

**Swindon Borough Council
Black and Minority Ethnic
Community Development
Officers**

**Activity Report
2008–2009**

**Community Directorate
Learning & Engagement Teams**

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Introduction

Swindon Borough Council Community Development Officers (CDOs) are part of the Community Directorate's Citizen Engagement Team.

The CDO team support local Black & Minority Ethnic communities in their development and raise the awareness of service providers about the needs of these communities.

They do this by:

- Building the capacity of community organisations
- Encouraging individuals and groups to identify the needs of their communities
- Promoting mental health and well-being
- Providing informal learning
- Encouraging interaction between all BME groups, contributing towards community cohesion
- Supporting equality and diversity in Swindon

During 2008/09 the team developed relationships with 27 community organisations identified through the mapping exercise carried out during the previous year. With the help of CDOs many of these groups chose to draw up formal project plans, which helped them to focus on their priorities for the year. At the end of the year their joint work with the CDOs was then measured against a set of community development indicators (see Appendix 4). Groups that did not require the same level of input from CDOs were monitored less frequently.

Whichever the level of support chosen by the group, many of their achievements would not have been possible without the help of CDOs. Most of these are listed below.

The roles of the CDO's are part funded by the PCT and as such our remit concentrates on Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health of the community. The work we do includes identifying and supporting service users and their families. Our aim is to maintain links with local service provision and work in partnership in terms of raising awareness of the barriers and the concerns of the community.

In addition we act as a pathway to communities that are hard to reach. We are able to signpost community members to appropriate services. We encourage service providers to actively participate in events held locally.

Groups

1. African Women's Support Group

The group had a successful launch at the Broadgreen Community Centre on 30th August 2008 attended by the Mayor of Swindon, Steve Wakefield. The group showcased some of their activities that included

The Group is developing steadily with the input and hard work of a very enthusiastic Chair. They are currently involved in education classes and an exercise programme.

Plans are in place to hold another event in June to recognise local a fashion show featuring African native outfits. Community members and children modelled these.

In January 09 the group hosted an event, inviting all community members to join in the celebration of Barack Obama's Inauguration. The event took place at the Live Club in Stratton and was very well attended. Local community members showcased their talents in singing, dancing, storytelling and fashion. A buffet of African and Caribbean Cuisine was on offer to sample artists and volunteer who have made a valid contribution to their community.

2. Bangladeshi Community Association

The group has continued to develop slowly and Management Committee members have been working well together.

With help of the Grassroots Grants from the Community Foundation, at the beginning of this year, the group continued to offer its support to Bangladeshi community focussing youth and women.

Further progress made by the group to promote community integration and cohesion. The group has recruited more volunteers &

3. Bengali-Speaking Mother and Toddler Group

This group was set up to encourage women from the Bangladeshi community who were seen to be accessing services less than others. A group worker was employed who spoke Bengali. Partnership working with Swindon College enabled setting up ESOL classes in the community, as many women were unable to access College courses because of cultural boundaries. These women are now accessing activities run by Swindon Asian Women's Association, events organised by the BME Women's CDO, women only swimming at the Health Hydro and International Women's Day event organised by the Women's Coalition. Swindon Borough Council also accessed this group for consultation.

4. Black History Group

Throughout October 2008 and in conjunction with Family Learning the Black History Group held a series of workshops to celebrate Black History and Family Learning month.

The four workshops included Arts/ Crafts. Drumming/singing, Colours (self esteem) and Story telling. They were designed to demonstrate that parents and children could be do activities together, have fun and be creative. The workshops were well received and all the participants gave very positive feedback.

The evaluation highlighted areas for improvement and recommendations to incorporate in a similar event that is being planned for the coming year.

