

# **Reaching Out to BAME Older People in Camden.**



**Interim Report.**

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**Voluntary Action Camden**

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## **Reaching Out to BAME Older People in Camden.**

### **Consultants Brief.**

#### **1. Mapping of key groups working with BAME older people in Camden.**

The specification for this piece of work clearly stated that the, “Ageing Better in Camden Strategic Board has agreed to establish a community action project specifically targeted for work with BAME community, and delivered through the BAME VCS”. There was also a commitment “to build capacity and help prepare groups in the borough to deliver this work.”

This required the mapping exercise to focus on BAME communities and BAME VCS as opposed to the more established and mainstream organisations that provided a generalist programme of activity. In line with this brief contact was made by email with twenty six BAME community groups in the borough. The email detailed the background, aims and objectives and time frame for the project. A list of the organisations contacted is set out in Appendix 1.

Face to face meetings and discussions took place with nine groups. Further face to face discussions are scheduled to take place with another two organisations, the Afghan Community in Camden and the British Somali Community.

The groups that took part in face to face discussions to date are:

- The Cornerstone Parish. Working with older members from the Nigerian community.
- The Glory of the Lord. Working with older members from the Congolese community.
- African Physical Training Organisation. Working with older members from the Congolese community.
- Community Outreach. Working with older members from the Congolese Community.
- Light for Nations Mission. Working with older members from the Congolese and Angolan communities.
- Unity Welfare Education. Working with the Muslim community.
- South Sudan Women’s Skills Development. Working with older people from the Sudanese community.
- African Health Forum. Working with older people from African communities.
- Kurdish Community Association. Working with the Kurdish communities in Camden and further afield.

Two groups supplied written submission:

- Sudanese Children in Need. Working with the Sudanese community.
- Somali Cultural Centre. Working with older members of the Somali community.

Further written responses are expected from the Afghan Community in Camden and the Somali Development Trust.

Due to time constraints and the impact of the recent weather it has not been possible to hold the planned community workshops. Two have been scheduled, one with the Congolese community and one with the African Health Forum. The aim is to hold two further workshops with the Somali community and the Sudanese community.

## **2. Themes from the Consultation.**

A summary of the face to face discussions is set out in Appendix 2.

The key themes to emerge are set out below.

- All groups, with the exception of the Kurdish Community Association, reported the presence of a number of older isolated and lonely older people in their communities.
- The Kurdish Community Association was only aware of 3 – 4 older members of the community that were resident in Camden although there were others resident in other boroughs. The Association thought that there may be older people in Camden but to establish whether or not this is the case would need some targeted outreach. The priority for the Association was to gain access to affordable ongoing premises to host community advice sessions.
- For all groups language and culture were key barriers to participation in “main stream” activities.
- Working across organisations working with the same community has been discussed and in many cases people are willing to consider this subject to practicalities and resources.
- Working across communities:
  - Some willing to do this but stressed that language and cultural support needs had to be met for all communities at any joint event.
  - Others thought that it was important for there to be separate provision for each community. Because of language, cultural and historical factors it would be very difficult to run joint events/activities for Nigerian, Somalian, Congolese, Sudanese and Angolan older people. The model should be separate provision, with other communities invited possibly with an occasional joint event as part of the project.
  - Another organisation stated that it respects that people have issues in terms of politics but they aim to support all members of the communities. People are encouraged to discuss politics outside of the service, activity, and support context. Experience has shown that when people have a positive experience this helps put other issues aside. Language is a major challenge. The approach is to group languages into three i.e. French, Portuguese and English to support those accessing the service. The group also have Kiswahili, Arabic and other regional languages. The use of translation/interpretation has been useful.
- Lack of transport was another key barrier to engagement as a number of community members’ had mobility issues to overcome.
- Most popular activities were social occasions, food/cooking singing, dancing.
- Theme of activities to promote health eating and nutrition also present.

- Theme of promoting inter-generational work to build understanding between age groups and to share skills e.g. younger people helping older people to set up their mobile phones, fill in electronic forms.
- Enthusiasm to know that the funding would be for 2 and a half years, rather than very short term.

