



Ethnic Minorities
& Youth Support
Team Wales

Tîm Cymorth
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig
& Ieuencid Cymru

All Wales BAME Engagement Programme

Impact of COVID 19 Crisis on BAME Communities

Summary Document

Sources:

- EYST All Wales BAME Online Forum on Covid19 – 25th March 2020 – 47 Participants
- EYST Forum on Muslim Community Impact of Covid19 – 1st April 2020 - 27 participants
- EYST Forum on Impact of Covid19 on BAME Pupils – 7th April 2020 – 50 participants
- EYST Forum on Impact of Covid19 on BAME Employment – 15th April 2020 - 16 participants
- EYST Forum on Impact of Covid19 on BAME Food Security – 22nd April 2020 – 20 participants
- EYST Forum on Impact of Community Cohesion, Racism & Hate Crime – 29th April 2020 – 70 participants
- Email contributions from Wales Race Forum Members 13th March – 31st March 2020
- Whatsapp contributions from BAME Leaders Covid 19 Group 25th March – 5th April 2020

Main themes emerging on ways in which COVID 19 is impacting BAME people and communities in Wales:

Food security and Distribution

1. Food insecurity – due to rising prices, closure of foodbanks, closure of services issuing foodbank vouchers. This especially affects asylum seekers and refugees but also BAME people who already experience disproportionate levels of poverty.

2. Concern in general for people who don't have money to bulk buy;
3. Some mosques are collecting food parcels; there could be more joint work on this.
4. With Ramadan approaching, is there some way that police can help with getting food to people safely? Especially the Iftar which is the breaking of the fast and occurs after sunset.
5. Food distribution centres are being set up in Swansea – that is taking place this week. Riaz Hassan will share information
6. Several community food delivery initiatives are being organised locally.
7. 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. Food bags are not adapted to religious or cultural or allergy requirements.
8. Food bag approach may lead to food waste.
9. If people who over 70, or classed in the 'high risk' category are self-isolating at home and need meals provided to them, how will religious observations around food be handled? If food regulations on labelling are set to be relaxed. - If people can't trust their food is properly prepared – halal etc, they will not eat.
10. We know that there are food banks and food parcels. We are liaising with Cardiff Council volunteers and South Riverside community development centre.
11. We know that this is just the tip of the iceberg
12. Food banks across Swansea have seen numbers of clients decrease as there has been shortage of food to provide them. Extra additional support has been offered by Swansea Council.
13. There is much confusion over the discrepancy in how various local authorities are handling FSM and what's allowed.

Discussion from Food Security Forum – 22nd April 2020

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 asylum-seekers daily, some say 100 per day. This is a crucial service to that client group, but there are safety considerations regarding social distancing.
- Riverside pantry – <https://foodcardiff.com/blog/riversidepantry/>. You can contact pearl.costello@wales.nhs.uk
- Flourish (Riverside), Oasis Cardiff and Horn Development Association have funds from Big Lottery to support BME communities around food poverty.
- Butetown Community Centre is also distributing food to vulnerable people every Wednesday.

- Al-Ikhlās centre in Cardiff are operating a foodbank and have scaled up during the crisis.
- Cardiff foodbanks delivered 55k meals last month, and they are looking to create system with network of food hubs across Cardiff.

Community initiatives in Swansea

- Centre for African Entrepreneurship (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 hostels but cannot cook 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 by phone. Send Theo the phone number Theo will call that person on evening of the food delivery.
- Sophie from EYST updated that single parent families in Swansea must get cash from cashpoint. Local authority coordinators organise food delivery and take cash.
- In Swansea there is a weekly virtual meeting for organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers specifically that is a crucial network for distribution and referrals for food provision. EYST, SASS, City of Sanctuary, SCVS, British Red Cross, Welsh Refugee Council and many others involved.

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; 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. Its 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 NWAMI in Colwyn Bay.
- Sainsburys are prioritising older people for delivery slots.
- AVOW in Wrexham 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, due to the time the crisis is going on. Anticipation that still more will do so.

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 unclear if this is the case (Trussell Trust to clarify)
 - 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 so.

- 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 guidelines 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>
- 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 Coalition wrote to the Deputy Minister and raised FSM/NRPF issues. Rocio will share that letter and response with Katie so that she can once again draw attention to it to amplify voice on this issue.
- The 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 those 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.

Loss of income, jobs and businesses

1. Vulnerability to unemployment and potentially homelessness . BAME people already have the most precarious and insecure employment and housing. Coupled with lack of support and advice on employment rights, plus the hostile environment, this leaves them extremely vulnerable.
2. Huge hit for people who work in taxi companies, high percentage are BAME
3. Financial impact on self-employed people
4. Impact on People in trade as taxis, restaurant workers and people on zero hours contracts are worried about whether they meet the 80% pay requirements.
5. Many people in small businesses such as catering who may be unable to recover.
6. Mentioned financial issues as a common issue, especially for those on zero hours contracts. Work must be done around council tax reduction applications – ensuring people access all benefits to which they are entitled. Workers in the informal economy – destitution risk
7. There are concerns about people who were working off the books, have now been let go and will not have access to furlough pay.
8. Predominantly concern for people working for restaurants.
9. The group recognised that there are several key sectors and interests not represented around the table, such as taxi drivers. The EYST Engagement team will follow up on some of these key sectors.

10. There was consensus that it is early days and for now we must keep our eyes on the key issues raised above and follow up on actions and suggestions above and seek emerging solutions

Access to Universal Credit

11. 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
12. There's been a 500% increase in no's of people registering for Universal credit. DWP staff are struggling with the increase in volume of applications already.
13. Chinese in Wales is experiencing increasing requests for help to apply for Universal Credit (with digital and or language barriers). There are numerous Chinese small businesses such as catering establishments where because of lack of trade, owners/employees turning to Universal Credit claims.
14. Right now, the number of staff working in the DWP centres is restricted because of the virus. (which has led to backlog of benefits claims). Since the pandemic it's been extremely difficult to get through to any of the helpline numbers for universal credit. If the government is going to be making these grants available for self-employed people, then they need the manpower to do the administrative tasks.
15. Personal Independence Payments face to face assessments have been cancelled for 3 months
16. New applications to Universal Credit have sky-rocketed. Even to get through on phone has taken hours and days. In this scenario, will the five-week period will become longer? This has been flagged up by many charities, but does anyone know of any movement to mitigate this?

Access to Business support

17. Charities are working towards supporting people struggling financially, but how will BAME people find out about this support?
18. Business support –There's a number of BAME independent businesses that are not necessarily linked in or members of FSB. In some instances there may be language barriers. How will Business Wales ensure all enquiries are properly dealt with and people best supported? It would be helpful for Race Forum members to be sent some details that they can circulate amongst their contacts and networks.
19. BAME communities need to know how to access support and advice if they are facing redundancy – self-employed and so forth. There's currently a 5 week waiting time to claim Universal Credit. Any new changes to legislation to mitigate losses needs to be effectively shared and made available in real time.

