

**Impact of Covid-19 on Black, Ethnic Minority and Refugee communities.
Conversation with Public Health, Hackney Council and the NHS hosted by
Hackney CVS / 29.04.2020**

Meeting notes - key points

Local communities

The role of local voluntary and community organisations is critical to supporting the most vulnerable.

Concerns raised about the lack of culturally appropriate food available in emergency food packages being made available through the Council. The Food Justice Alliance Network is trying to make sure there is a range of food available to meet different culturally specific needs.

Lots of concern that some communities, such as Rastafarian community, are being ignored or are not visible.

A number of community members talked about the importance of getting the terminology right – we should not use BAME – as it does not help describe the rich diversity of communities. The Council, Hackney CVS and community members should seek to discuss this point further.

Digital Divide

Digital divide is affecting poorer families. There is a need for laptops for children/families who don't own them. This is impacting on home schooling opportunities for many families. Some VCS groups such as Hackney Quest are trying to address this. However some young people fall through the net, for example those in care.

Some communities such as the Vietnamese community have limited internet access or are not able to engage digitally with services that are available. A main issue for

migrants and refugees is lack of access to services because of the lack of technological skills.

Mental health and lack of financial support

Demand for mental health support, particularly for African Caribbean residents is increasing – Mind is offering support: www.iriemind.org phone: 07554 451 296.

Growing Minds project for families from African Caribbean community has additional funds to provide services and support young people and adults.

Similarly for Turkish residents concerns about long working hours, no PPE, and bad working conditions in supermarkets and doing deliveries. Migrants are suffering from poor mental health and in danger of being homeless.

Many people have no access to Public Funds, particularly in the African community.

Real concerns about families/people in temporary accommodation in very overcrowded housing.

Domestic violence

Issue of increasing domestic violence with some community organisations overwhelmed with demand, particularly Rastafarian and Latin American communities – coupled with a lack of refugee space.

Women fleeing domestic abuse need to be prioritised for rehousing.

Racial abuse

Chinese and East Asian community are worried that racial attacks and harassment were increasing before lockdown and have gotten worse since.

Carers and vulnerable people

Concern expressed about the plight of carers who are now under a lot more pressure, psychologically and mentally.

This is particularly relevant for parents caring for sick children who can't leave the house – sickle cell affected families mentioned as under particular pressure.

People reported issues with vulnerable people, including kidney and cancer patients, whose medication was running out.

Pressure on people who have had their benefits cut and not replaced.

There is a notion of mistrust of statutory services among different communities. This will prevent equitable take up of services that are available. The VCS can play a key role here.

Funding being made available by the Nation Lottery Community Fund and locally from the CCG and Council will help to address this and provide more of a culturally specific offer to Hackney's diverse communities.

Concern expressed that if support is not provided to people it will cause resentment, especially from those already living on the margins. Lots of organisations like Daymer, Derman, Bikur Cholim and others are coordinating culturally specific support directly and remotely but there is much more to do.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

No financial support

Oladapo Awosokanre, Community African Network:

Lots of concern expressed about those with No Recourse to Public Funds, particularly in the African community who are being excluded from the mainstream support that is available. Community African Network trying to address this. Council making funding available to look at this so that people can access resources.

Nichola Lauder, Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest:

We are finding that people are terrified of consulting with GPs and hospitals generally along with the fear of not being treated equally – that is our biggest challenge. Our

service is www.iriemind.org or call 07554 451 296. You can refer young people. Most staff trained are therapists, those who are not are trained befrienders.

Ngozi Fulani, Sistah Space:

Sistah Space delivers food to 30 people a day every day. Like other cultures, we have cultural food. Rastfarian and other of our cultures are rarely recognised. Everyone is packaged under BAME.

Jabez Lam , Hackney Chinese Community Centre

Chinese and East Asian community members are worried that racial attacks and harassment were increasing before lockdown. We worry that when the lockdown lifts, attacks on this community will increase again. We would like to see some preparation work between the council and police to prepare to address this.

Ali Aksoy, Hackney Refuge Forum:

Because of long working hours, no masks, and bad working conditions in supermarkets and doing deliveries, migrants are suffering and their mental health is terrible. They are often living in over-crowded houses where they can be in danger of being homeless. With low incomes, they are trying to pay rent in the most expensive City in Europe, and we are hearing of issues with landlords.

Cllr Williams:

We need to be careful about language, saying BAME makes some invisible. Homogenising, whether about religion or ethnicity contributes to inequalities, and at this most difficult time many will experience in our lives, we have to distinguish.

Sonia Khan, Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery, Hackney Council:

Parcels are a short term response. The next phase is to look at who across the community is involved in helping, and looking at grants, and to make sure that Hackney Council is bringing in enough resources across communities to support needs.