

Age Concern Information and Advice Services for black and minority ethnic older people

A Strategy for London

This report has been prepared by Age Concern London and Sue McClinton of the Age Concern England Fieldwork Team on behalf of the Information and Advice Strategy group of the Age Concern federation in London. Thanks are due to the Age Concern Information and Advice officers across London, whose concern about information and advice services for black and minority ethnic elders led to the mapping exercise, and to the production of the report.

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Age Concern in London has decided that developing Information and Advice (I&A) services for black and minority ethnic older people in London should be a key priority for all federation members. In the summer of 2002 the region agreed that there should be action both locally and regionally on the strategy set out below, which has been incorporated into the wider London Regional I&A Action Plan. Implementation of the strategy will be monitored by the I&A Strategy Group.

Local response

- Each ACO Trustee Board should consider what its organisation will do to take forward the work, as set out on pages 8 to 9 of this report

Regional response

- **Carry out sub-regional pilot projects on:**
 - working with small, dispersed populations
 - sharing Community Language Skills
- **Improve access to funding**
 - produce background information to support funding applications
 - set up a workshop on securing funding for I&A work with BME older people
- **Provide guidance and practical support**
 - prepare guidance for ACO/Gs on role, recruitment, support and management of advisers from BME communities for general and specialist services
 - develop a resource pack on providing and accessing community language services and materials
- **Set up workshops to improve understanding of issues concerning BME older people**
 - cultural workshops – finding out about each other
 - tackling discrimination faced by BME older people

The region has also agreed that priority should be given to integrating I&A services for BME older people into Age Concern's wider work, and to identify ways to recognise and tackle institutional racism. As these apply across Age Concerns, it has been recommended that these should be taken forward by the region as mainstream issues.

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1. Introduction and Summary

This paper:

- provides the background to the London Regional Strategy for Age Concern (AC) information and advice (I&A) services for black and minority ethnic older people and their carers. It incorporates the outcomes of a workshop for staff, senior managers and trustees in September 2001 and of a mapping survey of current AC activity in London in I&A services for black and minority ethnic older people
- highlights lessons from current services provided by Age Concern in London and how the region and individual ACs should build on them
- describes a strategy from which priorities have been agreed by the region (as displayed on the opening page of this report).

The work has been serviced by staff from the London fieldwork team and Age Concern London, an independent consultant and the Chair of the I&A Strategy Group, and was carried out in consultation with members of the Strategy Group, Chief Officers, Trustees and I&A practitioners.

The report argues that:

- the changing demography of London's older population, the force of new legislation and Government initiatives, and requirements of Age Concern, the federation, make it imperative to focus on the needs of black and minority ethnic older people in every area of London;
- the picture of current I&A provision for black and minority ethnic older people provides examples of successful approaches to access, establishing a good basis from which to develop future I&A services. It highlights lessons to take into account in devising a Regional Strategy;
- developing and sustaining I&A services for older people from black and ethnic minority groups will involve co-operation, joint work and sharing experiences and resources at regional and local levels, both within and outside Age Concern;
- additional resources are required to enable individual Age Concerns to move on from where they are towards where they want to be.

2. The Case for a Regional Strategy

London's demography

Diversity

London is diverse in many ways. Made up of 32 boroughs (and their associated Primary Care Trusts), plus the City of London, it is not a single entity. Similarly, there are few generalisations that can be made about all older people in London. For each Age Concern, service provision and the style of the organisation must reflect local needs and populations, at the same time as drawing on and learning from collective experience in the region and elsewhere.

This is of course true for any Age Concern. What makes London unique is its rapidly changing ethnic balance, particularly in the older age groups. According to a 1999 report from the London Research Centre, London has the highest concentration of people from black and minority ethnic populations in late middle age and old age of any part of the country.¹ It will also experience the fastest growth of black and minority ethnic older people in this decade. The 1991 census showed that nearly half of all non-white black and minority ethnic residents over pensionable age in Great Britain were living in London. Census information on the country of birth shows that one in twenty people of pensionable age in London in 1991 were born in Ireland.²

Whereas in England as a whole the number of older people is rising, in London it is projected to fall over the next ten years, but with a rising proportion of black and minority ethnic older people.³ By 2011, projections show that the numbers of people aged 65+ in non-white ethnic groups will be about 140,000, three times the number recorded at the 1991 census.

