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AN ACADEMIC REPORT ON COMMUNITY CARE AND DEVELOPMENT: A focus on the Black and African community in the London Borough of Hackney.

Introduction: A community is a group of people who share a common identity, culture, or interest and live in a specific geographic area. Communities can be based on a variety of factors, such as ethnicity, religion, language, occupation, or shared experiences (MacQueen *et al.*, 2001).

This report will focus on the Black and African community in the London Borough of Hackney.

: This is a situation where people living in a particular area come together to tackle things of common interest to them. At the heart of community development is the belief that people should have unfettered access to health, well-being, wealth, justice, and opportunity. Community development enables self-determination, empowerment, collective action, and the opportunity to work and learn together (SCDC, 2020).

Community development helps in creating the following:

- supports communities to use their resources to add value to their community life.
- Helps communities and public offices to work together to make decisions and uplift services.

It operates with the following principles:

- Self-determination by allowing them to take decisions on matters that concern them.
- Empowers them to take control of their assets.
- Creates room for communal action.
- Allows them to learn and work together.

(SCDC, 2019).

DEMOGRAPHY: This report will be looking at the role community development plays among the Black and African community in the London Borough of Hackney. The Borough is situated in the Northeastern part of London. It has a land mass of 19 square kilometres with a population density of 13,647 people per square kilometre. According to the Office of National Statistics of 2021, Hackney has a population of 259,956 people. This population is made up of 53% of whites while the other 47% is made up of non-white minorities. Black people make up the largest minority group in Hackney accounting for about 21.1% of the population. (ONS, 2022).

Health and Social Care Needs of the Black and African community in Hackney: The health and social care issues facing the Black and African community in the Borough of Hackney are several and complex. The Hackney Council states them as:

1. Mental health: Black and African communities experience a disproportionate burden of mental health issues than the general population, and they face significant barriers in accessing appropriate care. This trend could be traced to the stigma attached to mental health, and cultural beliefs also play a role in their reluctance in seeking help.

There is a need for mental health officers to be culturally sensitive and accessible to this community (Memon, et al., 2016).

2. Chronic diseases and illnesses: The Black and African communities in Hackney are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart diseases, which can be linked to a combination of genetic and lifestyle factors. Programs for the prevention and management of diabetes need to be planned with their cultural needs in mind (Public Health England, 2018).
3. Maternal health issues: Black and African women are more likely to face maternal health issues such as low birth weight, premature births, and stillbirths in comparison to other groups (Office of National Statistics, 2019; Public Health England, 2017).
4. Difficulty in accessing healthcare: There is a tendency for the Black and African community to develop a lack of trust in the healthcare system due to language barriers, lack of information and understanding of the available services. All of these can contribute to difficulties in accessing appropriate healthcare by the Black and African community in Hackney (Ajayi, 2021).
5. Social isolation: The Black and African communities may experience social isolation and exclusion from the larger society in Hackney because of cultural differences, language barriers, and lack of community cohesion. This can impact negatively social and mental well-being (Memon, et al., 2016).
6. Cardiovascular diseases: The Black and African community in Hackney have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease because of factors such as high blood pressure, obesity, and lack of physical activities. This community should be targeted with programs that will aim at reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease among them (Lip et al., 2007).

Hackney Initiative in Handling Mental Health

This report will go further to look at the initiatives that the Borough has put into place to handle the incidence of mental health and help in improving health and social care for the Black and African community in Hackney Council, and These initiatives include the following:

1. The Council came up with the Hackney Mental Health Partnership (HMHP), which is a multi-agency network of organisations that provide mental health services established in 2017. The main aim of the body is to improve coordination and access to mental health services and necessary support for residents in Hackney. It further paid attention to prevention, recovery, and community-based care.
2. The Borough also set up the Hackney Wellbeing Partnership, which is a coming together of voluntary sector organisations that aid with mental health and emotional wellbeing. This partnership applies a person-centred approach, through the offering of services and interventions aimed at solving individual needs (Hackney Health and Wellbeing Board, 2022)
3. The council also invested in the training of its staff on how to handle mental health matters. This is aimed at improving their awareness of mental health issues and offering them support on how to respond effectively to the needs of service users (Hackney Council 2018)

Methods used by the council to communicate its policies.

The council used several avenues within its reach to communicate policies to the Black and African community and other citizens of the borough. Among these are:

1. **Mental health webpage:** The London Borough of Hackney had on its website a dedicated webpage for the purpose of providing relevant information on mental health policies, services, and available support for the citizens. Details of local mental health events and resources are also contained on the webpage (Hackney Council, 2019).
2. **Public awareness campaigns:** Hackney Council launched several public awareness campaigns on mental health and well-being, an example is the “Thriving Minds” campaign that targets the reduction of the stigma surrounding mental health in the borough (Hackney Council, 2018).
3. **Social media:** Hackney Council has been using social media platforms to disseminate information, such platforms include Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to share information on mental health services, resources, and events. It also uses such platforms to engage with residents and answer their queries regarding mental health (Hackney Council, 2019).
4. **Newsletter:** The council publishes a quarterly newsletter which highlights the latest developments in mental health policies and services available in the council. The newsletter also features interviews with mental health professionals, success stories, and events (Hackney Council, 2019)

Social, cultural, economic, and other challenges faced by the Black and African communities in the Borough.

