WDC Council flats yet they do not come often to clean them. There are also wind turbines on the top of the building which make a lot of noise during the day and disturb people who work shifts.
- A gentleman lives on the corner of a street which leads onto the main road. He finds it hard to take his car from the driveway onto the road. He wishes to know if the Council will consider adding traffic lights because of the potential for accidents. The Corner is on Avenue Road on the left hand side just before the railway bridge.

Economy, Skills & Employment

- There is concern in the community regarding the shutting down of Youth centres and cuts in the Youth Service.

- Debt issues have increased as many people have lost their jobs. The Stratford District job market is small and many shops and businesses are closing. Big stores, such as Tesco, are opening in the area and taking the trade from smaller businesses that eventually close down.
- Highly educated young people leave university cannot find a job and may follow a path into crime.
- Some organisations are finding it hard to reach BME communities in Stratford. It was felt that there is a need to reinitiate the missing link between Stratford organisations and the BME communities with help from WREP. Junaid Hussain could meet with Dave Webb to discuss regular meetings with Junaid and the Area Teams to discuss different themes in Stratford.
- The Terrence Higgins Trust work with HIV people. They are looking at ways to inform BME groups about their services. They will be holding an open event soon and are looking for contacts from the BME communities to invite.
- Orbit is looking for a way to get their message to and engage with BME communities. It was suggested that WREP could distribute this information through its website and possibly its newsletter.
- There is a weekly radio show for Polish people on Friday nights where information can be disseminated.

Rugby Forum

Safer Communities

- There is no Neighbour Watch on Abbey Street. A family experienced a number of burglaries. The 1st one took place 6 weeks ago and the last on Thursday 6th October 2011. In one case it was over an hour before the Police responded to a telephone from the family. Some burglars pretend to be window cleaners etc., and if they receive no response after knocking on the door they break in. There is no Police presence in the area despite people giving the same description of the perpetrators and the Police knowing the person but not following up. This could lead to vigilantism. There are not enough actions from the Police and they

tell you what you want to hear. The law abiding residents should be protected by the Police. This problem has been going on for weeks.

- People do not wish to leave their homes on Grosvenor Road or stay out late in case their homes are broken into. It was felt that more Community Police should be on the streets.
- Communities are worried about the reduction of funding to WREP.
- In New Bilton last year new families moved into the area and their kids created havoc. The Police moved the family out of the area. Now people are looking out for each other, there is Neighbourhood Watch and crime has reduced.
- There is an issue with substance users who live in the Brownsover flats at Turpin House and Siddaway House. They are being subject to underground crime by gangs. They do not feel that they can go to the police about these violent assaults. They cannot recover without cameras, security etc., as witnesses to their attacks so that these can be stopped.
- A gentleman in the Jubilee Street area reported troublemaker kids to the Police 2 years ago. One of the kids then threw a brick through his window. A while ago kids have also removed the bark from 10 trees that the Council put up which has caused them to die.
- In the Benn Ward there is a litter problem with fly tipping in the back roads and alleys between Bath Street and Murray Road. The Council say this has nothing to do with them as it is private property. This is an on-going problem.
- In the Newbold Ward the bin men have not put their bins back in the right places which has restricted pushchair and wheelchair access on the pavements.
- People have been parking cars on Caldecott Road preventing wheelchair access.
- The closing down of youth centres has made young people feel unsafe.
- Some people have broken into the Bath Street sheltered accommodation. Cameras are needed in this area.

- The Benn Partnership Centre has a lot of elderly and disabled people using its premises. People from the YMCA above have been throwing eggs and tomatoes at the clients. This has been reported to the YMCA management and Police.
- On Wood Street there has been regular vandalism by young people of empty buildings.

Health & Well Being

- Charges for BME Swimming are unaffordable to members of the community.
- There is a need to encourage more BME people to access the Rugby Wellbeing Service (Mind). There are barriers to access which need to be overcome. Mind is looking for advice on how to get BME volunteers and BME people that they can support.
- The Chinese Society wish to raise awareness of and publicise their group in order to encourage people to visit them. They have information on their website which WREP could use to put on its website under the members section.

Housing

- There is a leaning fence in the alleyway of South Street and Winfield Street. It was recommended that the gentleman speak to James Patch from Rugby Borough Council.
- A gentleman has an alleyway at the end of a street and wishes a gate there but a neighbour does not. The neighbour said he does not want the Council to put up a gate on his wall (95 South Street). It has taken 2 years for the Council to respond to the gentleman's request.

