

Conversations with Ethnically Diverse Communities in Arun and Chichester

Executive Summary

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June 2022





Voluntary Action
Arun & Chichester

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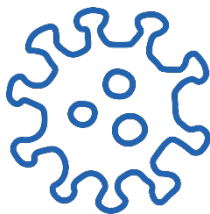
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'Fostering a culture of inclusion is not an idealistic idea, it is a necessity that we should be striving for – recognising and proactively addressing inequalities.' Sussex Health and Social Care Partnership Needs review¹

1. Introduction



The COVID-19 pandemic brought attention to many hidden needs. Existing needs and vulnerabilities were exacerbated for some people and new needs were identified. Without a doubt the pandemic preyed on many pre-existing economic and social vulnerabilities affecting local communities, families, and individuals.

There was early recognition that ethnically minority groups in the UK were disproportionately affected². Negative experiences are commonly reported by many people within ethnically diverse communities³ and some social determinants of health have historically prevented fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health.

Social determinants of health are the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, play, and worship that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. This project was to better understand the impact for ethnically diverse communities living within Arun and Chichester and to hear from people's lived experience.

Through this project we have looked holistically at ethnically diverse communities' experience of living and working in Arun and Chichester.



First celebrating Diversity
Event in Chichester

¹ Sussex Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Population Needs Review, Sussex Health, and Social Care Partnership, 2020

² Mahmood F, Acharya D, Kumar K, et al. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on ethnically minority communities: a qualitative study on the perspectives of ethnically minority community leaders. *BMJ Open* 2021;11: e050584. doi:10.1136/ bmjopen-2021-050584

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>





People shared the importance of making connections through networks, within their workplace, schools, through local community voluntary, charities sector and faith groups, as this helps people to feel part of their local communities. This also helps with knowledge of services and access to services for appropriate support when needed. Local groups and networks also help to integrate people and communities as to how they are viewed and treated.

2. The aims of the project

The primary purpose of the main report is to share the insight Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester (VAAC) have gathered through conversations with ethnically diverse communities living in Arun and Chichester since October 2020. The aim of the project was to:

- Raise awareness of the lived experiences of ethnically diverse communities living and working in Arun and Chichester - their priorities, challenges, issues, and concerns.
- Share information about emerging initiatives that positively respond to the identified needs of ethnically diverse people.
- Offer recommendations to reduce barriers to improve access into services, based on these communities' shared experience.
- Actively work in partnership with others to improve pathways and appropriateness of access into services and overall service provision across the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector for ethnically diverse communities.

Information was captured through conversations (face to face, virtually and by telephone) with organisations led by people from ethnically diverse backgrounds, local faith leaders and people living within the community, statutory services and organisations who actively engage with ethnically diverse communities in Arun and Chichester.



First meeting of the Together group (Representatives from four organisations).





It is important to add that this is a broad summary of the identified needs as informed by ethnically diverse communities in Arun and Chichester. Whilst there are common issues of concern, it is noted that people from ethnically diverse communities are not a homogenous group and as such not all communities have the same concerns or experiences. This means that responses to challenges also need to be carefully considered.

3. Context:

VAAC research undertaken during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic looked at how organisations supported ethnically diverse communities in Arun and Chichester and how ethnically diverse led organisations managed through this period.

Nationally, it emerged that ethnically diverse communities had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic in terms of rates of infection, mortality, and economic impact.

On an international level, the death of George Floyd in the US gave the impetus to the Black Lives Matter Movement which raised awareness of racism globally. In Chichester, a Black Lives Matter march was attended by 1,500 people from Chichester and surrounding areas.

In October 2020, VAAC set up the action research project engaging with ethnically diverse communities in Arun and Chichester. The aim was to increase initiatives led by and for ethnically diverse communities.

Arun and Chichester District Council's ethnicity profiles based on the 2011 census⁴ informs that 3% of Arun's population and 7% of Chichester's population are from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)⁵ (2019) highlights that more people from ethnically diverse backgrounds are living in West Sussex.



