

Communities of Interest Virtual Session Notes
Wednesday 22nd July 2020
10:00-11:30am

Attendees

- **Ali Spaul** – Forum Central
- **Amber Wilson** – Basis
- **Ann Crossland** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Annette Morris** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Daisy Morgan** – Forum Central
- **Emily Turner** – Women’s Lives Leeds
- **Iona Lyons** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Jay Anderson** – Leeds Faiths Forum
- **Jez Coram** – Forum Central
- **Karl Witty** – Forum Central
- **Parveen Ayub** - Healthwatch
- **Pip Goff** – Forum Central
- **Sam Powell** – LCC (chair)
- **Wendy Cork** – Advonet

Introductions & check-ins

- **Ann; young people:** concerns around mental health for young people, also affecting younger age bracket (including under 11s); younger people more distanced from labour market due to furlough and redundancies.
- **Annette; BAME community:** engaging with different health bodies including Synergi around mental health; key things around addressing racism within organisational structures; implications of BAME term and not identifying individuals
- **Amber; sex workers:** impact of obligation to wear face masks in shops with women and young people; implications of shops being cashless and struggles to make payments for women with Credit Union so facilitating discussions to see if other banks to get money from; concern around online safety and young people going missing not being picked up by school/other services.
- **Emily; women’s health:** big concern about face masks, and opportunity to supply them through foodbanks; link between how to get back to normal and mental health; increase in accessing services in the coming months.
- **Jez; people with a learning disability and/or Autism:** for people with learning disabilities connected to services and groups, there’s still great confusion over messaging, including people unclear about whether GP/hospital services are open - despite people being connected there’s still confusion so must be much more so for people who aren’t connected to

services. In terms of lone parents, there is concern over the financial impact on smaller organisations/voluntary groups closing down

- **Karl:** issue of what translation of predicted grades mean for employment opportunities for BAME young people.
- **Parveen:** people are still not sure about GPs opening, or confused on how they can access them; Healthwatch is doing a piece of work around outpatient appointments
- **Pip:** mental health; people returning to services - some afraid/don't have mechanism to support them to re-establish connection; older people and loneliness; confused messages around shielding as it comes to an end; also other things starting back up/shifting including housing evictions; enormous financial pressures
- **Sam; migrants, refugees & asylum seekers:** work focused on initial accommodation centre where asylum seekers are housed - Covid outbreak so people dispersed into local authorities; a lot of TS providers around housing meeting regularly around how services can be delivered in the current climate; two cultural food hubs now in place, Hamara and Infinity Give a Gift covering different parts of the city
- **Wendy; people with a learning disability and/or Autism:** anxiety around support including food deliveries ending; increase in mental health e.g. OCD, eating disorders, agrophobia in people who are self-shielding; increase in personalised resources for people as they plan to come back into the communities; focusing on reaching BAME communities - stigma around autism in certain communities; demand for mental health support; benefits; homelessness and fear of eviction; self-advocacy resources are now focusing on specialist groups, particularly migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, BAME communities and finding ways to use resources to help people to access services.

Covid-19 updates/key issues

Shielding

Iona raised a question from the shielding group around whether the latest communication being sent to those who are shielding should be translated into community languages.

- **Wendy** – videos featuring key messages are really useful, but low level of literacy is a concern, do we need something more visual to go alongside letters?
 - Sam confirmed the working group she is part of has been asked to create and translate videos on shielding messages. How will they know which language for which household? Sam will link in with Chetna

around this – consensus is that translating information around shielding adds value.

- Also important that key messages are supported in communities to build confidence.
 - Annette – evidence showed those not registered for shielding support was particularly high in Chapeltown area. Family member mentioned older people are very suspicious, and a lot of people are not paying attention to messages if they get them. Something about using community members to translate/transmit messages as well.

Test & Trace

Sam confirmed the English version of the walk through video for the walk-to test centre in Lincoln Green has now been finalised ([accessible here](#)), which is a useful resource for showing people how the test works.

This will be translated into 11 languages. Please share with your networks, and feedback to Sam and the team on how we can continue to engage with people around these messages.

Ali noted the current centre at Bridge St car park is coming to an end, so they are looking at whether it should be moved. There are also mobile options, and a number of organisations are working closely with Public Health to get postal tests. There's a possibility of consulting with residents and community groups via a survey around where it might be most usefully located, but data about who is accessing the centre isn't available yet. Any thoughts of how to make testing as accessible as possible are welcome.

