



Ethnic Minorities
& Youth Support
Team Wales

Tîm Cymorth
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig
& Ieuenctid Cymru

All Wales BAME Engagement Programme

Impact of COVID 19 Crisis on BAME Communities

Topical Forum – Food Security/Isolation/Older & Vulnerable People

22nd April 10:30-11:30 via Zoom link

Rocio Cifuentes (EYST Wales – Chair), Ginger Wiegand (EYST), Lee Tiratira (EYST), Pat Dunmore (Swansea CAB), Tracy (Newport City Council Tenancy Support), Theodore Toko Manzambi (Centre for African Entrepreneurship), Michael Smith (Ceredigion County Council), Jules (GAVO), Sophie de Marco (EYST), Daron Owens (Community Cohesion Officer NW Wales), Heather Edwards (Newport City Council), Shaheen Sutton (Ntl Lottery Community Fund), Robert Muza (Newport City Council Community Connectors), Heather Powell (Newport City Council Equalities Manager, Lesley Wood (Gwent Police Diversity & Inclusion), Katie Palmer (Food Sense Wales), Pearl (Food Cardiff), Tracy Barrington (Newport City Council), Mymuna Soleman, Selina Moyo (S Wales Police Diversity & Equality)

Rocio opens the meeting by declaring that today's agenda is about the impact of COVID 19 on BAME people who are vulnerable to food security and BAME people who need to isolate. We are 4 weeks into this lockdown now. The aim today is to look for experiences on ground and find out what people think can be done about it. The aim is also to identify any areas of good practice. Does anyone want to share how this impacts on you or your community?

Who is particularly vulnerable to food insecurity?

- Disabled people and people with health conditions
- People who are self-isolating
- People with lack of money, particularly those who were working freelance or cash in hand, where the sector has closed down
- People are struggling for money whilst looking for universal credit.

Community Based Operations Running in Cardiff:

- Oasis is continuing to operate kitchen and is feeding high number of refugees and a/s daily, some say 100 per day. This is a crucial service to that client group, but there are safety considerations regarding social distancing.
- South Riverside Community Development Centre have launched a new pantry project, particularly supporting local BAME community – <https://foodcardiff.com/blog/riversidepantry/>
- Flourish (Riverside), Oasis Cardiff and Horn Development Association have funds from Big Lottery to support BME communities around food poverty.
- Al-Ikhlās centre in Cardiff are operating a foodbank and have scaled up during the crisis.
- Newly launched Ramadan Relief fundraiser for food parcels: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/ramadan-relief-cardiff-covid-19-campaign>
- Fareshare Cymru have distributed equivalent of 55,000 meals through about 30 organisations in Cardiff. This is separate and additional to the Trussell Trust foodbank parcels going out. Food Cardiff have set up a Covid-19 Food Response Task Group and are looking to set up a co-ordinated approach using a network of hubs in the city.
- Cardiff Council information and advice. They are delivering food parcels for those self-isolating but not on Shielding list (as well as support with getting cash, benefits etc.). Cardiff & Vale Public Health Dieticians are advising on options for parcels for people with dietary requirements including Halal and Kosher food options. <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Emergency-Planning-and-Resilience/coronavirus-information/help-and-advice/Pages/default.aspx>
- For information on Cardiff activity you can contact pearl.costello@wales.nhs.uk from Food Cardiff. Also www.foodcardiff.com is updating webpage and will soon have a new “Accessing Food” resource section.

Community initiatives in Swansea

- Central African Community Centre (CAE) are collecting fresh and pantry food from Tesco twice per week to parcel and deliver. Every Friday and Monday evening - mostly to refugees and asylum seekers who are in need – for instance people who are living in hostel but cannot eat in hostel. They contact people by phone every

Monday and Friday evening to see if they need food, their dietary requirements and then will make them a parcel and deliver to their accommodation. They will let people know what food they have available and try to match their needs. They began by contacting their own networks and former participants but are now getting referrals from other organisations like City of Sanctuary. Whoever is struggling can contact Theodore of CAE at the following phone: Send Theo the phone number Theo will call that person on evening of the food delivery.

