



Discussion about Covid Impact on communities in Hackney & The City Friday 5 June 2020

Chaired by Jake Ferguson (JF), CEO, Hackney CVS

Introduction by JF

Follow up meeting to the first which was held on 29 April. Important to give local organisations, especially those supporting black and ethnic minority communities the chance to speak about how Covid is impacting organisations and people.

Vast number of issues raised in last meeting including:

- digital divide
- need for better information
- increasing concern over pressure on families
- domestic abuse
- needs of people with no recourse to public funds
- people who are invisible
- people who were in poverty beforehand and Covid has made that worse.

Government test and trace system - important public health system, but concerns about how data will be used. Hackney CVS hosting separate meeting about this on June 12.

What should be our collective focus be going forward? Where are current systems failing Hackney's diverse communities?

Note that we are using the terms diverse communities and grassroots communities interchangeably as it was agreed in 29 April meeting that the term BAME packages people into one group that does not reflect the fantastic diversity of people in the borough.

Hackney CVS keen to work with the sector to promote diversity of the borough in a positive way and collect case studies on this.

Strategy for recovery - Hackney CVS have developed 7 themes on this - we will look at this later in the meeting.

Mayor Glanville

Mayor/LBH keen to listen to VCS. There have been fortnightly meetings between the Mayor and Cabinet colleagues with VCS leaders that Jake convened - has been good for hearing how Covid has impacted communities and organisations and this has shaped LBH thinking and response to crisis.

A lot has happened since last meeting around inequalities and injustice and the meeting today is in shadow of the murder of George Floyd.

They are completely linked - a set of deep entrenched inequalities here - health, economic and social - a crisis hits those inequalities and you have a disproportionate impact, overlaid with a sense of global injustice.

The Mayor is feeding this into council - the fact that this opens up old wounds and traumas that are still very much alive for communities in Hackney. Important to explain this to leadership and to council and to the police. LBH need to make sure diverse communities in Hackney are heard during crisis and recovery.

QUESTIONS >

Paula Yassine, St Mary's Secret Garden

Q: What is the plan for people who are shielding and are extremely vulnerable?

Chris Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health

Covid helpline will continue. LBH can scale up for people who are shielding, especially if there is a second wave. Linked to VCH for volunteers, food deliveries and delivery of medications from pharmacies.

Ali – Caribeats

Caribeats was founded in 1st week of lockdown, from one person asking for Caribbean food. Started with own money, then raised money through crowdfunding, and have enough funding to deliver until 11 July - Caribbean food delivered once a week. How can the council help - the community want it to continue, but it needs funding.

Mayor Glanville

Aware of the need for cultural specific food. Hope you are connected to the Food Justice Network, the body the council will look to continue that support.

Jake Ferguson

Hackney CVS can help Caribeats with funding advice, volunteers.

Doug Holton– Hackney Trade Union Council

Issue of shops and shop workers as well as customers. Many shop workers are from diverse communities and are on the frontline. Walking through supermarkets, Morrisons in Stamford Hill a good example, there is good security about who goes in, but within the shop the social distancing measures not being followed, staff not wearing masks. If this happens in the public space, what happens behind the scenes?

Mayor Glanville

Police are primary social distance enforcers, councils are advisors and regulators, but cannot enforce. Very tricky situation - people have seen things throughout this crisis that they are concerned about. Council trying to work with all businesses and getting best practice advice to them. Govt. thinks businesses will self regulate. Mayor feels concern about this - once all the shops are open in dense areas and the streets are busy - then will only the young will feel comfortable to go out? A lot of businesses in Hackney are suffering, but community safety is important.

Faisal Pirbhai – Apex Learning Hub

With the drive for schools to re-open, concern that children have been off for such a long time - the attainment gap will be significant. With social distancing pressures, bridging the gaps will be very difficult – it could set us back 5-10 years. As much as we want to work in collaboration, community based organisations will be where communities go for support. Will there be support for our community facilities - VCS needs facilities that are fit for purpose. We will also need PPE to reassure parents that their kids will be safe, because parents want to go back to work.

Mayor Glanville

LBH definitely have stocks of PPE for VCS and have been doing that informally, but only where Public Health Guidance says you need PPE - there are no stocks for service users. Committed to maintaining voluntary sector and estates funding. Important that we don't have lost generations, people who have started lives for themselves, who are being knocked back by the pandemic.

Deputy Mayor Bramble

Be reassured LBH are thinking about that - we will bring the voluntary sector into that.

JF

Re chat comments about funding, please go on our website where we have all the links - www.hcvs.org.uk . About to announce funding from CCG - £300k which we will distribute through Hackney Giving. Lottery is funding small to medium charities - look out for funding information in the Hackney CVS newsletter.

Mentimeter poll about current concerns conducted by Jake - results attached as separate pdf.

JF: Where are systems failing people now? Open discussion...

Peter Merrifield- CEO of Support When It Matters (SWIM)

There has been a gap in providing specialist care from primary care to patients. Need culturally sensitive targeted information. So SWIM are setting up their own stall in Dalston Kingsland, to talk to the community about the disproportionate effect on our communities. Opportunities to solicit feedback on what is needed, what are the nuances and how can we ensure that these nuances are in policies.