⁴ Census, 2011, Chichester District Analysis, Corporate Information Team

⁵ <https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/core/west-sussex-jsna-summary-2019.pdf>





The increase has especially been amongst younger age groups. Most of this increase was in Crawley, and along the Coastal areas in Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, and Worthing.

VAAC membership in October 2020 showed that 5 out of 435 voluntary (just over 1%) and community organisations were led by Black, European and ethnically diverse people. Clearly this percentage is out of step with the average percentage for these communities against the population of West Sussex.

We began by speaking to our membership and with those who work with ethnically diverse communities – not necessarily members, including the Gypsy and Traveller Community, to understand what the challenges and needs in running their organisations and activities were. We also wanted to learn if these organisations were aware of how VAAC could support and if applicable, what prevented them from joining.

Alongside this work our knowledge increased of the different communities in the Arun and Chichester area, including key health and wellbeing concerns. VAAC also worked in partnership, and actively collaborated across the voluntary, community and charity sector, to share information to help improve pathways into health and wellbeing services.

We asked our membership about the diversity of trustee boards and accessibility of volunteering opportunities, as well as looking at how accessible VAAC was and how to be more inclusive to a wider range of groups. As part of this staff have undertaken initial diversity training.

What we have learnt is that [it takes time to build trusted relationships](#) with ethnically diverse communities and therefore our engagement is ongoing. However, through targeted engagement of a survey, face to face meetings and focus groups we believe we have increased our understanding of some of the priorities for ethnically diverse communities living and working in Arun and Chichester. By continuing our conversations with these communities, and asking for feedback on this report, we will be able to check and build on this understanding.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has also strengthened and developed the ways that communities come together informally to support each other. This is a significant shift in traditional community life that extends beyond formally organised voluntary groups and organisations. This presents opportunities for new ways of extending engagement and conversations into communities and synergising with other organisations, whilst also meaning that we need to be more flexible in our approaches to support community cohesion.

Our aim is to share the findings on key themes from the conversations completed so far. Suggested ideas have been made to help increase meaningful engagement to address some of the issues and concerns raised.



Celebrating Diversity
event in Littlehampton

4. Recommendations

Based on the feedback received through these conversations we are advocating the following recommendations for organisations who are looking to make their services more accessible:

- Investment in specific and appropriate training for staff and volunteers working within ethnically diverse communities, to ensure there are less misunderstandings.
- Communication is key to engagement and needs to be in simple language. Also, when engaging with local people **take time to listen, learn and explain.**



First Celebrating Diversity Event in Chichester





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- Ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of those who express difficulties with English and who can provide interpreting services and support. It is important to add that the **individual has the right to confidentiality**, so a family or friend may not be the best person to provide interpreting services.
- The importance of meeting people face-to-face, hearing their lived experiences and using local community spaces for meetings.
- Ensure that all information and signage is in the more commonly spoken languages.
- Ensure that there are locally available language classes, delivered at a time that suit the local community.
- Actively work in partnership with others to improve pathways into services and overall service provision for ethnically diverse communities.
- Extending volunteering opportunities to support access to conversational English.



5. Areas for further work and next steps

There are issues that need more in-depth conversations. Specific priority areas that need to be moved forward in partnership include:

- Exploring identified safety, support and engagement needs for farm and factory workers - this includes access to appropriate advice and information.
- Targeted relationship building and engagement with the Gypsy/Roma and Traveller Community looking at wellbeing, health, and stigma towards the community. It should be noted there is learning from outreach investments made in Crawley.
- Aligning with the [Sussex Health and Care Partnership 'Working with Communities and People' Strategy](#) to have conversations at a Primary Care Network level (approximately 50,000 registered patients). As this will support proactive and appropriate ways to increase accessibility into services including social prescribing that works towards improving longer term health outcomes.