Economy, Skills & Employment

- There was a query regarding accessing translators. The Interpreting & Translation Services project being set up by Renia Buc was recommended.

Nuneaton & Bedworth / North Warwickshire District Forum

Safer Communities

- A lady was worried about the introduction of the fortnightly wheelie bin collections in Nuneaton. At the moment they have 2 bins but there will soon be 3. She felt

that this new number of bins and the fortnightly collection would not be practical for large families, especially in the summer.

- One person commented on how hard it will be to take out another bin especially for the elderly.
- Another lady mentioned that an extra bin would be hard to place as her bins can only go in the front of her house, and some neighbours put their things in her bin because it is on the main road. Subsequently they fear that they would be penalised for the council for putting wrong items in the bins.
- There is a large bullying issue in the Asian Community. One boy wearing a turban was kicked by kids at his school. Another example of bullying was a child who got in trouble at school for holding drugs for a boy who threatened him into doing so.

Health & Well Being

- The young people suggested that WREP either visit school assemblies, youth groups or have young people forums or workshops in order to find out what issues are affecting them. WREP could also hold an open day activity for young people.
- Another suggestion on how WREP could communicate with young people is through meeting same age young people in an environment they feel safe in.
- Engagement by WREP with young people should take place at centres and youth centres.
- Issues relating to the changes in Day Care Services. There are concerns on what the elderly community will do and where they will go. A new dilemma will be different communities competing for services. No one seems to recognise the amount of work the BME Communities have put into Warwickshire, yet services are going or will be gone soon.
- The issue of agencies slowly folding and community groups picking up these services will create a fight amongst groups. Day Care Centres provide a multitude of unrecognised services.

- The reality is that the cuts are affecting the front line services. Consultation and engagement was done and a decision made. How do centres sustain themselves? Is there any way centres can benefit from services going forward.
- There was a request for health & active recreational activities for females in the area, such as women only swimming lessons. The group were told that Benji Evans is setting up a Zumba Class at the Edward Street Community Centre.
- An agency wished WREP to consider storytelling opportunities and awareness raising sessions for elderly people with mental health issues.
- There was question on where people will go when Edward Street Day Care Centre goes. They were informed that the committee is looking for ways to make the centre self-sustaining.
- The Khalifa Society is running a Community Café on Mondays from 10am – 12pm at the CCI Centre, opposite the Edward Street Day Centre, for those who used to go to Edward Street. The Café is run by volunteers and provides cold refreshments.
- It was commented that there were no health professionals at the forums.
- The ladies who attended the Edward Street Day Care Centre asked what is happening with the centre. They were told that the committee and others are meeting regarding project planning. They are looking at a way to hopefully keep the building running for the long term i.e. 20 years etc. When something has been agreed they will notify the community. It was noted that the Centre is the only avenue for elderly ladies to get out of the house.
- No-one sat down the elderly to explain what is happening with Edward Street yet the need to be enlightened. The Muslim Society will look at the viability of inviting all users when a plan exists in order to get input from them.
- The elderly ladies wish to go on a Parliament Trip like the young people.

Housing

Economy, Skills & Employment

- Members of the community wished something like the Parliament Trip for the Older People.

- It was felt that the internet is not a safe place for young people with some issues involving Facebook and inappropriate images in which the police were called in.
- It was felt the Facebook is an issue for under 15yr olds but not for the older young people.
- It was suggested that WREP should help the Police recruit specials and volunteers from the BME communities, especially young people.
- A young person felt that interaction with WREP through Facebook was a good option.
- A lady suggested an awareness day at Edward Street where representatives could tell the community how to keep themselves safe regarding the Asian burglaries.
- On Friday nights the young men are at home playing computer games. They wish to have more activities they can take part with such as football. They would also like more price accessible facilities and more equipment.
- The young men felt that there should be a separate forum for young people arranged by WREP to find out what issues and needs they have.

