

Written evidence submitted by Building Communities Resource Centre (BCRC) (MEM0027)

## **Introduction**

**BCRC carried out extensive research in 2019-2021 of BAME needs in our local borough.**

**This research has now been used to respond to the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry into ‘The experience of minority ethnic and migrant people in Northern Ireland’.**

BCRC Scoping Study was commissioned by our local Council and TEO through the Peace IV Partnership and gives voice to minority ethnic and migrant people mainly from the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough and organisations working with these groups.

## **BCRC Responses to the consultation questions:**

- the experiences of minority ethnic and migrant people living in Northern Ireland

BCRC has delivered 17 years of support for minority ethnic and migrant people and suggests a meeting with representatives to explain more about their programme and the needs of minority ethnic and migrant people living in NI.

The Scoping Study is peppered with needs explored and is worth reading.

In addition BCRC has recently gathered case stories of people’s experiences of living in NI.

We use the needs highlighted by the BAME community to influence bids for funding and daily working with government and statutory agencies.

TEO core fund a percentage of salaries for our 3 workers and we look for top-up plus programme costs every year.

In our TEO MEDF application 21-22 we highlighted the following needs:

BCRC workload intensified during 20/21 with Covid-19 and increasing needs for our services including Syrian families which reflects the need for increased collaboration and mentoring with EMSWs. BCRC supports 1,000+ interventions per annum assisting members of the BAME community with access to essential services. Main issues assisted by our EMSWs have been: Poverty/Benefits/Housing 29%; Mental Health 17%; Hate Crime/EUSS/BREXIT 7%; Employment/Job Loss 7%; Social Isolation 14% and 20% ESOL. Covid-19 is a cross-cutting theme impacting on these issues which includes Food poverty, education and family crisis support. Domestic violence increased during lockdown with 54 interpreting hours to date with 10 clients. BCRC supported clients from different ethnic backgrounds: Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Bulgarian, Syrian, Romanian, Senegalese Syrian, Chinese, Bangladeshis, Jordanian, Honduran, Egyptian and Chinese.

BCRC EMSW have completed a large body of research in 2020/21 for Peace IV "BCRC Scoping Study Causeway Coast and Glens BAME community" which highlights current needs of the local Ethnic population. BAME negative issues experienced were Cultural Intolerance (73%); Prejudice & Stereotyping (68%); BREXIT (79%); 48% said there was a lack of integrated dialogue and 47% said there was more racism today than 5 years ago. Consultees agreed that Good relations work was very important (68%) as was Understanding NI Politics & Identity (52%) and 47% highlighted Equality and Building Shared Communities as vital.

Needs highlighted include: More training opportunities in Intercultural Competency (ICC); Conflict Resolution, Hate Crime, Myth busting, Anti-intimidation, Anti-racism, Group Dynamics, Mediation skills, Capacity building in diverse communities, Civic leadership for BAME community and Lobbying. Training should also be accredited, for example OCN level, to give participants not only knowledge but also proper qualifications. Study Respondents highlighted needs for more integration and collaboration—more involvement in consultations by statutory bodies and engagement at meetings and representations on forums to encourage inclusive practices and intercultural competency; Race Champions suggested to assist with integration issues and lobby for equality in the workplace; Important to promote BAME institutions and showcase to others to break down race barriers; needs for multi-lingual counselling and interpreting services within statutory agencies; inclusion of BAME business and activities/services with shared and safe spaces; wider ESOL provision; schools diversity and ICC teacher training; afterschool's for integration; social proscribing and green proscribing for mental health issues; festivals and homeland traditions promoted and cultural exposure; local history discoveries; welcome of new citizens; hate crime reporting made easy and interagency Hate crime development; Refugees social integration needs and Islamic connections; women and older BAME needs plus issues of commemorating BAME history eg: contribution to WWI & WWII.

BCRC Immigration/Refugees support has increased by 1168% this year and requires a dedicated worker. There is a great need to implement longer term integration measures to aid families. Again Covid-19 has had a huge impact on these families who just arrived in Nov 19 and BCRC is working with other agencies to meet needs for ESOL, Employment, and Community & Cultural Engagement which is intensive work and justifies having increased service provision.

