

Information/Discussion Paper

Review of the council's work with black and minority ethnic communities

8 November 2010

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed.

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1** In the 2010 – 2015 corporate strategy, there is a commitment to “*Review our approach to working with communities of interest to ensure that the council continues to meet the needs of the communities who are most in need.*” The strategy identifies Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny’s role in helping to identify these priority communities.

2. Background to the work with black and minority ethnic communities

- 2.1** The 2001 census showed that 96.7% of our population was of white origin and that 3.3% were from black and minority ethnic groups. However, more recent experimental data from the ONS (mid-2007 estimates) shows the proportion of our population from these groups has increased to 6%. This is likely to continue to grow as black and minority ethnic school children make up nearly 14% of the school population.

- 2.2** The council appointed a community capacity worker in October 2007 to work with communities of interest across the borough, to help them identify and address their needs, and to become more actively involved in local community development and regeneration issues and initiatives. The current focus of the work supports black and minority ethnic communities in Cheltenham, and the post supports the wider work of the council in a number of ways:

- It helps the council fulfil its statutory duties under the race relations (amendment) act 2000 to promote race equality including the duty to promote good race relations;
- It supports the council to fulfil its statutory “duty to involve” as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This requires councils to take any steps they consider appropriate to involve local people in the delivery of its services.

- 2.3** In terms of the current work programme, the key objectives of the post are as follows:

- Engagement and participation;
- Health and Wellbeing;

- Enhancing the provision of arts and culture;
- Building safer and stronger communities;
- Partnership working.

This report provides a brief overview of progress made against the five areas before going on to provide more information about other communities in Cheltenham.

3. Engagement and participation

3.1 In terms of engaging with black and minority ethnic communities, the main challenge is that the communities are small and dispersed; there is no critical mass to work with and each community has its own dynamics, priorities and needs.

3.2 The capacity worker has developed a varied range of alternative methods and models that directly involve and empower groups and individuals within the community, and enable people to work collectively. As a result we have established working relationships with a diverse range of communities including Eastern European, Chinese, Hindu, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Gujarati, Sikh and Arab groups.

3.3 This year the emphasis has been on bringing individuals and groups from different communities together to take part capacity building, consultation, and information sharing activities.

3.4 Engagement through the Community Ambassadors

3.4.1 Initially set up as a pilot, the community ambassadors were set up to support the capacity worker to disseminate information to different communities. 12 volunteers were recruited from the Bangladeshi, Polish, Chinese, Malaysian and Pakistani communities. They received training that enabled them to provide 2-way communications between their community contacts and agencies.

3.4.2 Cheltenham West End Partnership, (CWEP) was asked to provide the training to enable the ambassadors to understand and relay factual information provided by agencies to their community contacts.

3.4.3 The community ambassadors scheme was launched in April 2010 at the Everyman Theatre and the event included a play (commissioned by the Everyman) based on the experiences of the ambassadors. It is called "You People", and examines how individuals from different communities struggle with jargon, bureaucracy, and colloquialisms. The play was repeated as part of the 2010 Literature Festival and was also performed in the council chamber to an audience of officers and members.

3.4.4 The community ambassadors group has been re-named CHAMPS (Cheltenham Ambassadors for People and Services). Government funding, secured in February 2010, has enabled CWEP to extend this pilot to be rolled out to target deprived areas and will see an additional 50 more ambassadors recruited and trained.

3.4.5 The community ambassadors group have worked with a wide range of partners including working with Gloucestershire Constabulary on a "Cultural Fusion" event, 2gether Trust on a mental health consultation, CBC on the budget consultation and GAVCA on an event to promote understanding and representation of the Gloucestershire VCS Assembly.

3.5 Engagement through Sahara-Saheli - a new community group

3.5.1 A "healthy mind, healthy body" pilot has led to the formation of a new community women's group called Sahara –Saheli, which means supportive friends.

3.5.2 The group is unique as women from the Gujarati and Bangladeshi communities are

now working in collaboration, despite language and cultural barriers. This is the first time that women from these communities have come together, or felt confident enough to want to take on the responsibilities associated with becoming a constituted voluntary group.

