



Review of Youth Work with
Black and Minority Ethnic Young People
in Newcastle upon Tyne
Executive Summary

January - July 2003

Commissioned by
Newcastle City Council's Play and Youth Service

Undertaken by
Regional Youth Work Unit and Save the Children



Introduction

This six-month-long review into services to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) young people in Newcastle was commissioned by the city's Play and Youth Service. The tender was awarded to a joint bid from the Regional Youth Work Unit and Save the Children.

This review was commissioned partly in response to the 2001 OFSTED inspection of the City Council's Children and Young People's Section. The OFSTED inspection highlighted the need to provide specific services to BME young people and the need to integrate BME young people into mainstream youth provision.

In March 2002, the Play and Youth Service undertook a short consultation exercise with BME organisations in the city to find out their views on the scope of the review and how it should be carried out. The review's brief for tender was largely based on this consultation exercise.

The aims of this review into work with BME young people are to:

- Map and assess current services
- Consider best practice
- Make recommendations to inform strategy and policy provision
- Involve BME groups and BME young people themselves in the review process.

Political and Social Context

There are now 5 million people from minority ethnic communities living in Britain. BME groups are considerably younger than the population at large. BME communities and asylum seekers and refugees are often socio-economically disadvantaged and subjected to racism on both a personal and an institutional level.

Recent government reports have urged councils to develop policies on community cohesion, to help promote diversity and combat racism. Young asylum seekers and refugees have been given scant mention in these reports. However, the development of youth strategies must include the needs of these most vulnerable of groups.

Involving children and young people in the planning, delivering and evaluation of government services brings significant benefits. If young people's views are taken into account, services can be tailored to meet real, rather than presumed need.

Statistics

At the time of the 2001 National Census, there were 7,044 BME young people in Newcastle upon Tyne within the 10-24 age group. The biggest age group was the 20–24 year-olds, with 3,410 young people. Overall, the BME population of the city has increased from 4.1% in 1991, to 6.9% in 2001. This represents a significant increase of 68% in the last ten years. It should be noted that this figure does not include the 'white other' category, which did not exist in the ethnicity classifications in the 1991 Census. Therefore, comparisons between the two census figures are problematic.



Consultation with Young People

Methods of consultation

The review team recruited 22 young people to be 'peer researchers'. These young people, aged between 15 and 25, came from 11 different BME communities across the city. For the purposes of this research, peer researchers are young BME researchers, who were peers of their research subjects, both in terms of race and age. Eight of the young researchers were asylum seekers or refugees. The purpose of recruiting these researchers was so that young people themselves should research the needs of their peers.

The peer researchers were trained in various methods, including Participatory Appraisal techniques (visual, community-based research tools such as spider diagrams and H forms).

Accompanied by experienced and qualified youth and community workers, the researchers talked to 288 BME young people across the city, in schools, youth projects and on the streets. In order to find out what issues were important, the researchers employed a variety of methods, including Participatory Appraisal techniques and questionnaires, as appropriate.

Research

During the course of the research, the 22 researchers talked to 288 Black and Minority Ethnic young people from across the city. 152 young people were contacted via a questionnaire in street settings and a further 136 young people in projects, schools and some street sessions using Participatory Appraisal Techniques. There was an even gender balance. 144 young men and 135 young women, ages ranging from 10-29 years old. (There were eight cases where gender was not recorded).

Research in Projects and Schools

In total, 144 young men and 136 young women were contacted, from 21 different ethnic backgrounds, ages ranging between 10 and 29 years-old.

The review encountered some difficulty in researching young people within the school environment. The review team wrote several times to all the schools in the city which had a significant number of BME pupils. Unfortunately, we did not receive responses from the schools until the latter stages of the research. Eventually, we were able to carry out sessions in two schools, Heaton Manor Comprehensive School and Westgate Community College.

The researchers, working in groups of 3 or 4, spent between 1-2 hours working with small groups of young people. They asked young people about the projects, places and activities they visited or engaged in during their spare time. They then asked groups about the areas where they lived, the projects they used, and what changes they would like to make in various aspects of their lives.