Hate crime has grown again fivefold 13 in 2017/18 and 69 in 2018/19 (NISRA Crime statistics for Causeway Coast and Glens) and now we are witnessing more hate crimes since the Coronavirus outbreak. Brexit was the big issue last year and we responded with our partners Stronger Together and IEF Ballymena providing assistance with EUSS settled status. Council Good Relations Audit 2018 indicates that those surveyed 16% felt racism had increased in 3 years and 11 % felt it had decreased while 43% felt it had stayed the same. Respondents felt that sectarianism and racism are connected. We are conscious of the mood in the area and 68% say that prejudice and stereotyping is either a big issue or a bit of an issue for them and 47% of people feel there is more racial prejudice now than 5 years ago.

- the challenges that minority ethnic and migrant people face in Northern Ireland

Isolation

Language barriers

Poor representation

Lack knowledge of where to find support

Institutional Racism

Government agencies lack resources for interpreters

Government agencies unwillingness to attract or use interpretation resources

Poor resources in bi-lingual mental health services

Hate crime/speech in schools - Teachers being prejudice in schools – bad example for pupils

Hate crime/slogans in towns where predominantly BAME people live and work

Explanations that they are not on benefits and not reliant on benefits

International Qualifications unrecognised

Erosion of homeland cultures

Training opportunities/progression routes

Hate crime/hate speech

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- the steps the UK Government can take to help ensure effective racial equality legislation in Northern Ireland

**BCRC responses taken from Scoping Study 2021 as follows:**

**Inclusion of BAME voices in local civic issues** eg: Focus on local NI worries- hospital waiting lists; education; future employment after BREXIT; cooperation not segregation and **Willingness to change attitudes and opinions** – How do we reach out to wider BAME audiences and engage in what is really needed?

#### **Outcomes**

- Assists with a greater sense of community cohesion
- A sense of being needed in the local community
- Reduction of Isolation
- Engagement and feeling of belonging
- Increased Inclusion
- Increased BAME Consultation

**Appoint Race Champions** to co-ordinate BAME work in local authorities/councils and in all statutory bodies - Each organisation needs to have someone who will be recognised as the

BAME Race Champion: Person responsible for not only representing the organisation outside and attend meetings and events related to the BAME communities but also someone who will be closely working with their workplace, lobbying for equality in the workplace.

**Outcomes:**

- Reduction of isolation
- Reduction of prejudice & stereotyping
- Increased inclusive practice
- Increased representation
  
- Increased cultural competency
- Increased trust in statutory bodies
- Reduction in Institutional racism

**Inclusive Local Authority Strategic Planning** - Each LA/Council in NI develop 3 year plan of action for support of BAME communities- with buy-in from BAME community.

**Outcomes:**

- Inclusive practice
- Partnership working
- Increased sense of belonging

**Joined up thinking**: Joint initiatives with NI Institutions and BAME Institutions ;Joint NI & BAME study visits ; NI & BAME History sessions

**Outcomes:**

- Greater understanding and celebration of diversity
- Increase in support within communities for the BAME population
- Increase in inclusive practice

**LA-wide interpreting services for all statutory services**: A borough wide interpreting service that can be accessed by individuals and Community/Voluntary bodies

**Outcomes:**

- Inclusive practice
- Breaking down barriers to accessing services
- BAME residents feel less isolated

**Creation of Shared Spaces Engagement with and promotion of BAME shops, activities and services** - Ensure inclusion of BAME business, activities and services in directories and Representatives on committees and public bodies

**Outcomes:**

- Greater integration into the community
- Greater engagement with services and support

**Shared Spaces** Engagement with and promotion of BAME shops, activities and services Explore public spaces such as health centres and schools to promote BAME services and use eg: European Language Days as an inroad to inform staff and children about BAME services

- Greater integration into the community
- Better understanding of diversity within our communities
- Greater engagement with services and support
- Encourage greater access to BAME shops and businesses

**Creation of safe spaces** –sign up for all public buildings Visible support and inclusion through signage/logo Development of “Safe Space” initiative with PSNI, Migrant Centre NI -Link in with town centre safe spaces

- Decrease in hate incidents/crime
- Increased trust and confidence in statutory bodies
- Increased confidence to report Hate Crime

**Creation of shared diverse spaces** Visible barriers & Invisible Barriers Eg: Appearances Behaviour Physical symbols Promotional materials / Atmosphere /Behavioural norms /Hidden agendas /expectations Beliefs/ Belonging: Is there a place here for someone like me?