1. In the area of health, the Black and African community in Hackney also faced the devastating effect of Covid-19, which had a significant impact on the Black and African community in the council. They had higher rates of infection, hospitalisation, and deaths. This has been attributed to pre-existing health conditions and socio-economic factors, which include, overcrowded housing, and employment in frontline jobs.
2. The Black and African community also had a high prevalence of diabetes. According to a report by Hackney Healthwatch, the prevalence of this disease among the

Social challenges:

Among the social issues facing the Black and African Community in Hackney are:

- Higher rates of poverty
- Unemployment
- Social exclusion

The above problems can inhibit access to resources and services and can increase exposure to crime and violence amongst the Black and African people within the council (Hackney Council, 2020)

Cultural Challenges: The Black and African community are faced with cultural issues such as

- Discrimination based on ethnic and cultural background. This can lead to a feeling of marginalisation and exclusion from the rest of society.

Economic challenges:

The Black and African community in Hackney Council are faced with the following economic challenges:

- Income inequality
- Limited opportunities for upward mobility

The above problems can lead to a significant increase in the level of financial stress and insecurity in the dwindling economic climate which has led to massive job losses.

Other issues faced by the Black and African community in Hackney Council include limited access to affordable housing, educational backwardness, and cultural differences. These problems can lead to a sense of disconnection from the larger society and create a lack of opportunities for personal growth and development.

These include the following: employment, income, housing, smoking, diet and several other issues revolving around health and wellbeing issues. Past needs assessment carried out shows the following:

- It is not every person that is able to access services that would help in the field to support a healthy lifestyle.
- Not all persons are able to access healthcare services to receive treatment easily.
- Not all communities are in good health.
- The disadvantaged people hardly take up the services in the community.

The council is aware of a range of factors that can affect local people's health and well-being.

Theories in approaching the problems of the Black and African community in Hackney.

This report will be looking at two of the many theories that can be applied in handling the plight of the Black and African community in Hackney. These are, The Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) and Albert Bandura's Social learning theory.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). This is the socio-psychological theory that looks at human behaviour from three perspectives, these are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. TPB sees attitudes as an individual's positive or negative evaluation of behaviour, the subjective norms look at a person's perception of social pressure to exhibit or not to exhibit a behaviour, while perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a behaviour (Ravis, et al., 2009)

TPB can be applied in handling such behaviours as Mental health, smoking cessation, and depression. The theory can also be applied in other fields of study. The theory was introduced in 1985 by Icek Ajzen as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). While the TRA focused on attitudes and subjective norms in predicting behaviour. The TPB came up with the perceived behavioural control to the TRA, by recognising how important an individual's perceived ability perform a behaviour in predicting behaviour. It has been used to prepare and evaluate behaviour change interventions (Ravis, et al., 2009).

The second theory this report will be looking at is Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. This theory highlights the importance of observing, fashioning, and copying the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. The social learning theory looks at how the environment and cognitive factors join forces to influence human learning and behaviour. Albert Bandura's theory added two more important ideas to the behaviourist theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. The two ideas added by Albert Bandura are,

- Processes of mediating happen between stimuli and responses.
- The environment through the process of observational learning shapes one's behaviour (McLeod, 2016).

This theory has a great role to play in fashioning out how to deal with myriads of problems facing the Black and African community in the London Borough of Hackney, especially with the relationship between stimuli, responses, and environmental influence too.

Recommendations

Listed below are some recommendations geared towards tackling the mental health and other issues facing the Black and African community in Hackney.

1. The borough should look at the possibility of improving access to mental health services among the Black and African communities, and they should be made accessible and affordable to them.
2. Efforts should be made to address the incidence of systemic racism and discrimination, which makes them vulnerable to mental health issues. Through education, training and changing policies, a great change can take place.
3. Increasing community support by engaging them through the provision of safe public spaces, creating community programmes, and establishing peer support groups that try to address mental health issues.
4. Awareness and education about mental and other issues should be increased through community outreach and education programs.
5. Cultural stigma surrounding mental health should be addressed by encouraging open conversations about mental health within families and the community.

Conclusion

The Hackney Council has been striving to ameliorate the plight of the Black and African community in its domain, but there is still much to be done to pull this community out of poverty and other social imbalances they are facing currently. The following actions will help in this regard:

1. Education: The council should create an enabling environment that will encourage the Black and African society to access education without much stress, by investing in creating quality schools, and providing scholarships and financial aid.
2. Empowerment: By creating job opportunities for the Black and African communities, the council will be empowering them to come out of the poverty cycle. Policies that promote equal employment opportunities and equal pay will suffice in this direction.
3. Equal access to healthcare: This will help in ensuring equality in the council. The council can invest in more health infrastructure and reduce the cost of healthcare services for the poor.
4. Access to affordable housing; Provision of affordable housing by helping low-income members of the Black and African society, Council will be creating a sense of equality among them and thereby ensuring there is no discrimination in housing provision in the council.
5. Cultural awareness and acceptance: There should be a deliberate attempt to respect and protect the cultures of the Black and African community in Hackney to give them a true sense of belonging and acceptance.

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