3.6 Engagement with young people

- 3.6.1** In partnership with leisure@ and the council's sports development officer we delivered a six week football pilot that enabled us to engage with a group of 20 young men ranging from 16- 24 years.
- 3.6.2** These young men are from a diverse range of communities, including Bangladeshi, English, and Indian. Many of them have said that they would normally be "walking round the streets and maybe getting into trouble".
- 3.6.3** They were grateful for the opportunity to get together, and to have a point of contact for a range of queries including, housing, apprenticeships, and work experience, volunteering and leisure pursuits.

4. Health and Wellbeing

- 4.1** We have worked in partnership with leisure@ to provide weekend exercise classes, and lunchtime swimming sessions that have been attended by women from all communities.
- 4.2** We have collaborated with a wide range of partners to deliver the "healthy mind, healthy body" pilot at St Paul's Church and the numbers have gone from 9 to 25 in less than eight weeks. Participants have said that the weekly get together has given them a new lease of life. They have moved from isolation to engagement and are more aware of support and service provision. Activities included:
- Health checks, and "sit-fit" armchair exercises delivered by the council's healthy lifestyles officer;
 - A range of emotional health and wellbeing activities delivered by 2gether NHS Trust including gaining control of panic disorder, positive steps to wellbeing, understanding dementia and coping with stress, anxiety, depression;
 - Support for carers - Carers Gloucestershire;
 - Services for older people – GCC (Community and Adult Care Directorate).
- 4.3** In November we are planning an event to promote emotional health and wellbeing. It is a partnership event with the 2gether Trust and the council's Play Development Team.

5. Enhance provision of arts and culture

- 5.1** The capacity worker has used Cheltenham's tradition of arts and culture and its associated infrastructure to develop specific projects with black and minority ethnic communities. The outreach team from the Everyman Theatre worked with the Sahara-Saheli group to produce a batik wall hanging that is now on display at the Museum and Art Gallery. The same team worked with the community ambassadors to capture their experiences of living in Britain that formed the basis of the "You People" play.

- 5.2** In February 2011, a partnership event with the Everyman Theatre will enable the

community ambassadors to produce, promote and deliver an week of events that will bring different local communities together to entertain and inform. The Everyman's Studio theatre will be the venue for stage and screen performances. The events will be advertised to the public via the Everyman and the Community Ambassadors network to attract a diverse audience.

6. Building safer and stronger communities

6.1 The Prevent agenda

6.1.1 This is a strand of work that aims is to stop people, especially young people, getting drawn into illegal activities associated with violent extremism. The Constabulary have a countywide action plan, but local authorities, have an important role to play as they are in a position to engage with communities, hear their concerns, and monitor tensions.

6.1.2 The BME work programme has delivered activities that contribute to this work. For example the community ambassadors promoted, and some took part in "Operation Nicole" a police cohesion training exercise that brings agencies and communities together to understand each others priorities and concerns.

6.2 Inter-faith Week

6.2.1 In November, Cheltenham Borough Council, Cheltenham Inter Faith, and the University of Gloucestershire multi-faith Chaplaincy Team, are coming together to deliver an event to mark National Inter-Faith Week.

6.2.2 The evening will be community-led, as individuals from all faiths will share a piece of music, a reading, story or poem that is significant to their religious tradition.

7. Partnership working

7.1 As confidence and trust has grown, the capacity worker has had to forge good working relationships with a diverse range of partners to meet the expectations of members of our black and minority ethnic communities. The worker how helps resolve an increased number of complex queries such as dealing with hate crime, housing and domestic violence. For instance, the worker has supported the Polish community who had specific queries regarding applications to choice based lettings. An information session for the Polish community was delivered by Cheltenham First Stop with the community agent providing interpretation. Both the community and the agency came away with a better understanding of some of the issues they each face.

7.2 The impact of this body of work has enabled communities to become stronger and sustainable, more visible and cohesive and more involved in decision-making processes.

7.3 We have created effective communication mechanisms via the community groups and the community ambassadors. The new CHAMPS network provides a single point of contact for representative consultation, thereby providing a valuable resource that also eliminates the need for costly interpretation.

