



A NEEDS ANALYSIS RESEARCH PROJECT FOR SUTTON OCTOBER 2020

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to identify the needs of the older black population (African and Caribbean people) living in the London borough of Sutton. This report is partly born out of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown and how this may have impacted those 65 years and over within this population.

This report will cover the current delivery of services that are offered specifically to those from the Black African and Caribbean populations, how the main organisations engage with these populations, what needs to be done and how this can be achieved.

A BME Needs Analysis Research Project for Sutton

Introduction

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Black African and Caribbean Data in Sutton

To have a better understanding of this population, data was gathered from the Sutton Council website. This data shares the latest estimates and projections for the population within the borough in order that they can plan services accordingly. The projected data for the total population of Sutton is approximately 206,075, of this 100,558 are male and 100,517 are female which equates roughly to a 50/50 split between these two groups. As we begin to further break this data down, the projected figures for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) populations is 58,000 which equates to approximately 28% of the total population, of these 9,930 are of Black African and Caribbean population; these further breakdown as 6,455 of African origin and 3,475 of Caribbean origin.

As a percentage the black population make up approximately 4.7% of Sutton, however, what is not clear from the data is what percentage of this are children, adults and seniors. This information would be useful to enable services to be better targeted at the specific groups, to ensure that the most vulnerable within this population are catered to.

What we were able to gather from the data was that the percentage of people 65 years and over in Sutton was approximately 15.6% a figure of 31,997 people, which is more than 3% of the London average of 12.2% and 3% under the national average of 18.5%.

Delivery of Services for Black People in Sutton

Based on a desktop search of the services currently available to older black people within the borough, a few organisations were identified. The African and Caribbean Heritage Association (ACHA), work specifically with those from these backgrounds with a remit of promoting health and wellbeing within this group through offering a range of activities to deliver their objectives. Sutton and Surrey Citizens Club work with older black and ethnic minority people in the borough, and Sutton African and Caribbean Cultural Association (SACCA), is a registered charity that works in partnership with other local organisations to highlight issues that affect people from these communities.

Out of the many organisations and charities based in Sutton these were the ones that specifically catered to the Black African and Caribbean populations. In addition to these the other main organisations that people from these populations may access included Age UK, Alzheimer's Society Sutton, Sutton Mental Health Foundation and The Stroke Association Sutton.

Although there seems to be a variety of services within the borough, what is of interest is how these organisations engage with older black African and Caribbean people.

A Small Charities Perspective

In order to gain further insight into these organisations and challenges that they may face, one of the charities that catered specifically to Black African and Caribbean people in the borough was invited to share their experiences. The following is a summary of their responses:

- Services that target black people is limited
- BAME term used generally, therefore does not take into account cultural needs of different BAME groups
- Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement started discussions that could lead to changes in how black people are supported in the community
- Older Black people with no extended family can lead to social isolation
- Many older Black people do not have access to suitable technology
- Churches which were key forms of support are missed during lockdown
- Need to encourage younger people to become Board of Trustees in order to implement new ways of working and sustain the charity/groups long term
- Only two main organised groups/charities in Sutton that are specifically Black led.
- Black people are spread throughout the Borough which can lead to isolation due to transport challenges
- There was limited support for Black groups to write bids, given they have no paid staff.
- Struggle by Black groups/charities to access support from emergency COVID-19 funding due to quick turnaround of bids
- Black groups unlikely to have reserves due to years of underfunding
- Black groups rely mainly on volunteers and unpaid staff, funders need to rethink how they fund Black groups.

As can be seen from the points raised there are a lot of perceived challenges and barriers for groups working specifically with this population within the Borough.

What the Research Shows

According to the Political Studies Association (PSA, 2019), people from BAME communities are less likely to complain about services even when that service is less than satisfactory. Further, spending cuts on BAME support groups can lead to isolation for some older people within these populations; as well as the deep seated socio-economic and structural inequalities leading to poor health outcomes and higher risks of life-limiting illness; which result in issues that often go unrecognised by those who make the policies affecting these groups (PSA, 2019).

According to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI, 2020) Black men and women are four times more likely to die from COVID-19 than white men or women. Therefore, organisations that are able to reach and offer support to people from these populations, in particular those deemed more vulnerable are needed now more than ever. Research into the care needs of people from BAME communities show, their needs are currently not being met by the system (PSA, 2019).

How do the larger organisations engage with black African and Caribbean people in need of their services?

What is known from the research around dementia is that, people from BAME communities often face delays in diagnosis and in accessing services, although it is believed that the prevalence within certain BAME groups is high (Hart, 2019). The Alzheimer's society has acknowledged that research exploring the experiences of different BAME communities is lacking, which in turn impacts the way in which they are able to make appropriate cultural adaptations, to the types of interventions and services they are able to offer (Hart, 2019).

The All-Party Parliamentary group (APPG) on dementia, compiled a report in 2013 which was designed to look at the experiences of BAME communities who were living with this condition. One area of interest which was highlighted within the report, was around those from the Windrush era, and the impact of this on those suffering from this condition. In particular, around reminiscence work, which has shown to be very therapeutic for many with dementia. What the APPG (2013) realised was that this work could prove to be traumatic for this population. In that, uncomfortable memories of their earlier experiences, such as being some of the first immigrants to arrive and settle in the United Kingdom (UK) post-war, and how they were received could become problematic to their mental health and overall wellbeing. Therefore, despite these organisations having significant amounts of funding to do their work, there still seem to be large gaps in how they are able to successfully engage with black African and Caribbean communities.

