



Ethnic Minorities
& Youth Support
Team Wales

Tîm Cymorth
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig
& Ieuenctid Cymru

All Wales BAME Engagement Programme

All Wales ZOOM Forum – 25 March 2020

Topic: Impact of COVID 19 Crisis on BAME Communities

Minutes of the Meeting:

Attendees - The forum had 47 attendees. We began the forum with round robin introductions. Many attendees have included their contact details with welcome to share in the comments of the meeting. The text of the comments is also updating. Below is a nearly complete list of attendees. (Apologies some names may have been lost because of sound quality issues. Also sincere apologies for any misspellings).

Abi L – Diversity and Inclusion Officer at National Assembly for Wales and Black History Month Steering group; **Paul Montez** - Swansea Council Housing Policy Officer; **Emily Dougherty** – ACC project manager; **Rosie** - Swansea Council; **Kay Howells** – Community Cohesion Coordinator for Mid and SW Wales; **Michael Smith** – Equalities and Engagement Officer for Ceredigion County Council. Would be good to hear of issues to feed back to colleagues; **Monica Frakiowisz**– Community Cohesion team – Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham. Like Kay; **Pat Dunmore** – “Making a Difference Project Manager at Swansea CAB; **Claire** – Policy and Research Officer at Bevan Foundation; **Selina Moyo**- Equality and Inclusion Coordinator with S Wales police; **Pam Cole** – Lead for Ethnic Minority Inclusion at Education Directorate in Swansea Council; **Hannah Sabatia** – A Better Welcome to Swansea Project (befriending for newly arrived asylum seekers in Swansea); **Rena Ahmed**– Family Link Officer for EYST; **Riaz Hassan**– Community Cohesion Coordinator for Western Bay area; **Beth** – Community cohesion coordinator for counter extremism in Swansea; **Sarah Mowen** – Community Cohesion Officer for Ceredigion and Powys; **Mary Roblin** – support for vulnerable families in Wrexham and informal ESOL sessions; **Brian Amos** – Gwent Police Positive Action Officer; **Andrea Beedles** – Positive Action Officer for N Wales police; **Paul** – Gower College Equality and Diversity Officer; **Cllr. Yvonne Jardine** – Swansea Councillor and champion for social inclusion and diversity; **Melissa** - Equality and Human Rights Commission – Human rights monitoring; **Siobhan Corria** – Action for Children Inclusion Officer; **Heather Powell** – Connected Communities Manager for Monmouthshire and

Gwent; **Kwesi Idun** – Coordinator at ACC in Swansea, working on a marketing project with them; **Matt** – Coordinator for Syrian Resettlement Scheme in Carmarthenshire; **Sahar al Faifi** – Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND); **Martyn Jones** – Head of Equality Diversity and Inclusion South Wales Police; **Noam** – Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) Educational Coordinator; **Geoffrey** – Chinese in Wales; **Fateha Ahmed** – Community member; **Shahinoor Alom** – Maths teacher at Fitzalan High School; **Cheryl Gourley** - lead for women in business at NatWest Bank; **Rajma** – WCVA; Rahila Hamid = Gwent Regional Coordinator for EYST' **Lee Tiratira** – North Wales Regional Coordinator for EYST; **Jalal Goni** – Central South and West Wales Regional Coordinator for EYST, **Ginger Wiegand** - Research/Policy lead for EYST; **Rocio Cifuentes** – EYST CEO

Discussion on main issues – main ways COVID 19 is impacting BAME people and communities in Wales:

Burials, Funerals and Bereavement Support, particularly for Muslim Communities

- Funerals are a real huge concern for Muslim communities; there is concern that some important religious practices may be affected.
- Also, there is a confusion over exactly what measures are in place or may be put in place.
- Muslim community in need women who are both trained on doing Islamic washing for the deceased and also on following the government instructions per COVID 19 practices. **Please alert Sahar at MEND if you are trained in both or know someone who is.**
- Was noted that all funeral directors are well versed in new guidelines and are starting to instate social distancing rules for funerals
- Concern about preparing community to deal with grief and sudden loss within the community.

Loss of income, jobs and businesses

- People in trade as taxis, restaurant workers and people on zero hours contracts are worried about whether they meet the 80% pay requirements.
- Many people in small businesses such as catering who may be unable to recover.
- Difficulties to apply for Universal Credit especially for people with language barriers or who are digitally excluded. Was already an issue but with expected influx of universal credit claims and also changing ways of Jobcentre staffing working, even more a concern now. Especially being able to make claims in languages other than English
- Chinese in Wales is experiencing increasing requests for help to apply for Universal Credit (with digital and or language barriers). There are numerous small businesses such as catering establishments where because of lack of trade, owners/employees

turning to Universal Credit claims. Cllr Yvonne Jardine can put Geoff in touch with someone for that.

- CAN (Citizens Advice) does still have access to language line and can do over the phone advice to people with interpretation support from language line.

