EMERGING COMMUNITIES IN HOUNSLOW AND WEST LONDON: MAPPING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Afghan, Algerian, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Romanian and Bulgarian communities

Project Report

October 2014
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), Middlesex University

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at Middlesex University, London initiates and supports high quality research of national and international standing. Its researchers use innovative methodologies to undertake research on new and emerging topics within the social sciences, in particular with neglected and marginalised communities, at a local, national and international level. The Centre actively promotes interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. Staff are involved in a wide range of projects funded by research councils, the EU, government departments and the major charities. The SPRC publishes academic papers and books, as well as reports and briefs for policy makers, practitioners and community groups. The Centre runs events, including conferences, seminars and short courses including research training. In addition, the SPRC supports postgraduate research students, including research council funded students and a number of well established masters programmes. For further information and to view reports from our recent projects please visit: www.sprc.info

Community Partnerships Unit (CPU), London Borough of Hounslow

The Community Partnerships Unit (CPU) at the London Borough of Hounslow, takes a corporate lead in the strategic development and management of the council's partnership with the voluntary community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) to deliver key organisational objectives. The team also advise Members on work relating to: a stronger and empowered community – more people participating in local decision making; a cohesive and resilient community – people from different backgrounds getting on well; a sustainable and independent voluntary community and social enterprise sector – building the capacity of the third sector and supporting sustainable growth; and encourage neighbourhood partnerships consisting of local stakeholders – facilitating regeneration within the borough’s communities. These objectives are delivered through management of the council's VCSE funding programme, 'on-the ground' community development and capacity building programmes, development and implementation of the Prevent Strategy work stream and the council's community cohesion and community engagement strategies.

West London BMER Advice Network and Acton Community Forum

The West London BMER Advice Network consists of established agencies which emerged from and are embedded in a range of BMER communities across the Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Harrow, and Hounslow. Affiliated to the larger BMER Advice Network, BAN (which represents 40 refugee and migrant organisations across London), the West London BMER Advice Network also aims to ensure BMER people can access quality support and develop stronger partnerships across the advice sector and to ensure policy makers, local authorities, statutory services and funding bodies have a clear view of these diverse communities and strengthen and ensure the survival of much-needed support services. The West London BMER Advice Network works in consultation with Acton Community Forum (ACF), which has been a central delivery and policy development partner in West London, including undertaking research, consultation and focus
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groups with hard-to-reach and BMER communities. ACF’s core staff has extensive skills, contacts and experience working in London’s voluntary sector, with a key focus on BMER communities.

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Project Team

Within the Social Policy Research Centre at Middlesex University, Dr Alessio D’Angelo was the project co-ordinator and Preeti Kathrecha the lead researcher and report writer. Prof Eleonore Kofman and Dr Dominic Pasura contributed to the literature review; Michael Puniskis provided data for the statistical appendix and general editing; Magdolna Lorinc conducted the mapping of organisations and stakeholders; Dr Lisa Clarke provided additional research support on the final stages of the research and report writing.

Misak Ohanian and Matt Friedson facilitated the community outreach and engagement for the project on behalf of the West London BMER Advice Network.

Acknowledgements

The Social Policy Research Centre would like to thank all the organisations, community activists and Hounslow residents that helped inform this report. In particular:

Afghan Academy Afghan Community Organisation Alzheimer’s Hounslow CAB Feltham and Hounslow Ealing CVS East European Advice Centre Hounslow Clinical Commissioning Group HCN (Hounslow Community Network) Hounslow Libraries Hounslow Race Equality Council Islamic Integration Community Centre London Buddhist Vihara Multi Cultural Centre National Algerian Centre ROTA (Race on the Agenda) Tamil Community Centre Tisarana Vihara The Moonstars Café The Upper Room Hounslow CCG
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1. Introduction

The London Borough of Hounslow (hereafter LBH) has a diverse community with a variable and changing population. The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at Middlesex University has been commissioned by the Council to aid a better understanding of its newest and emerging communities.

Hounslow is one of the six major boroughs in West London (others are Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hammersmith & Fulham, and Hillingdon). These boroughs have seen significant numbers of new arrivals in recent years and have seen a large increase of non-UK born residents.

The project was conceived based on information from the 2011 Census, which shows the LBH has among the highest proportion of Afghan, Burmese and Sri Lankan ethnic communities in the UK. The Algerian community was identified by the Council as an emerging community based on feedback from frontline service providers. The Council was also keen to explore the potential impact for new communities arriving from Bulgaria and Romania when the restrictions on entering the UK were lifted on the 1st January 2014.

Members of these six communities are considered to be isolated in the Borough and may not approach the Council or other organisations for support and advice services. The research project aimed to help the LBH better understand the current position of these communities in the Borough through the following objectives:

- Map the location, size and defining characteristics of the six ‘emerging communities’: Afghan, Algerian, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Romanian and Bulgarian;
- Identify the needs of these communities and any gaps in service provision;
- Investigate whether (and how) these communities are engaging with the LBH or other service providers;
- Explore how best to engage effectively with the six communities, and identify best practice in this area both within the Borough and from national examples;
- Identify which voluntary and community organisations are working with and within each of the six communities.
2. Methodology

In order to successfully engage with existing communities and voluntary services across Hounslow and West London, the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) worked in partnership with the West London BMER Network and Acton Community Forum (ACF), using a community-based ethos and participatory approach in line with the short and long term objectives of the project. The partners helped co-ordinate community outreach and engagement support by the network and other third sector organisations.

To be able to map the six communities, understand their needs, how they are engaging with service providers in Hounslow and what the best engagement approaches are for the Council, we used the following methodology:

**Review and analysis of secondary data:** An extensive analysis of official statistics was undertaken to construct a socio-economic profile of each of the six identified community groups. This included data from the Office for National Statistics (2012a, 2012b), Annual Population Survey, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Communities and Local Government, Health data, Asylum statistics and the latest Census data (2011). We also looked at data from the Schools Census to provide a picture of the second-generation within each of these groups and how in-migration to the Borough is impacting on school resources.

