

Consultation with Minority Ethnic People living and working in North Dorset

In 2005, North Dorset District Council commissioned Ebi Sosseh to engage with minority ethnic people living and working in North Dorset to promote dialogue and good relations. Ebi's specific brief was to map out where people resided and also to find out about the experiences and needs of the diverse people in the area.

Report Summary

The consultation was conducted with the use of Questionnaires and also through open-ended interviews with prompts. Of the 70 people who were interviewed, 52 were male and 18 female with ages ranging from 9 to 64.

The majority of people consulted lived in Blandford Forum, Shaftesbury and Gillingham.

Area	Ethnicity	Research Venue	Issue
Blandford Sturminster Newton Shaftesbury Gillingham Iwerne Minster	African African Caribbean Iraqi Jewish South African Turkish South and South East Asian White and mixed race Philippines	Home School Work Social Gatherings	Service Provision Positive and negative experiences Needs Networking

Questionnaire Summary

62 people completed Questionnaires:

1. 12 people have lived in the area between 0-2 years, 16 people 2-4 years and 52 have lived in North Dorset from 4 years onwards.
2. Information about employment, including employee's rights (52), Business support (35) and advice on social security brief 24 and information about social events (18) are the services respondents would most like to receive information about.
3. 15 have experienced racial abuse, and 6 racial violence, none have reported graffiti or vandalism on their property, 36 have been victims of racial jokes.
4. 53 people said that they knew where to report racial incidences, the Police Station being mentioned by the majority as the place for monitoring. 54 people said that they would report a racist incident even if they were not victims.
5. Reasons for not reporting a racial incident range from fear of stigma, shame and a perception that the police will not be understanding and sympathetic enough.

Partnership work with other community groups and other social activities were suggested as a way of encouraging more interaction with local people. 11 people indicated a desire to assist in organising multi-cultural events.

Report Findings

District Council Services

Even though there is some awareness of what the District Council does, Black and Minority people as a whole do not know where to adequately seek advice and help from. There is a low level of knowledge about how the Local Government System works and about entitlements to services.

British people of ethnic minority descent fared better when it comes to having an adequate understanding and awareness of local services, but of those who have arrived directly from abroad, only 6 out of 32 have shown an adequate understanding of the basis about District Council provision.

Community Development Involvement

There is a general feeling of being unsure amongst ethnic minority people about how best to play a part in community affairs. New arrivals in the area have little or no networks to make them feel welcome or part of a group or association. For those who work in ethnic restaurants, their only contact with the local people is through customer/staff relationships. People interviewed acknowledged that they also had a part to play in breaking down barriers and building links and understanding between people.

A number of previous interviewees expressed the wish to be more involved in mainstream community initiatives than projects or activities involving their own cultural backgrounds, to help them integrate and to prosper more quickly in the area.

Whereas, as adult male Black and Ethnic Minority people were mainly unaware of community development initiatives, younger people have benefited greatly from school activities.

Housing

The majority of the sample were living in private housing. There are, however, no barriers to housing from the people interviewed. Black and Minority Ethnic people, particularly in their late 20s and mid 30s have struggled to find single occupancy accommodation. Overcrowding is more common amongst staff housed above ethnic restaurants.

Business Support

Restaurants visited were unaware or belonged to any business networking clubs. Black and Minority Ethnic business people tend to be very insular and generally communicated with their own peers.

There is low awareness of the support available, which may hinder the progress of some ethnic minority businesses.

Advice

Personal networks seemed to be the main favoured way of finding out about information. Most people interviewed were aware of how to access information on benefits entitlements and housing. People who are new to the area tend not to be very aware of where advice can be obtained.

Employment

There is a very low percentage of unemployment amongst the Black and Minority ethnic people sampled. Language problems seem to be the main barrier for people seeking work in the area, this may result in a lower self esteem and in appropriate career choices. Some of the people interviewed indicated that they were made to feel inferior at work and had experienced racial abuse.

Racism and Discrimination

Young people have reported the most amount of racism amongst the sample. Racism amongst adults was more rarely reported, although the incidences were similar to those cited by young people.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Even though BME people generally feel safe in the area, there is a general feeling of being marginalised and isolated.
- Further outreach programmes from community and sports development will help increase community interaction between diverse communities and people.
- A simplified information network would be useful in filtering information to ensure people are informed on services.
- A higher profile is required by the District Council on racism.
- Outreach work should be considered on economic development issues, particularly in ethnic restaurants.
- Further access to adult education and English Language courses would help people to integrate, find employment and accommodation.