Findings

Positive and negative aspects of local areas

- Safety – young people talked about the benefits of ‘feeling safe’ in communities which consisted mainly of BME people
- Fear of violence and experience of bullying and harassment was expressed many times
- Racism was one of the most negative aspects of living in their areas in general and Newcastle in particular. BME young people experienced verbal abuse and racist bullying on the streets
- Young asylum seekers and refugees often talked about feelings of isolation

Changes they wanted to make:

- More effort to combat racism
- More CCTV cameras
- More trips for young people in their areas
- A greater variety of music events
- More multi-cultural centres
- A metro station in Fenham/Arthur’s Hill
- Increased access to jobs
- Football parks

Projects

The young people mainly attended projects set up as separate provision to work with BME young people or asylum seekers and refugees.

Aspects of projects most respondents liked were:

- Meeting members of their own community
- Single gender (girls-only) provision
- Safety
- Workers
- Being able to talk freely and express opinions
- Learning

We asked what aspects of projects young people would like to develop.

They wanted:

- Barriers to their using services to be removed. Barriers included inappropriate opening times/age range, unsuitable space/facilities
- Normal activities like trips, cookery, arts and crafts
- International and national exchanges
- Music
- Asian young men wanted sporting activities
- More meeting places i.e. an internet café
- More BME-specific provision
- Asian young women wanted more girls-only clubs
- Racism and bullying to be tackled



Street Sessions

During 16 street sessions, the peer researchers contacted 152 young people from 28 different ethnic backgrounds, ranging in age from 10-29. Practical considerations (weather, time available) meant that the primary research tool used in street sessions was a questionnaire.

Most of the young people (115 out of 152) lived in the West End. The researchers asked them what they did in their spare time. The male respondents were far more likely to play sport, while the girls visited the library and the cinema (more talking/socialising activities). The main reason they gave for not using youth projects was 'other priorities', in other words, having better things to do. Lack of information, however, was also highlighted.

Requests for change included:

- Improved access to sports facilities (32%)
- More facilities specifically for BME young people (21%)
- More culturally-mixed provision (18%)

Experience of peer researchers

The 22 peer researchers:

- Were able to inform their interviewees about projects in their area
- Gained confidence and self-esteem
- Gained awareness of other BME communities
- Gained information on services
- Formed a cohesive group
- Demonstrated high levels of ability and commitment

Consulting Young People: Key Findings

1. Projects specifically established for young people are major sources of support for their communities
2. BME young people would like to be involved in groups that are mixed in terms of ethnicity
3. Provision for BME young people is fairly limited
4. Provision is mainly located in the West End
5. There is a lack of information about what is available
6. Asian young women want girls-only groups
7. The needs of BME young people are very similar to those of other young people. They would like similar levels of resources
8. Racism and racial harassment need to be tackled.



Feedback from Practitioners and Managers

Gathering the views of practitioners and managers was an essential part of this review. 3 methods were used: a questionnaire, interviews and a Consultation Event. We sent out 102 questionnaires to projects which either work directly with BME young people or which provide support services to them. A total of 19 questionnaires were completed, 16 from voluntary sector projects and 3 from the statutory sector. 13 key workers and managers were interviewed at their places of work. At the Consultation Event, held in June 2003, we presented emerging findings to workers and managers and asked for their views.

The views of managers and practitioners about the various relevant issues are as follows:

Current provision for BME young people by Play and Youth Service

- Some organisations are isolated and disadvantaged in terms of staff and funding
- Few young asylum seekers and refugees are accessing Play and Youth Services
- Play and Youth Services have never prioritised BME young people
- Some existing provision is good, and we should build on that

Funding and resources

- 15 out of 19 projects said that funding was a concern
- Funding criteria may restrict work in less deprived areas
- Work with BME young people can be resource-heavy
- Language support is essential

Venues

- Lack of safe and accessible venues
- Community groups can be territorial
- Community organisations are often dominated by older people

Strategic Planning

- Lack of service coordination
- Poor access to information on BME events and projects
- Lack of commitment to equality
- Lack of support for community-based organisations – new and old

Staffing and Training

- There are not enough BME workers
- There are no detached BME workers
- BME staff are often part-time/do not have enough hours
- BME workers lack support
- Anti-racist training is essential for all workers