For Census data we looked specifically at datasets on: year of arrival, country of birth, and main language. Also, for the first time, detailed ‘write-in’ data for self-identified ethnic group is available, allowing for the analysis of statistics for specific groups previously subsumed into broader aggregate census categories. Statistics provided by the Annual Population Survey give a broad socio-economic profile of the Borough and official data on benefits claimants, asylum applications and schools data published by the relevant government departments and this enabled the construction of an up-to-date assessment of welfare needs in Hounslow, in relation to the six emerging communities.¹ In addition, specialised geographic information systems (GIS) software was used to produce thematic maps of each of the six community groups within the Borough. Mapping exercises of this kind have been used to great effect in previous projects we have undertaken with migrant and minority communities in London.² See Appendix 2 for detailed statistical tables.

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¹ Issues of data reliability were addressed in relation to the less sizeable communities.
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Review of literature and policies: We reviewed what work exists around each of the communities (both within the borough and as a comparison, within London and the UK). This included a review of academic and mainstream publications, journal articles, reports and grey literature\(^3\). We also reviewed relevant policies/strategies that may affect the six communities within the LBH.

Focus Groups: We captured the views of individuals from the six communities through a number of focus groups consisting of individual users of a range of services across the borough. Working with the West London BMER Network, Acton Community Forum and through the links and partner organisations already established in the voluntary community and social enterprise sector, we identified participants, community-based interpreters, translators and appropriate venues.

Table 1: Fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghan</td>
<td>2 focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algerian</td>
<td>One-to-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>1 focus group; One-to-one interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>1 focus group Tamil; 1 focus group Buddhist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>1 focus group; One-to-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>1 focus group; One-to-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>19 Stakeholder interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stakeholder interviews: To gather additional insights into the needs and characteristics of the communities and to explore issues of service provision, access, engagement and resources, we conducted a series of one-to-one interviews with key representatives and stakeholders in Hounslow. These included service providers both mainstream and within the community sector; people working in the community (such as prominent members or community leaders); and representatives from the Council. Interview findings were supplemented with additional online and telephone based research with relevant organisations across London, to compare the needs of the six groups across London and to identify good practice.

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\(^3\) Grey literature is informally published written material that is not widely accessible and, hence, difficult to trace. Examples include: preliminary progress reports, technical reports, working papers and conference proceedings. Nevertheless, researchers often view grey literature as an important source of information as it tends to be recent and original.
Table 2: Stakeholder interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Afghan Academy</th>
<th></th>
<th>Islamic Integration Community Centre</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Afghan Community Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of Equality &amp; Human Rights, LBH</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CAB Feltham</td>
<td></td>
<td>London Buddhist Vihara</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CAB Hounslow</td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-Cultural Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ealing CVS</td>
<td></td>
<td>National Algerian Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>East European Advice Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td>ROTA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hounslow Clinical Commissioning Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil Community Centre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hounslow Community Network (HCN)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tisarana Vihara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hounslow Libraries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Councillor Sharma – LBH (then Leader of the Council)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hounslow Race Equality Council</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Community Observation: This methodology involved visiting some of the key hubs in Hounslow such as the high streets, libraries and community centres as well as talking to local people and businesses about perceptions of Hounslow and the six communities. This method helped inform how to engage with these communities in non-standard ways and helped us to recruit people and organisations for the focus groups and interviews. It also enabled an understanding of the socio-cultural patterns of the six communities within Hounslow.

Call for Information: In order to successfully map the six communities we sent out a call for information to known networks of the SPRC, West London BMER Network, Acton Community Forum and the LBH for help with: finding contacts to help inform primary and secondary data collection; the literature and policy review; the mapping of voluntary and community organisations working with the six communities; information about where (and how) these communities are engaging with the Council or other service providers; examples of best practice and help in recruiting people for focus groups, interviews and translations of interview data.

The call for information was disseminated through: SPRC social media, website and academic networks, over 400 community and voluntary contacts through the West London BMER Network and Acton Community Forum, LBH Community Partnerships Unit networks and website; the Hounslow Community Network (HCN), advice services across London, Embassies and High Commission (Sri Lanka) representing the six communities; places of worship and direct contact with relevant organisations found through desk research and fieldwork.

Mapping of service provision: Throughout the project we conducted a mapping exercise of service provision for community organisations working with the six groups. This was informed by the focus
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groups and interviews, but also supplemented by ‘snowball sampling’\textsuperscript{4} and desk, online and telephone based research. Our partners from within the West London BMER Network and other links established and developed during the call for information (see further details below) also supported us in producing a directory of relevant organisations, services and initiatives.

We also conducted an online survey of organisations to add to existing data obtained from the methods outlined above. The type of information collected from organisations included: type of service provided and mode of delivery, how they are funded, contact details; networking, collaboration and partnership trends of organisations; specific cases of best practice in terms of community engagement and accessible and culturally-aware service provision; and examples of best practice.

Limitations of the Study

It is important to note some of the gaps and limitations of the study to give the findings further context. Each of the six communities should not be seen as homogenous but as made-up of subgroups with a range of diverse affiliations. Given the timeframe it was not always possible to fully reflect this diversity. A good example is with the Afghan community, we managed to speak to a group of people affiliated to two mosques in Hounslow used mainly by two Afghan ethnic groups but could not consult a range of Afghans from across all of the 14 plus ethnic groups. Similarly we were able to speak to Hindu Tamils and Buddhist Sinhalese but only very few Tamil Christians and no Sri Lankan Muslims.

\textsuperscript{4}‘Snowball sampling’ is a technique that is viewed as appropriate to use in research when members of the population are considered to be difficult to access, locate or recruit. As a result, the researcher uses a snowball sample to collect data on few members of the target population that he or she is able to locate before asking them to suggest or locate other members of the sample population who in turn suggest additional members of the target population, thus facilitating data collection (Oliver and Jupp, 2006).
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Dissemination and Engagement

A direct benefit of this project will be to foster links between community organisations engaged in the fieldwork and the LBH. To build upon any momentum created by the research, we suggest that dissemination of the report and engagement with new contacts is a priority. Direct benefits include:

- Building an open dialogue between LBH and the six communities;
- Having a bank of translators and community representatives from the six communities;
- Creating a forum for future consultations and events.