- Increased inclusive practice
- Increased sense of belonging
- Increased cultural competence
- Increase in community cohesion

**Inclusion of BAME in local festivals e.g.: Christmas and insert BAME festivals into our calendars**

A CC&G borough wide Diversity week “Polish week” “Spanish Week” “German Week” etc. to stimulate exchange & Causeway Mela

- Recognition of our diverse community
- Greater inclusion of marginalised communities
- Increased respect and celebration of diversity

**The importance of maintaining homeland culture and traditions** and passing these onto the next generation Provide diverse culture and language learning to BAME and local children both online and face to face, so more local children will have the opportunity to learn and experience BAME culture and second generation BAME children can learn and understand their own heritage and be proud of who they are.

- A sense of pride and mental wellbeing
- Greater feeling of belonging to a diverse and intercultural community

**Exploration of International cuisine** Link in with Naturally North Coast and artisan markets

- Greater sense of belonging & integration into the community
- Encouragement to try diverse food and make connections with the culture

**Expansion of BAME support/groups out across all areas of CCGBC** Culture exposure work /BAME forum in all towns in CCG

- Current gaps exist in events/provision/ESOL
- Increase in inclusive practice
- Increase in confidence and trust in Statutory bodies

**Inclusion of BAME voices and history** Storytelling events and programmes to capture and amplify marginalised voices in CC&G Borough

- Greater inclusion of BAME voices
- Increased civic action
- Increased sense of belonging

**Inclusion of achievements of BAME community in newsletters and social media** Ensuring events and publicity are inclusive

- Greater inclusion
- BAME voices seen as integral to community
- BAME community seen in positive way
- BAME feel a sense of belonging to the community and support from Council

**Updated information services**, available in digital format and physical hard-copy format in a range of publicly accessible spaces / Update of welcome pack and induction pack in different languages / Updated guides of local activities in different languages / Include navigation of the health service and mental health service / Buddy system to take BAME to social events

- Inclusive practice
- Greater sense of welcome and belonging for BAME residents
- Reduction of Social Isolation for BAME residents

**More frequent community/networking events** where the services and needs of BAME community can be publicly addressed Equality officers and GR officers meeting with BAME groups regularly/ The need for greater understanding of age-based needs within the BAME communities

- Greater knowledge of BAME needs and the ability to be responsive to it
- BAME feel more included and supported

**Action to support BAME Political lobbies & emerging campaigns** Examples given include:

Education; working with marginalised communities; lobbying to change immigration laws and the NHS surcharge for frontline workers. The provision of adequate support and advice including legal advice. Support for non-violence campaigns (eg: current BLM movement)

- Increase in trust & confidence in Statutory bodies/institutions
- Decrease in Isolation
- Increased feeling of belonging
- Increase in education

- Increase in Inclusive practices
- Reduction in institutional racism

**Funding provision** The current model for funding (project –by-project) and its flexibility within projects need to be re-evaluated /Core funding needs programme costs attached to reduce time scratching around for additional funding

- Responding more effectively to BAME projects on the ground
- Allow for greater flexibility and ease of connection with civic leadership
- Allows for adaptation area by area and new ground-breaking initiatives such as PB led activities
- Flexibility around partnership working, mentoring for BAME groups

### **Education and Training opportunities within the community for frontline staff and for elected reps**

More training opportunities in;

- ✓ Intercultural Competency (ICC)\*
  - ✓ Conflict Resolution
  - ✓ Hate Crime
  - ✓ Myth busting
  - ✓ Anti-intimidation
  - ✓ Anti-racism
  - ✓ Group Dynamics
  - ✓ Mediation skills
  - ✓ Capacity building in diverse communities
  - ✓ Civic leadership for BAME community
  - ✓ Lobbying
  - ✓ Training should also be accredited, for example OCN level, to give participants not only knowledge but also proper qualifications.
  - ✓ Compulsory training in \*ICC for elected representatives, frontline staff & Community organisations supporting BAME members of the community
- 
- Greater understanding and celebration of diversity
  - Development of Intercultural Competency
  - Reduction of hate crime
  - Development of coping strategies
  - Increase in inclusive practice
  - Cultural competence, using inclusive language