20. There is evidence of low confidence that BAME small businesses will be granted access to all the benefits to which they are entitled and worry that BAME small businesses may be disproportionately affected by the application process.
21. There are concerns about underlying and inherent institutional racism which has been proven evident in forms and application processes. Some are worried their applications will be rejected in the same way that employment applications are (based on “foreign” name).
22. The UK Government should make the process transparent - clearly laying out how decisions are made to reward support and ensure robust equalities monitoring data is gathered, reported and eventually analysed to measure the impact after this time period.
23. Being self-employed is a challenge, and this COVID 19 process is new, but people must follow the process before making assumptions. If you follow process and collate your evidence, you can challenge any decision.
24. No one will be compensated until June and that will be 80% of earnings, so will be low, especially if one is on low income already. There is also concern for people on zero hours contracts, who have applied for govt support - What happens between now and June?
25. There is also concern about people being able to access advice. For instance, no one is aware of provision of advice in a language other than English.
26. Some suggestions for places to access written advice:
 - Martin’s Money saving programme - <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus-self-employed-and-employment-help/#freelance>
 - Citizens Advice - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coronavirus-check-what-benefits-you-can-get/>
 - Business Wales - <https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice/>
27. Local Authorities also have a role in administering these grants, so local authority webpages are a way to start. Newport City Council has an easy to read place on their website and NCC is looking into gathering info on protected characteristics.
28. There is a lack of expertise of this type of benefit and advice-giving within BAME sector. Organisations need to upskill in this topic. CAB does have guidance on website that is easily accessible in English. RC and PD will converse further about potential for CAB to train people from BAME sector organisations and groups to be able to cascade messages and signpost people to accessing these benefits.
29. Question was asked: Could Business Wales play a part in making sure advice gets disseminated in appropriate format to various groups?
[Update – Business Wales has experienced extremely high call volume and is having trouble keeping up, but it does have access a flexible, discretionary Participation Fund to help overcome barriers individuals

may face in participating in Business Wales services. The Fund can be used in a variety of ways such as providing translation services, tailored support for disabled people, costs of caring responsibilities and hiring of specialist equipment. The fund has also supported bespoke workshops for lone parents, ethnic minorities and young people.]

30. One positive e.g.: One person knew of two BAME self-employed women who have been successful in getting loans/10K grants they need to keep business afloat. What helped them was having good records of business so far and use of accountant to prepare those records. This did raise some concerns about businesses that just started out and didn't yet have good records.

Employment conditions

31. Lots of concerns with TA's – large proportion are BAME women. Many are agency workers, fixed term workers and brought in for a short period of time. There's discussions taking place to redeploy them into the community to cover 'meals on wheels' but again they will be in the community and exposed. How will you ensure people feel safe enough to deliver, in a completely different field to the one they usually work in, particularly in a lock down situation?
32. The WTUC has raised issues around employers who are readily behaving badly. Many workers have been laid off with no pay and put on furlough whilst employers wait to receive UK govt wage subsidies. Global foods which employs a no of BAME workers falls into this category.
33. We have asked for greater clarity/guidance around health and safety for those that remain open as many employers are not adhering to 2 meters rule and are not providing PPE.
34. WTUC have been pushing for clarity over business support.
35. WTUC pushing for a joint statement with WG on Fair Work during Covid 19
36. Unequal employer treatment of BAME workers both in relation to safety of workplace and furloughing employees
37. There is evidence that people classed as essential workers are being asked by their employers to work without PPE and that some employers are not following social distance guidelines.
38. There is evidence that some employers are classifying their workers as key workers even though that case may be shaky.
39. There is evidence that people are being pressured by employers to work even though they feel the working environment is unsafe for them – or that the worker may make other persons in their household unsafe by bringing COVID 19 home from that working environment.
40. There are no guidelines which require employers to furlough workers who live with someone who has had a "shielding" letter.
41. There are widespread concerns about EU people being demanded to work in unsafe conditions by their employers. Newport City council had a lot of complaints around safeguarding of EU nationals.

42. RE Furloughing (vs. letting employees go) – There are also concerns about people losing jobs with the employer not taking the consideration of furlough as an option. There is confusion among some employers about furlough and who qualifies and how it works. Likewise, there is a perception that some employers are taking advantage of the opportunity to cull staff numbers.

Provision of PPE

43. There is group consensus that that provision of PPE is a big issue – to not just NHS workers but all key workers – including in factories, delivery, retail.
44. As above, there are stories of workplaces where EU migrants do not get sufficient PPE.
45. The group also queried the potential for very small businesses such as corner shops and small vendors to access and afford PPE for their employees. These shops are vital to neighbourhoods and also to supplying culturally appropriate foods.
46. The group questioned but did not know if PPE was available for employers to purchase or if it was in general scarcely available.
47. Funders urgently want to put money COVID 19 relief efforts– would PPE be covered? Big Lottery has given top up funding to previously organisations and are also funding new organisations up to £10,000. PPE has not come so far applications, but could imagine they could cover PPE for volunteers, for instance with organisations that work with older people in care homes. Most Big Lottery applications have been around food poverty and volunteers getting food to older people's homes – nothing around PPE.

BAME workers as key workers

48. Over-representation of BAME workers in essential sectors and over-representation of BAME people in COVID critical care patients
49. BAME people and migrants are over-represented in essential worker sectors such as health and social care, distribution, transport, food processing, etc, particularly in precarious professions in the gig economy and low pay sectors.
50. This is particularly concerning with emerging evidence that BAME people are hugely over-represented in critical care COVID patients.
51. RCC has written letter to First Minister to scrutinise the disproportionate impact of COVID 19 on BAME people.
52. Rocio Cifuentes sits on the COVID Moral and Ethical Advisory Group Wales will ask if they are collating figures in this respect and scrutinising those figures.

Children, Young People and Education

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

1. Impact of schools closing – will disproportionately affect BAME families who are poorer, more likely to rely on free school meals, have less internet access at home etc. Many will be key workers, but BAME families need to be reassured on what the school childcare offer looks like, or there is risk they will seek to rely on extended families including grandparents. Council guidance on school care provision is problematic.
2. Each council and in some instances schools applying their own interpretation of guidance. We have had several reports where schools will only provide care if both parents are health care workers, despite in many instances the one parents being NHS key worker and second parent being classed as critical worker.
3. The list of 'critical' workers needs to be put into the public domain and greater detail provided on how children of parents who are deemed critical will have their children looked after. Many BAME families operate on an extended family/community basis. If trusted individuals or grandparents can no longer look after their children and they must be schooled with children and teachers who they do not know, this could be practically and emotionally impactful. Lots of parents are asking me which schools will remain open and whether they can be forced to work?
4. There are also concerns about how local authorities are defining key workers and whether families who qualify for key worker childcare are taking up that option. Are BAME families having their eligibility communicated to them and being made confident to consider the offer?