The type of activities could include:

- **Stakeholder consultation workshops**: Workshops between voluntary and community representatives of the six communities and the Council to jointly build effective strategies for engagement and be the basis for an engagement strategy;

- **Dissemination of the report among Councillors**: A launch event to raise awareness among local Councillors of the six communities and highlight specific needs;

- **Informing frontline services**: Raise awareness of the use of services and needs of the six communities among key service areas through training, factsheets and or events.
Section 3

The 6 Communities in Hounslow: Profile & Use of Services and Needs
3. The Six Communities in Hounslow

About Hounslow

Hounslow is one of London’s largest Boroughs, covering 23 square miles. The Borough sits at the edge of central London to the east and is located near Heathrow Airport. The economic profile of the region is dramatically influenced by geographic location and around one fifth of employment in the borough relies on direct employment or the supply chain to Heathrow airport.  

The Bedfont, Feltham, Hanworth Area Forum, The Central Hounslow Area Forum, The Chiswick Area Forum, The Heston and Cranford Area Forum and the Isleworth and Brentford Area Forum provide a mechanism for engaging with local residents at an area level and providing community leadership. They evolved from an understanding of the differences between local areas and communities, placing a continuing pressure to plan and cater for the different needs and demands on public services across the different areas of the Borough.

The effect on use of public services in London depends on the type of immigration flow and type of area migrants live in. Hounslow is one of 13 Local authorities classified as a super diverse cluster by the Census with the following characteristics: an urban area with a history of migration and very high rates of migration for all categories of migrants, including children and elders, international students, asylum seekers, migrant workers and migrants of different nationalities; high turnover levels and high employment levels in migrant-dense industries; higher than average numbers of young people, below average numbers of older people, and more households in the rented housing sector.

Most of Hounslow’s population live in areas more deprived than the national average; locally, the most deprived wards are Hanworth and Cranford. Around 42% of households rent in the social or private sectors which is approximately 10% higher than the national average; most private rented housing is in Chiswick and owner occupied in Osterley, Heston and Feltham. Social housing is also concentrated, occurring predominantly in Brentford, Isleworth and Hanworth.

Almost half of the Borough’s population (48.5%) belong to a BMER group (2011 Census). By country of birth data, Hounslow has a high proportion of Afghan (5,162), Burmese (528), and Sinhalese (103) inhabitants compared to other London Boroughs. Ethnicity data shows Hounslow has the third highest proportion of Asian/Asian British, in this case, Indian groups in the UK; other notable groups are: Filipino (2,607), Nepalese (includes Gurkha 2,559), Polish (9,483), Sri Lankan (3,199), Somali (1,162). There are over 16,000 households in Hounslow where none of the members in the household have English as a main language (17% of total). This is ranked ninth in the UK. International migration into the Borough is thought to account for around 3.4% of the population in 2011, compared with 2.5% in London and 1.1% in England and, in recent years, there has been significant migration from other parts of the European Union, such as Poland.

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5 London Borough of Hounslow, Cohesion and integration strategy 2012-2015. pp10  
7 London Borough of Hounslow, Cohesion and integration strategy 2012-2015. pp11  
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The Council has identified six target groups it would like to know more about: Afghan, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Algerian, Bulgarian and Romanian communities.

The following sections for each community will outline:

- The demographic profile of the population in London and Hounslow;
- An outline of the literature on each community including any available data, migration patterns and key characteristics;
- An analysis of the use of services and perceived needs of each of the six communities in Hounslow by the following themes:
  - Contact with the Council
  - Health
  - Education and employment
  - Housing
  - People, culture and community.

**Figure 1: London Borough of Hounslow Ward Map**
3.1 The Afghan Community

By country of birth, Afghans are the sixth largest BMER group in Hounslow with almost 4,500 residents in the borough. This represents more than 11% of the total Afghan population of London. Since 2001 the Afghan population in Hounslow has grown from 1,357 to 4,463 in 2011. The main language spoken by Afghans is Farsi and this is the tenth most common language in Hounslow and twelfth most popular language spoken by pupils in the Borough; other languages spoken are Pashtu. The Afghan community in London is concentrated in the West with the largest population in the Borough of Ealing. Within Hounslow Afghans are concentrated in Heston East, Heston West and Cranford.

The literature suggests that the Afghan community in the UK is fragmented in terms of tribal, ethnic, regional, or political identities and affiliations and this is reflected in the views of Afghan residents and community leaders we spoke to in Hounslow. The literature also highlights the experience of unaccompanied migrant children and more research may be needed to determine the size and characteristics of this particular group in Hounslow especially in the context of mental health provision. Similarly, literature around the welfare and advice needs of the Afghan community has highlighted specific issues affecting the community, such as: poor education, trauma and mental health, use of drugs and alcohol, involvement in gangs, inadequate and inappropriate support from local authorities and discrimination in employment. (See, ‘Looking at the literature’ for more details.)

Figure 2: Key findings – Afghans in Hounslow

- Poor awareness of Council services
- Frequent contacts with Housing services
- Reports of dead end enquiries/complaints with no follow-up
- Negative experiences at point of contact
- Perception that poor English warrants poor treatment
- Questionable provision of translators
- Poor representation and visibility of Afghans in the Council
- Perception that greater visibility equals greater share of resources and better treatment
- Reported poor cultural sensitivity – e.g. leisure services and women only sessions

- Lack of formal and informal support structures for Afghan women
- Potentially high incidence of domestic violence
- High level of loneliness, isolation and depression
- Problems with GPs and perceived lack of cultural sensitivity

- Positive perception of schools (consistent provision of advice, and translators
- Lack of provision of full time education/language classes (more than
### Housing
- Feel ill-informed about Housing services
- Lack of information about changes in housing policy and procedure
- Perception that they are treated worse than more visible/larger minority groups
- Poor frontline experiences affect confidence of women and deter future contact
- Lack of awareness of temporary accommodation
- Living with a fear of the threat of homelessness (can also affect mental health)
- Problems with private landlords

### People, culture and community
- Fragmented community structure impacts on lack of community hubs and organisations
- Organisations do not relate to the HCN
- Organisations’ negative experiences of applying for funding

