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***Component Two: Approaches and Initiatives for Addressing Health and Social Needs of
BAME Communities in Greenwich, UK***

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Introduction

Community development has a long history and has been shown to positively impact health and community involvement in service planning (Fisher, 2014). This report looks at strategies and initiatives designed to meet the health and social care needs of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in Greenwich, UK. These communities often face significant health disparities, such as higher rates of chronic illnesses and mental health issues compared to the broader population. Contributing factors include socioeconomic inequality, cultural and language barriers, and discrimination (Raleigh, 2023). Barriers like long waiting times, language difficulties, poor communication, cultural insensitivity, and a lack of awareness also affect the relationship between service users and providers (Memon et al., 2016). This report suggests initiatives focusing on culturally sensitive health services, community engagement, and digital inclusion, supported by relevant theories, policies, and practices.

Community Overview and Needs Assessment

Greenwich is a diverse borough in London, with a population of around 289,100 according to the 2021 Census. About 40% of residents identify as BAME, including Black African, Black Caribbean, South Asian, and other ethnic groups (ONS, 2023). Of these, 21% identify as "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean, or African," while 13.2% identify as "Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh." This diversity is also reflected in religious affiliations, with over half of Greenwich residents identifying as Christian and a quarter stating they have no religion (Royal Borough of Greenwich, 2024). Smoking and obesity are significant contributors to early mortality and illness, with these health risks strongly linked to poor COVID-19 outcomes. Greenwich has higher rates of smokers and obesity than most areas in London. Fifty percent of those with type 2 diabetes are of ethnic minority origin, and the borough also has higher rates of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, which are significant risk factors for poor COVID-19 outcomes (Royal Borough of Greenwich, 2020). These disparities are worsened by socioeconomic factors, such as lower income levels, higher unemployment rates, and poorer housing conditions. Cultural and language barriers, along with experiences of discrimination, also make accessing healthcare services difficult (Ajayi, 2021). The social care needs of these communities are

complex, including inadequate support for the elderly, a lack of culturally sensitive services, and insufficient mental health resources (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2021). These challenges are compounded by a digital divide, where lower levels of digital literacy and access to technology further marginalised these populations from modern healthcare innovations (Kozelka et al., 2023).

Addressing Health and Social Care Needs: A Community-Led Health Promotion Initiative

In response to these health and social care challenges, a community-led health promotion initiative is proposed. Community-based participatory research is an effective way to reduce health disparities. It allows individuals and communities to address their own health issues (Thompson et al., 2017). This approach involves collaboration between community members, including individuals and families from BAME backgrounds who are directly affected by health and social care initiatives. Local residents will provide valuable input into the design, implementation, review, and assessment of development projects (Wanjue, 2023).

Representatives from community-based organisations and healthcare providers, such as local NHS services, community health centres, and private healthcare practitioners like Greenwich Health, will work together to provide the best possible primary care (Greenwich Health, 2024).

Primary Initiative: The Greenwich BAME Health and Wellness Program

The Greenwich BAME Health and Wellness Program is a comprehensive community-based health promotion initiative. The main objectives are to:

1. **Reduce Health Disparities:** Address the high rates of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and mental health issues in BAME communities by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and improving access to preventive healthcare services. Socioeconomic deprivation is a key determinant of health, with ethnic minority groups disproportionately affected (Raleigh, 2023).
2. **Enhance Cultural Competency:** Train healthcare providers in cultural competency to ensure that services are tailored to the cultural and linguistic needs of the community. Cultural competence training focuses on developing the knowledge, attitudes, awareness, and sensitivity of those working in healthcare (Dreachslin, Gilbert and Malone, 2012). Differences in language and cultural practices can hinder effective

communication with healthcare providers, reducing patient and provider satisfaction (Shamsi et al., 2020).

3. **Promote Digital Inclusion:** Bridge the digital divide by enhancing digital literacy and ensuring equitable access to digital health tools and resources. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted inequalities, particularly in digital health access among minority ethnic communities, exacerbating the digital divide (Kozelka et al., 2023).
4. **Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Foster active community participation in health and social care planning, decision-making, and program implementation. Community participation is widely seen as beneficial for the development, implementation, and evaluation of health services, although challenges to successful and sustainable community involvement remain (Haldane et al., 2019). Systemic racism and individual prejudice can negatively affect mental and physical health, as well as access to services (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2021).

Approach and Actions

Health Education and Screening Programs

The core element of the Greenwich BAME Health and Wellness Program is health education. Regular workshops and screening sessions will be held within the community to educate people about the risks associated with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and mental health issues.

These workshops will be carried out in partnership with local healthcare providers, community leaders, and non-profit organisations. The health education sessions will cover topics like maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking, reducing excessive alcohol consumption, lowering salt and fat intake, and increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains (Gibore et al., 2021). To address language barriers, educational materials will be culturally appropriate and translated into the main languages spoken by the community (Al Shamsi et al., 2020). Screening events for blood pressure, blood glucose levels, and mental health will be held at local community centres, churches, mosques, and other easily accessible venues. These screenings aim to measure outcomes like changes in body weight, blood pressure, dietary habits, and physical activity (Gibore et al., 2021).

These events will not only collect important health data but also help connect community members with healthcare services. This initiative is in line with the NHS Long Term Plan, which

focuses on reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes for marginalised groups, such as the modernisation of the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme and the expansion of lung health checks (NHS, 2019). Additionally, it supports Public Health England's framework, which highlights the importance of addressing social determinants of health, such as employment, housing, and education, to improve overall well being (Middleton and Williams, 2018).