Great Okusun - local young leader

Is there a ban on evictions for non payments during COVID-19 and have LBH gone further for people without papers? What about the undocumented - those who aren't able to come forward. Situation for those concerned about the fears about deportation.

Mayor Glanville

There's a firm no eviction policy. Want to make people aware of financial support. The ban on eviction should be extended due to covid-19 debt. Don't want to see rough sleepers going back on the streets. We want to make sure there is a fund for all including people who are undocumented - the fund will launch soon.

Terry Bednall

Want to talk about poverty and especially about unequal access to the benefits system, particularly for people from diverse communities. Want to talk about the effect of Windrush on people's willingness to challenge the systems, want to have a discussion about the need for the VCS to have more of an anti-poverty agenda.

JF: I would agree with you. We have talked internally about the need to do more about poverty - it's at the heart of so many of our problems in society.

Hazel Saudners, Deafplus

Deaf and disabled people's rights have been denied by the government and the system is failing these people. Most of these people are self isolating. Receiving mixed messages, challenges just being able to access a GP appointment - all GPs operating differently. Need interpreters. e.g. food being left on front door, and disabled people not been able to pick up the food - needs addressing.

Paula Yassine, St Mary's Secret Garden

High death rates of adults with learning disabilities - but 2nd June Public Health report was brushed aside. Death rate rose by 136 percent during peak, don't know Hackney figures. Affected by cuts to adult social care over many years. Extra work and support needed to support this community. What plans are there for this?

Chris Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health

Don't know local figures but have asked. There have been good outcomes locally in homes in terms of getting PPE in - not aware of any deaths.

Elsbeth Williams

Concern for people with disabilities. Visually impaired people - it's hard to access zoom, with pop ups and people coming in and out - daunting for people with visual impairments. The support being given to visually impaired people in the community is not adequate..

Courtney Brown - Father to Father

Lack of respect from statutory sector. Needs to be a mutual respect between sectors as we work towards the same outcome and support community. The partnership work needs to improve.

Increase in domestic abuse. Safeguarding women and girls, but also need to look at men who are victims of DV. Need to work with perpetrators to find out where that abuse is coming from.

JF: What are the solutions? Agree small orgs don't feel respected by state or by large charities. Why are black families being failed?

CB: There is no trust with the system, and there needs to be better respect of cultural orgs that understand racism and trauma. Young black men need to not be judged and need space to freely express themselves, and not be called angry black men.

There is distrust of a system of that is mostly white lead - there is no empathy and compassion. We want it to be inclusive. If it's not acknowledged then it breeds distrust within the community.

JF: Will be raising this with the Mayor of London – sitting on ticking timebomb if we don't focus on this.

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

What Courtney said was really important. From the Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men work we know what's needed - but it's the how, how we lead is really important. In phase 2 of the Covid plan - how the council frames and leads with compassion and empathy is important. Importance of inclusive leadership at council. (LBH were introducing training no this before pandemic).

JF: The Met get 30 mins training on race/racism which can't be right.

Maxine Claye - Trustee of Sistah Space

Dealing with black and ethnic minority victims of domestic abuse. Anybody can be a victim of DV. Covid amplifies issues x 1,000. Sistah Space still working, listening, dropping provisions to victims of DV. But Sistah Space have been asked to vacate their premises - given 2 weeks notice. Black minority impacted more than any other by the Covid. Cannot be asked to move in 2 weeks when we and victims are in trouble due to impact of Covid.

Mayor Glanville confirms in chat function that Sistah Space don't have to move:

From Philip Glanville (Mayor) to Everyone: (11:30 am)

Maxine, you won't have to move . That is the commitment from everyone from the Council during lockdown or a phase of it . About to write to you .

Jabez Lam – Hackney Chinese Community Services

Increased racism, have called on the government for a public enquiry. Met are involved in forum, and anticipate attacks will increase. HCCS have produced a leaflet for the community for how to deal with racism – need the Council to step up their support and engage with the issue. One third of SE community are in catering industry, hardest hit, latest in recovery. Economic impact will be significant, and many will close.

Mayor Glanville

Trauma felt by the South East Asian community from the start hasn't been recognised enough by political leadership and I apologise for this. Want to repair that damage now and reflect on it. Also, Jenette Arnold OBE, London Assembly Member, would like to meet the South East Asian Community members and take this to the Mayor of London.

Tony Wong, Connect Hackney Director, Hackney CVS, presented the VCS Covid-19 priorities recovery plan - *attached as separate pdf*.

TW stressed that this is a work in progress. Key points >

Seven key priorities:

- Inequalities
 - Fear and anxiety
 - Safeguarding
 - Digital Divide
 - Protecting VCS orgs at risk
 - Mental and emotional wellbeing
 - Mobilising volunteers
- We need to lobby for more funding

Audience asked to rate through Mentimeter which priorities most important for them. Inequalities was rated most important (full results included in pdf).

JF: Don't want this to be a doc that sits on a shelf and goes nowhere. It needs to be fluid - we will follow up with a survey and involve the sector.

Summing up:

JF: Diverse communities & the VCS have been on the sidelines for too long - or we are brought into the conversation late. We need to be at the heart of conversations and solutions - as a collective of organisations we have experience of working on so many different issues.

End.