NB - as reported by interviewees and stakeholders
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

**Afghan**

2011 Population Born in Afghanistan
Ranked by Most Populous

- **Hounslow**: Foreign Born 3.08%
  - Ranked 6
  - 4,463

- **London**: Foreign Born 1.19%
  - Ranked 26
  - 37,680

**Top 5 Boroughs by Afghan Born**

1. Ealing: 6,015
2. Hounslow: 4,463
3. Brent: 3,698
4. Harrow: 3,314
5. Hillingdon: 3,248

**Top 5 Boroughs of Persian/Farsi Speakers**

1. Barnet: 6,639
2. Ealing: 4,200
3. Brent: 3,341
4. Harrow: 2,548
5. Hounslow: 2,121
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Afghanistan Born Population in 2001 & 2011
Ranked by Most Populous in Hounslow

2001: 1,357  
2011: 4,463  
+228.90%

Speakers of Persian/Farsi  
Ranked by Most Common Language, 2011

Hounslow: 2,121 (3.05%)  
London: 39,645 (2.30%)  

Geographic Distribution of Afghanistan-Born Residents in London

Afghanistan-Born Residents
- 10 to 1,500-low
- 1,500 to 3,000
- 3,000 to 4,500
- 4,500 to 6,021-High
Looking at the Literature: Afghans

**Data**

There is sparse academic literature on Afghans in London, in many cases focusing on specific issues. Most of the available data on Afghans in the UK comes from small-scale studies authored by charities, government and other community organisations.

An estimated five million Afghans live in the Diaspora of which 56,000 live in the UK mainly in London.

Between 1989 and 2007 almost 42,000 Afghans applied for asylum in the UK and 5,523 left the country through removal, assisted return or voluntary repatriation.

The majority of Afghans in London are concentrated in West and North-West London boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Harrow and Barnet.

**Migration Patterns**

Migration has been an integral part of the social and cultural fabric of the Afghan society, a kind of rite of passage.

**Key characteristics**

**Fragmented:** the Afghan community in the UK is fragmented in terms of tribal, ethnic, regional, or political identities and affiliations, exacerbated by the dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees to areas outside London and the South East. The lack of a coordinated community structure is strategic as it avoids potentially divisive conflicts. (Khan, 2013a).

**Generational conflict:** studies suggest that the first generation Afghan migrants, predominantly older migrants, are concerned about retaining pre-migration cultural ties, the younger second generation Afghans worry about integrating into the host country (Faniel, 2011; IOM, 2007).

**Unaccompanied migrant children:** in the past decade most Afghans have been arriving in the country as unaccompanied migrant children and constitute a significant proportion of Afghans making asylum applications to the UK; most have their ages disputed by the Home Office when compared to other nationalities. Between 2005 and 2010, only 3% of such applications were successful exposing unaccompanied migrant children to the risk of deportation, detention or destitution. Research into the experiences of unaccompanied migrant children has underscored their vulnerability to stressor points prior to leaving their countries of origin, during the journey and settlement in the UK e.g. one survey on the mental health of Afghan unaccompanied migrant children in one of the London Boroughs shows that around a third of male unaccompanied migrant children were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, unaccompanied migrant children displayed a marked resilience considering the amount of adverse events they had experienced.

**Welfare and advice needs:** an assessment into the welfare and advice needs of Afghan communities in the London Borough of Harrow listed specific issues affecting the community as: poor education, trauma and mental health, use of drugs and alcohol, and involvement in gangs (Vacchelli et al., 2013). The Department for Communities and Local Government describes the Afghan community as ‘facing considerable economic, social, health and welfare problems which are due to a lack of resources within the community as a whole but also due to inadequate and inappropriate support from the local authorities’ (cited by Faniel, 2011). Afghans in the UK have formed socio-political, religious, and refugee-focused community organisations to cater for the increasing population’s welfare and needs (IOM, 2007); some community organisations address diverse Afghan needs through sport such as football and cricket.
The continued conflict in Afghanistan over the past three decades has massively increased the numbers of people leaving.

Three main phases of international migration from Afghanistan (1970s to the present): 1) period when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan; 2) the fall of the Communist Government and the start of the civil war in the early 1990s; 3) recent exodus of Afghans fleeing Taliban rule and drought.

The asylum route has been the main avenue of entering the UK.

**Discrimination and employment:** most Afghans claim they are discriminated against in the job market (Jones, 2010). A study of Afghans in Brighton observes that they work in kitchens, shops, takeaways, carwashes and hotels. (Khan, 2013b). In London, 'in the last 10 years most stalls in the capital's vast network of street markets are either manned or owned by Afghans.'
Use of Services and Needs of the Afghan Community in Hounslow

Summary of Findings

Based on the interviews conducted in this study, contact with the Council for Afghans in Hounslow revolves around meeting basic needs such as housing and welfare support. Interestingly, Afghan women are unaware of any other ways to contact the Council except through Housing services. As a result, this will be the only point of reference people have with the Council and they know little about what other services are available to them. Poor experiences perceived at these points of initial contact and thereafter result in negative impressions of the Council. This is made worse by a perception that poor representation and visibility of Afghan people in public life is seen as a reflection of how seriously the Council takes a community, for example, Afghan men in this study feel that South Asian people are given priority because they are more visible in public and civic life. Schools are the only example given where engagement is seen as positive. The lack of adequate language support and provision has implications for community interactions with the Council but it also impacts on the ability of Afghan people to feel confident in communicating their needs, to find employment and to feel secure in their nationality and immigration status. An exploration of the types of mental health provision for the Afghan community is essential if the Council is to tackle the concerns of residents (particularly women) facing isolation, depression and loneliness, often as a result of poor language support, but also as a result of cultural practices. The Council needs to be more informed of and sensitive to cultural practices as basic mistakes in service provision are still being made, for example, having a male lifeguard at women only sessions at some of the leisure centres, is often perceived by the community as a deliberate and ignorant act. Furthermore, the Afghan community is concerned that GPs fail to acknowledge depression.

