

Connecting Communities

“You can’t engage with any group exactly the same way as you do with another group”

“There is diversity within the diverse community”

Background:

The number of people with dementia from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities is expected to increase at a greater rate than across the UK population as a whole. Raising awareness of dementia and risk factors that can be more common in some BAME communities could help to reduce the number of people with dementia from those communities in the future and reduce barriers to accessing services.

London is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world with 55% of its population being from BAME groups. The Alzheimer’s Society’s innovative pilot ‘Connecting Communities’ project aimed to increase awareness of dementia amongst BAME communities in London.

About the Association for Dementia Studies:

The Association for Dementia Studies is an active research and education centre. Our multi-professional team are experts in the field of person-centred dementia care and support.

Through research, education, consultancy and scholarship, we make a cutting-edge contribution to building evidence-based practical ways of working with people living with dementia and their families that enables them to live well.



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Eight boroughs were included in the pilot project.



The Connecting Communities Project aimed to increase:

- Engagement with BAME communities and community specific dementia health care providers
- Dialogue between BAME communities and the Alzheimer's Society and wider stakeholders
- Dementia awareness and knowledge of dementia care services in BAME communities
- Understanding amongst professional groups of dementia specific issues faced by BAME groups

Findings:

Over 540 dementia awareness sessions, talks and events took place, reaching 8,300+ people from BAME communities and greatly exceeding the original target.

A total of more than 15,500 people were reached by the project activities as a whole including 2,500+ professionals and more than 4,600 additional members of the general public. The project had an even greater informal reach as people shared their newly-gained knowledge.

The BAME communities participating in the awareness sessions included: Afghan, African, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, Chinese, Greek, Indian, Somali, Tamil and Turkish, as well as further groups from Latin America, South Asia and the West Indies.

BAME communities warmly-received and appreciated the awareness sessions.

A key element of the success was tailoring sessions to the specific needs and preferences of the different communities.

Resources developed by the project provide a strong platform from which to take this work forwards.

Evaluation methods:

- Questionnaires for community organisations receiving awareness sessions
- Semi-structured interviews with project staff
- Session observations
- Stakeholder focus groups
- Feedback from volunteers

Impact of the awareness sessions:

- The project has been able to address misconceptions regarding dementia that exist within BAME communities
- People understand the potential impact that their lifestyle and diet may have in terms of being risk factors for dementia
- People appreciate the importance of seeking professional help when symptoms first appear
- People are more aware of the dementia services available within their local areas
- Carers have a better understanding of what their loved ones are experiencing and why they may behave in certain ways

The Alzheimer's Society was awarded funding by the Department of Health to undertake the Connecting Communities Project, an innovative 27-month pilot which began in early 2013. The Association for Dementia Studies was commissioned to undertake an external evaluation of the pilot and gained ethical approval from the ethics committee at the University of Worcester.



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