Cultural Competency Training for Healthcare Providers

Modern healthcare still struggles with cultural competency and disparities related to race, gender, and ethnicity (Nair and Adetayo, 2019). To tackle cultural and language barriers that often prevent BAME communities from accessing healthcare, the Greenwich BAME Health and Wellness Program will include a comprehensive cultural competency training module for healthcare providers. Community-based bilingual health educators will be trained to lead these workshops, ensuring cultural understanding using the culturally competent communication model (CCC), which fosters better relationships between patients and healthcare providers (Schouten, Manthey, and Scarvaglieri, 2023).

This training will cover key areas such as cultural health beliefs, effective communication with non-English-speaking patients, and an understanding of the social determinants of health affecting BAME communities (Jongen, McCalman, and Bainbridge, 2018). It will be mandatory for all healthcare professionals working in Greenwich, including general practitioners, nurses, and mental health counsellors. The program will collaborate with local educational institutions to develop and deliver this training, supported by the Greenwich Health Training Hub, which provides workforce and training support across the borough (Greenwich Health, 2024).

The initiative is grounded in the principles of cultural humility and patient-centred care. Cultural humility involves an open, lifelong learning approach to understanding and respecting cultural differences in healthcare settings (Lekas et al., 2020; Greene-Moton and Minkler, 2019). This approach aligns with conflict theory, which explores how disparities in wealth, power, and status impact BAME communities' access to health and social care services, leading to unequal health outcomes (Jones, 2012; McCartney et al., 2021).

Digital Inclusion and Literacy Programs

Digital literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, and communicate information using digital tools (Reddy et al., 2023). Recognising the digital divide as a barrier to healthcare access, the program will offer digital inclusion and literacy workshops to equip community members with the skills needed to navigate digital health tools. Health and digital literacy play a crucial role in promoting better health outcomes (Shao et al., 2023). These workshops will cover using mobile health apps, booking online appointments, and accessing health information digitally.

The program will work with local government agencies and tech companies to provide affordable or free digital devices to low-income families, acknowledging that low-income households, particularly Black and Hispanic populations, are disproportionately affected by limited access to technology (Sanders and Scanlon, 2021). Community digital hubs will also be set up in local libraries and community centres, where residents can access the internet and receive one-on-one digital training. Libraries are recognised as key partners in promoting inclusive and sustainable development by providing access to information essential for economic, social, and environmental progress (Wang and Si, 2024). This digital inclusion initiative aligns with the UK Government's Digital Strategy, which aims to ensure everyone has access to digital skills and opportunities (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2022).

Communication Strategies and Media Use

Importance of Communication

Effective communication is crucial for the success of the Greenwich BAME Health and Wellness Program. A well-rounded communication strategy will be used, combining traditional and digital media to reach the diverse BAME communities in Greenwich (Chirwa and Boikanyo, 2022).

Traditional Media Outreach

The program will run mass media campaigns through existing media channels like television, radio, and newspapers. These channels are particularly useful for reaching older adults and

those with limited access to digital technology, helping spread information about health workshops, screening events, and digital literacy programs (Wakefield, Loken and Hornik, 2010).

Social Media Campaigns

Social media platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok, and Instagram will be used to engage younger members of the community and promote health awareness. The program will produce culturally relevant content, including videos, infographics, and testimonials, to educate people on preventive healthcare and digital literacy. Social media influencers from the BAME community will be involved to amplify the program's messages and encourage participation in health activities (Roy and Malloy, 2023). This approach aligns with the NHS's digital engagement strategy, which focuses on improving patient engagement and health outcomes through digital communication tools (NHS England, 2024).

Community Ambassadors

The program will recruit and train Community Health Ambassadors to act as links between the program and the community (Pullen-Smith, Carter-Edwards and Leathers, 2008). These ambassadors will play a key role in spreading information, encouraging participation, and providing peer support. A similar approach was successfully implemented in the "Community Champions" initiative in other London boroughs, where residents were trained to promote health and wellbeing within their communities. For instance, a community gardening project in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea saw significant community engagement, with 363 residents participating between April 2022 and March 2023 (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 2023).

Recommendations for Adapting to a Digital World

Expanding Telehealth Services

As the world becomes more digital, it is essential to adapt the Greenwich BAME Health and Wellness Program to take advantage of digital technologies for greater impact. Telehealth has

become an important tool for delivering healthcare, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program should expand its telehealth services, ensuring that all community members can access remote consultations and health services, regardless of their digital literacy levels. This will require partnerships with telehealth providers and training sessions to help community members navigate telehealth platforms. An example of successful telehealth use is the NHS's "Attend Anywhere" platform, which has been widely used for virtual consultations (Shaw et al., 2021).

Developing a Health App

To make accessing health information and services easier, the program should consider developing a dedicated health app tailored to the needs of the BAME community in Greenwich. The app could include features like appointment scheduling, health education resources, and a directory of culturally competent healthcare providers. This would help streamline the process for patients, especially for those who face language barriers or have limited access to healthcare. The "MyGP" app, which allows users to book GP appointments and access their health records, could serve as a model for this development (iPlato, 2022).

Conclusion

Addressing the health and social care needs of BAME communities in Greenwich requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on cultural competence, community engagement, and digital inclusion. These communities face significant disparities, including higher rates of chronic diseases and mental health issues, which are often linked to socioeconomic inequalities and systemic barriers to healthcare (Raleigh, 2023). Initiatives like the Greenwich BAME Health and Wellness Program aim to reduce these disparities by promoting culturally sensitive healthcare services, enhancing digital literacy, and empowering the community through active participation (Thorlu-Bangura et al., 2023; Kozelka et al., 2023). The integration of community-led health promotion and digital inclusion strategies is key to bridging the gap between healthcare services and the diverse needs of BAME communities. By addressing these areas, the program not only helps reduce health inequalities but also contributes to a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system in Greenwich (Sandhu et al., 2021).

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