Black Caribbean elders in London constitute 35 per cent of the total number of older people from non-white black and minority ethnic groups, with Indian elders accounting for a further 31 per cent of the total. The fastest growing groups of ethnic elders between 1997 and 2011 are projected to be older people from the Black African, Other Asian (as listed in the 1991 Census) and Bangladeshi communities.⁴

The Health of Older Londoners report⁵ identifies a number of factors that disadvantage elders from most black and minority ethnic groups (for example in employment and income); and factors that disadvantage particular black and minority ethnic elders. For example Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean elders are less likely to be owner-occupiers, and more likely to be living in social housing than white or Indian groups. Levels of overcrowding are especially high for older people from South Asian ethnic groups. Work with older people from black and minority ethnic groups has consistently shown that they lack the information they need to access services, benefits and other essentials for managing their daily lives.⁶

Within these and other generalisations, it is important to note that all such factors differ within and between ethnic minority groups. Stereotypical assumptions should be avoided through careful research of local circumstances and experience.

What does this picture mean for AC I&A services in London?

Each borough in London is at very different stages in a number of respects, including the percentage of black and minority ethnic elders. These currently vary between 31.5% in Brent and just over 22% in Hackney and Newham, to under 5% in Barking & Dagenham, Bromley, Havering, Hillingdon, Kingston upon Thames, Richmond upon Thames and Sutton. These latter boroughs, however, show the greatest projected change between now and 2011, for instance in Barking and Dagenham, a 73% change from 700 to 1,100; or in Hillingdon, a 78% increase from 1,500 to 2,700.

It is likely that boroughs with high concentrations of a particular ethnic group will have more established services than may be the case in (mostly outer London) boroughs, where black and minority ethnic older people are scattered, or too small in number to warrant a service dedicated to their particular needs. In addition, there are pockets of black and minority ethnic populations in central London boroughs which may be overlooked when the focus for services is on larger, more easily identifiable groups. This means that different factors will affect local responses to local need, requiring analysis of the adequacy of a particular service for an established community, and consideration of the need for inter-organisational, and perhaps cross-borough or pan-London work to meet the needs of scattered or locally small populations.

In all such cases, I&A services have a key role to play in supporting older people to enforce their rights, to gain access to services and to influence the policies and practices that affect the quality of their lives.

Legislative framework

New legislation formalises the need to ensure such services meet the needs of everyone in the population. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires certain public bodies to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups. Where a public authority contracts out a function, it should include non-discrimination and/or race equality performance standards as obligations under the contract, and their effective monitoring and enforcement.⁷

There is currently legal debate about the extent to which a private or voluntary agency carrying out so-called 'public functions' can be said to be a 'public body'. However, a federation like Age Concern which aims to be inclusive of all older people will undoubtedly wish to adopt best practice as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

Other developments have given national and local statutory bodies an increasing role in the provision and regulation of I&A services – for example through the Community Legal Service (CLS), Care Direct, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Best Value indicators. These place an imperative on Age Concern to safeguard access to independent I&A services and, in particular, to support the role of BME community groups in speaking for the interests of their communities.

Institutional racism and equal opportunities

These issues are not just for Age Concern and apply not only to I&A services. The voluntary sector as a whole needs to promote inclusiveness in all its work. The starting point is not a particular service such as I&A (although that can provide a framework for analysis), but whole organisations – how they are structured, how they choose their staff and employees, and how they plan their services to ensure inclusivity and challenge discrimination of all types. Age Concerns are at different stages in this endeavour. The recently published 'Challenging Institutional Racism. A toolkit for the voluntary sector'⁸ is a helpful reference for all organisations in such work. The AC Regional Strategy, and its implementation, will need to take account of the organisational context in which I&A services are provided.