Digital Poverty – Laptops, Broadband

5. Challenge facing people is access to educational resources. Large families in single households often share a single device. Muslim households have higher number of members living close to one another.
6. Many families don't have access to WiFi or computers. They are feeling frustrated as their children are not able to keep up with schoolwork. We have asked them to contact the schools. We (Women Connect First) have lend some laptops, but of course that is a drop in the ocean.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Swansea Education Authority is considering how to get paper-based packs to those

10. 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.
11. There are massive concerns about lack of access to Wifi and suitable tech devices in order for pupils to access educational resources provided by the schools;
12. Schools may have laptops that pupils can collect, but a lot of children don't have access to Wifi.
13. There is a confusing lack of Government guidelines to local authorities on how to support community members/families who lack laptops/broadband to access educational resources.
14. Access to online assessments is of particular importance for high school students given shifting grade assessment practices and not being able to access them is very problematic.
15. When schools are using online platforms such as email or website updates to communicate information on free school meals or post weekly homework, if pupil doesn't have access to Wifi, they won't receive the communications from the school;
16. There was consensus that current Covid 19 disruption offers opportunity to demand Government to consider Wifi an essential household utility and ask for it to be provided not only to asylum seekers but also to other low-income and digitally households as a matter of a human right.
17. It was noted that the Government must provide laptops/tablets and Wifi access to student who are without them; otherwise it is in breach international law. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children must have access to education. As there is a legal obligation for authorities to provide laptops and WiFi, we mustn't ask the Government these things as a favour; we must demand that they execute their duty under law or risk having a lawsuit brought against them.

Challenge for BAME Parents with limited English to Home school and detrimental impact on BAME children.

18. Barriers to accessing educational resources – Facilitating parents' ability to home-school
19. Language can be a huge barrier. Accessing school hubs and other online set ups is extremely difficult for parents who don't speak English fluently.
20. There is likely an under-reporting of parents' concerns over lack of access to laptops and Wifi. Some schools report that they have had requests for laptops from families but not from BAME pupils/families. Are BAME parents not going back to the schools to make these queries?
21. Citizens' Cymru has distributed a letter via BAME community group networks encouraging families to go directly to children's school if there isn't a computer at home. They did so after receiving intelligence from community high schools in Cardiff that pupils/families were not requesting digital support, which the schools had equipment to provide.
22. BAME community groups can facilitate communication between for parents and schools. BAME groups need to get the word to parents that

they should be communicating with schools about any barriers to accessing educational materials. Likewise, BAME groups can facilitate that communication where parents are not able to themselves.

Bias in predicted grades

23. 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? Impact of cancelled GCSEs and A-Levels and predicted grades instead – predicted grades are known to negatively impact on BAME and working-class pupils due to lower expectations from teachers. Schoolteachers and Education Minister should be alerted to this possibility to mitigate this. Education Minister Kirsty Williams has issued guidance to schools that this year’s grades should be based on a combination of predicted grades and assessments.
24. Young people are extremely concerned about predicted grades, long proven to be associated with teacher bias, with teachers underestimating BAME pupil’s actual exam performance. Pupils are concerned that they won’t get the necessary grades to attend university.
25. One parent shared her child’s previous experience of passing with As, Bs and Cs, despite being predicted to fail at GCSEs. This same child is having the same experience of low predicted grades and current situation is very distressing.
26. There is a lack of understanding around the appeals procedure relating to predicted grades. It is imperative that clear, straight-forward, easily navigable and fair procedures are in place to appeal grades.
27. Some young people who do not get sufficient grades to enter university in fall may drop out of university pathways altogether rather than repeat a year.
28. This phenomenon may impact an entire cohort of BAME young people, with a risk of rise in NEET young people from BAME backgrounds in coming years.
29. It is suggested that attendees at this meeting ask the Education Minister to issue guidance for educational institutions to mitigate bias against BAME pupils. A multi-agency open letter to English Education Minister, for instance, requested schools do equality impact assessments on predicted grades, by looking at overall predicted grades and then breaking them down via ethnicity to analyse if there are any discrepancies.
30. Likewise, there is potential to challenge Universities to adapt the way in which they make decisions to fill student places – to ensure that they meet established diversity targets within departments and to assess in alternative mechanisms for recruitment decisions.
31. Dr. Youmna Mouhamad, a researcher at Swansea University who runs a BME Engineering student network, asks for examples what can university do about student intake and would be interested in exploring practical actions universities can take and influencing recruitment officials.

32. In the current context, universities may easily get distracted with their financial situations, particularly if travel bans and continued “lockdown” or perception of UK’s safety cause loss of revenue from international students.

Mental Health

1. 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.
2. Mental health concerns for people isolating and especially those in supported housing.
3. Lots of issues around mental health and well-being particularly for health and social care workers. A plan is being pulled together. There is recognition that many health workers have existing and new PTSD.
4. With mental health, the impact of lockdown can trigger past traumas related to reasons for seeking asylum for example.
5. Also BAME people are disproportionately represented in mental health institutions – what support is being given to people in institutions or on heavy medication at this time for their understanding of what is happening?
6. Anxiety is a key issue; many young people don’t recognise the signs and need to be signposted.
7. Some young people may not be very open about these issues and there must be a culturally sensitive way to deal with these issues.
8. Cardiff wellbeing service on Whitchurch Road has a Facebook page that is producing regular guidance regularly on anxiety, but the information isn’t available in different languages, so parents aren’t aware of it.
9. Young people who have put everything into preparing for high stakes exams to gain university entrance – there is a huge mental health impact as, all of a sudden, they now feel gaining that entrance is beyond their control.

Elders

1. Government advice for isolation of elderly doesn’t take into account the prevalence of BAME and Muslim families who live in intergenerational houses
2. Covid-19 effect on elders – not being able to socialise and go to mosques are focal points for Muslim community and play a vital role in people’s lives. Need to ‘keep eye out for elder members’ with Ramadan approaching.
3. Big impact on Bangladesh community is that ‘uncles’ from older generation especially are not used to staying in and sometimes not taking advice to stay in, which adversely affects other family members in households. There are also some dysfunctional relationships with younger members of the family going out and so putting their families at risk. Is there anything out there that can allow elders to socialise and talk to each other – something like this Zoom call would be good.

4. Impact on elderly people who are self-isolating and unable to use mobile phones etc.
5. Impact on BAME elders in sheltered housing and in hospitals – how will their language, cultural and religious needs be met if visitors severely restricted?
6. Food parcels to shielding vulnerable people – will these meet cultural and religious requirements?