### **3. ABCD Approach.**

Whilst carrying out this piece of work the consultant has been impressed by the amount of energy, commitment, skills and knowledge that individuals and the communities collectively have and wish to give. They see the project as a real opportunity for the community to work with older members to tackle social isolation and loneliness. A project that may in turn build on their track record on delivery and lead to future opportunities being realised.

All of the groups were well rooted within their communities and all have secured access to premises to run activities and events, in some cases with the costs being covered from donations from the community. The value, impact and sustainability of the investment from Ageing Better will be greatly increased by working with such a dynamic collection of assets.

As detailed in section 2 working together across organisations working with the same community has been discussed and is possible subject to practicalities and resources.

In terms of working together across communities, language barriers, cultural differences and the impact of past events would mean that this would take some planning. The above summary would suggest that the decision on whether to and how to work across communities should be discussed with each group/community as part of the action plan. So, in practice, the model will be a combination of separate, separate with others being invited with some joint social events.

### **4. Proposed Split of the Borough Into Two Areas.**

As part of the discussions with BAME groups the governance model for managing the delivery of the project was discussed. It became apparent very early on that to split the borough into two would prove problematic. All of the groups contacted stated that the actual and potential users of the services and activities would be drawn from across the Borough. So if the Borough was split into two delivery vehicles the majority of groups would have to be members of both which could lead to duplication of effort and unnecessary complications.

The model that all groups warmed to was for there to be one contract covering the whole of the Borough. A lead body, that would also be a delivery agent, would hold the contract, distribute funds to other delivery partners, undertake the administration and carry out the monitoring required. The role of the lead agency would need to be resourced and one suggestion was for a 5-10% sum of the whole contract price to be allocated to the lead agency to cover the costs involved.

The need for a lead agency to be identified was also part of the discussions. Some thought was given to the setting up of a Single Point of Contact model but was not favoured in the context of the funding available and the fact that two of the groups had prior experience of being the lead agency for project work in the past – the African Physical Training Organisation and the African Health Forum.

The governance model that has emerged is for one of the two agencies, with some support, to take on the lead role for the project and to be a delivery partner. The general view being that if this model works successfully it is a model that can be used again and in other settings to enable BAME groups to access a wider range of funding sources in the future.

The consultant also discussed the model and the role of the lead agency with Hopscotch, a BAME organisation which delivers a number of projects across the borough, including working as the lead delivery agency for the ABC Bangladeshi Community Action Project. Hopscotch would be willing to act as lead agency for this BAME Project if required but would also be willing to support a smaller BAME agency in this role rather than compete for the role.

If this model is approved the selection of the lead agency will form part of the action plan, along with the finalisation of the support and development package required by the lead agency. Here the Ageing Better Team will have an input in relation to the co-production of a simple monitoring framework and clear guidance on the allocation of and reporting back on the use of funds.

From the discussions, once the 5-10% costs of the lead agencies administrative costs is deducted, one of the suggested ways forward was for a standard sum of money to be allocated to each community which is then broken down into agreed budget headings e.g. volunteer expenses, refreshments, activity costs and travel etc. From reading the full report it becomes clear that the numbers of older people in each community does vary significantly. This then raises the possibility of the funding being weighted according to the numbers involved. The Ageing Better Board may wish to take a view on this issue which can then be shared with the groups for further discussion.

## **5. Assessing Targets.**

Seven of the groups contracted gave a figure for the number of older people they were in contact with. The total for the seven groups comes to 565. There are another six groups for which an estimate of the numbers is awaited. However, on the basis of the evidence and discussions to date a total target of 525 over 2.5 years would seem to be realistic.

## **Appendix One.**

### **Organisations Contacted.**

Ivorian and African French Speaking Women in Action.  
Sudanese Children in Need.  
South Sudan Women's Skills Development.  
Camden Arabic Association.  
The Glory of the Lord.  
African Health Forum.  
British Albanian Muslim Community.  
North Western Islamic Cultural Centre.  
Unity Welfare Education Centre.  
Somali Promoting Democracy.  
African Physical Training Organisation.  
Congoese Old People UK.  
King Fahad Project.  
Somers Town Cultural Education Centre.  
British Somali Community.  
The Cornerstone Parish.  
Community Outreach UK.  
Aboh Mbase Union.  
Afghan Community in Camden.  
Albanian Community in the UK.  
Somali Cultural Centre.  
The Light for Nations Mission.  
Lebanon Orthodox Church.  
Somali Development Trust.  
Kurdish Community Association.

