



## VCS Assembly Meeting Notes

### Racial equality: What will make City & Hackney anti-racist?

6<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 11am-2pm, Zoom meeting

The meeting was opened with music including: Public Enemy “Don’t Believe The Hype”, Eddy Grant “Give Me Hope Jo’ Anna”, Gil Scott Heron “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”, Nina Simone “To Be Young, Gifted And Black” and Sam Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come”.

#### **Rosemary Jawara (RJ), CEO of Beersheba Living Well**

- Welcomed attendees and explained the importance of everyone feeling included and comfortable throughout the meeting
- The importance of focusing on solutions to making City & Hackney anti-racist was expressed
- The aims were outlined; to better understand how communities face inequalities and gaps in service provision that could improve health and wellbeing outcomes
- Highlighted that professional culturally appropriate support is available to individuals should they need emotional support during the day from SWIM
- RJ expressed a desire for everyone to have the opportunity to speak and be part of co-producing solutions

#### **Music from members of the Youth team at Hackney Council for Voluntary Service (HCVS) -**

**Hikaya by NomAEd99 and From My View by DKingsley.**

#### **A live verse from local poet and self-published author, [Yolanda Lear](#)**

Yolanda spoke of the struggles she and many others experience living in Hackney, how Hackney no longer represents the proud diversity it used to and the challenge of creating an anti-racist borough.

**Tony Wong (TW), CEO of HCVS** explained the meetings aim of bringing everyone together to develop solutions to make City & Hackney anti-racist.

- Solutions have been pulled together from research and insights with many community organisations and members and will be discussed and developed further through collaborative working.
- Outlined the agenda and introduced the day’s speakers
- Outlined how to access professional emotional support should attendees feel affected by anything discussed during the sessions
- Reiterated that this issue will not be able to be solved in one session, however it is a good place to get the ball rolling and highlighted there will be follow up sessions on these solutions both in person and online which will also tie into black history month

**Vanessa Morris (WM), CEO of Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest** was introduced to give an overview of the status of the business case following the first Assembly in June on Emotional wellbeing.



- Conversations have taken place with commissioners, statutory partners, special interest groups and wide range of community groups. Project proposals are to be put forward to the integrated care partnership board for approval next month
- There are several ideas including:
  - \* holistic advocacy and support for people with long term disabilities and long-term health conditions
  - \* clinical supervision support for organisations supporting young people throughout the pandemic
  - \* support workers for refugee and migrant populations
  - \* transition support for young people going from primary to secondary school with focus on cultural sensitivities and funding for befriending and volunteer recruitment
- We ask everyone to keep their eyes out for these as we will be asking which partners and communities can most effectively work to bring those ideas to fruition

**Dr Sandra Husbands (SH), Director of Public Health for Hackney and the City of London,** shared [this presentation](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on pre-existing inequalities.

- City and Hackney have been very impacted by COVID-19 and people from ethnically diverse and minoritised communities have been disproportionately affected via infections, mortality, economic situation and barriers to employment and educational support
- SH shared this [document](#) showing the key areas for action to tackling health inequalities in City & Hackney, highlighting the anti-racist approach to tackling health inequalities which acknowledges the unequal systems that perpetuate these inequalities

**Susan Cueva (SH), Hackney Refugee and Migrant Forum (HRMF) and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Leadership group representative and Chair of KANLUNGAN** shared some case studies and lived experiences of the Filipino communities struggles during COVID within the context of ethnic and racial inequalities.

- She recognised the experience of inequalities these populations face act through systemic forms of restrictions and controlling interventions imposed on them. Experiences of hate crimes and racism against the Filipino community increased 1000% during the Pandemic.
- SC highlighted the need for the government to increase statutory provisions to support mental health services to these communities as organisations such as KANLUNGAN are providing culturally appropriate mental health support but do not have enough provision to do so equitably
- Highlighted that black and ethnic minority led community organisations only receive 5% of the total spend to voluntary organisations and noted that UBELE are lobbying for changes to this

**The meeting moved to the first round of breakout rooms with the aim of discussing some of the provided solutions and other solution suggestions to making City & Hackney Anti-racist.** Each breakout room was focused on an area where racial inequalities were identified by insight research e.g. education, mental health. The solutions were suggested by diverse organisation members from across City & Hackney in pre-assembly discussions. Attendees were reminded of the available support from SWIM and of the Assembly Agreement.