Contact with the Council and Public Services

Most of the Afghan women are unaware of the various Departments within the Council except for Housing. As a result, there is confusion about which services there are, what they are responsible for and how the Council can help. For example parking complaints, planning permission, disability benefit, long journey to school, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), hate crime and noise, are all examples of queries raised by Afghan women with Housing services. Not surprisingly, the Afghan women describe how there is no follow up or response to their queries, which results in a negative impression of the Council.

Some Afghan women describe a sense of frustration about their enquiries/complaints not being followed up or reaching a dead-end and as a result they will simply give up. Although, Afghan women report that they understand basic English, they find it difficult to articulate or express themselves fully and suggest that this has worked against them and it may be why people at the Council “treat them badly.” Some women describe asking for a translator when visiting the Council, but none ever being provided. Moreover, some Afghan men describe Council staff as ‘unprofessional.’ One Afghan organisation explains that negative attitudes towards the Council stem from a negative first point of contact, as they comment:
“If it were enhanced e.g. better language provision, more one-to-one support, the [Afghan] community will stop blaming the Council.”

Similarly, another Afghan organisation describes a negative experience with the Council whilst applying for grant funding for a youth club:

“We had Youth Club for a while and we applied for grants and the lady over the phone said, “it is unlikely that you will get something” and I was quite upset and insulted, I said “excuse me I haven’t sent the application form and I haven’t returned [the] application form, how can you [be] discouraging me from applying”, she said, “oh you know the Council doesn’t have money”, and I was really shocked, and since that time I said if the Council is that poor, we have to do something ourselves.”

The organisation went on to try and fund its own activities through various fund raising activities. It feels like it missed out on an opportunity to be part of a Hounslow network and was discouraged from turning to the Council in the future.

Afghan men feel they would trust the Council more if Afghans were more visible in public life. They perceive that the Afghan community is not represented in the Council, particularly on frontline services and they feel that Afghan people from the community are not given prominence. In contrast there is a feeling that the South Asian community is over represented in the Borough and, as a result, they feel that they get a larger share of the resources.

In addition, some Afghan women report a cultural insensitivity in leisure services, for example, at advertised women only sessions at Heston Pool, there is often a male lifeguard on duty. Whenever they complain they are told that there is nothing that can be done because staff are on a rota.

**Education & Employment**

Overall, the view of schools has been very positive among Afghan women who describe receiving help with various problems such as providing letters to support a case. They feel confident communicating with the school through their children and, in some cases, the schools also provided translators. Afghan men feel there are not enough spaces in local schools, hence, they are forced to travel further, incurring more expense.

Afghan men understand the importance of learning English to support them to find work but indicate a number of perceived barriers:

- The Council does not provide full time education/language classes more than once/twice a week
- With the limited hours that they are offered, they are unable to learn the language adequately enough to meet nationalisation and citizenship standards
- People with different English language proficiency levels are put together in the same class, their ability to read and write English is not taken into account.
For example, one Afghan man attended classes provided by the Council for more than 3 years. There were 3 levels: Beginner, Level 1 and Level 3 in the same class but the teachers did not take this into account. The Afghan man left and took private English language classes and finished in 6 months.

**Health**

Afghan women feel they are not getting the support they need be it from the Council, external advice services or, for some, their own families. As well as having nowhere to go in Hounslow, women feel there is no one to go to. They describe looking forward to Fridays at the mosque, as they know this is when they will get a chance to meet other women and catch up. However, other than socialising, the mosques do not offer much more in terms of support for women. Some women also describe not receiving the support they need from their husbands; one woman described how she thinks her husband takes his frustration out on her but that it is her duty to let that happen, as he works hard (she was reluctant to complain about his behaviour and would not say much more). The majority of women describe feeling low or depressed and some said they have been diagnosed with clinical depression. Afghan men also describe feeling depressed when they feel they are “getting nowhere with the council” which is made worse by not being able to communicate effectively and by poor language provision, as they state:

“They don’t know how much you suffer on a daily basis, and how does that affect your family, your wife and children.”

“We are more than a thousand Afghans…who are getting ill and getting depressed, because of this issue that we cannot speak English, they don’t provide us [with] the proper full time education that we can learn English and sort out our own issues by ourselves.”

There were a number of complaints against GPs and various procedures related to them, for example: not being able to or knowing how to complain about GPs; receiving no response if they do complain; not being listened to; not knowing what questions to ask the GP and “having to accept an incorrect diagnosis.” There is also a feeling that GPs do not recognise poor mental health, as the following comment exemplifies:

“But if you are depressed, within yourself, and you are struggling and you go there, they tell you, [you] are ok.”

**Housing**

Afghans feel ill-informed about Housing services and complain that they do not receive information about changes in housing policy and procedures. They also feel they are treated unfairly, i.e. that other BMER people in the Borough are better informed and, as a result, get better housing. For example, Afghan men feel that the Council only listens to people who ‘pester’ them as opposed to patiently waiting for a reply, “whoever comes to chase them every day, they’ve got free time, they go sit at the Council, giving them headache, they say alright, let them move in…” This lack of awareness about Housing services and changes in housing policy then translates to frustration directed at the Council.
Afghan women who have dealt with Housing services describe being made to feel bad for complaining and report that they often face rude, impatient and intolerant behaviour, which adds to their feelings of low confidence and self-esteem; all of which discourages them from further contact with the Council, as indicated by the following comment:

“I am going to [the] Council but they said you can wait in the waiting list, you can wait we have 18,000 people within the waiting list. She say ‘you think you’re the only one who needs a house?’ They said they don’t help me…they just say that you are not allowed in this country.”

There is a particular lack of awareness around temporary accommodation resulting in feelings of insecurity about housing status and the constant ‘threat of homelessness.’ Understanding of temporary accommodation is limited and people do not understand why they have been in temporary accommodation for long periods of time, often many years. Afghan men describe feeling forced to accept temporary accommodation with no understanding of how long they will be there, as they state:

“They pushed me to accept that home temporarily; they said probably few weeks or months. Now I’m living for more than 4 years in the same house with 4 kids and my wife in 3 bedrooms. It was temporary house for few months they pushed me to accept it. When I asked they said the policy has changed. You just keep quiet, you should be happy.”