- Single parent families in Swansea must get cash from cashpoint. Local authority coordinators organise food delivery and take cash. (Sophie)
- In Swansea there is a weekly virtual meeting for asylum seekers specifically that is a crucial network for distribution

Community initiatives in Newport

- There are about 12 active food banks in Newport at moment and Newport City Council has injected funding into them. Some are delivering; some are not, and Individual food banks have their own criteria/referral means. Newport's central food bank on Corn Street is delivering food to homes. If one is a signatory, they will do e-voucher. King's Church in Newport are not doing deliveries to homes but are delivering to hubs, so people do not need to go far. Trussell trust is operating voucher scheme.
- Newport is looking at getting something set up with Bethel church that will get culturally appropriate packages to people. They are looking at that with school lunches as well.
- Newport City HUBs now have a free phone number: 08081 963482, which anyone can call with queries. They are getting foodbank referrals on daily basis - Jesus Cares parcels, Trussell Trust Vouchers. They can arrange pickup slots at certain times at Hubs. Pill HUB are working with Pill Unity to start a Fareshare scheme selling £3 pounds food bags, live tomorrow. They will only have 60 bags per week and don't have halal options.
- Newport Hubs are also doing shielding calls, welfare calls for those in receipt of those government parcels. It takes about 7 days turn around for parcels to start arriving to a person and there is no provision for dietary or cultural requirements.
- A Newport Council Community Connector refers BAME people to Newport foodbanks every morning, including a large number of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

- Feed Newport also considers cultural aspect and are doing very well for people.
- A group of volunteers in St Julians & Beechwood E Newport are doing deliveries; can reach through Facebook group.
- GAVO in Newport are coordinating volunteers – “Volunteering Matters”. For assistance in Newport with shopping or meds pickup in Newport, phone Newport City Council or email social service. The person will be passed to Newport Community Connectors who can then send referral to volunteering matters.

Community initiatives in North Wales

- There are a few community groups organising to deliver packages, such as NMAWI in Colwyn Bay.
- Sainsburys are prioritising older people for delivery slots
- AVOW coordinates a volunteer service for people to do shopping for those who can't leave the house.

General food bank notes

- The biggest challenge for food banks from BAME perspective is making sure that people receive information in way that is appropriate to them. They are not sure that BAME people are getting information about how to access foodbanks.
- Also, they have had feedback on cultural appropriateness of packages. Though some (not all) foodbanks do try to provide culturally and medically appropriate food parcels and ask clients those needs, they do not always have control over what they have in stock and so may not have appropriate items.
- Food banks sometimes do not give big enough parcels – not recognising larger size of BAME families on average.
- One Newport support worker will refer a family to three food banks so they can have opportunity to have different items and improve volume of food.
- Individual foodbanks have different criteria/referral systems. Most foodbanks still require a voucher or voucher alternatives -some are operating via what's app – each FB has different mechanism and criteria – some voucher some what's app message.
- Anecdotally, there is evidence that more people who were on borderline of needing Foodbanks have crossed that line into food insecurity now.

Shielding & Welsh Government Food Parcels

- There is concern about people who were expecting a shielding letter from Welsh Government but haven't received one. Those present had multiple examples of clients or neighbours in this position, including one with chest conditions and one person who could pay someone to do shopping but could not find anyone to do so.
- To get a shielding letter, one must be "clinically extremely medically vulnerable" and there is a list of specific conditions. About 80,000 people in Wales have been identified and sent shielding letters, though many letters were sent to wrong addresses in the first instance.
- People who feel they qualify but have not received a letter should contact their GP or hospital nurse. There is evidence that GP practices are responding to such queries in varying ways – some being very responsive and some deflecting. In two examples, a person was told their GP practice was the wrong place to go to ask for this, and in another practice a locum did not know anything about shielding letters. There is communication between Welsh Government and GP practices and hopefully things are kicking into place better.
- Concern around people with mental health issues additionally who may be anxious and are afraid or unable to contact their GP for shielding letter query.
- Newport City Council has received notice of additional people in the shielding category over the past couple weeks.
- 1,700 residents in Ceredigion have had shielding letters and those who do have health conditions/vulnerabilities but do not qualify are directed to county website where there is a page with alternative ways to get support.
- Notes of the food parcels for people who are shielding food parcels.
 - They are only meant for those who have no other recourse to get food; It was initially thought only a portion of those who are shielding would receive food parcels.
 - The first parcel round has been undersubscribed.
 - Welsh Govt parcels are only meant for shielded person, not whole household. However, people should alert Local Authorities if they feel the household is not in position to provide food for other family members. For instance, Cardiff Council is conversing with food parcel recipients to identify single parent families.
 - Volume of food parcels – food is supposed to last for one week but Trussell Trust has said that it is otherwise.