#### **Breakout session 1 key headlines:**

##### **1) Employment and equity of economic opportunity (Facilitated by David Kingsley)**

- Financial literacy education to break the poverty cycle
- Local mentoring partnerships
- The need for teachers in schools to reflect the communities they teach



## **2) Criminal Justice and legal rights (Facilitated by Saqib Deshmukh)**

- Solutions should to be framed around Lammy report and Mayors action plan on policing and building on these – learning and implementing, not new reports

## **3) Culture, awareness, representation and respect (Facilitated by Jake Ferguson and Tony Wong)**

- A programme of work which supports those in power to understand their own biases; become more culturally competent; not use labels or narrative that drives difference – this should be coproduced with local people/communities.
- Highlighted race as a construct historically by those in power to label the dispossessed - wanted to see school children taught this to ensure they understand how everyone is equal
- Need for a local body that supports people experiencing institutional racism to support local workforce and students
- Develop an awareness campaign, that spans targeting central governments mis-messaging around diverse ethnic communities, to be delivered from schools
- Equalities standard that local organisations can sign up to demonstrating commitment to anti-racism

## **4) Education (Facilitated by Frances Haste)**

- Use the 'Neighbourhoods' platform where schools are at the centre to create a space where schools can regularly meet to harness relationships with VCS organisations and share knowledge and awareness of the referral process
- Working with PRU and education partners to address racism in schools would also help to address a more comprehensive approach and mentoring programme

## **5) Neighbourhoods, housing and gentrification (Facilitated by Georgina Appeageyi)**

- Set up Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) for democratic accountability in housing provision & funding processes
- Build personal capacity so people can actively engage in consultations

## **6) Mental health (Facilitated by Yolanda Lear and Peter Merrifield)**

- Mental health services should focus on families as well as individuals
- Training up Mental health champions with mental health first aid and other trauma informed training
- The importance of clinicians working in mental health services looking like and reflecting the communities they serve to improve trust and safety
- Need for better understanding of LGBTQi+ service users' needs when accessing services

## **7) Disability, long term conditions and older people (Facilitated by Kim-Lien Ong)**

- Access to community venues which are unused, or concession of venue hire for small groups to run health and wellbeing activities which also have a social aspect
- Partnership working to deliver activities or showcase taster sessions to get more people involved in the projects or services
- Better advertising of different activities available

## 8) Refugees and migrants (Facilitated by Caroline Hickey)

- Promoting positive stories to challenge media bias
- Capacity knowledge to ensure recourses are where they need to be
- Trauma informed ways of working with RAM communities, sharing our own experiences and shared learning can lead to stronger networks

## 9) Institutional racism (Facilitated by Sonia Khan)

- Need to see leaders ask questions / frame issues differently - not from a set of norms, values and behaviours that are white, professional and middle class. Example use: vaccine take up - start talking about trust and why people don't trust the system rather than why people don't take up vaccines
- Acknowledged the scale of this issue and that it requires commitment to ongoing work and not just a training session once a year

**Marie Gabriel (MG), Independent North East London (NEL) Integrated Care System (ICS) Chair & Chairperson at NHS Race and Health Observatory**, gave a talk on the ICS, highlighting its remit in improving population health and tackling health inequalities.

- Race and health observatory builds evidence on health inequalities experienced by diverse ethnic groups and identifies actionable, practical recommendations that the NHS and leaders can take to tackle health inequalities
- MG suggested three key themes to becoming anti-racist
  - \* imbedding evidence of knowledge on systemic racism and how it impacts health outcomes
  - \* being prepared for integration of actions in innovating, to move resources away from certain areas to others
  - \* ensuring accountability including continued commitment to capacity building and engagement necessary for achieving anti-racism

**Following a short break for lunch the second breakout sessions were introduced by TW.**

- TW described the aim of the second breakouts was to develop the solutions further, considering factors that would enable or prevent solutions from working, such as commissioning processes, capacity, target population, which organisations could work together and how.