5. Caribbean Luncheon Club

The Luncheon Club have commenced work on a Historical Quilt, which depicts their journeys from the Caribbean islands. When completed, it is hoped that it will be displayed in the Town's New Library in Regent Circus. The group have worked closely with a Local primary school Ferndale throughout the year and have used this opportunity to raise the awareness of the children about Caribbean culture. The children have been involved in the preparation, cooking and sampling of Caribbean cuisine, games and story telling. The members have enjoyed the company of the school children and look forward to their visits. An exchange visit was arranged December 2008 where the children hosted a traditional Christmas Lunch and carol service for the Luncheon club members.

Age Concern has now closed in Swindon are sadly no longer acting as the Club's managing Agents, so the group have now affiliated to Swindon West Indian Community Association.

6. Caribbean Social Club

One of the few groups to secure funding this year to continue with their running costs. Their membership has increased during the year with 40+ members. In July 2008 the group organised a day trip to Bournemouth. Over 50 community members and their families attended and was a good way of socialising for many members who are often quite isolated on a daily basis.

7. Goan Association

This group has required less input throughout the year though the CDO is aware of the growing Goan community and has met throughout the year with the leaders.

An initial meeting has taken place with one of the committee members of the Goan Association to look at developing work with women from the Goan community. It has been highlighted that many of the Goan women who were working previously are now unemployed. Also there are increasing numbers of Goan women needing support as relationship problems have increased and the women are feeling isolated.

8. Nepalese Community In Wiltshire

This group has continued to develop steadily and the new management committee members have recently began to explore the possibilities of the providing IT/ESOL classes to Nepalese women

The groups organised a big community event attended by over 300 people attended by councillor and senior SBC officers.

9. Pakistani Welfare Association

The Group organised a well-attended community event, in which councillors as well as senior SBC officers attended toward the end of last year.

With the help of grant from Community Foundation's grass root grants the group resumed organising and supplementary school for Pakistani children attended the after-school club and feedback from the

Overall the group has continued to recruit more volunteers, to improve their ability to offer services to Pakistani community in Swindon, and have been able to network more effectively.

10. Pakistani Women's' Group

This is one of the groups that the team has had most difficulty accessing. Although there has been some contact with women from the Pakistani community it has been very fragmented. In an attempt to improve contact we have started a drop in session at Drove People's Campus coffee bar area. Women who drop their children off at the school often come to the coffee area to meet up, to wait for the toddler session, or to attend community learning classes. This has led to contacts with a number of women who did not know there was a community group for them in Swindon.

11. Polish Community Association

Members of the group made an important contribution to the production of a Diversity Awareness Pack for staff working in AWP Mental Health Trust. The Chair also spoke about migrant workers' experiences at the recent SBC Migrant Workers Conference for Employers. The CDW is planning to identify key community contact and to work with the polish community in the next year.

12. Saturday Supplementary School

A group of young people led by two play workers and with some assistance from volunteers. This group has become very popular and is attended by an increasing number of children. They completed a 12-week drumming course, which has enabled them to reach a good standard of playing steel drums. It is hoped to purchase a second-hand set of drums in order for the children to continue improving their skills. They have been actively involved in dance tuition this year and have entered and won first prize in a local talent competition. They have performed at several events. The group have now embarked on singing lessons from a professional tutor in order to form a youth choir in the future.

13. Swahili Community in Swindon

The Swahili Community in Swindon has organised several events in the past year to bring the community together and the capacity of the organisation to support its members has strengthened

The groups grant submitted grant application to SBC but like others they were unsuccessful, and they are currently waiting to hear the outcome of their

When funding for an After School Club came to end the group indicated a need for homework classes. A family learning course – where parents and children come together to support the child's learning, has now been provided through close work with SBC Family Learning Co-ordinator.

The group is planning to take part the refugee week celebration in 2009.

14. Swindon Asian Women's Association (SAWA)

This is a support group for Asian Women from all backgrounds. A programme of activities is planned based on the needs of the members. There is regular consultation with the members to ensure that their needs are being met.