Warwickshire Police – “Burglaries within the Asian Community” – Chief Inspector Mike Slemensek

- There has been a trend of burglars targeting Asian communities to steal gold.
- From January to date there has been concern in the Asian community because while they are out of their homes in the daytime burglars have been targeting homes and stealing jewellery for the Asian gold.
- This is a new type of offence with 54 cases in Warwick.
- Nuneaton has experienced 24 cases.
- The burglaries are because of the high market cost of Asian gold and the fact that it is easier and safer to deal in gold.
- Similar offences have taken place in Leicestershire where it is the 4th highest offence.
- The priority is for this to be dealt with straight away in Warwickshire.
- The criminals are not based in Warwick and are organised gangs, sharing intelligence and with home security teaching.
- Offences in May were high but have dropped to low at the moment.
- All forces are working together and have managed to control cases to a low level. They are also still gathering information.
- No violence has occurred in these incidents as all home owners have been out.
- Asian households are being targeted using the voting register etc.
- The Police are advising people to put their valuables in a bank or a safe.
- There are not many people in the Neighbourhood Watch Schemes which need more promotion in the Asian community.
- These offences are falling rapidly but the Police are still vigilant and asking people to report incidents, look out for your neighbour and report any suspicious people in the area.

- At Ashton Court, Lillington, Leamington Spa there are lots of problems. RESPONSE: Link residents up to the Neighbourhood Police and work together to give advice.
- Language barrier has been a problem in reporting. RESPONSE: An officer can arrange a visit for a Neighbourhood Officer to visit families in person. An officer will arrange a visit out to Portuguese families to discuss any problems that have arisen.
- Question: Does the dealer ask where that gold comes from? Answer: Some are informing the police but there is no such law in buying gold off people.
- There are 3 or 4 offences in Warwickshire and the Police are focusing on the centres of population in the Asian community. They are gathering DNA, fingerprints etc., and working with other forces to gather information.
- Question: Are the criminals people in our own community? Answer: No, Leicester, West Midlands, London etc.
- In Birmingham these crimes have been going on for a long time and all jewellers have communicated together to get the crimes down.
- One helpful thing would be the bank safe and if the cost was low people would use the bank more to secure their gold.
- As gold is worth so much people need to try and keep it safe as people could be watching the house. Response: People will search your house until they find any gold.
- Question: Have the cases been dropped since these crimes have happened and the people been arrested. Answer: Yes cases are lower as more arrests have been made.
- There is a rumour going around about an email and text messages saying that people are using violence and holding children at ransom. This is not true.

Warwickshire County Council – “Assessment & Care Management”- Andrew Sharp (Adult Health & Community Services)

- Assessments
 1. If someone is in need they ring WCC
 2. Eligibility is then accessed (FACS) at the WCC Service Centre
 3. Direct referrals may also come through GPs.

- Q – What if someone is not happy with the level of need they have been assessed at?
- A – If the level is not agreed, there will be a reassessment and the person has the opportunity to complain.

- Q – If not critical or substantial?
- A – Complain to the Senior Manager. If you are still not happy complain to the ombudsman

- Q – What is the difference between the prices if someone goes onto 24 hour care?
- A – You can buy your own care. All care homes have different rates. WCC will pay a fee and the client pays the difference (standard rates).

- Q – How are services made available to BME communities and those who do not speak English?
- A – Encourage providers to employ different ethnicities to translate.
- A – Ask what language is spoken, then take their own interpreters.

- Q – How long does it take from initial assessment to final decision?
- A – A final decision can be made in 1 day, if urgent. It will depend on the waiting list.

**Warwickshire County Council – “Transforming Services for Young People
(Update) – Peter Hatcher**

- Originally there were 30 youth centres being managed by WCC and this has now decreased to 5.
- 3 of remaining 25 youth centres have been closed.
- The final 22 are being offered to the community to be managed by community groups / organisations. Business cases have been put forward and a panel will decide the outcomes on 17th November 2011.
- WCC have a compliment of 23 full time staff.
- From 1st September 14 Youth Workers and 9 Senior Practitioners will be focussing on priority areas such as drugs, crime and locations.
- 55% will be in the north, 30% in the south (Warwick / Stratford) and 15% in Rugby.

- Q – What happens to the centres if nobody (Community Groups) comes forward?
- A – The building will be sold, surplus to requirements

- Q – Will community groups have financial support?
- A – No specific support but there are community development funding streams available such as the Big Society funding.

- WCC is moving away from traditional youth service delivery. Centres will now become premises used by different groups / organisations which may be managed by one particular organisation.

- Big risk – voluntary organisations / groups that take over one of the 22 centres may not have the skills i.e. understanding the needs of young people, to successfully deliver a youth service. While paid officers will give the required time to try to provide an opportunity to engage / accommodate the needs of young people.

- Youth work will become more focussed and priority will be given to secondary school age groups, i.e. 13 -19 year olds.