- Food parcels do not account for cultural, religious and medical dietary requirements. Welsh Government are aware of this issue but not clear on potential response

Impact on Muslims, particularly culturally appropriate food & Ramadan

- It will be stressful if people do not get appropriate food during Ramadan. If people are sent wrong food, or are not confident that it is halal, they will not eat it.
- In Newport, there has been some discussion about mosques providing Iftar meals to vulnerable people during Ramadan to provide iftar meals to vulnerable people and if there are guidelines about doing to.
- Likewise, after a death, traditionally the family doesn't cook food. Close family and friends will be sending it. There are a couple of families in Newport where multiple family members have been ill with COVID or died. Neighbours will be providing them food during this period.
- There is an urgent need for guidelines on how family, friends and local organisations can safely cook and deliver food to people. Muslim council of Wales website does have some guideline but very detailed as regards to food hygiene and safety, particularly hot and cold foods and transmission. Newport City Council have some Ramadan specific guidance put out later today – safe observation whilst observing social distance. Guidance from food standards agency on delivering foods: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-safety-for-food-delivery>
- Cardiff and Vale dieticians are advising on options for parcels for people with dietary requirements including Halal and Kosher food options.
- Morrison's is providing delivery slots for people who are isolating or vulnerable, but one can only choose from a few package options; they recently added a "Ramadan" package.
- Question - Could EYST communicate to people who are organising food response with guidance on dietary needs, importance and impact of Ramadan and on providing parcels for larger families?

NRPF & FSM

- Question – Are people who are classed as NRPF currently receiving Free School Meals (FSM)?
- Newport City Council workers have put a proposal to provide FSM to NRPF families to NCC's Senior COVID 19 group and are awaiting instruction.

- There is consensus that guidance from Welsh Government to local authorities on NRPF provision must be stronger. Although WG was in contact with local authorities on this issue pre-COVID, local authority response has been patchy.
- Katie Palmer of Foodsense Wales requests that people send evidence of NRPF families who are not receiving FSM to her. She is in regular contact with Welsh Government on this issue and evidence in various locations will be valuable to her arguments.
- Wales Refugee Council wrote to the First Minister and raised FSM/NRPF issues. Rocio will share that letter with Katie so that she can once again draw attention to it to amplify voice on this issue.
- There problem with this issue (along with others such as culturally/medically appropriate food parcels) is the time lag for WG response, and the stress that families face during that time lag.
- There is thought among the group that NRPF families are now eligible for emergency support from the discretionary assistance fund.

Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)

- Question: Does anyone have recent experiences trying to support someone to access discretionary assistance fund (DAF)?
- It's there and ready to be used. There has been a request to extend the DAF and Wales is fortunate in this regard, but there is a sense that the DAF is not currently used as much as it could be.
- DAF can be accessed through a host of different partners who may be overstretched at moment; there has been a doubling of applications recently.
- Only designated partner agencies can apply on behalf of someone for the household goods
- Anyone can apply for the cash assistance. Apply online and get decision within 24 hours. Emergency cash assistance is up to £150 but on average is usually around £20-£50. Support workers had different experiences of being successful in getting DAF cash for food. One had always been denied those applications and the other had been successful on them. "Its always unpredictable how much one will get."
- EYST is a partner agency and is currently doing DAF applications; Newport Council Hub workers are also doing a high volume of DAF applications, about 10-15 per week.
- Online DAF applications are very difficult for speak with limited English or digital skills. There is a great amount of detail involved in the application. The following two people are happy to be contacted on best ways to remotely support people with

limited English or digital skills to apply for DAF: Tracy Barrington
Tracy.barrington@newport.gov.uk and Fateha Ahmed fateha@eyst.org.uk.

- DAF applications can still be made over the phone.