

27 April 2011

Ms Johanne Mears
North Tyneside LINK
The Shiremoor Centre
Earsdon Road
Shiremoor
North Tyneside
NE27 0HJ

Dear Johanne

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the LINK report 'Exploring health and social care needs of people in black and minority ethnic communities in North Tyneside' carried out by the Health and Race Equality Forum in Newcastle.

We agree that it is important for commissioners and providers of health and social care to take account of the needs of black and minority ethnic groups.

While we do produce information in a range of languages and formats, we are aware that there are many who are not able to access this form of information for a variety of reasons. Efforts are made to try and make sure that information gets to the people who need it – about services, programmes and initiatives, and to make sure people from these communities have all the information they need about their care and treatment. We work with the community and voluntary sector networks and local authority partners to do this, as well as individual service providers.

The problems identified in this report suggest best practice is not always being followed. NHS service providers are required to ensure that they meet the needs of their patients - local NHS foundation trusts each have policies on accessing interpreters. These include best practice information. Information for primary care service providers on how to access interpreting services is also available through our staff intranet. We will pass these comments on to organisations providing locally commissioned NHS services in North Tyneside.

For all the public health improvement work we undertake, as well as NHS service design and improvement, we do use recognised social marketing approaches. These put the target audience at the heart of service planning and marketing and where appropriate this will include BME communities. This also applies to work to support the promotion of public health messages and access to services around smoking, alcohol and sexual health for these communities.

An example is the work we are undertaking with the North of England Cancer Network – the local part of the ‘Be Clear on Cancer’ campaign – which aims to raise awareness of the early symptoms of cancer. The key messages include ‘finding it early makes it more treatable and could save your life’. Work is being taken forward over the coming months to embed this campaign in local communities.

With regard to health promotion through community and religious leaders, we would agree this has worked well in Newcastle (the Health and Race Equality Forum carry this out on our behalf) and we would support this approach. We do meet with different BME communities in the borough, most recently with the Whitley Bay Bangladeshi Community Centre after Friday prayers, in partnership with council colleagues. Although this work has focused on feedback about local services and consultation work, we have taken local consultations to the groups from this centre over the last few years.

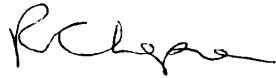
There are a number of findings relating to the identification of health and social care needs which will fall in the remit of the new Health and Wellbeing Board in North Tyneside. These, alongside the ‘next steps’ outlined in the report, will need to be considered through this new emerging structure. Our lead commissioners, public health and GP consortia colleagues are all represented in this new structure.

We should add that we usually undertake work with different BME community groups through the North Tyneside Community Health Forum (CHCF), and through links with council colleagues. The CHCF is also currently working on developing groups to support the partnership boards of the new North Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board as part of their commissioned work from ourselves and North Tyneside Council. The Health and Wellbeing Board will need to consider the recommended ‘next steps’ in the report and how these fit with developing engagement strategy for the borough.

Finally, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment project board will be meeting in May. We have requested that they consider how this information can be used to support the JSNA. For information, there is a piece of work being undertaken regionally on migrant health, which will be included as part of the JSNA in North Tyneside.

I hope this response is helpful and thank you again for sharing the report with us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Chapman', written in a cursive style.

Rachel Chapman
Director of public engagement and communications