Closure of Places of Worship

1. With Ramadan approaching, closure of mosques will have a severe impact on Muslims
2. Impact on vulnerable people must recognise refugees and asylum-seeking Muslims and also students who depend on mosques daily for food provision, especially for Iftar during Ramadan.
3. Encourage mosques to reach out to communities and younger members talking online
4. Could mosques speak more with each other?
5. There is work to develop online tool kits called “My Digital Mosque” coming soon with things like group chat facility which can join people up.

Volunteers/ Community Groups

1. Play crucial role in comforting people and making sure people have food/supplies. Also connecting to people and sharing information.
2. Carers of vulnerable people are sometimes going off sick and being replaced and potential issues around this for quality of care.
3. Various wellbeing telephone helping initiatives are springing up. Role of community groups in this situation is key. Mainstream volunteer groups can't meet the needs of communities, for example because of language barriers.
4. Potential need for a BME Elders Volunteer befriending service?
5. There are examples of local coordination networks and online meetings to respond to asylum seeker and refugee needs.
6. There's lots of well- intended community groups springing up on line however we have been informed of scamming taking place.
7. Lots of issues have been raised around volunteers. WTUC have made it clear where work should be paid it shouldn't be replaced by volunteers
8. Just to say that we (Women Connect First) are dealing with many more practical and real problems with our families. There's a sense of despair and hopelessness. They are calling us to ask for urgent help. They are running out of food and money. Many facing redundancy, 2 or 3 generations living together in one household.
9. We (WCF) need to prepare together to respond quickly before the situation worsens for these families.
10. Community groups are trying our best with the resources that we have, working long hours and trying to respond and make referrals.

11. We need to produce simple and accessible information in different languages of what they need to do and who to contact.
12. Every day many new issues emerge.
13. They are now running out of food and are asking us to go shopping for them.
14. We have a team of volunteers, but of course with new guidelines we are not able to handle cash. These older women are not able to shop online and are very suspicious of given their bank details to us let alone anyone else.
15. We have been trying all day to find out about any official policies or procedures. We are linked to Cardiff council volunteers scheme and they have referred to us many people interested in volunteering and willing to do these tasks. However we are unable to use them as we don't know whether these people have DBS, etc.
16. We work with vulnerable adults. We have looked in all websites and WCVA, etc and haven't found any helpful guidelines.

Access to Services & Advice

1. Many BAME clients use community groups for face to face advice and signposting – the majority of these service are now closed, while new email or phone-based access systems are being thought out. But this will take a while to set up, and how to offer effective interpretation via 3 way calls is also a challenge.
2. Would be helpful if councils would allocate their community outreach workers to prioritise sign posting people who need the appropriate support rather than passing on their bank details to a stranger or transferring money.
3. CAB (Citizens Advice) does still have access to language line and can do over the phone advice to people with interpretation support from language line.

Domestic Abuse

1. Women who already had issues of domestic violence are feeling trapped and frightened.
2. Women who have divorced or separated their partners are having many difficulties with parental contact.
3. Women's Aid have put some media out about women who need support being stuck at home and possibly forced into isolating with their abusive partners or otherwise. This is a big issue for BAME Women - how do we support and keep protecting people who may be in such a situation?

Refugees & Asylum Seekers

1. As asylum seekers are on £35 per week, can't buy in bulk and may go to store to find empty shelves.
2. We've also had outcries from families who cannot work due to waiting on their immigration applications and who have now been left with nothing as

they have had to stop all cash-in-hand jobs due to the lockdown. It is a very difficult situation that many of us are in.

3. Uncertainty around timescales regarding Asylum application processes
4. Extreme income poverty, digital exclusion and poor housing exacerbating experience and impact of 'lockdown'.
5. Potential for re-triggered PTSD
6. Loss of informal economy/ off the books employment can potentially have a knock-on impact of destitution for asylum seekers and new refugees.
7. Immigration status, Hostile Environment & No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)
8. Positively, WG has directed local authorities that the usual restrictions on providing support to people with NRF have been lifted and local authorities are now required to house people classified as NRPF.
9. Newport City Council is supporting a few people with housing and reference concern with future fallout regarding questions as to whether the council will be able to continue to support those people in future.
10. Likewise, there is a lot of debate legally regarding how councils can support people with NRPF and what kind of assistance they can get beyond housing, such as food and other things they need.
11. Multiple of those present provided evidence that a lot of people with NRPF people are not coming forward and declaring themselves to local authorities, as they are concerned about whether housing and support will be available in coming months in Post-COVID environment or whether with resumption of Hostile Environment policies, they will lose the housing and possibly be outed to immigration authorities.
12. Likewise, one service provider noted there is a lack of capacity to house people with NRPF in Swansea and that clients are still being asked about immigration status when presenting themselves. Does that mean that people presenting are still being judged on whether they have NRPF?
13. One person provided an e.g. where a person who sent in a visa application recently, was placed in NRPF category in interim.
14. There is also concern about immigration visas and work permits particularly for health workers who have been given one year extension. Will this be taken away when hostile environment resumes? But also concern for multiple categories of workers who may have to reapply for visa/work permit extensions under the new immigration system. How will effects of this crisis play out?

Burials, Funerals and Bereavement Support, particularly for Muslim Communities

1. Funerals are a real huge concern for Muslim communities; there is concern that some important religious practices may be affected.
2. Also, there is a confusion over exactly what measures are in place or may be put in place.
3. 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.

4. Was noted that all funeral directors are well versed in new guidelines and are starting to instate social distancing rules for funerals
5. Concern about preparing community to deal with grief and sudden loss within the community.
6. Update from Muslim Council of Wales on Muslim burials: Normally a quick process involving bodies being washed and a ritual performed, normally with many attendees from the community. With CV-19 deaths, there are complications for those that wash bodies. PPE is needed for a safe wash and for those to take precautions. Availability of PPE equipment dictates what can be done to a body. Symbolic wiping of body bags has been adopted by some with no PPE. There may be issues with families not being comfortable with this. Mosques in key locations are being supported for smooth burial processes in their regions. Some mosques have the right facilities. Also work with others to ensure burial slots are available. Working with councils and PPE access availability reliant on supply and demand and the NHS. In North Wales, Bangor, Wrexham, Llandudno Junction and Rhyl mosques have wash facilities with large numbers of health care facilities and support. Currently, there is a healthy amount of space and there is ongoing work with health boards and hospitals towards digitalising death certificates via local councils. Mid Wales and Powys have less institutional facilities and Midlands region are looking at supporting mid-Wales deaths.
7. There are different guidelines from different local councils. For example, max 5 people in Newport and 10 in Swansea. Currently 4/5 people present including funeral directors at prayers.
8. There's lots of anxiety over burials and how religious ceremonies will be handled if a family member or friend passes. It would be helpful to have clear messaging to communities on what to expect, as well as how much contact they can expect with loved ones who have the virus and are critical in ICU. Saying goodbye in person may not be possible for example. Perhaps a virtual option could be offered?
9. This will need careful consideration where prayer and burial is part of a deeply religious & personal passage of the final stages of life on earth.
10. MEND can also support organisations or individuals which may need advice on an Islamic perspective on COVID-19.