Afghan women say that processes have never been explained to them and they only understand something once they have to complain about it. Afghan men complain their housing need is often a point of contention and it is difficult to apply for housing without having to move their families into smaller and worse accommodation; even though they feel they meet the perceived criteria for a) having lived in the borough for more than 10 years and b) having a low income. This finding indicates that there is a knowledge gap between actual policy and how the housing policy is perceived.

A neighbouring Borough may also house people in Hounslow and this can result in confusion over which council is responsible for them. For example, one woman complains of long and expensive daily journeys to Ealing on the school run and of being passed from one council to another after being placed in temporary accommodation in Hounslow by Ealing Borough Council.

There are strong concerns about renting from private landlords. Once they sign up to a contract they are usually tied in for a year, meanwhile if another house does become available they cannot break their private contract and so miss out, despite being told by the Council to take up private rental. Numerous bad experiences involving landlords were cited such as: repairs not being done, accusations made about damage, complaints against children and extra money being charged.

**People, Culture and Community**

Some organisations describe how the Afghan community in Hounslow is fragmented by family, tribal, political and religious affiliations. This impacts on Afghan community hubs and organisations. For example some mosques will be made up of Farsi speakers, another will only be for Pashtu speakers.

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9 See e.g. Guide to the Housing Allocation Policy 2013, London Borough of Hounslow.
resulting in informal divisions that create a barrier for anyone wishing to form an organisation or start an initiative for Afghans in Hounslow, as illustrated below:

“Unfortunately we have Mosques that only Farsi speakers go more often…we have one other Mosque, near Stonebridge that only Pashtu speakers go…unfortunately we have the Afghan Society that support[s] some Islamic groups there but they are Pashtu and we have some other groups that we support from Rabbani groups…and then in Harrow we have some groups formed with their families… they are from the People Democratic Party of Afghanistan…there is still people that are sensitive to some of the fundamentalist Islamic groups, some of the communist group[s]…But those sensitivities and bad image unfortunately still exist there.”

There is, however, a strong desire to bring about unity; for example, one Afghan organisation in West London is in the process of developing an Afghan Council and has representatives from Afghan organisations across the UK.

Strategies for Better Engagement

All the positive contact experiences described by Afghan women such as with schools and Councillors involve a long-term person-to-person contact rather than a one-stop-shop style of interaction with someone ‘behind a desk.’ It is only then that Afghan women feel they are being listened to and get the support they require. For Afghan men the priority is English language support and a dedicated Afghan organisation through which other services can be provided and other needs met. There is also awareness that although mosques are a good hub and can facilitate some provision, not all services can be provided through a mosque, hence, there is a need for a ‘cultural centre’ for non-religious festivities and cultural events. The communities’ experience and initial contact with the Council is important; if that experience is negative it sets back future contact.

Specific Ideas for Engagement:

- One-to-one support
- A consistent and reliable case worker and direct links to that person
- A holistic approach to a series of queries as opposed to one at different points of contact and with different organisations
- An Afghan community liaison person in the Council
- Targeting Afghan community leaders to develop their capacity and leadership skills to implement an effective engagement strategy with their respective communities
- Raising awareness about what services are available
- Raising awareness of what community groups exist in the Borough
- Support network of organisations or activities specifically for Afghan women and those that work with them
- Specialist advice clinics for Afghan women
- Mental health clinics and advice for Afghans
- Access to legal advice
Figure 3: Potential Points of Engagement: Afghan Community

- **Schools**: Relay information, Learn English/new skills, Programmes in school holidays, Parenting classes
- **Mosque**: Womens clubs, Classes to learn English/new skills, Advice surgery
- **Leisure Centre**: Wellbeing support, Ladies clubs/classes
- **Frontline Council services**: Housing, Welfare benefits
- **GP**: Relay information, Mental health support, Domestic violence support, Specialist clinics
3.2 The Algerian Community

The Algerian-born community represent a growing group in Hounslow, although the largest concentration of this group is in Waltham Forest, with the remaining population spread fairly evenly across the London Boroughs. The Algerian born population in Hounslow is still statistically very small and has grown from 254 in 2001 to 629 in 2011. Hounslow is home to the ninth largest Algerian population in London. Algerians primarily speak Arabic and some speak French. Overall, Arabic is the seventh most common language in the Borough. The Algerian ethnic population appear in both the Arab and Other North African population data. In Hounslow the former is concentrated in Osterley and Syon and the latter in Osterley and Hounslow Heath.

Specific research on the Algerian population in the UK is very limited. There is data that suggest that the Algerian population in the UK is male-dominated; the 2001 Census shows that 70.5% of the Algerians in the UK were male. Due to their small number, Algerian women may not be captured in statistics; hence, it is not known how many are accessing public services. The literature suggests that Algerians chose to come to Britain because of the perception that British society was more tolerant towards Arabs and Muslims and, in recent years, the UK has received a considerable number of Algerians as asylum seekers or economic migrants. This relatively new community may have issues that affect engagement such as cultural unfamiliarity and a lack of community organisation.

Research also suggests that Algerians may be working well below their level of qualification; indicating there may need to be an exploration of English language provision in the borough as well as a need for employment surgeries. Some studies report Algerian immigrants as highly represented among the client group of several refugee mental health services in London, often as a result of being undocumented migrants. Another theme in the literature is that there may be a higher level of political mistrust among this group and political engagement levels are low based on attitudes to terrorism; something that the Council should be aware of in its approach. (See ‘What the Literature says’ for more details).