A CDO has been working with the management committee to support its development. Membership of the committee has increased substantially. This has included representation from a wide variety of Asian communities in Swindon. SAWA had their AGM in June 2007 with 80 women attending the event. They have secured funding from Lloyds TSB for 3 year funding for crèche and activities plus an SBC adult learning contract for grant for room hire and administration.

SAWA have successfully applied for and received £5000 funding from the Community Foundation. This money is to be used to set up a programme of activities based on the needs of its members.

15. Swindon Somali Community Association

The group continued its work with children through SOK, and Anecdotal evidences suggest that both children and parents benefited from the above activities in the past year.

The group held its second AGM last year without any problems and the previous Management Committee members were replaced by new members.

16. Swindon Somali Women's Group

It has been difficult to support this group due to low levels of activity this year resulting from loss of key leading members.

A new committee has been established. Funding has been secured from the Community Foundation to pay for room hire. The group are planning to meet once a week to lessen social isolation, look at issues facing women from the Somali community, to work with the CDO to develop a programme of activities.

17. Swindon West Indian Community Association

This group has continued to support the Saturday School and The Lunch club as well as other community groups. Participating in events and They have also volunteered their time and provided catering to the Obama Event January 2009 organised by the African Women's' Support Group and another annual event organised by the Race Coalition.

SWICA are currently looking at alternative funding to assist with the preparation and running of the Annual Carnival for 2009. This event is organised by a group of volunteers who work hard throughout the year to plan this event which raises awareness of cultural differences and brings the whole community together for a day of family entertainment (including lots of local talent), stalls, food and workshops.

18. Tulip Multicultural Group

A group of women in Gorse Hill have set up a group for women from BME backgrounds. They have formed a management committee. The women started meeting in each other's houses. The group are very keen to promote community cohesion. Their primary aim is to develop the capacity and skills of women from ethnic minorities so that they can participate more fully in society. They are hoping to do this by developing a programme of activities, building on the skills they already have. They are also keen on promoting the health and well being of women new to Swindon and their children.

OTHER KEY WORK AREAS

BME Forum

All community organisations have been signposted to join the newly formed BME Community Forum hosted by Swindon Racial Equality Council (SREC). It is hoped that this will become a strong voice for the BME community in Swindon, achieving more than the sum of its parts and creating a one-stop shop for individuals and groups in need of community support.

The forum has met on 2 occasions and was re-formed to provide a platform for community groups to identify topics of discussion and look at ways to address those issues. Approximately 15 members have attended the meetings on each occasion. The group have set up an interim steering group of 5 members and have looked at their terms of reference. Mark Feeny who gave an insight into the new commissioning process attended the first meeting. It is hoped the group will meet on a regular basis and establish themselves to become sound representatives of the whole community.

Capacity Building Training

A series of training courses have been provided this year with funds from SBC Adult & Community Learning. The sessions have included minutes taking, chairing meetings and ICT. In this year the team also started investigating the possibility of delivering an accredited training course in Community Interpreting Skills (in partnership with New College), Advocacy Skills for vulnerable adults, and Mentoring Skills for work with under-achieving BME children at Drove School.

Equalities Coalitions

The CDO's are Link Workers to the Equalities Coalitions for Race, Women and Older People. Each Coalition Chair discusses agenda items with staff, and members voice their opinions and raise issues of concern. The Link Workers then pass issues on to relevant officers within Swindon Borough Council for a response.

The coalition process is currently under review.

Mental Health Service User Involvement & BME Volunteering

This is an area of low take up within the BME communities and there are many reasons behind this including: stigma within the family unit about mental health; reluctance to acknowledge that there is an issue; language and cultural differences. This year the team began to make closer links with service providers with the aim of setting up referral protocols.

