



Nuneaton & Bedworth Black and Minority Ethnic Forum
8th October 2009
Hatterspace Community Centre

The Nuneaton and Bedworth Consultation Forum took place on the 8th October 2009 at the Hatterspace Community Centre. It was attended by individuals and representatives from the local community as well as participants from statutory and voluntary organisations.

A presentation was delivered by David Vasquez from Warwickshire Fire & Rescue (WFRS). The presentation concerned the possible closure of fire stations across Warwickshire. WFRS reassured the community that the closures would not have a detrimental affect on the services they provide. If individuals are worried about the closures they are welcome to come and meet with WFRS and participate in their consultation regarding a fitter, stronger fire and rescue service. Please visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fireandrescue or telephone 01926410410 for further information.

The four workshops which ran in the evening included:

- 1. Probation & Community Sentences**
Facilitated by Assistant Chief Officers Andy Wade and Kathleen Mitchell
- 2. Access to Services (Health)**
Facilitated by Carolyn Parker (PALS Coordinator)
- 3. Policing & Community Safety (Prevent Agenda)**
Facilitated by PC Jillian Atkinson and PC Roni Koshi
- 4. Local feedback**
Facilitated by Iyaaz Matadar (Chair of BME Youth Council)

Probation & Community Sentences

Although the Probation team are not visible in the same way as Warwickshire Police, it is important that the work they are involved in is understood by local communities, for example they work with police who take offenders back to prison. The team supervise offenders and work alongside the Criminal Justice Agency to set sentences and enforce action on repeat offenders. The 'Community Payback Scheme' an initiative that Probation is leading on, supports organisations to fulfil certain objectives such as the removal of graffiti or support with projects if required. The scheme will not take on work which would take over from paid employment.

Community individuals feel that the probation hostel (Macintyre House) located on Edward Street is very unsafe. People have been seen to be using drugs

close by and in locations used by residents such as the local post office. Probation staff confirmed that the residents from Macintyre House are monitored and agreed for a representative to come out and speak to the community regarding the hostel and its residents. They feel that residents who live nearby should be able to voice their concerns to a probation officer who will listen and take into account their views and represent it to the courts. Elderly female residents are especially scared to come out of their homes after about 7.00pm.

Information is also recorded about people and ex-offenders who respond to taunts and other types of provocation.

Access to Services (Health)

The issue regarding health for black and minority ethnic communities is multi dimensional. For example it is felt that Dental Practices do not treat their patients appropriately and if an appointment is missed, the individual is taken off the register. Elderly individuals felt that a particular Dentist in Edward Street was discriminatory against them because of their age. Where practices have staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, individuals felt that they discriminated against patients who could not speak English and refused to communicate with the patient in any other language than English. Individuals would like to know if this could be resolved and who / where they could go to, to complain or report the issue.

Opticians similarly do not provide interpreting and translation support and it can be difficult to understand what outcomes have been agreed if English is problematic for individuals.

Hospital patients continue to take children to hospital appointments to use as interpreters if they are unable to book appointments with the interpreter Parveen Dean and the service is unavailable. There were additional issues regarding parking and having access to a range of health facilities as many are not aware of the variety of support which is available. Materials such as leaflets and information should be made more accessible and easier to understand and support is required to help complete forms and / or applications. Leaflets would be an excellent medium to provide information to BME communities. In addition some hospital signs are being translated into Polish but not into other languages. Access to NHS support has become a barrier especially where there is limited accessibility of information distributed in the community. The closure of services at the George Eliot Hospital has had an extreme impact on the BME community.

Some GPs do not listen; some are excellent while others are not so good. This may be down to poor communication with patients.

Mental Health is again a continuing concern for BME communities. Partnership work is required to create awareness about Mental Health in BME communities.

There is a stigma attached to mental health in communities who are often in denial about this. Identifying what the mental health needs are in the BME community is paramount.

BME communities are also experiencing physical access issues. Carolyn Parker will visit the Edward St Day Centre with the health booklets which offers support and advice on patient health.

Policing and Community Safety - Prevent Agenda

There is a big issue with drugs in Nuneaton and a lot of noise and tension during evenings.

There are training camps supporting the 'prevent agenda' both nationally and locally. The Police require support from the community to take the work of the 'prevent agenda' forwards.

The negative views surrounding Islam and Muslims is extremely disconcerting and is creating additional tension in the area. Wrong assumptions of Islam can marginalise individuals and lead to radicalisation. Individuals should report any negative behaviour immediately to the Police which will be recorded as a hate incident. Again if parent's families or guardians notice a detrimental change in young people, they should inform the Police. Family and society can provide boundaries and raise alerts. People want to know how they can help their children. They also want to know the tell tale signs of radicalism and who they can approach with their concerns. Some people were unaware that Nuneaton had cases of radicalisation and violent extremism.

The BNP are also creating friction in the community with their right wing views and attitudes. There have been young people in gangs coming together for example at Hinckley College and there was an incident regarding a petrol bomb. One person has taken the blame for this but is too frightened to say much more.

The community is not aware of the work of the prevent agenda teams and do not know a lot about extreme behavioural patterns. Those that live alone are scared to come forward when incidents happen. Awareness should be raised in community centres who could then liaise with either PC Jillian Atkinson or PC Roni Koshi. In addition the community should know that there are other organisations where people can report incidents and not just the Police. It was also discussed that the 'prevent agenda' may not work and that all individuals in society should get a fair hearing. This will prevent frustration and prevent radicalism.

There is a parallel issue of Muslim children placed in foster care in non-Muslim households. This may make such children vulnerable to radicalisation. The 'prevent agenda' needs to be a pervasive initiative touching all aspect of society

as violent extremism is the first step to terrorism (pre radicalisation), right-wing groups and Al Qaeda. It is important to educate the public of what particular triggers there are to look out for, for example where and how young people may be vulnerable to radicalisation. This may be through education, the internet (Nicky Reilly case), peer group pressure etc.

The community and the Police need to work together in order to build trust and work in supporting one another. The Police and various public authorities are working in partnership to provide services that will engage and involve youths at community centres, Mosques and Gurdwara's. However these initiatives do not reach out into the whole community. Initiatives such as community champions are unheard of and although individuals are aware of detached youth workers, they are not aware of the full remit of their work. The community was not really aware of the work WCAVA supported.

An idea was proposed of allowing people to make anonymous reports and produce a booklet educating all communities on various faiths.

The recent visibility of PCSO's on the streets has been very good and in areas such as Stockingford, crime and community tensions have improved.

BME young people have legitimate grievances that have not been recognised. Services, including youth services and young people's parliament across the county do not have adequate representation of BME youth. There is a lot of stereotyping of young Muslims both in school and outside of school. The Police should organise specific consultation events with BME young people. A young person complained that though she experiences a lot of racist comments, nothing gets done. This is when different cultures take it into their own hands and cultures clash. It should be made clear to the community what they should do when they experience racist comments and offences. BME youth grievance is not being addressed. Only then can young people engage with public authorities and work together to raise awareness of the 'prevent agenda'.

Local Issues

The community is frightened of the BNP and do not go out at night. There has been recent in the area surrounding Edward Street for a long time with people's cars and tyres let down.

Language barriers are still a difficult and contentious issue. The elderly community in particular and parents who have migrated from abroad would like to know who they can speak to if they have an issue with language and communication. They in particular feel that the language barrier is a huge concern. There is also a cultural difference in accessing information, where different cultures may identify different issues as important.

An individual on Edward Street wishes the telephone box next to her house to be removed. She has complained about the noise and violence emitted from the box on numerous occasions but nothing has been done.