Hate Crime, Community Cohesion and Tension Monitoring

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Key focus for Western Bay at moment – find out impact of Corona Virus on BME communities and most vulnerable communities in the area.

4. 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.
5. Per Martyn Jones, first All Wales community tension monitoring meeting took place yesterday with all four forces.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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
9. Emerging evidence that Far Right and Tommy Robinson spreading fear about Muslim communities linked to Covid19.

Updated Discussion notes from Forum on 29th April 2020

Deputy Minister and Chief Whip Jane Hutt's Introduction/Address

The Deputy Minister joined in for most of the last half of this forum. She gave a brief address expressing that she was eager to listen to participants. She is grateful to meet this group and noted that 69 attendees is very impressive. She noted that in its response to COVID 19 over the past weeks, Welsh Government wants to ensure that equalities are at the forefront. The Deputy Minister has a wide remit which includes equalities; domestic violence; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people; crime and justice and the third sector. She has engaged with many groups recently, including Wales Race Forum, BAME Newport HUB, Wales Refugee Coalition and recognises the importance to engage locally and regionally as well as nationally. Shortly, she will be meeting with Faith Communities Forum. It is very important to communicate how Welsh Government can support the disproportionate impact of COVID 19 on BAME people as seen in the workforce and community. This was addressed in a statement by Vaughan Gethin AM, Minister for Health and Social Care, last week and in the establishment of the COVID 19 BAME Advisory Group. Welsh Government is now moving to consider how to get out of lockdown, with the First Minister publishing a proposed framework last Friday. The Deputy Minister has made clear that COVID 19 crisis has potential to deepen inequalities and that it is very important to get exit from lockdown right and protect frontline workers, so we do not go back to outbreak and small outbreaks. Public health must be at the forefront as well as social and economic considerations. One proposal is that any move should be equality impact assessed, so as not to disadvantage people with protected characteristics – but even better may possibly lead to a more inclusive society. The Deputy Minister would like to hear this group's views on how to exit the lockdown in a way that does not exacerbate inequalities but rather provides potential for positive transformations. That is a big discussion, perhaps for another occasion.

The following is a summary of experiences, concerns, and paths for potential action from forum attendees in regard to the impact of COVID 19 on Community Cohesion, Racism and Hate crime.

Indications that street-based hate crime has declined since lockdown orders may be masking other dynamics

Hate crime reporting & street-based hate crime

- Dialogue at weekly police dial ups in Swansea indicate that hate crime has gone down; however there have been reports of abuse directed at members of the Chinese community relating to the pandemic and they have suffered greatly.
- We should not be misled by low hate crime figures. That would be akin to misconception that shoplifting is down now. Coming out of this, things will get worse and we need to prepare. Community cohesion is currently strong because people are helping each other now, but we should not get lulled into sense of false security.
- Hate crime reporting is currently low because people are living in fear of uncertainty and reporting is last thing on their agenda, as they are struggling to survive.
- Gwent police have a weekly phone-in forum on aspect of community cohesion and hate crime. They stress importance of using 101 system. Once its logged, its locked. Please call 101 or contact one of us with concerns. Police are doing all they can to minimise tensions in community.
- One can also phone Victim Support or report at their online reporting portal: <https://www.reportheate.victimsupport.org.uk/hate-crime/>
- Likewise one can report online at TrueVision - <https://www.report-it.org.uk/home>. True Vision will collate national figures and trends and can also make referral to local police if necessary.
- One way to tackle hate crime is skilling up people in reporting. There have been efforts to try to organise conference in Newport around that.
- Currently, EYST is offering online training in challenging hate crime to professionals “Don’t Hate, Educate.” Contact nicky@eyst.org.uk. When schools reopen, it will be offered to teachers and pupils.
- From Chat: Victim Support will soon release sessions around raising awareness of Hate Crime to key community people, professionals and anyone else interested in Hate Crime. To get on mailing list, contact Becca.rosenthal@victimsupport.org.uk
- There is wide consensus of the importance of encouraging and supporting people to report hate crime.
- From Chat – Welsh Government makes the point that having evidence on hate crime in terms of reporting figures gives them a strong base for our policy response.

People targeted and abused by neighbours

- “How many people are stuck in unsuitable housing, waiting to be moved on, and are suffering?”
- Example a client in temporary accommodation has been abused by her downstairs neighbour and is afraid to leave the house. The police have been to the property 6-7 times and it’s been reported to housing options, but she is still awaiting a resolution.
- Victim Support notes that clients they are currently supporting are mainly experiencing neighbour related abuse, rendering them, “prisoners in own home,” afraid to go in back gardens or on daily walks because they do not feel safe in their neighbourhood. People experiencing this are reluctant to phone police either thinking the case is trivial or fear of escalating tension and reactions from neighbour. Victim Support is encouraging reports of anything that is neighbour related. They are looking to create online materials which reassure and encourage people to report via 101 or use online reporting.

Increase in online hate

- There is much evidence that online hate speech has risen in the lockdown period. Social pressure of the lockdown drives people to use online means even more than normal.
- Online, there is much conspiratorial talk and mis/disinformation. Likewise, as online use is going up, people are talking and sharing stories more, thus exacerbating spread of both rumours and of examples of hate speech and stereotyping.
- Question: Are there any attempts to demystify mis/dis-information? We must have a way to separate truth and facts from disinformation, so agencies can distribute truth through their networks.
- A lead researcher at Cardiff University’s “HateLab,” which monitors online hate speech verified that his lab is observing more online hate in recent times. HateLab’s current focus is UK wide. Question: Would Welsh Government be interested in using this opportunity to collaborate and fund Welsh focussed research about online hate? This could be a collaboration between organisations, for example: MEND, the Chinese community, Welsh Government and Hatelab. “Research is costly, but we need all the intelligence we can get, and universities are crucial at looking at online crime.”
- There were a number of chat comments that agreed that Welsh specific research into online hate speech would be a good idea.
- The Deputy Minister noted that we need all the intelligence we can get, and universities are crucial at looking at online crime; we also need to look at what happens next – particularly in terms of challenging hate narratives - how can we keep alive the current recognition of BAME and migrant people’s contributions to NHS and essential sectors?