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- The sharing of information of local organisations working with ethnically diverse communities for referrals.
- Working within an Integrated Care system to explore asset-based community approaches that support people's active engagement in their holistic health and wellbeing, building resilience and improving longer term health outcomes.
- To further [explore the barriers](#) for members from diverse communities to [access volunteering opportunities](#) and to work with organisations, to actively create accessible opportunities for voluntary and paid work within voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.
- Exploring participation and engagement in education for ethnically diverse communities.
- Continuing conversations across the different ethnically diverse communities in Arun and Chichester, to explore further opportunities for collaboration.

The work reported here provides a good foundation and platform to delve deeper into the issues raised. There is a need to widen the conversations to people who were unable to engage at this time. Key ongoing steps to promote and take forward include:

- Support for **safe conversation spaces** where ethnically diverse people are really listened to, and their lived experiences are valued.
- Improve the availability and sharing of data to better inform understanding, identify gaps, and unmet needs. It is hoped this will counter stereotypes, misconceptions, and prejudice.
- Offer networking and information sharing with groups that are led by ethnically diverse people and by groups who have specific targeted services.
- Actively promote opportunities to join board and forums to increase diversity and support organisations to make these an inclusive space.
- Develop **collaborative approaches** with the voluntary and community social enterprise with the inclusion of faith groups and



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partners (Local Council, NHS, and Police) with the aim of co-design, co-development, co-delivery, and reflection. It is important to share the learning so that provision is in sync with the needs and aspirations of minority communities.

These interviews and focus groups have supported VAAC to better support and co-develop initiatives with other groups and individuals. Further conversations are needed to improve knowledge sharing and access to services and activities from our wide range of partners.

The Together Project: Four community leaders across a range of backgrounds have formed the Together partnership under the umbrella of the Transformation Centre. Their aims are to celebrate Diversity in Arun and Chichester, to create a space for people from ethnically diverse communities to talk on issues that matter to them, to support integration and to access goods and services which are hard to access in the local area.

This work is delivered through monthly events rotating between Chichester and Littlehampton, funded by the Sussex Community Foundation. The first event took place in March 2022 in Chichester with thirty-two people attending. Feedback included:

“

‘I really appreciate that because of VAAC, we got an opportunity to meet new people. It is a great way to start to introduce each other to other minority people. Also represent our cultural festivals, food and discussion about different topics which include different activities improving health, mental health, children’s activities. Connect with people from heart to heart. Thanks again.’ Event attendee

“

‘Thank you. It is refreshing to be in a room with people who look like me.’ Event attendee

Working with Connecting Cultures: A new emerging group, seeking to support ethnically diverse families in Chichester. Working with [Everyone Active](#) (contracted by Chichester District Council) to look at health and fitness classes for women and their families. Connecting Cultures with

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VAAC is seeking funding to move this work forward to provide support for women - information and signposting and conversational language classes.

Working with Chichester Jamia Centre to progress plans for a mosque (place of worship) and community centre in Chichester:

Approx. 400 men are regularly worshipping in a rented space run by the Chichester Jamia Centre, a registered charity. There is not enough space to currently include women in worship. Arabic classes are provided at weekends for children. Bringing together people from Chichester and the wider Chichester District. People use the mosque from a wide range of nationalities and backgrounds including Britain, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Pakistan, and Morocco.

Support for Ethnically Minority Families who have a family member in prison: In partnership with Sussex Prisoners Families⁶, Bridging Change, Diverse Resources International and VAAC are combining their strengths and expertise to work directly with families who have a family member in the criminal justice system. Working with families, wider community, and key stakeholders to tackle related issues that prevent people from gaining the support they need. As families of prisoners, particularly mothers, experience trauma, loss, poor physical and mental health, increased financial and housing problems occur as a result of their loved-one's imprisonment. VAAC are currently trying to secure funds to take this work forward.

Eastern European Support: VAAC are talking with Aspire, Local Authority, Grandads Front Room, Lithuanian Community of the South Coast, and the Shore Church looking at different ways to support vulnerable Eastern Europeans. This includes targeted events, referrals to appropriate services and access to language classes.