Refugee Voice

Refugee Voice is a place where refugees and asylum seekers can air their views and ask for information about service in Swindon. It is a sub-group of the Swindon Multi-Agency Forum for Asylum Seekers, Refugees & Migrant Workers and is led by the team. During 07-08 a decision was made to set up regular monthly slot for meetings on topics chosen by the members. Invited speakers will bring along information about how their services may be better accessed by Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Ten meetings were held in 08-09 attended by 80 Asylum seekers and topics covered included housing and homelessness, education systems in the UK, policing, and community concerns.

Refugee Week

Swindon formally marked Refugee Week for the first time in June 2007 with a community celebration. The second event, very successful took place in Jun 2008 with an emphasis on people telling their stories.

Support for Individuals

During the year the team received referrals from a number of agencies for support for BME Women facing isolation. These have included Social Services, Health Visitors, Children's Centres, Domestic Violence Unit, School nurses, & CPN's. Often they are looking for a support group that women can attend, to alleviate their sense of isolation & vulnerability. Many of the referrals require a visit to get more information about the cultural context of the individual. Often the team's response is to provide advice and guidance about accessing support within the community.

South West Regional CDW meetings

The CDO's attend a monthly meeting to share good practices and exchange ideas relating to Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health with other CDW's in the region. This forum also provides information relating to specific training courses and conferences which will enhance our knowledge. It also enables us to better equip ourselves in identifying the signs and causes of Mental Health. Due to the wide geographical spread of CDW's it provides an invaluable support mechanism. The Citizen Engagement Manager also attends the regional meetings for managers Delivering Race Equalities to share best practice and network.

Swindon Multi-Agency Asylum Seekers and Refugee Forum

There is no doubt that the forum has fulfilled its primary purposes through the following activities

Quarterly Meeting: Quarterly meetings that brings together representatives from statutory, voluntary, and other relevant bodies that are working for and with refugee and asylum seekers with a view of exchanging and sharing information about issues relating to refugee communities in Swindon

National Refugee Week: The forum has organised, coordinated and led a number successful activities/events during national refugee week June (17th - 22nd). This was the second year that the forum organised, events during national refugee week with the help of funds from SBC. Members contributed stalls; cultural presentation and traditional food to the above events, and over 200 people attended 2 main events. The mayor of Swindon attended the main public events and made brief speeches in support of the refugee communities in Swindon.

Refugee Voice Sub-group: There is a monthly refugee voice meeting, in which local refugees/asylum seekers attend to get information about the local services and how to access. The sub-group consulted representatives from local refugee communities to get their views about topics to be covered. Education, health and employment are examples of areas/topics covered in the past 10 months.

Swindon Homelessness Strategy: The forum contributed to the development of the Swindon Homelessness Strategy, and will take part in its implementation, which involve providing training to the staff working for local housing providers as well as homelessness team in the Council.

Challenges:

Attendance: The number of professionals attending the quarterly forum meeting reduced

Forum Sub-group: Several sub-groups were formed to address employment, education, and health issues but none of the sub-groups members met so far.

The Swindon Somali Community Association is again planning to take part the refugee week celebration in 2009.

The group managed to secure an office base, which management committee members agreed is vital to their work, but it is having paid 2 months rent, the group decided not to continue using the base as they did not have the funds to continue using difficult to see how the group will be able to pay monthly rent, as it has proved difficult lately to find funds for revenues i.e. rent,

The New management committee members played a very important contribution to the meeting held by Hazel Blair, Community Secretary, during her visit to Swindon.

The group submitted grant application to SBC last but was not successful, and the group also is waiting the outcome of their application to Community Foundation.

Weekly Drop-in at Broadgreen Community Centre

During 08-09 there was a total of 164 “drop-ins” on Tuesday afternoons. These include those who came in more than once.

The drop-in has become a popular venue for community members to attend, whether for social reasons or to seek advice and guidance from us. We are able to effectively signpost many attendees to appropriate service provision. We did recognise that few women attended and that not many people from the West Indian community visited the sessions.