## Appendix Two.

### Themes from the Consultation.

#### Cornerstone Parish.

- A faith based organisation that also organises social activities and care for the older members of the Nigerian community. Approximately ten people in total that are scattered across the borough.
- The group also does home visits as some members cannot get out of the house due to arthritis etc.
- Some of the older people cannot speak English; this is a barrier to involvement in any wider activities. The group has access to a church hall in Camden Town.
- Group was interested in doing joint activities with other communities as long as the language and support needs of the older people were met otherwise the older people would not be able to take part.

#### The Glory of the Lord.

- Faith based group that also organises social activities and care for older members of the Congolese community. The Glory of the Lord works closely with the **African Physical Training Organisation** and two other community groups working with Congolese children and young people. Both groups were interested in the project and thought there was a strong need for more support for older people from the Congolese community. They were however very suspicious of consortium bids that in the past have been led by large organisations that end up taking up all of the money with nothing left for smaller groups.
- There are a lot of Congolese older people in the UK and Camden in particular, estimated number being 300. They arrived in the 1990's and are now aged 60 plus. A number of the older people do not speak English and language is a barrier to taking part in wider activities.
- The older people come from across the borough as whole. A number of them are very isolated. The group has access to Highgate Church for activities. The priority activities would be something that the older people could enjoy – dance, music, swimming, art classes, and trips out.
- The group need access to resources to cover the following - transport, refreshments, volunteer expenses, administration, staffing costs and interpreters. Members of the group have experience of translating for the Home Office and Police.
- The groups have experience of acting as the lead agency for the funding of £30,000 for a football project from John Lyons and a sum of £50,000 to fund supplementary classes from Camden Council.

## **Community Outreach.**

- A company run by a Congolese woman who is a qualified social worker. The group works with older people from the Congolese community. They have contact with more than 60 older people.
- There is a social event on the first Friday of each month. Participants, if able, make a small contribution of between £5 and £10. A small sum of money has also been provided by the Resurrection Ministry to help pay for the rent. Financially the group is struggling and the founder is using her own money to support the group.
- The social events are supported by up to 50 volunteers. The group also does home visits to find out needs and to support the housebound. The majority of the participants are women, brought to the UK by their families to help bring up their grandchildren. The grand children are now grown up and moved away and the women now often live alone, or with other older family members. They do not speak English and cannot communicate with others outside of the home or go out. Their confidence levels, as a result, are very low.
- The group would like to carry on with, and do more, social activities. They would also like to run other activities that range from knitting, cooking of African food, music, healthy eating and sharing experiences. Other needs include transport to enable mobility, scheme where volunteers can read newspaper to the older people to keep them up to date with what is happening in the world. There was also great enthusiasm for inter-generational projects e.g., how to manage a mobile phone, developing small allotments to enable people to grow potatoes and vegetables. A number of the older people also have problems filling in electronic forms and an inability to read letters that are sent to them.
- The group has been looking for premises to use in Camden but cannot afford the rates. They are currently meeting in a hall in east London. The group is also keen to expand to cater for older men in the community.

## **The Light for Nations Mission.**

- This is a faith based group that is in contact with over 50 older people from the Angolan and Congolese communities. 20 of the older people are members of the congregation and there are a further 50 – 60 people that are not members of the church.
- The Church is a key link to and source of a social life for many of the older people. The key activity that older people would like to be involved in are social occasions, bringing people together to eat and, talk to each other and take part in activities e.g. sewing, dancing, singing, computer skills, language skills. Access to transport would be crucial to success.
- At present the group runs weekly services, music classes for young people and activities for women. These activities are spread over a number of premises and the group is working hard to find one location for all activities including those that it would like to provide for older people.

- The group think that they may have the expertise to act as a lead body but they are just starting out and do not want to take on too much too soon.
- The group suggested that the lead group must be resourced possibly by taking 5-10% off the contract price to cover administration.
- There is also the challenge of how to allocate the remaining sums. Dividing the sums equally between the communities was suggested, with an agreement that the funds would be spent on volunteers' expenses, venue hire, refreshments, and transport and possibly tutors.
- The group has access to a number of volunteers.