The Age Concern federation

Age Concern, the federation aims to enhance the lives of all older people. A number of national initiatives place a responsibility on Age Concerns to review current practice and act to make changes in services for older people from black and minority ethnic groups. These include:

- **I&A Strategy:** agreed in 1998 and reviewed in 2001 with recommendations, amongst others, to provide greater support and leadership in respect to regional strategy and greater focus on services to black and minority ethnic older people;
- **Quality Counts:** the Organisation Standard for Information and Advice stresses the importance of analysing need, of working with other providers about respective roles in meeting information and advice needs, and the need to evaluate current practice, with plans for development identified, within a timetable;
- **Beyond Rhetoric – a guide to working with ethnic minorities (ACE Research and Development Unit, 2000):** this good practice guide helps those working towards the extension of existing services and the development of appropriate work with ethnic minorities;
- **Black and minority ethnic forum:** a national forum recently established to hear and represent the voices of black and minority ethnic older people. Two representatives from the forum have been elected to the ACE Board of Trustees.

3. Lessons from present practice in London Age Concerns

The September 2001 workshop⁹ and the mapping survey in early 2002¹⁰ provide a number of lessons to take into account in devising a Regional Strategy:

- many Age Concerns in London are actively involved in providing I&A services to ethnic minority older people, either as part of their mainstream I&A service, or as targeted projects;
- in some areas at least, the image of Age Concern in London as a predominantly 'white' organisation should be challenged;
- staff with language and cultural knowledge, within mainstream and targeted services, can encourage take-up and ensure an effective service;
- access to translation and interpreting services is required to support mainstream services;
- ensuring access to I&A services for black and minority ethnic older people can require a targeted response to different populations, in particular through outreach services in community locations;
- work with other local groups, in particular with BME community groups, is a successful and necessary approach to extending access, in particular building personal relationships over time;
- sub regional work across Age Concerns shares expertise and provides an efficient use of resources; a development resource helps to make contacts, uncover needs and develop services;
- racism can exist among trustees, staff, volunteers and users in Age Concerns and must be tackled as part of improving I&A services;
- an organisational context that supports I&A activities is a prerequisite for development, eg a receptionist with language skills, joint work with other Age Concern services, positive attitudes of volunteers and staff towards people from different cultures and nations;
- additional funding to extend and develop services to black and minority ethnic elders could help to make a real impact.

Twenty-two Age Concerns responded to the mapping survey. Detailed findings provide the following picture of Age Concern I&A services in London:

- the pattern and profile of BME populations and Age Concern users varies considerably across and within boroughs and involves many different nations. However, Asian elders are the most likely BME group to be users of Age

Concern services. Where known (15 of 22 respondents), Age Concern users are disproportionately represented by people from BME populations;

- most Age Concerns can show some activity that takes into account the particular needs of black and minority ethnic older people. In the main, this involves tackling access and language barriers through recruitment of BME advisers and through outreach services;
- fewer Age Concerns have services targeted at particular BME populations (9 of 22). These are predominantly provided or supported by paid workers with language skills; all but two are services provided in community locations;
- most Age Concerns mention contacts and/or joint work with local BME community groups and other agencies relevant to working with black and minority ethnic older people;
- most Age Concerns have some specialist resources to draw on to advise BME older people, mainly in the form of people and specialist services. Half have advisers who speak community languages. Over half included information resources or translated materials as part of these resources. This varied from Benefit Agency leaflets to custom-made materials produced by the Age Concern about their services and about rights;
- there is patchy knowledge of Community Legal Service Partnerships (CLSP) activity on black and minority ethnic issues; the impact of CLS is not yet evident and is seen as potentially both negative & positive.

Comments were made by respondents to the survey about the value of translated materials, in particular the need to reach and inform more people about rights and services; to encourage self-referral; and to provide appropriate materials to BME community groups. Translated materials describing Age Concern services and explaining local services, including language support available, were identified as particularly valuable. However, many more concerns were raised about the limitations of translated materials. The general consensus appears to be that staff with language skills are of most use to those whose main language is not English.