Asylum seekers and refugees

- Few workers from refugee backgrounds
- Work with asylum seekers and refugees is resource-heavy
- Professionals need more information about asylum seekers and refugees
- Meaningful relationships between the statutory and voluntary sector need to be developed

Other issues

- BME young people are not involved in the development of services
- Cultural barriers may exist around the discussion of sensitive issues such as drugs, sexual health or other taboo subjects
- Lack of dialogue with parents and community leaders

Practitioners' Recommendations

- More financial support from the statutory sector for BME projects
- More suitable venues
- The development of a multi-cultural youth centre
- The development of a strategic plan that links BME work into all youth strategies
- Play and Youth Service should be more open, should have more links with voluntary sector and other local authorities in the region
- More BME workers needed
- Target BME staff for training
- Support BME young people to become workers or management committee members
- Continue the dialogue with BME young people which this review started
- Develop contact with parents and community leaders
- Anti-racist training for all Youth Service staff and young people
- Employ mixed (in terms of gender and ethnicity) staff teams
- BME workers to work with both BME groups and white young people

Specific recommendations for young asylum seekers and refugees

- Awareness-raising work for staff
- Attract young asylum seekers and refugees to existing services
- Provide language support
- Establish asylum seeker/refugee-only provision if appropriate
- Be sensitive to immigration status
- Provide emotional support



Key Findings From Research With Young People And Practitioners

From the extensive work we have carried out with practitioners and young people during this six-month-long review, these are our key findings:

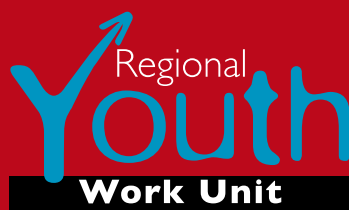
- BME young people want to be involved in mixed provision. The young people who took part in the research were keen to access services that bring together both BME and white young people. However, many BME young people do not currently use mainstream provision because they perceive it as racist and inappropriate to their needs. Mainstream provision must be made accessible to BME groups.
- Young Asian girls require special consideration in the development of services. Cultural issues demand that separate single-gender provision is essential. Their communities need to be reassured that provision is safe and appropriate.
- The Play and Youth Service needs to direct a specific strategy for working with young asylum seekers and refugees. This needs to include specific services which recognise the complex issues that affect young asylum seekers and refugees. Language support and informal educational programmes are essential.
- More provision needs to be provided for BME young people in the East End of the city, including young asylum seekers and refugees.
- Racism and the experience of racial harassment have a detrimental effect on the activities in which BME young people engage. Although anti-racist training can address this in youth projects, on a wider city level, the Local Authority needs actively to challenge racist attitudes. This could be achieved through educational and awareness-raising programmes in schools and within the Council. Closer liaison with police and other services may help to form a coherent anti-racist strategy.
- Action needs to be taken to recruit and train more BME youth workers.
- Anti-racist training needs to be available for white youth workers in the city. There also needs to be training in racial awareness and methods for combating racism. These programmes need to be a regular part of training schedules, not just a one-off event.
- The experience of the young researchers has demonstrated that young people from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds can work together very effectively. The Play and Youth Service needs to find resources to fund this group and offer further training opportunities.



Recommendations

The Play and Youth Service commissioned this review with the aim of it having an impact on future service delivery. There is an opportunity now to act upon the findings from the review. The review team have made the following recommendations:

- The Play and Youth Service should appoint a lead officer to oversee the development and implementation of a strategy for service development with BME young people.
- Practitioners in the city have a wealth of experience and understanding, and they need to contribute fully to future service development.
- The possibility of establishing a Centre for Diversity in the city should be explored.
- The Play and Youth Service should identify several projects in the city, which could be used as pilots for developing integrated mainstream provision. These pilot programmes could involve anti-racist training for staff, mixed staff teams (in terms of ethnicity), development of appropriate youth work initiatives, and a community needs analysis.
- All Play and Youth Service projects need to carry out a community audit to ensure that their services are reflective of their local population.
- BME young people have been at the heart of this review process. We recommend that they continue to be involved in strategy development, consultation and further research.



Save the Children NE Development Team