8. Key learning points include:

8.1 The good practice and lessons learned can be applied in a wider context that will contribute to the council's corporate priorities.

8.2 Effective engagement and participation drives community development and we have established models of engagement and good practice that can be adapted to work with communities of place and interest and the equality strands.

- 8.3 We have demonstrated that when trust, rapport and confidence have been built we are able to bring together individuals and groups that would not naturally come together.
- 8.4 We have promoted volunteering opportunities by enabling individuals to work in pairs or small groups. This has overcome language and confidence barriers and empowered them to become more involved in local issues and activities.
- 8.5 The post has enabled agencies from the statutory and voluntary to develop much closer working relationships with our black and minority ethnic communities.

9. Working with other communities – Cheltenham’s demographic profile

- 9.1 The work with Cheltenham’s black and minority ethnic communities is at a mature stage. There continues to be significant needs within these communities, but the focus of the work will be to strengthen and develop the structures we have put in place in order that they become self-sustaining.
- 9.2 The committee is asked to consider whether a similar approach could be developed with other communities in Cheltenham. To help the committee, this report sets out some of the latest data about our communities.
- 9.3 Older people - Cheltenham already has an ageing population with 21.7% of people are aged 60 or over but this figure is predicted to increase to 29% by 2033, an increase of over 12,000 people. This growth is at the expense of younger people where there is a predicted decline in overall numbers. We know that whilst some older people will remain fit and active for longer, there is still likely to be significant issues with vulnerable and isolated older people that will require additional health, social care and housing services.

age	2009 mid-year estimates	%	2015	2026	2033	%	% growth (2009 to 2033)
0-19	26,363	22.7	25,950	26,590	25,180	19.8	-4.5
20-39	34,349	29.5	34,270	31,710	31,200	24.5	-9.2
40-59	30,363	26.1	31,900	33,250	33,640	26.4	10.8
60-79	19,020	16.4	20,540	24,970	26,760	21.0	40.7
80+	6,149	5.3	6,440	8,350	10,590	8.3	72.2
	116,244	100	119,100	124,870	127,370	100.0	

(source GCC)

Disability - Cheltenham has some significant issues with disability, with over 17,000 people declared that they have a limiting long-term illness. Community and Adult Care have 4,500 service users in Cheltenham with a large proportion of these having some form of physical disability. Mental ill-health is prominent with nearly 1,700 people in receipt of incapacity benefit due to mental illness and an estimated 16,400 cases of neurotic disorder. (Source Gloucestershire eJSNA v3.3)

- 9.4 Carers - In terms of support, there are nearly 10,000 people providing some form of unpaid care in Cheltenham.
- 9.5 Deprivation - Whereas in 2004 only one Cheltenham area appeared in the top 10% of most deprived areas, there are now two tightly defined super-output areas which are the regeneration area in St. Pauls and Monkscroft in St. Marks. There is a band of

deprivation that runs east west from Springbank, Hesters Way, St. Peters, St. Pauls and Oakley with the two deprivation hotspots of St. Marks and St. Pauls.

10. Moving forward

- 10.1** The work of the capacity worker will be important to the council in the forthcoming period in working with these disparate groups to give them a Cheltenham identity.
- 10.2** As the council moves forward to become a commissioning body, it will need to develop a more co-ordinated approach to community development, engagement and participation. This will ensure that commissioning decisions are taken using an accurate picture of needs in our communities and that we are clear about our communities' priorities.
- 10.3** Equally important will be the need to build up capacity in local communities in line with the concept of the Big Society. As the public sector finances decline, we need communities to be more confident/resilient and able to take on and resolve community issues that might normally be the preserve of the "state". This means that the public sector needs to recognise the huge benefits of community action and take communities seriously; this means not thinking that the public sector way is the right way but that the right way will be developed in partnership with others.
- 10.4** In addition, the council will continue to have statutory obligations to promote equality and diversity and to engage with communities that are covered by the provisions of the new Equality Act 2010. The "protected characteristics" are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.

Background Papers

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Accountability	Cabinet Member Finance and Community development
Scrutiny Function	Social and Community O+S