- **Amber** – the system didn't appear to be set up for service organisation representatives supporting others to get tested, so there was some initial confusion. Not straight forward but process seems to be smoother now.
 - Ali confirmed approx. 70 people a day are accessing the centre
 - A local testing offer has been developed to enable organisations to support individuals who might not be able to navigate the national system. Sam will ask her colleague Laura, who's leading on the outbreak work, to attend a future session so we can explore this conversation further.

Intersectionality & shared action planning

Karl began a discussion following on from conversations he's been having with Pria, Annette and Sam around the Communities of Interest work. These conversations have recently turned to issues around underlying inequalities, and have coincided with resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which has been a strong platform for addressing some of those inequality issues which have been flagged up by this work.

There have been lots of conversations and action taken already around BLM and a strong push to become more anti-racist within the sector and as organisations. Some of this work includes conversations within the Social Care community forum for race equality where there have been discussions around bridging the gap between BAME people and decision makers.

Annette gave an update on the work the BME hub has been doing with organisations to support them in becoming more anti-racist. There has been a shift in terms of urgency in response to Covid and the BLM movement.

- Lots of new hub members have joined, and three sub groups have been very active. The Health & Wellbeing subgroup will be looking at recommendations from the Public Health England document out of Covid
- Also a focus on mental health – the Hub has been invited to join the Synergi group, which looks at the disproportionate number of BAME people in the mental health system.
- Working with Yorkshire & Humber academic research network to look at research on BAME people and in particular, the Covid vaccine and the issue of trust around targeting BAME people. Also having a conversation with director of the Network around how they support leadership within BAME communities.
- Also involved in a BLM core group within LCC led by Councillor Coupar – starting to look at systemic racism within council & wider bodies including public health and the criminal justice system.
- As Karl mentioned, the Social Care community forum is looking at issues of racism within the health system and how we can bridge gap between decision makers with equal levels of engagement.
- Invited to take part in conversations with the National Lottery communities fund, who are looking at how they're engaging with BAME communities, as there's evidence that BAME communities not accessing their funding. How can that balance be addressed?
- Involved with the Independent Advisory Group - organisations want to have conversations around addressing racism within their organisations, to look at and try to break down systems.
- In discussion with DWP and CAB along with Migrant Access Project, working to address the lack of take up for certain funds from BAME communities.

Annette concluded that the Hub is engaging on levels they have not been invited to before, and are opening up discussions in areas where we can start making change.

Karl summarised a Statement of Intent that has been produced by Third Sector Leeds:

In support of Black Lives Matter, Third Sector Leeds will undertake and support actions to:

- *Listen to and amplify black voices*
- *Call out bigotry and hate when heard*
- *Actively become anti-racist in our practices*

- *Stop asking black colleagues to repeat their experiences*
- *Lead on these issues, not expecting our black colleague to do so*

As part of taking this work forward:

- *TSL will prioritise work with partners to create opportunities for leadership with and for our black colleagues and amplify the voices of black led third sector organisations in Leeds*
- *Members of the leadership group will proactively go out to meetings and events held by and with black led organisations in order to enhance engagement*
- *TSL will encourage Leeds' infrastructure organisations to deliver Unconscious Bias training, will promote courses developed by partners and will campaign for our members to use this resource*

Forum Central recently held a Black Lives Matter: Taking Action member session where we reviewed the statement, and explored shared experiences and commitments to action within the group. The session was really well attended and we're looking to continue those conversations.

Throughout these conversations, shared experiences of migrant communities & BAME groups have struck a chord. People who make up those communities are complex and they don't have single identities. Sometimes identities overlap and intersect, with people falling through the gaps of silo-based working. For example, within the context of Covid, young BAME people have experienced a greater mental health impact than young people.

During the next phase of Covid as lockdown eases, we want to ensure we can maintain the momentum that's been gathered, and look at how we can translate the learning into action. No person is just one thing – the benefit of this group is hearing from across experiences, looking at how people are experiencing this particular time, and how inequalities are further impacting how they're experiencing Covid.

Karl posed the following questions:

Reflecting on your organisations experiences of working with, and supporting BAME people during, and before, Covid 19 and your response to BLM:

- 1. What has your organisation learnt/what actions have you taken?**
 - 2. How can we use this learning to help Leeds become a fairer city more generally?**
- **Wendy** – we've set up task group within Advonet; also want to continue previous discussions around the gap in access for people in terms of CAB/advocacy; how do we set up joint work around reaching people who are falling through the gaps because they don't present issues in a neat way – language issues, cultural understanding needed as well as translation; also conscious that our learning disability/Autism groups are very white British;

this is pushing things forward and clear action is needed. Any support with that is really helpful.