Bognor Community: A group of people exploring ways to build community cohesion and address negative perceptions of ethnically diverse communities.

⁶ <https://www.sussexprisonersfamilies.org.uk/>



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6. Acknowledgements

We are truly grateful to the following organisations who supported this project financially: Sussex Community Foundation and the Local Community Neighbourhood Network. Arun District Council funded the survey and a targeted piece of work relating to community access to information on staying well and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We would also like to thank the following for their help, feedback, and guidance with this project:

- Aida Kaman, Fed
- Aspire Sussex
- Bruno Kondabeka, Transformation Centre
- Denis Byrne, Sussex Prisoners Families
- Joanna Cooke Partnership Officer, Partnerships & Communities Team, Arun, West Sussex County Council
- Neil Cotton Partnership Officer, Partnerships & Communities Team, Chichester, West Sussex County Council
- Julie Hoggatt, Economic Regeneration Officer, Arun Council
- Jurgita Balkiene
- Galya Kostova
- Andzejus Ageicikas
- Shalufa Begum/ Emma Hughes Connecting Cultures
- Miranda Cormell, Shore Church
- Hilda Chehore UKSWA
- Gintarė Ulevičiūtė, Lithuanian Community of the South Coast
- Lukasz Kowalski, Sussex Police (Operation Akcent)
- Mark Eyre/ Dermot Torney, Sussex Police
- Gemma Driver, Sanctuary
- Tobias Condron, Stonepillow
- Kevin Richmond/ Adrian Barrott, Sussex Community Foundation
- Adeelah Khan, Carers Support West Sussex
- Grandads Front Room
- Vikki Gimson, Sussex Interpreting Service
- Jacek Pokropek/ Fr Chris Bergin, Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church

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- Stephanie Mooney who has led the project is funded through the Local Community Neighbourhood Network.

Those who were willing to be interviewed or completed a survey or participated in a focus group.

healthwatch
West Sussex

Thank you for the support of Healthwatch West Sussex, especially Cheryl Berry Community Partnership Lead who supported and edited this report and Cara Horne Communications Lead who designed the report.



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7. Footnote links

1	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnically Communities Need Assessment 2016, West Sussex Public Health, and Social Research Unit https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/core/Black-Asian-and-Minority-Ethnically-Communitates-Needs-Assessment-2016.pdf
2	Mahmood F, Acharya D, Kumar K, et al. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on ethnically minority communities: a qualitative study on the perspectives of ethnically minority community leaders. BMJ Open 2021;11: e050584. doi:10.1136/ bmjopen-2021-050584
3	https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html
4	Census 2011, Chichester District Analysis, Corporate Information Team https://www.chichester.gov.uk/media/19419/Census-2011-report---March-2013/pdf/2011_Census_Report_Chichester_District_v2.pdf
5	https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/core/west-sussex-jsna-summary-2019.pdf
6	Sussex Prisoners https://www.sussexprisonersfamilies.org.uk/

VAAC wants to see a thriving, inclusive and strong VCSE sector that supports, inspires and empowers individuals and communities throughout Arun and Chichester.

We provide support and development services to the VCSE sector to bring about sustained and positive changes to individuals and communities throughout Arun and Chichester.

1:1 Support for Member Organisations

We are here to support your individual situations covering all aspects of running your charity including governance, funding and volunteering. You can contact us by downloading our referral form from our website.

Funding Focus

Our monthly funding newsletter highlights potential funding opportunities. Regular funding surgeries give advice on a range of funding streams and how to apply.

Stay up to date with our weekly e-bulletin that gives the latest information for the voluntary and community sector.

Check out our social media platforms and website below.

Networking and Training Events

We hold regular events covering a range of subjects e.g. trustee training, GDPR, transport and older people forums.

Looking for Volunteers?

If you are looking for volunteers, please get in touch with Tracy.Bowdery@vaac.org.uk or visit our website to upload your information.

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