

Bonn Conference – September 2008

Supporting the Engagement of Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Older People – experience from England

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Supporting the Engagement of BME older people

- Demographics
- Obstacles & Barriers
- * Recent research findings
- Engaging with BME older people locally:
Age Concern's experience –
AC Leicestershire & Rutland
AC Hillingdon

Demographics

- Britain – increasingly diverse and ageing society
- England – total population 49,138,831; 87% white British and 13% BME groups (incl. white minority groups)
- Older people (over 65) – 16% of total population
- Approx. 7% of over 65s from BME groups – or 517,321 people

Supporting the Engagement of BME older people

- **‘Engagement’** – *encompasses a wide range of activities, including the provision of information, consultation, active participation in decision-making and scrutiny;*
- *Common denominator is that older people are participating in the public arena, getting involved in a way that’s designed to be socially beneficial, as well as individually enriching’.*

Supporting the Engagement of BME older people

Obstacles and barriers –

- **Attitudinal barriers** – *scepticism, mistrust, assumptions & stereotypes;*
- **Structural barriers** – *place, location, institutional barriers, accessibility/acceptability, transport, support/affordability;*
- **Cultural barriers** – *language, diet, religion/faith, gender, participation.*

Service user participation – ‘Doing it for themselves: participation and BME service users’ (SCIE/REU, 2006)

Key points –

- *In last 20 years service user participation in social care has increased, while BME participation has diminished;*
- *Policy-makers/Service providers often consult with BME professionals and community leaders, rather than directly with service users;*
- *No evidence to suggest that BME service users do not want to participate;*
- *Social care professionals - important role to play in facilitating participation;*
- *Race equality issues must become part of mainstream activity;*
- *BME service user participation does work when properly supported.*

BME older people's views on research findings – JRF study (May 2004)

Key finding –

- *Older people said that they had been over-researched, with researchers often asking the same questions (or producing the same findings) as had been evident 15 years ago. They did not want more research for its' own sake;*
- *They wanted action that would bring about change and **to be involved in decisions that affected their lives – locally and nationally.***

The involvement of Chinese older people in policy and practice – Ruby C.M.Chau (JRF, 2007)

Key findings –

- *Broad definition of concept of involvement;*
- *Chinese older people involved in social life in different ways;*
- *With appropriate encouragement, Chinese older people able to take up different roles;*
- *‘Ownership’ is critical in involving Chinese older people;*
- *Rational choice to get involved – clear reasons & expectations; awareness of pros and cons;*
- *Involvement not without difficulties;*
- *Gains & losses in the process.*

The involvement of Chinese older people in policy and practice – Ruby C.M.Chau (JRF, 2007)

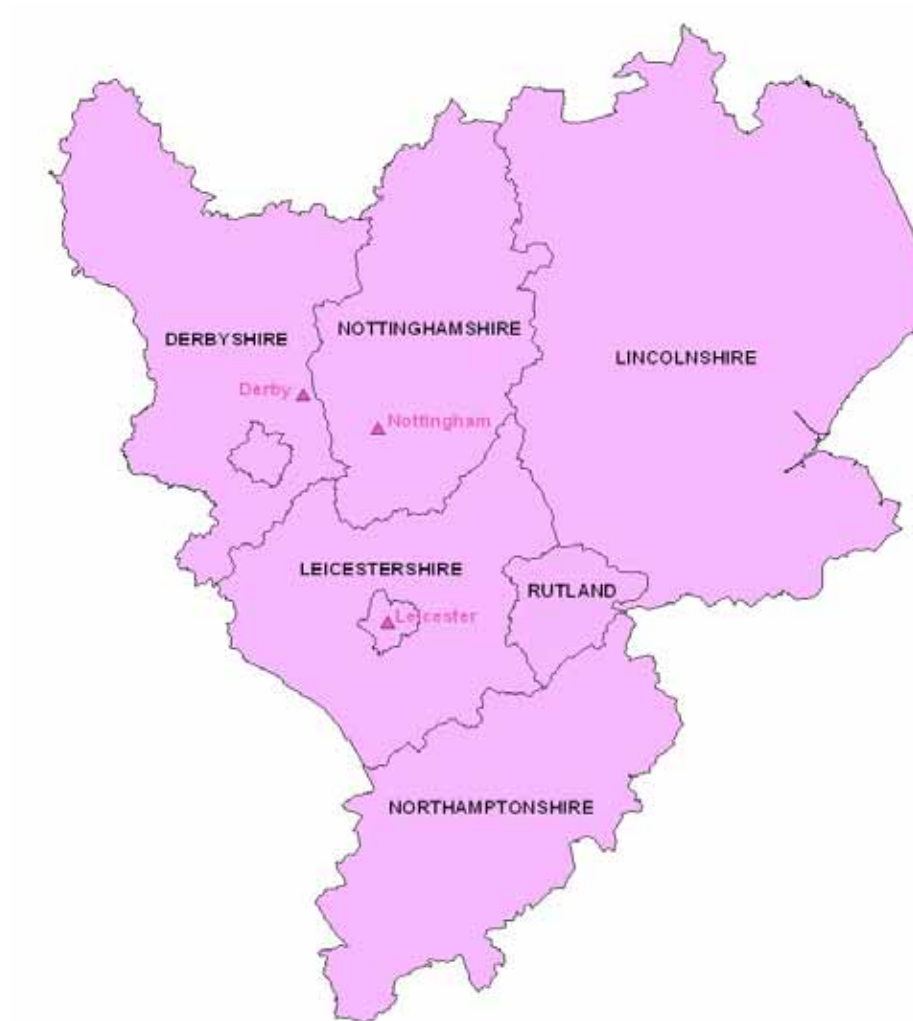
Suggestions for enhancing involvement –

- *Both Chinese & host communities should provide genuine opportunities for involvement of Chinese older people;*
- *Efforts should be made to offset disabling factors which can hamper involvement;*
- *Practical support should be provided to enable involvement;*
- *Members of Chinese community should also recognize and support the contribution of older people who get involved.*