We felt there was a need to offer a more private and confidential service to the community and now have access to another room at Broadgreen for an additional three days per week. This has encouraged more individuals to attend for advice and is proving to be a popular option.

Women's' Health Event

Following requests from women in the community and the needs assessed by health providers in the town, a Steering Group was set up to plan Health Event for Asian Women on Mental Health and Well-being in June 2007. Membership included Community Development, Psychology, Avon and Wiltshire Partnership, PALs, Learning Ambassadors, Mind, Headways, Swindon PCT, Bi-lingual facilitators from Community groups, SAWA and Mental Health Service Users.

The aims of the event were to raise awareness about mental health and well-being & to look at barriers to access.

Over 80 Asian women attended the event and feedback included: women wanted more of these events; a follow up event should look at ways of relieving stress; the importance of translated materials, interpreters; the need for bi-lingual advocates supporting women to access services; women feel misunderstood over medicated by their GPs.

Recommendations from the event were sent to GP's in Swindon and presented to the Mental Health Local Implementation Team. Another event is being planned for June 2008, taking all the recommendations on board. This event will be for all BME Women.

A second event took place in June 2008. The aims were two-fold. To raise awareness about mental health and to improve access to support. A local GP did a presentation on GP services, which was translated into four main languages. Workshops took place on how stress affects us and making lifestyle changes. Bi-lingual facilitators attended a one-day training workshop provided by AWP Psychology. The event emphasized the importance of interpreters and translated materials. Also the need for bi-lingual advocates to support women accessing services.

Activity Summary 2008-9

Targets	Achievements
Make initial contacts with 400 BME people	450
On going engagement with 50 BME individuals	50
Work with 16 community organisations	27
Revision of booklet signposting people to mental health services	✓
Results of mapping exercise circulated to partner agencies	Reviewed and updated Jan 2009
Weekly drop-in established at Broadgreen Community Centre	Additional service provision from Feb 09
25 groups signposted to BME Community Forum	Re-launched Oct 2008
Promotion of capacity building training sessions	18 attendees for Security Training - Interpreting -planned for April 2009
10 BME volunteers recruited to mental health settings	1
2 Women's Health Events	1 June 2008 1 planned June 2009
5 Service Users involved	0
1 Relationship Building Workshop for community leaders and MH professionals	✓
Production of Diversity Awareness Pack for AWP staff	✓
3 CDOs to undertake training in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector	✓ Completed Jan 09

Appendix 1

Resources & Partnerships

The CDOs are funded through the pooled SBC/PCT mental health (MH) budget as part of the NHS 'Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health' (DRE) initiative. The annual service level agreement has been renewed for 08-09. The CDOs are line managed by the SBC Citizen Engagement Manager and report to Swindon's Local Implementation Team (LIT) through a DRE Steering Group.

The team are members of the regional DRE network of Community Development Workers and keep informed of news and good practice via a dedicated website www.drenetwork.org

In addition the team has forged strong working links with internal and external partners including: Community Safety Partnership Team and their affiliated links; Adult & Family Learning; Swindon Sure Start Partnership; Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership; Primary Care Trust (PCT); Swindon MIND; Patient Advice and Liaison (PALs); Voluntary Action Swindon; and many more.

Appendix 2

Key Roles of the BME Community Development Officers (from NHS 'Delivering Race Equality in Mental Health')

1. Capacity Builder
 - Supporting the development of community organisations
2. Access Facilitator
 - Looking at barriers to access
 - Directing people to community services
3. Change Agent
 - Seek out capabilities of communities to develop innovative practice
 - Increasing channels of communication between community and statutory services
 - Identifying community concerns and gaps in services
4. Service developer
 - Advising on training of staff
 - Hi-lighting importance of culture in service systems and practice

Appendix 3

The BME CDO team Action Plan 2008-2009 is working towards the following Delivery of Racial Equality in Mental Health (DRE) building blocks