Figure 4: Key findings – Algerians in Hounslow

| Contact with the council | • Widespread mistrust of authority  
|                          | • Council services are poorly publicised  
|                          | • Rely on signposting by community members – informal support network  
|                          | • Cultural reasons behind not asking for help outside the community  
|                          | • Café culture style informal support and advice network  
|                          | • View that Council services are bureaucratic  
|                          | • Find it hard to book a translator  
|                          | • Welcome the idea of Council led leisure services e.g. football  
| Health                   | • Cultural and religious gender separation means greater levels of isolation and loneliness among women |
### Education & employment
- Need guidance through the process of transferring qualifications and finding employment
- Would welcome job search skills training and subsidised courses to obtain vocational qualifications
- Algerian women - poor English can lead to isolation and depression
- Need to support young Algerians (e.g. positive role models)

### Housing
- Problems with landlords of private rented accommodation
- Concerns about the housing process especially knowledge and ability to use LOCATA

### People, culture and community
- Community has conflicting views of community cohesion – potentially affecting levels of engagement
- Do not feel accepted by ‘British’ people
- Concerns about Algerian young people and loss of cultural heritage
- Need for parenting classes to address cultural conflict
- An overall lack of existing secular Algerian organisations (and non-political)

NB - as reported by interviewees and stakeholders
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

ALGERIAN

2011 Population Born in Algeria
Ranked by Most Populous

- Hounslow: 629 (0.43%)
  - Ranked 38
- London: 15,829 (0.50%)
  - Ranked 42

Top 4 Boroughs by Algerian Born

1. Waltham Forest: 1,845
2. Brent: 872
3. Southwark: 832
4. Haringey: 803
9. Hounslow: 629

Top 4 Boroughs of Arabic Speakers

1. Westminster: 11,971
2. Brent: 7,892
3. Ealing: 6,989
4. Kensington & Chelsea: 4,447
8. Hounslow: 2,499
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Number of Algerian born in 2001 and 2011, Ranked by Most Populous in Hounslow in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>254</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>+147.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speakers of Arabic (Algeria)  
Ranked by Most Common Language, 2011

Hounslow
- Ranked 7
- 2,499
- 3.60% of English as Additional Language

London
- Ranked 10
- 70,602
- 4.09% of English as Additional Language

Geographic Distribution of Algeria-born Residents in London
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Geographic Distribution of Arab (Including Algerian) Ethnic Group in Hounslow

Arab (Algerian) Ethnic Group
- 86 to 148-low
- 148 to 209
- 209 to 271
- 271 to 332-high

Geographic Distribution of Other North African (Including Algerian) Ethnic Group in Hounslow

North African (Algerian) Ethnic Group
- 4 to 17-low
- 17 to 30
- 30 to 43
- 43 to 56-high

1. Bedfont
2. Brentford
3. Chiswick Homefields
4. Chiswick Riverside
5. Cranford
6. Feltham North
7. Feltham West
8. Hanworth
9. Hanworth Park
10. Heston Central
11. Heston East
12. Heston West
13. Hounslow Central
14. Hounslow Heath
15. Hounslow South
16. Hounslow West
17. Isleworth
18. Osterley & S. G.
19. Syon
20. Turnham Green
Looking at the Literature: Algerians

Data

Specific research on the Algerian population in the UK is very limited. Collyer’s (2002, 2004, 2005) PhD thesis and subsequent publications remain the most significant studies to date, and yet, ‘the Algerian population in Britain is poorly known and little understood in the wider British community.’

The number of Algerians in the UK has increased from 3,500 in the 1991 Census to 10,500 in the 2001 Census and 22,000 in the 2011 Census. Other estimates suggest that there are between 25,000 and 30,000 Algerians in the UK (Joffe, 2007).

The majority of Algerians in the UK are concentrated in London in places such as Finsbury Park, Leyton, Walthamstow, Edgware and Fulham. As part of the Government’s asylum dispersal policy, some Algerians asylum seekers were dispersed to Leicester, Bournemouth, Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham (Collyer, 2004; Joffe, 2007).

The Algerian population in the UK is male-dominated; the 2001 Census shows that 70.5% of the Algerians in the UK were male. For Collyer (2005), this may be because Algerian women may not be accessing public services to be captured in statistics or they may be living with relatives in France. It may also be that more women may be dissuaded to resort to undocumented migration to the UK than men.

Migration Patterns

Because of colonial ties, France has been the main destination of Algerian immigrants and currently over a million Algerian immigrants live there. In the 1970s and 1980s, migration to the UK increased as a result.

Key characteristics

Cultural unfamiliarity:

The fact that such ‘a large proportion of the Algerian population in the UK have arrived so recently also leads to a widespread unfamiliarity with the dominant culture’ (Collyer, 2005).

Lack of community organisations:

There are a few Algerian community organisations in the country and consequently there is little sense of a cohesive and unified community (Collyer, 2004). Because of the nature of the conflict in Algeria, an atmosphere of mutual suspicion exists within the community (IOM, 2007).

Employment – over qualified:

Some Algerians migrated to the UK to learn English; in fact, Algerian authorities had long encouraged university-level students to pursue studies in Britain and the US to disrupt the country’s dependence on France (Joffe, 2007). Nevertheless, the majority of Algerians are working well below their high level of qualifications.

Undocumented migrants:

When their asylum cases are rejected, many Algerians choose to remain undocumented rather than risk returning to their homeland and Collyer (2005) describes Algerian immigrants as highly represented among the client group of several refugee mental health services in London.

Political mistrust – attitudes to terrorism:

In comparison to their fellow co-ethnics in France, Collyer (2002) found that the level of diaspora political engagement of Algerians in the UK to be low; this may be because in both France and Algeria, there was a widespread perception that Algerians who came to Britain were involved to some degree in Islamist politics or terrorism. Since 2005, fears of global terrorism linked to the Algerian community in Britain have led to arrest, detention and deportation of some Algerian
UK comprised of highly educated Algerians in contrast to the more working class migration to France.\textsuperscript{xx}

Since the beginning of civil war in 1992 and France’s imposition of travel restrictions on Algerians, a new pattern of emigration to the UK emerged (Collyer, 2004).

Algerians chose to come to Britain because of the perception that British society was more tolerant towards Arabs and Muslims. Furthermore, suspicious of the close relationship between the French and Algerian security forces, Algerians moved to the UK to claim asylum, a country with no previous ties to Algeria.