Stereotypes of Muslim communities, some particularly relating to Ramadan

- Rumours are circulating in multiple platforms/spaces that COVID 19 will peak during Ramadan because Muslim community is gathering and socialising.
- “During Ramadan, we are supposed to pray in the mosque, and this is the first time in history that we can’t ... These rumours are causing panic in the community because we are in fact following the guidelines strictly and we are already in spiritual pain.”
- In some cases, wider community which is becoming aware of disproportionate impact of COVID 19 on BAME people, especially in particular parts of Wales such as Newport, is engaging in victim-blaming. On some occasions, questions are raised as to whether BAME and/or Muslim people are social distancing or aware of public messages. Those may be valid questions to be asked but can quickly become victim blaming. This is a worrying trend to be aware of.
- It is very troubling that Trevor Phillips, who has been suspended from the Labour party for racism, for Islamophobic remarks, has been appointed to lead the inquiry into COVID 19 disproportionate impact on BAME communities. Most people who have died in frontlines NHS are BME and Muslim. No one will have faith that he will be fair to Muslim people in that enquiry. WG should have own independent inquiry apart from Trevor Philips.
- Some concerned about police stopping BAME people who are delivering food to vulnerable people.
- Gwent police have been doing work to ensure that that the message goes out and that mosques are following social distance guidelines.

Global dimension

- International students still living in Wales need attention – Stephen Carr from WGLA had a Zoom meeting with 100 international students yesterday, many of whom were not aware of a lot of COVID issues. The meeting was well received. Universities are doing what they can, but it would be very good for Welsh Government to address this group as well.
- African people are being racially abused in China and that has had backlash across the globe. People in African communities here are sharing video clips about attacks in China against African people and it is very distressing. Race Council Cymru has held meeting with Chinese community in Swansea to see how we can stop escalation of these messages and work together to counteract.
- Across the globe, ethnic minority people are bearing the brunt of COVID 19 both in terms of getting the virus and having negative outcomes such as critical care or death disproportionately and bearing the brunt of economic fallout due to lockdown. This is well documented in United States and other countries as well as the UK. Causes are years of institutional racism and discrimination: socioeconomic status leading to underlying health conditions, quality of housing, environmental racism – living in polluted areas, occupational segregation into low paying jobs, including many frontline sectors

such as transport, delivery, domestic worker, health and care workers, food service, food production.

“Holding on to the Gains”

Using this time to amplify positive messages and counter-narratives to prejudice and hate

- There are some gains in community cohesion now, and in order to keep that going post COVID, there must be strong community engagement.
- Currently there is societal and cultural acknowledgment of contribution of BAME people to NHS. And there are numerous examples of ethnic minority people, communities and establishments supporting the wider communities and the NHS. There are also many examples of diverse communities and neighbours coming together to support each other: creating food parcels, making food deliveries, providing IT equipment and broadband access. “COVID 19, in a funny way, has brought whole community together and we are witnessing acts of kindness, sacrifice and also seeing the impact that the BME community has on the wider community.”
- Amplifying these positive stories and narratives about BAME and migrant contributions to NHS, essential sectors and community volunteering and food provision, etc can indirectly and directly fight racist ideas.
- We organisations in the BAME/racial equality sector must connect with each other and promote these messages ourselves. For instance, the MEND website is providing platform for anyone to blog personal stories. Anyone can write and send stories to Sahar Al-Faifi and she will send to MEND website to be shared with all social media platforms: sahar.al-faifi@mend.org.uk. Likewise Newport CAB can promote local positive stories: pat.dunmore@citizensadvicesnpt.org.uk
- Stories are very powerful and its vital to record as much as possible at this time so it’s not forgotten post Covid-19. Race Alliance Wales is currently collecting stories (200-300 words) to capture personal experiences of BAME individuals and communities during this period. Please send any experiences to racealliancewales@gmail.com
- **However**, Welsh Government, local government, mainstream media and non-BAME voluntary organisations must all do more do more to promote these stories. For instance, a lot of the ‘Save the NHS’ imagery in mainstream media appears to be ‘white-washed’ with little representation of people of colour.
- It is important to be sure our communications are spreading helpful and constructive messages, especially considering a lot of young people are seeing these narratives. We need to connect positive and light-hearted stories with impactful and serious stories. That will make our framing more believable and our stories more widely accepted. For example, the Welsh Government statement on Chinese Community.
- From chat: Bevan Foundation has recently published a report titled “Shared Ground: Integration of Migrants in Wales” <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/publications/>

Continuing the lift on No Recourse to Public Funds

- At the moment, UK Government and Welsh Government have lifted rules relating to No Recourse to Public Funds and for now, many more women surviving domestic violence are able to access refuge. Organisations such as BAWSO are very grateful for that, but what happens after the pandemic? When women need to move on from refuge to their own accommodation, will Government be sure there is a way to do this?
- During the lockdown, BAWSO have seen an increase in referrals both for women surviving domestic violence and trafficking (NB: there is often a correlation between the two). People are coming forward during the lockdown as “they can’t stand it anymore.” The domestic violence cases that BAWSO deals with can involve multiple family perpetrators: brothers, in laws, partners. “These women have escaped for now; What happens after?”
- Wales Refugee Coalition are also organising a campaign to argue for scrapping No Recourse to Public funds and would invite BAWSO to get involved as well.
- Deputy Minister’s comments in relation to this issue: She is glad to hear from BAWSO and Wales Refugee Coalition.

Keeping the energy of this forum and others like it going and gaining momentum

- There is consensus with Deputy Minister’s proposal to have a subsequent conversation about best and most equitable/transformational way to exit lockdown. This group is up for such continued conversation.
- One suggestion was for a point person to coordinate media efforts and another suggested a funded policy role to coordinate issues and take them forward.
- Perhaps this forum can create a couple of sub-groups – one regarding media and one regarding keeping the gains/exiting lockdown.

Institutional Racism

- It was noted that the 27-year anniversary of Stephen Lawrence’s death was last week Wednesday. The aftermath of that tragedy allowed us to look in depth at institutional racism in our society for the first time. “Never forget that the power we have to challenge started with McPherson report and it’s important that we teach youth the power of engaging and challenging. Without that, I wouldn’t be here today.”
- For years and years, people engaging in work in this sector have reported a combination of disadvantage and inequality for ethnic minority people and it is still happening.
- BAME people are over-represented in essential/frontline sectors, including low paying ones, which have been undervalued until now.
- One attendee has many family members who are nurses or workers in social care, who feel they are unable to say “No” to situations they feel dangerous, such as situations in care home where they have no protective equipment.

They are exposed to COVID 19 even though they are more vulnerable to getting virus.