4. A Regional Strategy

This section describes the elements of a pan-London Age Concern Information and Advice Strategy for black and minority ethnic older people and their carers, agreed by the regional meeting in June 2002. The Region has prioritised particular elements of the strategy and these are set out on the first page of this report.

The strategy has relevance both regionally and locally. It recognises that Age Concern Information and Advice services are at different stages in their development, with different resources and priorities. However, at the same time, it places an obligation regionally and locally to address the issues and identify appropriate targets for ways forward.

Aims of the Strategy

The aims of the regional strategy are threefold:

- to ensure that black and minority ethnic older people and their carers have access to free, independent and appropriate I&A services, whether through Age Concern or other suitable providers;
- to build capacity of local Age Concerns to provide such services;
- to support the work of black and minority ethnic (BME) community groups to provide such services.

Outcomes for black and minority ethnic elders and their carers

The Strategy will be viewed as successful if some or all of the following can be shown as outcomes – locally and/or regionally – for black and minority ethnic older people and their carers:

- they are aware of and have access to free, independent and appropriate I&A services;
- they have a choice of I&A providers, whether from their own community or from mainstream services;
- they have access to I&A services that are culturally sensitive, including own language services;
- they have access to I&A services that address specific needs affecting them and their community, for example residency rights, health issues and the effects of discrimination;
- they can increase their knowledge, contacts, confidence and influence to tackle quality of life issues, including the policies, practices and services that impinge on them.

The local Age Concern response

Each Age Concern will need to decide an appropriate response, given its local circumstances and the profile of the local population. The strategy recognises local I&A services are at different stages of development and have different resources. There is no expectation that every ACO/G should do everything. However, the local response should take account of the Regional Strategy, and thus the strategy places general expectations on all Age Concerns in London to move towards meeting the needs of black and minority ethnic older people.

To ensure this, Boards of Trustees will need to consider the points raised on this page and the next, and ensure that appropriate local priorities for action are identified that will make a difference to BME older people and carers in their area. In keeping with the agreed strategy, trustees are expected to report progress to the Regional Meeting. The BME audit tool in the Age Concern Information and Advice 'How to' Guide¹¹ could be used. Ways forward described below, are based on successful ways of working identified by Age Concern in London.

At a local level, Age Concerns should:

- know about the ethnic profile of older people in their area;
- know about the needs for I&A services of older people from particular black and minority ethnic populations;
- know about the ethnic profile of people using their I&A service and the particular issues faced by them;
- have contact with BME and other local groups working with black and minority ethnic older people;
- agree, in consultation with local groups, the appropriate contribution from Age Concern in meeting the I&A needs of black and minority ethnic older people, whether directly or in joint working with others;
- work with other agencies to protect and promote access to independent, free and appropriate I&A services, whether through the CLSP or otherwise;
- provide a culturally appropriate I&A service.

An appropriate I&A contribution from Age Concerns will include some or all of the following:

- take referrals from and make referrals to community groups;
- act as a resource to BME community groups in their I&A work, including supporting the development of such groups where none exist;

- use BME community groups as a resource in Age Concern I&A work;
- publicise and promote I&A services available in the area;
- influence statutory and other services to provide appropriate services to black and minority ethnic older people;
- carry out joint activities with other I&A providers to develop appropriate services.

A culturally appropriate I&A service will include:

- a generalist I&A service used by black and minority ethnic older people;
- services targeted at particular populations;
- generalist and targeted services staffed by advisers with cultural knowledge of black and minority ethnic populations in the area; and with community language skills, or with access to community languages;
- reception staff with cultural knowledge, community language skills or access to community languages;
- I&A services provided at locations where older people from black and minority ethnic populations visit;
- information resources, including signposting information, relevant to the particular queries and needs of black and minority ethnic older people;
- access to necessary translated materials and services;
- display of multi-cultural materials and images, inside and outside the premises;
- effective internal referrals and joint work between I&A and other AC staff;
- internal policies and practices that promote equal opportunities and address discrimination.