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern's experience

- *No claim to be comprehensively representative of all older people; ACs often develop links with local BME elders groups - working in partnership to promote their interests;*
- *Some ACs support the direct involvement of older people from excluded BME groups – eg. local BME Elders Forum;*
- *Greater investment of time, resources and support;*
- *Providing appropriate practical support to local engagement mechanisms;*
- *May result in groups developing a stronger voice & being able to speak for themselves;*
- *Partnership approaches with BME community & voluntary groups, and with statutory agencies.*

Supporting the engagement of BME older people – Leicestershire & Rutland



Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern's experience

Leicestershire & Rutland Minority Ethnic Forum –

- *Asian Services Development worker employed by AC L&R to support groups of BME older people;*
- *Independent local groups offered support from AC L&R;*
- *Leicestershire & Rutland ME Forum established own constitution & management committee in first year;*
- *Older people responsible for the Forum's decisions & governance;*
- *Practical support from AC L&R – mtgs, membership;*
- *AC L&R provides support & liaison with statutory agencies – improved information about services, and improved consultation with BME elders.*

Supporting the engagement of BME older people – London Borough of Hillingdon



Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

Ethnic Minority Access Project (EMAP)

- Aimed at all older people from BME communities in Hillingdon;
- Services offered enable greater access to health & social services within the borough.

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

Aims of EMAP –

- To empower BME older people to take a leading role within the Borough of Hillingdon in shaping services for older people;
- To enable greater access to the structures involved in provision of services locally;
- To identify gaps in existing services for BME older people.



Hillingdon

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

Services provided through EMAP –

Information & Advice on:

- Housing Benefit & Council tax
- Accommodation
- Social Care
- Health Services
- Leisure activities
- Transport
- * Welfare benefits
- * Utility bills



Hillingdon

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

- EMAP services are provided by 2 Coordinators in several different languages:
 - Arabic, Somali, Urdu, Punjabi & Hindi
- Numbers of people using the services are growing weekly
- Steering group meeting held every 6 weeks to review progress



Hillingdon

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

BME Elders Forum, Hillingdon

- Was started in October 2005 as a mechanism for BME older people to raise their concerns with different agencies;
- Very successful, attendance at meetings increasing monthly;
- 60-80 BME older people attend each month;
- Speakers from – Older People's Services; Anti-social & Racial Harassment Team; PALS & Revenue Services.



Hillingdon

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

BME Elders Forum –

- Very important forum for BME older people locally;
- Source of information and knowledge;
- Provides an opportunity for BME older people to express their views on their lives and local issues in Hillingdon, and to be heard by policy-makers & service providers.

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

Older People's Assembly –

- Organised by Hillingdon Local Authority – Brenda Venn, Older People's Services;
- BME Elders Forum members participate in the Assembly, with support from AC Hillingdon staff;
- Brenda Venn regularly invited to the BME Elders Forum – so members can raise any issues/concerns in advance of Assembly meetings; more productive;
- Language barriers for BME older people when attending the Assembly meetings.



Hillingdon

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

Older People's Assembly –

Achievements for BME older people include:

- Cleaner alleyways around the Hayes area
- Request for a bus-stop
- Blocked drains were unblocked
- Attended a workshop for older people
- Raised awareness of anti-social behaviour in Hayes area



Hillingdon

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

Older People's Assembly –

- BME older people participated in a workshop on Hillingdon Council's Plan for Older People, 2005-2008;
- Excellent workshop where BME older people were able to put forward their views & concerns.

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People Locally – Age Concern Hillingdon's experience

Networking with Voluntary & Statutory organisations

eg: PCT, Hillingdon Carers, Social Services, Housing Services, REC, Community Transport & Somali Women's Group

Future plans include...

- Support regular meetings of the BME Elders Forum;
- Encourage participation of BME Elders Forum members in the Older People's Assembly;
- Raise awareness of the project/services among BME communities;
- Participate in meetings with voluntary & statutory organisations;
- Recruit volunteers & organise necessary training.



Hillingdon

Supporting the engagement of BME older people – key issues to consider

- **Clear aims and purpose** for ‘engagement’ – clear idea of who needs to be involved; realistic strategy for outreach & engagement;
- Building up **trust & mutual respect**; assessment of pros and cons;
- Developing **ownership & partnership of equals** - listening, accountability & feedback;
- Providing appropriate **support & tackling barriers**;
- **Recognition** of input and contributions;
- Having an **impact & tracking CHANGES** in policy & practice;

Supporting the Engagement of BME Older People

Thank you for listening!

AGE
Concern

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