- Likewise, an attendee has noted an increase in BAME people working front of house in supermarkets, which are taking on BAME people in greater numbers only in a time when they need to take on more workers quickly.
- Hate crime (except online) may be low, but we need to prepare for what happens after COVID 19 is over. “The blame game is coming; Society always needs scapegoat. How do we prepare for post-COVID?” Note from chat: Concern that in economy slump post COVID, BAME people and migrants will be blamed for lack of jobs.
- From chat: Big concern that dependent families of migrant workers/work permit holders who have died in the front line are likely to be removed from the UK, depending on their situation. Relating to Home Office hostile environment.
- Question: We know there is English based inquiry on disproportion effect on BAME COVID. Will WG take on study based in Wales? Real fears this pandemic is showing fault lines and inequalities in society and after effects will only make it worse. We would like to be involved in learning good practice, developing community support and working with you on it. Can we do that?
- Deputy Ministers comments in relation to these points:
 - She referenced last week’s statement from Health Minister Vaughan Gethin. In that he said, we are engaging with health professionals, medical associations, Race Council Cymru and other key community figures.

Now they are moving into advisory, inquiry and evidence gathering stage. There is a meeting of a BAME COVID 19 advisory group today at which Heather Payne from the Chief Medical Officers office will be a key official from medical perspective. This group will look at workforce risk issues including for allied health professionals, but they will also be looking at the impact from a community perspective and engaging many agents.

- The Deputy Minister references the need to understand Welsh perspectives, epidemiology and statistics and to link those with ONS, the UK government and the Scottish Government.
- Again, she suggests meeting again with this group to talk about how the exit from lockdown avoids exacerbating inequalities and even makes positive transformations.

- She is very interested with the point that many BAME people are going into additional frontline spaces. And she is conscious of the important point about risks applying to social care as well as healthcare.
- She takes the point about how we can build on the gains made during this period. We must recognise the contributions of and impact on BAME people in relation to this virus and must make sure that is handled and respected and at the forefront of policy.

Supporting Travellers particularly those without permanent accommodation

1. I have been asked to raise a Gypsy, Traveller site concern on behalf of residents. The residents depend on tokens for water and electricity. They rely on local authority site staff availability to provide these tokens. No staff, no tokens. No tokens, no water or electricity.
2. Health provision must take particular care to ensure that greater trust and better, more comprehensible information is delivered to families, in partnership with established and respected Romani and Traveller community organisations and representatives, and that individuals are encouraged to seek medical care if they should fall ill, with the assurance that hospital services and healthcare practitioners will be unbiased in their delivery of advice and medical care.
3. Self-isolation and social distancing are going to be particular challenges in circumstances where family space is limited and families live in close proximity with each other, on Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites for example, or in multiple-occupancy dwellings where many Roma reside in over-crowded conditions.
4. Particular attention needs to be paid to the needs of residents on sites or in MOD that house Romani and Traveller families, including information delivered in appropriate forms (infographics) and languages (Czech, Slovak, Hungarian).
5. Working with local Gypsy churches and faith groups to develop good communication and effective dissemination of information should be a priority, especially as many Romani and Traveller people will turn to their church or mosque for support, advice and reassurance in these troubled times.
6. Government guidelines came out on that last week and local authority should have it. Travelling Ahead also posted recent guidance which is available online.

Community Fear & Unrest

1. There is unrest due to scaremongering in the community – e.g. linking causes of CV-19 to 5G towers, new world orders, and widely circulating lots of worry.

2. There are many stories going into overdrive and lots of misinformation spread, which is uninformed by science. People in positions of trust must be clear and provide sober guidance.
3. 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.
4. There is helpful guidance available in multiple languages. This ensures accurate messages are shared.
5. Another rumour is people fearing accessing hospitals for fear of contracting CV-19 and passing away.
6. Community fear – it is unclear what treatment you do get if you think you have the virus, and if your symptoms worsen. With news that a nurse in London was refused entry to hospital after his symptoms got worse after 7 days of isolation and even though he reported not being able to breathe he was still told not to come to hospital – and later sadly passed away in his bathroom. What are the guidelines on who is being admitted to hospital and at what point during their symptoms?

Housing

1. Government will be introducing legislation around rent evictions – mortgage holidays be passed on by both private and social landlords. We have heard of many people who have been made redundant due to coronavirus and others being temporarily laid off with no pay and don't qualify for SSP. This means people can no longer pay their rent but landlords are sending threatening letters of eviction and in some cases showing up and changing locks. Again this needs immediate attention.
2. Housing legislation is set to be introduced for social housing and private rentals. WTUC want rental freezes and private and social landlords to pass on any 'mortgage holiday' benefits to tenants.
3. Social class plays a huge part in whether people have the privilege to socially distance or stay at home.
4. BAME individuals may be in more cramped spaces with no gardens and young people in these situations are under more pressure to go outside the home.
5. Disproportionate impact on Roma families living in crowded houses where in normal circumstances, adults would expect young people to be outside of the house in daytimes, but they are now required to stay indoors.
6. Likewise, there will be a disproportionate impact on intergenerational households.
7. Overcrowding will impact young people's education as they may be unable to find a quiet space to sit down and do some work.

Health

1. Those with diabetes – which is more prevalent amongst BAME people are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, Diabetes UK is working hard to make sure they can support everyone who needs help. You can

contact the Diabetes UK Helpline, on 0345 123 2399 or helpline@diabetes.org.uk, open Monday - Friday, 9am - 6pm

2. Also increased risk for those suffering from Sickle Cell Anaemia
3. There's lots of fake self testing kits being circulated and offered at £15 a go. We have been inundated with calls from individuals who have raised concerns – particularly a number of self employed and zero hours. A large proportion of these workers are BAME and young workers.
4. Given there's no virus testing for NHS staff, will this change, now that the number of critical workers are set to increase? Particular issues for those individuals would need to return home, having exposed themselves within the community
5. Big issues now around health care workers self-isolating hence focus on testing for health care workers. We want this to include families of those Workers too.
6. Disproportionate burden of risk is being carried by NHS Medical frontline workers who are BAME and EU Nationals? Will this be recognised by Welsh Government and Public messaging
7. Refugees and asylum seekers who are qualified to work in the health service should be allowed to work and others who could assist with other areas of key work, such as drivers and delivery staff who are critical and in demand. Is the Welsh Government considering this in their discussions with the UK government?
8. WTUC encourage ppl to sign up to the NHS workers campaign. Many of these workers are BAME. We have also raised concerns around cleaning staff in NHS not being considered key workers. Considerable no's are BAME as well as porters
9. Possibility that NHS workers may be asked to self-isolate from families away from families as well as possibly construction workers. This isn't happening yet but maybe considered same as other countries. Logistical issues as well as emotional to consider so not immediate
10. A high percentage of people being hospitalised are from a BAME background; this pandemic is having a disproportionate impact unfortunately.
11. There is a cumulative negative impact as multiple negative factors add up for BAME individuals and communities.
12. Example from volunteers with 'Friends of Sickle Cell and Thalassemia': Members are already marginalised are not getting information from consultants regarding their vulnerability. They haven't received any guidance/letters and are more disadvantaged if they have more regular hospital appointments and aren't aware of processes. She is frightened for her community at this time. "We are looking for ways to get them the information, but it shouldn't be on us. It really highlights how marginalised our communities are."
13. Many on the frontline are BAME people ... lose/lose situation. They are at risk and disproportionately affected.