The regional Age Concern response

The success of the strategy will depend in large part on action taken by Age Concern locally. However, regional action can be taken to support local developments and to encourage and guide Age Concerns in activities likely to make a difference locally.

The regional response has the following elements:

- to promote and, where needed, work to increase the supply of I&A services to black and minority ethnic older people in London, whether through Age

Concern or through other agencies;

- to provide guidance and practical support to Age Concerns in London in meeting the expectations laid down in the Regional Strategy;
- to provide opportunities to share experiences and to gain knowledge about good practice in working with black and minority ethnic older people and communities;
- to ensure that the strategy is relevant to the interests of black and minority ethnic older people and community groups and is linked with other relevant initiatives;
- to monitor the implementation of the strategy and evaluate its progress.

The next sections set out practical steps from which regional priorities have been selected (as shown by *).

Promoting and increasing supply

Action with other London agencies: Age Concern in London will work with other relevant pan-London agencies to monitor and promote the supply of I&A services to black and minority ethnic older people, including monitoring the impact of the CLS on such services, including those provided by smaller groups and BME community groups, and assessing the adequacy of supply for immigration advice. Alongside other agencies, Age Concern in London will make representations to funders and statutory authorities on the current picture of supply and the steps required to ensure adequate provision.

Information about Age Concern services: Age Concern in London will produce a directory of AC I&A services for black and minority ethnic older people, drawing on the results of the mapping survey. The directory will be made available to Age Concerns and to other agencies to promote take-up of these services and to encourage contacts between those providing, or wishing to provide, services.

Action across Age Concerns: Age Concern in London will explore the feasibility of three sub-regional pilots designed to increase access to local I&A services. Lessons and practical tools from each pilot will be made available to other Age Concerns and agencies:

- ***pilot 1 – working with small and dispersed BME populations:** this pilot will explore ways to reach out to, and provide I&A services for black and minority ethnic older people in areas where communities are small or dispersed, or where there are many different ethnic populations. This pilot will include feedback from BME community groups and other agencies as to

the appropriate role required from Age Concerns in these boroughs;

- **pilot 2 – access to immigration advice:** this pilot will explore the appropriate role of Age Concerns in this area and the resources required to carry out this role, including other agencies to which to refer older people;
- ***pilot 3 – sharing community language skills:** this pilot will explore the feasibility of setting up a pool of advisers with community language skills as a resource to neighbouring Age Concerns.

Access to funding: Age Concern in London will provide information for local services seeking funding for I&A services. This will include:

- a directory of existing and potential sources of funding for I&A services to black and minority ethnic older people;
- *background information for use in support of funding applications, including London-wide and borough statistics;
- guidance for boroughwide and sub-regional initiatives to make the most of partnership opportunities, for example through regeneration or neighbourhood renewal initiatives.

*This information will be made available to Chief Officers and other managers with responsibility for I&A services and will form the basis for a funding workshop for them so local circumstances can be applied to general information. The workshop will include practical help in making specific applications. The information will be revised, where necessary, in the light of the workshop.

Guidance and practical support

Age Concern in London will provide guidance and materials for local services and will find ways in which to use these materials inter-actively, for example at events/workshops, with the I&A practitioners network or at Chief Officers' and Trustees' meetings. The following should be considered in deciding priorities for regional action:

- **a resource pack and guidance** on assessing services and for devising a policy and service development plan for I&A services for black and minority ethnic older people. The pack will take its lead from the findings of the mapping survey and will support Age Concerns in their response to and progress reports on the Regional Strategy. The pack will include the Age Concern BME service audit;
- **guidance** on the role, recruitment, support and management of advisers from black and minority ethnic communities for generalist and specialist I&A services. This will be produced with the assistance of Age Concerns

with experience in this area;

- **a training pack** for volunteer and paid advisers on the principles and skills involved in providing I&A generally and to black and minority ethnic older people. This will support the recruitment of advisers from black and minority ethnic communities and will provide a resource for working with BME community groups delivering their own services;
- ***a resource pack** and guidance on providing and accessing community language services and materials, including internet materials and access, accompanied by a database and collection of existing materials/resources in use by practitioners;
- **production of the national I&A leaflet in community languages** identified during the mapping survey.