Barriers impacting how Black African and Caribbean communities engage with larger organisations

The Mental Health Foundation (MHF, 2019), recognises that those from BAME communities who have experienced or still experience racism in their personal lives, could lead to an increase of stress and result in negative effects on their overall health and mental health. The MHF (2019) recognise that racism could be a result of many things, from a casual slight, which many black African and Caribbean people sometimes feel they have to deal with as a result of unconscious bias, to more explicit comments and verbal or physical abuse. Further, for some within these community's mental health is still quite a taboo subject, and still viewed unfavourably by many from these communities, therefore leading to barriers in those needing support as a result of them not engaging with these services. What is also concerning, is that according to MHF (2019), those from Black African and Caribbean communities' risk of psychosis is nearly seven times higher than those from white populations. However, despite these figures many people from these groups are still not receiving the support and help they need.

Other areas that could affect why Black African and Caribbean people do not engage with the larger organisations could also be a result of access. For many Carers of the BAME elderly, the access to state funded support is a lot less than their white counterparts (PSA, 2019); further, assumptions are also made that the families of these communities will 'care for their own'. Additionally, due to lack of culturally specific services, such as dementia care, many older people from BAME communities prefer to use generic care services that are tailored to their ethnic needs (APPG, 2013).

Finally, it is estimated that the proportion of older BAME people 65 years and over is predicted to rise by 1.3 million in 2026 (PSA, 2016), therefore there is a need to focus on services that cater specifically to the these groups, so that they are not overlooked by the policy makers during the planning stages.

Meeting the Needs of Black African and Caribbean Communities within the Borough

What we know is that in spite of the good work that the larger organisations within the borough are doing, there are still gaps in how they are able to reach this group. Although they are sympathetic to their needs they are not able to directly engage with the group, successfully. This could be in part, due to the lack of collaborative work that these organisations engage in with the smaller grassroots groups and charities who have a more invested relationships with their members and clients (APPG, 2013). As well as the assumption that many of these groups do not like to ask for charity, even if the offer is there (PSA, 2019).

Based on the research the next few years are important to ensure that the needs of this community are met. What we know is that those 65 years and over are some of the fastest growing population in the UK; as well as the impact that the COVID-19 crisis has created for many within this group. By taking the steps that are needed now we can better support the needs of this group and reduce the many inequalities they face moving forward (PSA, 2019).

What is needed is a cultural approach to engagement. Usually, when larger organisations reach out to smaller groups to work with their members and clients, there is usually no monetary compensation for this arrangement. If we desire to see more engagement by these groups of the larger well-funded organisations, then good practice would be to create links between the ethnic minority community groups and charities, and the local specialist services, such as those offered by the Alzheimer's society (APPG, 2013); by collaborating and offering training to these groups they are then armed with the knowledge and tools to better support their clients, and have a better relationship with the local organisations within the borough, whilst maintaining their autonomy.

Another area where positive changes can be made is how we support those with mental health illnesses and conditions. By creating culturally appropriate treatment and interventions we can increase the cultural competency in these services; through ensuring that small things such as culturally appropriate foods are served to those from this community, to the ethnic diversity of staff. Additionally, staff from the larger organisations can be trained to have a better understanding of the effects that unconsciousness cultural bias can have on the mental health and wellbeing of this group, so that we can reduce the incidences of experiences of discrimination that can occur as a result of this (MHF, 2019).

During the initial lockdown, Advice Support Knowledge and Information (ASKI) was able to acquire funding from the Sutton Rebuild Fund, which enabled them to undertake some initial research into the needs of the Black communities in Sutton. As a result of this, Place At My Table (PAMT) was set up, with the intention of tackling some of the inequalities and challenges outlined in that report. As a Black led charity, PAMT has the infrastructure to work with larger charities and the statutory sector to bring about change and move towards creating a level playing field for those working with vulnerable Black men and women in the Borough of Sutton. As it will be sympathetic to the needs of the smaller Black groups and engage directly with them, whilst having a proven track record of engaging with the larger organisations.

PAMT will be the 'bridge' between the smaller black groups and charities, and the larger organisations, that will enable better outcomes for all. For example, during the initial COVID-19 crisis, funding applications came up quite quickly with relatively short deadlines. This left smaller groups and charities unable to access and apply for funding successfully, due to lack of staff and structure within their organisation. The role that PAMT will play is that of facilitator, to support these groups and charities to apply for these funds when they become avail-

able, and work with them to ensure that they understand what they need to do and have in place, in order to be better prepared when funding opportunities arise.

Conclusion

This report has provided some initial insights into the current delivery of services that are offered specifically to those from the Black African and Caribbean populations, within the borough of Sutton, as well as how the larger main organisations are able to engage with these populations.

What it has highlighted is that although the services are available, many of the smaller groups and charities that cater specifically to Black African and Caribbean communities do not feel like they have the support they need to function autonomously.

There is a need for more collaborative work to happen between the larger mainstream organisations and the smaller Black led groups and charities. Additionally, services offered by the main organisations need to be culturally sensitive to the needs of these groups, so that their needs are catered to both now and in the future.

Finally, case studies that involved understanding the direct needs of those users from the Black African and Caribbean communities within the borough would be beneficial. This would support and encourage more open dialogue from those accessing and using these services, whether one of the smaller black led groups and charities or the larger main organisations within the borough. This would enable all the stakeholders and players involved to be able to provide these services as they will have a clearer understanding of what these needs are.

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