**Responsive training and events** -Events into local places to bring people there to gather and learn e.g. Coleraine Mosque, diverse housing areas, Cultural Institutions /Cultural events in places where new communities have arrived or where there is a need e.g. Brexit /Online connection points like BCRC Connection Café

- Bring the learning into the community
- Encourage open days and visits to cultural institutions and places of faith to increase understanding and respect
- Online learning and connection for those who are more isolated in rural areas

**Creating safety in the way we commemorate** Auditing existing memorials and ceremonies to seek inclusion of BAME communities (EG recognising Polish communities' contribution to the wars) /Do council area's commemorate and celebrate any specific important anniversaries for the BAME community

- Greater inclusion in important areas of commemoration and memory adds to a feeling of belonging within the community
- Instilling a sense of pride in homeland and recognition of positive contribution is very positive in terms of feeling welcome and appreciated. This can reduce culture shock and aid with integration

**Time and effort spent on how to support people who are intimidated from within their own communities** Anti-intimidation training

- Increased community cohesion
- A sense of pride in shared communities
- Empowerment of BAME communities

**Education, prejudice reduction, what is a hate crime, training and how to report** Training in the community and in schools /Hands of my Friends re-develop and reintroduce

- Reduction in Hate Crime
- Increase in reporting

**Interagency Forum on Hate crime to be developed** -This was a positive step in terms of community consultation and could be held as an Interagency meeting quarterly going forward.

- BAME Trust building with authorities & frontline services
- Interagency response to BAME needs

**Anti-racism programming** Anti-racism strategic programme planning /Institutional racism, the longstanding and long term effects of enslavement and use of power need to be examined

- A greater sense of belonging
- Inclusive practice within Statutory bodies
- BAME support and confidence in statutory bodies

- Empowered rhetoric and civic voice in order to respond to racism

**Respect for facilitators from BAME backgrounds** Ensure that facilitators from BAME community are equally valued and paid for their input into programmes

- Greater sense of worth and wellbeing
- Greater sense of support and inclusive practice
- Economic opportunities for BAME community

**Support and sharing information and best practice regarding Syrian families in CCG**

BCRC Sits on the Syrian Families Interagency group led by NHSCT. Continuing the support through funding

- Greater knowledge around the needs of new refugee families in the area
- Sharing of best practice
- Supporting new families and aiding in integration

**Myth busting educational sessions around refugee journeys** The community in Northern Ireland must be encouraged and supported to better understand the nature and trauma of seeking asylum and resettlement in another country, and understand the benefits, responsibility and pride Northern Ireland should have in offering this sanctuary to some of the most vulnerable children and families in the world.

- Greater understanding and support within the community
- A greater sense of belonging
- Reduction in hate incidences/crime

**Social interactions and connections with Muslim citizens** There is a need for Muslims to be actively included in social and cultural groups, to enable better understanding of Islam and Muslims to help dispel discrimination. /There is a need for social interactions between Muslim children and other children for tolerance and better understanding. /Schools hold awareness sessions and events for children of different faiths

- The active engagement and connection of the Muslim Association in programmes will help to build community cohesion
  - Increased inclusion and building understanding will allow for a greater sense of belonging

**Chinese Cultural connection programmes** More Chinese (& BAME) culture introduction sessions provided to local people in all age group and all walks of life, to create intellectual and emotional connection with Chinese culture to prevent many forms of racism that caused by ignorance and fear. Increased cultural competence

- Increased community cohesion
- Decrease in prejudice
- Decrease in hate incidents/crime

**Women's programmes – interaction and connection with other women** A programme with interaction between diverse women in the community /Multi-lingual Interpreters for Women's Aid

- A sense of belonging
- Increased civic action
- Increased confidence for marginalised women to include their voices in public discourse
- Increase in support for women in crisis

**Development of a collaborative relationship with the University and work with them as a stakeholder re International learning and inclusiveness in the community** Collaborative work with International dept. re International students in the community /Helping the University connect more within the community

- Connection and collaboration on BAME support work
- Sharing best practice
- Shared events

**Support BAME volunteers and help to empower and educate BAME citizens to allow them to fulfil paid roles in the community** Educational support that is helpful and meaningful & Volunteer experience to build capacity

- Supported Volunteering
- Increased skills
- Increased integration

- Inclusive practice
- Increased representation of BAME in workplaces and in roles to support BAME community