Sharing practice and gaining knowledge

A programme of events will be provided to assist local Age Concerns to develop their activities. The following subjects should be considered as part of such a programme:

- ***finding out about each other:** the culture, faiths and experiences of different nations and the particular pressures faced by black and minority ethnic elders;
- ***tackling discrimination:** recognising and addressing discrimination faced by black and minority ethnic older people;
- **successful approaches to service provision:** working with BME community groups, providing outreach services, establishing targeted services, recruiting advisers from BME communities;
- **access to and use of community language services and materials:** drawing from the resource pack.

Making the links

Age Concern in London will ensure that the Regional Strategy is, and continues to be, relevant to the interests of black and minority ethnic older people and community groups. Older people and community groups should influence the strategy and its work at local and regional levels.

Age Concern in London will ensure that strategic and operational links are made with other Age Concern initiatives. This will include:

- links to the Pathways project;

- sharing the Strategy and its outcomes with others in the federation;
- ensuring that Quality Counts requires members of the federation to mark progress in providing services to black and minority ethnic older people and in improving equal opportunities in organisational arrangements and service provision.

*Age Concern in London will ensure that I&A services for black and minority ethnic older people are supported and integrated within the work of the wider Age Concern organisation or group. To this end, a workshop for senior managers and trustees will be devised to examine the policies and practices required to support and integrate I&A services for black and minority ethnic older people and to identify ways to recognise and tackle institutional discrimination.

Evaluating progress and making it happen

The Regional Meeting will be responsible for monitoring progress and evaluating the success of the strategy. Age Concern in London will agree how best to discharge this responsibility and at what stages, and how, the progress should be reviewed.

Age Concern in London will seek resources for the implementation of the strategy, including recruitment of a regional development worker to support the implementation of the strategy.

October 2002

References

1. Many available figures from the Census give information about non-white groups, and draw on figures for 'place of birth' to judge numbers of other minorities in the white population, such as Irish people, and those from Turkey and Eastern Europe. The latter groups may form 'hidden' minority groups within the population. Where possible we make clear the groups we are referring to, but in all cases figures are usually just indicative of the scale of population numbers.
2. Health strategy for London. Rapid review of older people in London. Presented to the NHS Executive, London. London Research Centre, 1999.
3. The discussion in this section, and all figures quoted, are from 'Health of Minority Ethnic Elders in London. Respecting diversity'. The Health of Londoners Project, 2000. It should be remembered that the figures are based on projections from the 1991 Census; it will be essential to update this information as 2001 Census figures become available in 2003. In particular, these figures will give information about some white minority ethnic groups, such as Irish people.
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. See, for example, 'Elders' Health, the Voice of Experience', Age Concern London 2000; 'Listening Event for Older People from Black and Ethnic Minority Communities, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey'. Age Concern England, 2001.
7. The General Duty to Promote Racial Equality: guidance for public authorities on their obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Commission for Racial Equality, 2001.
8. ROTA, LVSC, ALG, 2002 – download from www.actionlink.org.uk, www.rota.org.uk or www.alg.gov.uk or order in hard copy from LVSC, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA.
9. Improving access by black and minority ethnic elders to Information and Advice Services. Workshop Day 6 September 2001. Report available from Jacque Reynolds at Age Concern England field work department, tel 020 8765 7423.
10. The work of Age Concern I&A Services in London. Survey findings and questions arising. March 2002. Benson-Waterhouse. Available from Age Concern London, tel 020 7346 5968.
11. Running Information and Advice Services: A "How To" Guide. Available from John Edwards at Age Concern England on 020 8765 7468

Practical Examples of I&A BME Work

Local circumstances mean that ACOs and Groups will implement the Strategy in different ways. A 'horses for courses' approach will be needed, but each horse must have a course.