- **Ali** – how we can do the work so referral processes get simpler, people can work in increased partnership to help people under one roof, and people don't feel like they're being batted between services

Karl went on to raise the point around translation of learning across the system and whether people feel they have the opportunities to share resources/knowledge/skills to create a more inclusive offer for other groups.

- **Wendy** – lots of brilliant work has gone on through Inclusion for All around access for the Deaf community, and same for Autism, but often suggestions improve access for everyone and presenting information clearly/more visually is helpful across the system
- **Amber** – as part of the Truth project (which challenges poor practice about child sexual abuse) we're working with the ethnic minority advisor to transform her experience into actions to make organisations more welcoming to young people, especially from ethnic minorities. Services and organisations have to be open to people from any community, and we need to ensure services are tailored and welcoming for everyone.
 - Creating an inclusive culture is much harder to do than introducing a process or system. Discussions have highlighted the value of having conversations and sharing learning, in the hope of introducing a more positive, inclusive system.

Karl asked the group for any ideas around how can we share experiences across the system. For example, conversations amongst the Local Care Partnerships have shown that conversations across the third sector don't easily fit in with the rest of the system. How do we bring the wider system along with us in terms of the progress we're making?

- **Annette** – there's a great need moving forward for organisations to communicate and get past the difficulty of addressing 'the elephant in the room.' No matter what service you are, it's important you take a look at the structures of your service and break it down. The front facing elements of your organisation are critical – how your organisation is presented, how you recruit people, information in application forms.
 - There are lots of areas that can be changed quite easily; little changes over time will help us get to where we need to end up.
 - If we want to have a fair and equal society and system for all, it's about breaking down our old ideas and shifting the way we communicate/think about things and what we expect from each other
 - The way people are perceived prevents them from accessing a service. The conversation needs to start somewhere and people need to feel comfortable. We need to feel that this is as important as anything we've ever done.

- **Pip** – Forum Central is doing some work the CCG around its 'Shaping our Future' programme – focused on how commissioning will happen around pathways and themes in the future, rather than block funding. Conscious that this issue needs to be flagged and is one of the key threads in this discussion
 - Being able to have dynamic and progressive conversations is key and that's what people will get by engaging with the third sector
- **Parveen** – Healthwatch has a checklist to ensure that communications we're sending out to people re looked at as a whole – is it accessible to someone who's Deaf for example, or visually impaired, or with a language barrier, and ensuring information is as accessible as possible for people within communities.
- **Emily** – Women Friendly Leeds put out a statement, and did a social media campaign focused on amplifying Black women's voices – real focus on little changes to make a bigger difference; tried to ensure diverse range of women represented in literature; ensure always on team meetings and other agendas so we're constantly addressing it; collecting resources including training, literature to read and adding as a resource hub on the website.
 - Leeds has to be a Women Friendly city for all women, so critical that intersectionality's are considered.
- **Iona** – role-modelling is so important to this. Within the third sector, we're up there with understanding about inequalities and how things are for communities, so it's essential that that's shared. Training is also a huge issue for example, how to manage a complaint of racism from a young person
 - Annette & Sam agreed schools are a key area – it's a historical issue, and a really big problem. If not managed, the child is left feeling isolated and unsupported, which leads to anger amongst parents.
 - Training along an understanding of racism is and how it affects people are crucial.
- **Pip** – important to come back to the discussion around the use of BAME as a short cut.
 - Anette confirmed this is a conversation currently happening within the hub. The use of the term BAME loses a lot of the differences going on. We need to understand what works for individual communities; it's crucial to identity and people feeling like they have a place in society
 - Sam also raised concerns people have around the use of the word 'migrants'.

Sam turned the discussion to the issue of guidance coming in around use of face masks in shops and any issues that people foresee around that.

- **Emily** – how do we provide people with face masks who can't afford them?

- Annette added there is likely to be an issue around implementing the need to wear them for certain communities who haven't been wearing them.
- **Pip** mentioned donated face masks are available through Forum Central and organisations can get in touch if they are short.
 - Availability and access feels like an important issue, and good to have a sense of what we're doing as a city to address this
- Also worth considering community safety and whether people feel unsafe in the dark etc.

As people also coming out of shielding, and there's a lot of anxiety about getting out/people not being able to go 'back to normal'. It's important to communicate around distancing with shielding cohort.