**Breakout session 2 key headlines:**

### 1) Employment and economic empowerment

- Changing person specs on job applications
- Working alongside migrant parents from marginalised communities for them to better understand the education/employment system
- Alternative provisions for school leavers that do not attain necessary qualifications, etc

### 2) Criminal Justice and legal rights

- Local justice panels (recommendation 18 in Lammy report). Important to ensure local recruitment. Panels would have a wide brief including supporting those who are prison leavers HCVS to support and hold the budget for restorative work and the local justice panels and be involved in recruitment.



### **3) Culture, awareness, representation and respect**

- Targets for strategic boards to increase ethnic make-up of those around the table
- Training for system leaders around structural racism, unconscious bias and white privilege – local community leaders should be involved in delivering this
- Ensuring board agendas are such that it allows for full interrogation of how racism impacts on the delivery or implementation of programmes
- Ensuring co-production is collaborative and empowers people properly rather than ticks a box
- Using the wealth of creative talent in the borough to shine spotlights on communities and people on the ground who are changing the lives of others
- Use language that is uniting, not dividing

### **4) Education**

- Involving young people in policies and governance within school, codesign, pupil forums- youth parliament is currently active in most schools
- Safe spaces to express views; anti-racist department in schools to improve accountability
- Improving cultural competency in schools – using VCS groups and young people to deliver
- Triage system for exclusions – no student should be excluded without culturally competent representation as part of the process
- Rebuilding parent champion programmes

### **5) Neighbourhoods, housing and gentrification**

- Potential role of VCS group should be to conduct quality audits of local services
- Meaningful Conversations (build capacity so residents can actively engage in conversations including understanding and challenging what is racist), community practitioners to have direct access to distribute capacity-building vouchers, also data collection for shared issues

### **6) Mental health**

- Mental health champions
- Reducing stigma around mental health
- Need for services to be available for those over 25 years

### **7) Disability, long term conditions and older people**

- Family based approach to working with people from diverse communities
- Needing a triage/reporting system to health professionals when there is someone people have needs and no other services are available to them
- Bid writing support for small community organisations to improve access

### **8) Refugees and migrants**

- Developing a policy strategy on training officers to talk to migrants
- Action plans for gathering resources to optimise capacity
- Producing a dashboard to track progress on solutions and actions
- Quality mark for local services VCs and statutory. Assessed by service users/ professionals etc

### **9) Institutional racism**



- Approach to leadership change to change their mindsets and behaviours that reflect community diversity; training that centres resident lived experience; microaggression policies; public sector equality institution can be a tool
- Consider what it is institutions can do differently as opposed to what is the access issue for the resident

**Rosemary Jawara (RJ), CEO of Beersheba Living Well**

- RJ thanked all who attended and reminded everyone of the available support.
- Highlighted the powerful nature of this meeting and the importance of working together to make City & Hackney anti-racist.

Short feedback / monitoring questions were asked via zoom poll.

RJ reminded that the solutions and discussions from today will be brought together and further discussions will occur to develop these solutions into actions.

**Closing song: Something inside so strong, Labi Siffre.**

“ Brothers and sisters  
 When they insist we’re just not good enough  
 Well we know better  
 Just look ‘em in the eyes and say  
 We’re gonna do it anyway

Something inside so strong  
 And I know that I can make it  
 Though you’re doing me wrong, so wrong  
 You thought that my pride was gone  
 Oh no, there's something inside so strong ”

For further information please contact [Assembly@hcvs.org.uk](mailto:Assembly@hcvs.org.uk)

If you attended the Assembly, please complete this short monitoring questionnaire:  
<https://forms.office.com/r/AuLVZv8TiN>