To show what elements of the Strategy might look like in practice, examples are given from five Age Concerns in London. They are from boroughs with small and large minority ethnic populations, with long established services, or where development is at an early stage. These examples give an idea of steps that local Age Concerns can, and do, take in meeting the I&A needs of older people from minority ethnic communities.

Age Concern Barking & Dagenham

Contact: Claire Ramm 020 8270 4921

What we do

There is a very small population of minority ethnic elders in the borough. We don't have specialist resources for our work with these communities and our I&A staff don't have community language skills. We have begun the Sunrise Centre for African Caribbean Elders and our I&A workers will make monthly sessional visits to the Centre. We are part of an Age Concern sub-regional group (Redbridge, Havering and Waltham Forest) which looks at developing services for ethnic minority older people. This group is devising a questionnaire for elders to help us identify gaps, access issues and other needs, to assist us in our future planning. The group is also planning a workshop for BME older people (from all four boroughs) to participate and have their say on what services they need.

What works well

Going out to where BME older people meet in order to promote the Age Concern I&A service.

What we'll do next

We have funding from the Community Fund to employ a part-time BME I&A worker, who will link into our African Caribbean Centre, as well as doing outreach work in the community. We plan to make further funding applications to expand our I&A service overall, to enable more outreach services to be set up in the local area. For the future we are intent on getting information and other materials printed in different languages.

Age Concern Brent

Contact: Daksha Chauhan 020 8450 0550

What we do

65% of people using our I&A service are from BME communities. We have generalist advisers and volunteers who speak Gujarati, and a number of other languages, working from the Age Concern office. For fifteen years Age Concern Brent has been working to ensure that its I&A services reach older people from black and minority ethnic communities, who make up a large percentage of the borough's diverse population.

Specific services include:

- A Gujarati-speaking advice worker
- Outreach sessions during the annual Your Rights week, targeted at minority ethnic groups
- A weekly advice surgery in Stonebridge, one of the most deprived wards
- Interpreting, when necessary.

Other initiatives include:

- An advice and advocacy monitoring group, which meets quarterly and includes representation from a number of minority ethnic community groups
- A health factsheet, distributed to 450 black and minority ethnic older people
- Work alongside minority ethnic groups, providing training and information updates to their volunteers.

What works well

The recruitment of Gujarati-speaking advisers has prompted an increase in queries from these communities. Home visits, outreach, talks and benefit take-up sessions targeted at particular communities help to make contacts with local BME groups and to reach out to older people.

What we'll do next

We are in the process of setting up Information Desks, staffed by volunteers with language skills, in the most deprived wards and where there is a high percentage of older people from a specific ethnic group.

Where we get money

We get money from the local authority for two advice worker posts and have decided to designate one post as a Gujarati-speaking post. We also get funds from the Community Fund and from Stonebridge Housing Trust. We have a small fund to buy in interpreters as necessary.

Age Concern Bromley

Contact: Ellie Boon 020 8315 1850

What we do

We have a small population of older people from BME communities, estimated at 986 in 2001. Very few contact us direct for I&A. We have few specialist resources for working with these communities but do have access to language line and interpreters through Bromley Refugee Network and the Primary Care Trust Health Development Unit. We hold information about organisations that work with minority ethnic elders, and publicise our services through outreach work, for example sessions at the Black Caribbean lunch club, talks to the Bromley Asian Cultural Association, day centers and so on.

In 2000, we approached the main BME communities and forums in the Borough to discuss with them how we could work together. Specific I&A needs were identified as a basis for joint work.

What works well

We have good communication with the BME community groups, the local BME forum and with other agencies in order to take forward work.

What to avoid

Assuming we are the most appropriate organisation to provide the service on our own.

What we'll do next

A consortium of agencies, including Age Concern Bromley, obtained funding from the London Borough of Bromley for a 2 year pilot project, initially working with 3 communities: Black Caribbean, Asian and Somali. The project has a full time development worker employed by Bromley Racial Equalities Council (BREC). The project includes and goes beyond providing I&A services and hopes to support older people from BME communities to articulate and identify social and health care services that are needed. Work will be carried out with local agencies, statutory and voluntary, to increase their capacity to meet needs, to promote awareness of existing BME projects and strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the BME community sector to deliver mainstream services.