1. More appropriate and responsive services
2. Community engagement & capacity building
3. Better information & awareness

This includes the following aims:

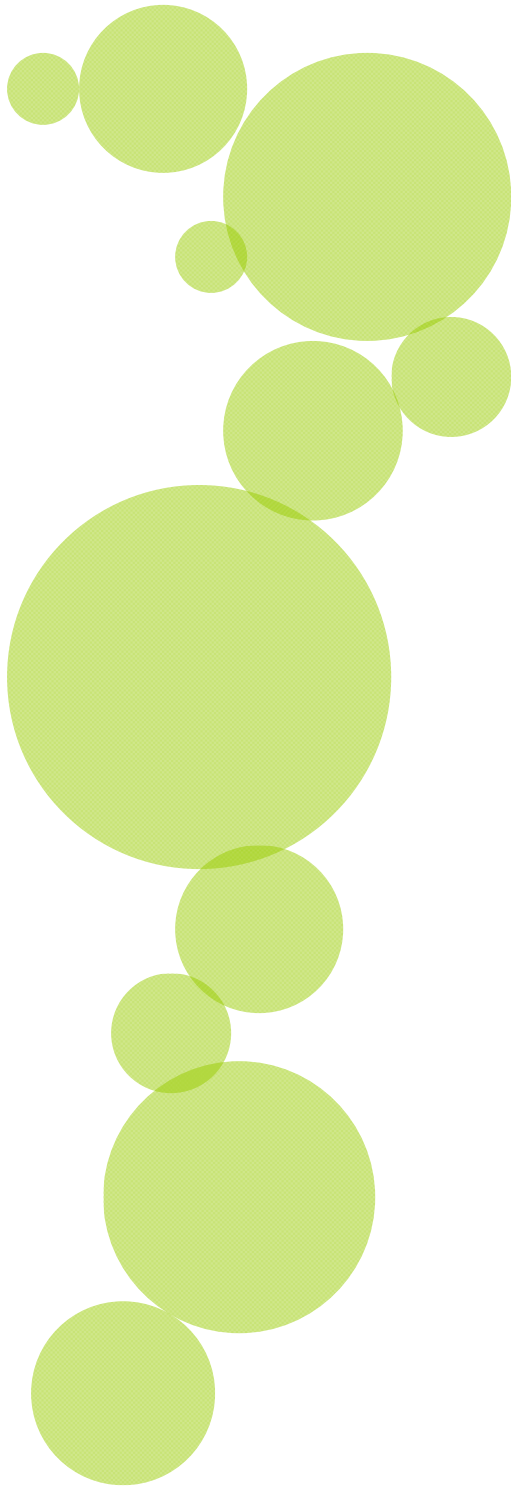
1. Compile a profile of statutory and voluntary support services available to BME groups locally
2. Compile a profile of BME voluntary and community groups and describe the services they offer
3. Provide opportunities for dialogue, assess support needs, identify priorities & create project plans with BME groups on MH & associated issues
4. Promote mental health literacy of BME groups, promote talking about mental distress & the importance of early intervention
5. Support and work with multi-agency groups to develop joined up BME initiatives to tackle inequalities
6. Develop capacity within the BME communities to tackle mental health issues
7. Raise awareness of MH issues, create opportunities for dialogue between BME communities & service providers
8. Increase participation of BME people in service delivery
9. Ensure service providers and front line staff are aware of and sensitive to cultural diversity
10. Undertake training in delivering adult learning & bring people together for informal learning

Appendix 4

Community Development Measures

- Isolated and disadvantaged group brought together
- Community groups strengthened
- Other community members benefit from groups' activities
- Community networks and the sector generally are strengthened
- Public services are improved as a result of community influence
- Wider community benefits from changes in public services
- Community action and influence owned by wider community

- Public agencies improve their practice directly with CD advice and support
- Individuals become empowered and more active in community / civic engagement processes
- Inequalities and exclusion are addressed



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