- the health and economic outcomes of minority ethnic and migrant people in Northern Ireland, and the steps the UK Government can take to help improve them

**Benefits system/welfare** explanations and **person centred assistance**. Development of multi-lingual support for benefits, including Universal Credit - Training to frontline staff and Intercultural Competency to counteract institutional racism

- Person centred approach to BAME claimants
- Inclusive service delivery/practice
- Reduction in stress and anxiety of BAME clients in dealing with benefits in a second language

**Widen provision of accessible and free ESOL Courses** including rural areas. Taking into consideration different levels and times. Greater provision of ESOL

- Increased communication for people of ethnic minorities enabling increased access to services for BAME community
- Reduced barriers to service
- Reduced barriers to employment

**Recognition International Qualifications** – many BAME and migrants do not have their qualifications recognised and therefore cannot access employment that they are skilled to do

**Provision of Diversity programmes within Schools** School programmes focused on celebrating and respecting diversity in our communities

- Increased understanding and respect in a multi-ethnic society
- Increased sense of belonging for BAME residents
  - Reduction of Hate Incidences

**Teacher training focused on diversity and culture in NI and Inclusive practice** Provision of teacher training & Inter Cultural Competency (ICC) and inclusive practice

- Tool kit for inclusive practice in schools
- Increased capacity of teachers in dealing with racist incidents in school

**After schools activities** Extra-curricular activities, including sport, are a way to help refugee students to make friends, overcome peer problems, and to promote social interaction among children from different cultural backgrounds. Schools can be flexible to allow outside agencies to come in to provide after schools activities

- Greater sense of integration and belonging
- Allows equal access to activities without having to pay if activities are funded

**Increased communication for people of ethnic minorities** enabling increased access to services for BAME community

**Increased Mental Health Support for BAME community** Train level 4 bi-lingual counsellors - Language is a primary barrier toward expression and accessing well-being services/Create Mental health ambassadors/enable Access to online support and Change mental health to well-being (due to stigma attached to wording 'mental health')

- Reduction of isolation
- Greater sense of belonging and support
- Increased support including counselling for older BAME people
- Reduce stigma of mental health through name-change Well-being support
- Accessing services and programmes without fear of stigma
- An increase in confidence and wellbeing which allows for a greater part in the community

**Mental Health social proscripting** A range of support and programmes that examine the use of social and green proscripting

- Aids in the support of Mental wellbeing without the stigma which is present for many different cultures with the label of Mental Health
- Greater sense of belonging in the community

**Ethical treatment of BAME people** For BAME people, telling their stories can be traumatising, respect and care should be used in asking people to tell their stories. Care needs to be taken that organisations do not take advantage of people and profit from their stories and experiences

- BAME people will feel less obliged to tell stories in inappropriate setting

- Reduction in mental stress associated with reliving trauma
- Increased understanding of BAME journeys and stories
  - Increased cultural competence

- successful initiatives and programmes to encourage cultural exchange and diversity among people in Northern Ireland

**BCRC Minority Ethnic Programme** – includes: Speaking Truth To Power; Diverse Histories; Intercultural competency; frontline crises support; Globetrotters summer scheme; Refugee support ; Interagency working; Cultural ambassador employment etc..

**BCRC suggest a meeting with representatives to explain more about their programme**

**BCRC's Peace IV CIP Continuation of work** –Community Integration programme Build upon momentum of Peace IV work Prove that this work is continuing in legacy/Not tick box start and stop approach

BCRC delivered a genuine full engagement and diversity programme with BAME and 'indigenous' communities – this work created a platform for current anti-racism and diversity work which is ongoing and sees buy in and empowerment of all communities

**Local version of Small World's Café** BCRC/Radius Connection Café operating online due to Covid – provides:

- A safe inclusive & welcoming space to make connections, share ideas, reduce isolation
- Increased sense of belonging
- Stakeholder space for BAME needs
- Increased understanding of BAME journeys and stories

- people's experiences of applying for the EU Settlement Scheme.

BCRC is part of the Stronger Together network and we share the management of Home Office funded EUSS worker who has provided one-to-one support for people applying EUSS.

We have been offering 10 hours per month for EUSS support. Last year we supported 300+ people.

**END**

*June 2021*