Children, Young People and Education

Serious concerns about how BAME children will be affected by the closure of schools

- How will BAME pupils in Wales be affected by prospect of cancellation of high stakes exams? It is well documented there is discrimination in teachers giving predicted/expected grades to students – with BAME pupils on whole given lower predicted grades. Will this affect entrance to uni and also qualification for specific A level tracks?
- What about households where children won't have access to a laptop and/or wifi? Those children who are digitally excluded will be at a disadvantage to other students upon return to school.
- Fitzalan High tried to get a log of what all pupil households have in terms of tech. They have made certain things available but there are a lot of kids especially from Czech Roma communities that won't be able to complete the work sent home. Fitzalan was able to provide some tech to families but making parental contact has been tough.
- Swansea Education Authority is considering how to get paper-based packs to those
- Some schools seem to be slow out the gate in preparing materials for students. Some sense that schools were biding their time until after Easter break to seriously provide work for pupils.
- Younger generation are dealing with anxiety and some key workers are worried about impact on mental health issues. Likewise shelter at home orders may exacerbate anxiety and mental wellbeing.
- Free school meals – some schools are giving free school meals out in schoolyards, but there is concern that may be scaled back or change in how it is managed if epidemic curve heightens. Pam Cole of Swansea Council said the council are thinking of how to deliver FSM in line with social distance guidelines – she thinks what they may be doing in coming weeks may change as the curve changes.

BAME Families in Intergenerational Houses

- Government advice for isolation of elderly doesn't take into account the prevalence of BAME and Muslim families who live in intergenerational houses

Hate Crime, Community Cohesion and Tension Monitoring

- All of the Community Cohesion coordinators across Wales are working to get key messages out and keeping communication up with marginalised and vulnerable groups. They are looking at what they can do collectively and support organisations and minority groups and monitor tensions.
- In North Wales, right now, they are mapping out what support is available at moment and where Community Cohesion team can step in and work together with organisations to provide support digitally where they can.
- Key focus for Western Bay at moment – find out impact of Corona Virus on BME communities and most vulnerable communities in the area.
- Swansea is having a community tension monitoring phone call each Monday. He will put the info on this and welcomes people to get in touch with any concerns.
- Per Martyn Jones, first All Wales community tension monitoring meeting took place yesterday with all four forces.
- Putting information out on Facebook - in a Facebook friendly format - is a great way to get messages and information to EU Communities and also other ethnic minority communities too. Many EU people use FaceBook a lot as a source of info rather than watching British news or British TV.
- Scams are on increase if we could inform communities to be mindful and let relevant authorities know if they have heard of any problems which may have occurred.
- Chinese people are being targeted because of wearing masks and receiving very hostile activities. Chinese in Wales supports them. Geoff explains people really need to be understanding about different beliefs and mask wearing.

Supporting Travellers particularly those without permanent accommodation

- Government guidelines came on that last week and local authority should have it. Kay will send Monica guidance recently put out by Travelling Ahead. Travelling Ahead also posted recent guidance which is available online.

Food security and Isolation of people

- Efforts to identify food banks across Wales and passing the information over to communities, who are in need.
- As asylum seekers are £35 per week, can't buy in bulk and may go to store to find empty shelves.
- Concern in general for people who don't have money to bulk buy;

Additional Solutions – Some solutions have already been mentioned above but here are some additional:

- Local coordination responding to asylum seeker and refugee needs.
- 11 food distribution centres are being set up in Swansea – that is taking place this week. Rias Hassan will share information
- Swansea Council and Police have also set up a weekly tension monitoring system. Phone number set up with call at 11am on Monday morning. Riaz will put the info on the chat feed for this Zoom meeting
- Several community food delivery initiatives are being organised locally.
- Various wellbeing telephone helping initiatives are springing up. Role of community groups in this situation is key.
- Swansea LEA are thinking about how to get paper-based work packs to children who may need them
- We can share links to school work and activities for children. Some have posted links in the Chat feed to this Zoom meeting.
- Bevan Foundation is doing a series of Blogs around COVID 19 – she invites people to share blogs with her. There are some helpful blogs from Age Cymru already sharing. Claire is also engaged in Bevan foundation work around integration in Wales - Case studies about integration in Wales. Contact Claire from Bevan Foundation for either.
- Facebook/Sofastage – Free fun creative activities for people at 3pm and 6 pm and daily organised by this FB group. Fez Miah will post link on the chat feed for this Zoom meeting.
- Swansea Citizens Advice is still open for business not in offices but at home. They have new email address. Anyone can email them and they have loads of advisors just waiting to phone people who need help back. Many CABs across Wales are operating in similar fashion. Pat will share the Swansea CAB email address in chat feed for this meeting.

- **MEND** can also support organisations or individual which may need advice on an Islamic perspective on COVID-19.

Rocio thanked everyone for attending!!!! This was very useful and we agreed to have same all Wales online meeting monthly.

Date for next online Zoom meeting to be sent out shortly!