### **African Health Forum.**

- The group is about bringing together African communities and those providing services to the African communities.
- The group provides services to benefit all African communities. The aim is to support members and the community to access health services, live healthier lives and contribute to society.
- The group encourages discussion of political issues to be held elsewhere and not where services are provided.
- When people have a positive experience of the service, this helps them put other issues aside because their need becomes priority. They begin to understand what really matters for them, so providing a good quality client centred service can help.
- Language is a major challenge. The groups approach is to group the languages into three i.e. French, Portuguese, English to support those accessing the service. This is based on colonial experiences of the continent. The group also has Kiswahili, Arabic and many other regional languages applicable. The use of translation/interpretation has been useful.
- The group is in contact with 25 isolated older people. They stay in the house, they have little conversation with others and conversational skills deteriorate. Many of the people do not watch TV as they see it as something for younger people. To get involved with activities older people will need access to transport.
- Concern was also raised about the past experience of activities being started and finishing within a few months. People's expectations are built up and are soon squashed. In terms of activities the older people would like to be able to consider the following:
  - Activities that encouraged and enabled older people to get out and interact with others e.g. exercise, dance, singling classes, walking.
  - Having the opportunity to have everything under one roof. If the activities/services are in one place this can make life easier.
  - Training and supporting older people to self-manage. Most older people in the communities are looked after by their children or grandchildren. They often look after grandchildren and have no time for themselves. There is no freedom or independence. They do not have control over their hospital appointments and other important meetings or even when they can eat.
  - Encouraging people to understand nutrition.

- Support on entitlement to benefits, volunteering opportunities.
- Inter-generational work. Getting young people to understand older people and older people to understand young people.
- Including older people in networks and encourage socialising or dating.
- The group has acted as a lead organisation for over 10 years with funding from Camden and Islington Primary Care Trusts joint commissioning for sexual health and HIV funding for African Communities. The amount of funding was up to £100,000. The funding was negotiated for 15-member organisations. The funding came to an end when the PCTs were dissolved.

### **Somali Cultural Centre.**

This group is in contact with 100 older people.

Activities include:

- People's coffee morning at which Arabic classes and other activities take place. These activities are not currently funded.
- Group carries out home visits.
- For the future the group would like to secure resources to run keep fit classes, Arabic and Quran cultural events like storytelling and looking at films and history.
- The group has not been a lead partner in the past and would need to look at what it involves.
- The key areas the group works well in are service delivery and design for Somali community.
- The group knows that getting Somalis' to take up services can be hard so a contract that allows a change in engagement methods if the group thinks that there is a better way to get people involved would be ideal.

### **Sudanese Children in Need.**

This group is in contact with people who are aged 50 and over. Their key focus however is on children and families and the proposed project with older people was not an ideal fit.

### **South Sudan Women Skills' Development.**

- Most of the women this group is involved with are aged over fifty. Three are over sixty and two are over seventy.
- The group currently runs a monthly social club that includes healthy eating activities, mosaic making and talks. The women come together, sit down, chat and exchange information about back home.
- Most of the women do not go out to any other place. The culture of the community is that you do not go out unless you have the money to do so. Most women have very little money and cannot afford to travel to galleries or museums that have free entrance.

- Many of the women live alone. Many have little understanding of health matters e.g., a woman had a stroke and was not aware what was happening to her. GP's talk to people in language that they cannot understand. There is a need for more health awareness activities. Many speakers on these topics are free e.g. Arthritis Society. The key areas where awareness needs to be raised are diabetes, stroke, arthritis and cancer.
- Mental health is another big issue.
- Any activity must be in the language spoken within the community as many of the older women speak little, if any English.
- For this project to be successful it will need a point of contact that is contactable five days per week.
- Ideally the project should start in the summer when the weather is still warm. People will come out, take part and then build a link to the project that will get them there when the weather gets colder.
- Delivery also needs to be at a consistent time and day e.g. Tuesdays and Thursday 1pm – 5pm. When there is a long gap people lose interest.

### **Unity Welfare Education Centre**

This is a faith based group working with the Bangladeshi and Somalian communities. They needed to talk to people before they could comment on what are the needs of older people. Currently key focus was on homework clubs and youth facilities.