14. Proposed solution: Encourage WG to highlight contributions of migrants and BAME people on COVID 19 frontline in its regular communications or as a specific campaign.
15. Shielding vulnerable individuals: There are concerns that the letters about shielding sent by WG to vulnerable individuals have only gone out in English. Sanjiv VEDI will check the process if someone requests the letter in another language.
16. Doctors of the world website has NHS Coronavirus guidelines in 43 languages: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/>. Likewise, Public Health Wales has shielding information in different languages and also in audible version: <https://covid.reciteme.com/nhs-protect/>

Human Rights Impact of Legislation

1. Many anxieties by the BAME community who are already living in a hostile environment. The new Coronavirus legislation is very draconian and worrying many people. They have seen the images of troops on streets in London. Heard about the government enforced self-isolation, which again could impact BAME communities disproportionately, given they already face systematic racism and structural discrimination. Need messaging on this.
2. Under the new legislation, there will be changes in the regulations around sectioning people under the Mental Health Act. BAME communities are already disproportionately impacted. If police are given special powers to remove the need for a mental health nurse and social workers to sign off, we will see a big leap in the number of BAME people being affected. There are many examples of police failure and for communities to now hear the police will have further powers to detain and enforce, will become hugely problematic. This needs careful managing and messaging as people still remember when after 7/7 'Shoot to Kill' was brought in.
3. People are very fearful of being deported, including many Windrush generations and families.
4. Fear of disproportionate use of new police powers on BAME people – especially as they are less likely to have large gardens.
5. Gwent Police have a campaign to stop young people going out with their friends. There is a local hashtag #StayinforGwent but there is potential to make this campaign Wales wide.
6. A similar approach exists in Ceredigion and Powys, where they also aim to monitor tensions and de-escalate issues before they become problematic in communities. Suggested ways of working together.
7. Gwent Police has a fortnightly community dial in chaired by the Chief Inspector where community members can dial in with any concerns.
8. The Coronavirus Act has passed and has gone through The Assembly. We need to think about how we monitor the impact of the Act and the pandemic, particularly the impact on human rights and equalities. Essential to information share like we are now and prepare for the 6 month review of the Act.

9. The EHRC have made the decision to tell public bodies in Wales that they do not need to publish their strategic equality plans or their annual report by April 2020. This will be reviewed in October 2020
10. European Network against Racism (ENAR) is monitoring impact on Human Rights. #COVID19 is having an impact on racialised groups in Europe - If you, as a migrant, person of colour (this can include people of African, Arab, Asian, Caribbean, Latin American, Roma or Sinti descent) or belonging to a religious group, have been disproportionately affected or not protected by the measures taken by national authorities in the European Union, we want to hear your experiences and make them heard. If you are an organisation providing support to racialised communities, we also want to hear from you. 🤝👉👉 Fill in our short survey so that we can raise awareness about this situation: <https://bit.ly/2QIyp7y>
<https://www.facebook.com/105583994022/posts/10157498685614023/?d=n>

Proposed Solutions & Opportunities

1. BAME led media channels which publish content in multiple languages.
2. Involve people in BAME communities. "This is a challenging period, but we are part of the solution. Let us work together to come out with positive solution."
3. Keep our eyes open to signifiers of hate crime. Point made that in the police community tensions dial-up in Swansea, the community support officer reported that hate crime has significantly dropped during this period. Though that is good news, there is a risk reporting has gone down.
4. Find additional allies with power who have common cause and work with them- for instance in trade unions and Commissioners such as Young Person's Commissioner or Future Generations Commissioner (who has power to request response to the question to public bodies about where their priorities are – and can make specific requests about policy guidelines or lack thereof).
5. There is a range of funding opportunities for community groups in response to Covid-19. Anyone who wants to be on Rocio's email list can drop their details in a chat here.
6. Important to recognise, celebrate and disseminate the positive and optimistic stories - EG - a local community member making visors for frontline workers; EG – the many BAME owned restaurants who are providing food to NHS workers at hospitals, inc. one who has adapted business model to have a fundraiser to be able to provide food
7. We must be sure to use this opportunity to share positive stories and positive role models.
8. Can Welsh Government do more to have a comms campaign to drive these messages?
9. Important to hold onto (and grow) the gains that emerge during this crisis
10. After lockdown finishes, what will be next steps?
11. An opportunity exists in pushing for better recognition and reward for work in current developing areas of new policy and legislation. Much of the

latest policy drive in Wales was based on a desire to safeguard rights post-Brexit. Undoubtedly, the conversation will now take on a Covid 19 angle.

12. There is political debate about work being properly recognised and rewarded in a range of sectors which have large number of BAME workers.
13. How do we move on from the corona virus pandemic, learning lessons and building a better society, especially one where there is better recognition of work that people undertake and better reward for undertaking work and delivering vital services to the public. Many of these areas of work comprise a relatively high proportion of BAME employees.
14. The COVID 19 bill has presented an unprecedented increase in unemployment benefits. We should fight to keep these as standard employee benefits but also argue to expand living standards generally – for all people working and non-working.
15. Likewise, keep up the emerging argument that broadband should be an essential household utility.
16. Economic Strategies of local authorities - Ceredigion County Council are currently revising their economic strategy and given Covid 19 this will need revisiting.
17. How to get economy in LA's on their feet after lock down and how recognition of WG Fair work commission and Social Partnerships Bill may play in that. Fair Work Commission Wales Recommendations <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/fair-work-wales.pdf> Social Partnership Bill <https://gov.wales/more-equal-wales-strengthening-social-partnership-white-paper>
18. Strategic Equality Plans have just been revised. Nevertheless the implementation of equality objectives will help to support equality needs due to the coronavirus pandemic. If SEPs were seen to be already dated, it is possible to carry out an interim revision. The big change on the horizon is the commencement in Wales of the Socio-Economic Duty under the Equality Act. This is due to commence on the 29/9/20, but could be delayed. The SED could be really critical in ensuring that poverty impacts are taken into account in policy and strategic decision making and is therefore really important over the next few years, being mindful of corona virus related economic impacts, possible recession and possible austerity measures. The SED Non-Statutory Guidance was published on the 1/4/20. <https://gov.wales/socio-economic-duty>
19. Interesting as well to think about the idea of a Human Rights Act for Wales and how this relates to ICESR.
20. We are in for a period of great change – we just need to try to make sure that this change is for the better!
21. This is the last of this weekly forum series to gather initial evidence of the impact of COVID 19 on Black, Asian and ethnic. We are ensuring that the notes from this forum series are reaching officials in Welsh Government. We will likely schedule additional forums in time.
22. If anyone is interested in joining a subgroup either on a) media or b) "keeping the gains"/equitable exit to lockdown, say so in chat.