In addition, we will be appointing an I&A worker who will develop outreach work with BME older people and, among other duties, will work closely with the development worker based at BREC.

Where we get money

The London Borough of Bromley Development Fund supports the REC development worker. The I&A worker is two-year funding from a legacy.

Age Concern Hillingdon

Contact: Katie Beveridge 01895 431 331

What we do

BME elders are a very small fraction of our users, much lower than the proportion in the community. Our Development Officer, shared with Age Concerns Ealing, Hounslow, and Hammersmith & Fulham, is building links with BME groups. She is currently working with two Asian Women's Groups in the borough in a supporting role. She is trying to identify other groups.

African Caribbean elders are dispersed and isolated through the borough. Our Advocacy Project Co-ordinator is going to establish links with African Caribbean elders and research their needs.

In partnership with Hillingdon Race Equality Council we have obtained funding for two part time workers to establish "Access to Health" for Asian and Somali elders. We have Benefits Agency leaflets in various languages and plan to translate a summary of all our leaflets into community languages.

What works well

Face-to-face contact, access to someone with language skills and an understanding of and respect for diversity.

What to avoid

Telephone contact and written information that is not in the relevant first language. Giving established community groups the impression that we wish to do anything other than support them.

What we'll do next

We are applying to "Opportunities for Volunteering" for a coordinator to recruit volunteers from the black and minority ethnic communities. We are applying to "Supporting People" for two part time BME community workers – one for benefits and one for I&A. Our cross-borough ethnic minority development officer is applying to ALG for ongoing funding; and to the Sports Council for two part-time ethnic minority elders for health promotion activities across the four boroughs. The Ekta Asian Women's group will have an office based in Age Concern Hillingdon and will provide I&A to Asian older people.

Where we get money

The Community Fund gave us permission to use an underspend to fund our African Caribbean worker in her research; and to fund the translation of publicity for the Advocacy Project. The Primary Care Trust gave funding to the REC and Age Concern to fund the "Access to Health" workers. ACE gave a grant to Ekta towards a lunch club.

Age Concern Tower Hamlets

Contact: Brenda Evans 020 8981 7124

What we do

37% of people using our I&A service are from BME communities. Our current generic advice worker speaks Sylheti. We produce leaflets about our advice service in different community languages, usually Bengali. Our 60+ Guide is also provided in Bengali. We have summaries of key Factsheets produced in Somali, Chinese and Vietnamese. We have a female part time Bengali adviser who, alongside Bengali speaking volunteers, provides outreach services in community venues, including at a Women's Centre in order to meet the particular advice needs of women. We also have a bilingual adviser (one day a week) who takes referrals from the Home Service/Handyperson project. We provide home visits to housebound BME older people. We attend regular meetings with other local providers, actively liaising with Bangladeshi day centres to increase awareness of our services. Until recently, we also had an advocacy project working with Bangladeshi and Somali elders, which had two bilingual workers. However, this closed in August 2002 due to lack of funding. Replacement funds are being sought.

What works well

Our Bengali advice worker, and outreach work based within community organisations. Separate sessions for older women. Promoting ACE grants to local BME groups assists in building good relations. Translated materials work well in some cases, but bilingual staff are more important than translated materials because not all Bangladeshi elders can read Bengali, and few Somali elders read or write. Our bilingual Bengali speaking reception worker provides information, signposts to other services and provides administrative support to the advice service such as booking appointments and updating information materials.

What to avoid

Avoid working through a third party eg a son or daughter – other people don't always know what an older person wants for themselves and may stop a proper discussion of what is needed.

What we'll do next

A joint funding application is currently being prepared with Age Concern Newham around the advice needs of Somali elders in the two boroughs. This population straddles the two boroughs. We are seeking to consolidate the funding for established work with Bengali elders.

Where we get money

The Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT), ACE and Lloyds TSB Foundation.

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