In recent years the UK has received a considerable number of Algerians as asylum seekers or economic migrants.\textsuperscript{xx} According to Collyer (2002), ‘Algerians come to the UK since it has few connections with Algeria at a governmental level and they perceive it to be more tolerant towards Algerian nationals.’ In addition, Algerians migrated to the UK because it was easy to find work and the lack of security controls once they entered the country (Joffe, 2007). Immigrants (Joffe, 2007). Yet during the 1990s, both France and Algeria considered Britain as having lax attitudes towards violent Islamic extremists who had obtained political asylum in the country. After events of September 11, in 2001, and in the wake of the London bombings in 2005, the British attitudes and policy changed towards the Algerian community. From 2000 onwards, the Terrorism Act (2000) and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (2001) has disproportionately affected the Algerian community as the majority of those detained have been Algerian (Collyer, 2005). Some Algerians in the UK believe the close cooperation between British and Algerian security forces has made them targets of state-sponsored violence (Joffe, 2007). Hence, there is a sense of uneasiness within the Algerian community.
Use of Services and Needs of the Algerian Community in Hounslow

Summary of Findings

Historically, studies suggest there is a mistrust of authority among Algerians and this could partly explain why the Algerian community in Hounslow have little contact with the Council. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, Algerian men tend to consult informal networks before contacting the Council or following any correspondence from the Council. This informal support is often found in a café culture type network that exists in Hounslow, where other men in the community offer advice, signposting and support. This is not the case for women, and a lack of English language skills combined with a culture of gender separation may mean that women are more isolated or have much smaller social networks to rely on and find it difficult to meet other women. Ironically, Algerian women tend to be more qualified than Algerian men but both groups find it difficult to transfer their qualifications so that they can find work. These factors combined may contribute to higher levels of isolation and depression among Algerian women and this should be explored in Hounslow. There are opposing views of community cohesion and belonging in the Borough with sections of the Algerian community believing that integration is not possible because the cultures are so different or because they will not be accepted by Western culture, and others who feel that integration needs to happen but in a structured way to gain the trust and respect of the Algerian community. This tension could explain why there are so few Algerian organisations in London. This tension could also explain why some older Algerians describe a culture gap between them and the younger generation; organisations suggest there may be a need for parenting styles to adapt to a more Western context as well as a need for positive role models. One pathway for integration could be through sport - Algerian men describe a need to play football with other communities in a more structured way. Finally, Algerians in private rented accommodation describe facing prejudice from private landlords, and those who are in social housing describe problems using Locata.  

Contact with the Council and Public Services

Algerians praise the strong sense of equality in UK life and do not experience the class divisions that exist in Algeria and some European countries (e.g. France, Italy and Germany). There is also a strong sense that the UK justice system is fair and does not discriminate. Despite this, Algerians describe trying to have as little contact with the Council as possible. Building trust with the Algerian community is key in how the Council can maintain effective contact. As the literature outlines, there is often a culture of mistrust especially of authority and among people with an uncertain immigration status, as indicated by the following comment:

“Theyir legal status does not allow them to just go around and say "hey, by the way my status in this country, I’m not even allowed to be here." So anything”

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10 Locata is a choice based lettings system which allows you to apply for vacant Council and Housing Association properties in Hounslow and in neighbouring boroughs that are part of the Locata scheme (see e.g. www.locata.org.uk).
that's got to do with the government…it might be a sensitive issue”
[Algerian focus group].

Some Algerians do feel that the Council can offer a good service but they say that services are very poorly publicised; Algerians are often unaware of services until signposted by community members. Algerian men describe how Algerians tend to keep problems to themselves and are often unhappy or unwilling to share problems, particularly to someone from outside the community because they do not want to be seen as helpless, needy or begging for help. For this reason, they often feel isolated when they have an issue and are much more willing to seek help if they have an informal advocate/someone to accompany them. This informal support is from within the community through their peers and particularly at Algerian coffee shops. Such cafés function as a social and advice hub providing a range of informal services, such as: interpreting/translation, writing letters, translating/explaining letters; signposting to CAB, solicitors; peer support/advocacy/accompanying them to visits; advice on accessing services.

The informal advisers will ask them to return to the café to find out what happened in order to build their knowledge base. In contrast to these informal networks some Algerians describe their experience of advice services from the Council and the CAB. There is an overall sense that these are full of obstructions, bureaucracy, difficult forms, an unwillingness to be helpful, and are very slow. The appointments/bookings process required for an interpreter is felt to further hinder the process, as the following comment exemplifies:

“CAB [Citizens Advice Bureau] has lines around the block. Algerians are too impatient to wait for appointments; want help then and there or they will not return”
[Algerian focus group].

Leisure: In contrast to a lack of contact with the Council, Algerians welcome the idea of Council led leisure services. For example, some Algerian men currently play football informally with other Algerians or other ethnic communities and would welcome something more formal and for the Council to help facilitate this.

Education & Employment

One of the key issues for Algerian men and women is the transfer of qualifications and guidance through that process to enable them to find employment. Key areas of employment for Algerians in Hounslow are described as catering, management, self-employed/own businesses and airport security. Men say they would welcome job search skills training and subsidised courses to obtain vocational qualifications (e.g. plumbing). There is a perception that there are good opportunities to return to Algeria once professional qualifications are obtained in the UK (e.g. doctor, IT, pilot). In Algeria, higher education is in French and, particularly for professional qualifications (e.g. science, medicine), they follow the Baccalaureate system, which is not accepted in the UK without extensive retraining.

A characteristic of Algerian women is that they tend to be well educated (usually more qualified than Algerian men) but experience difficulties because they cannot speak English well enough to find a job;
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

this can lead to a downward spiral where women begin to feel isolated and even depressed, as the following comment illustrates:

“It’s a paradox because most of them have a degree, Masters degree or PhD from Algeria but for some reason and as I said, it’s catch-twenty-two because when they come here, it becomes a handicap because they don’t have the language, don’t have any friends, anybody to associate yourself to...just one family or two and that’s all you’re playing with for the next few years. But this is what’s happening and it becomes quite disturbing” [Algerian organisation in London].

Role models: One Algerian organisation also feels that younger Algerians need to have strong professional role models to help them connect to a positive Algerian identity and professions, for example The National Algerian Centre have facilitated events inviting Algerian professionals (e.g. Oxford Law professionals, PhDs) to present to young Algerians studying for their GCSEs and these have been hugely successful in inspiring young Algerians.

Health

According to Algerian men there is cultural and religious gender separation and Algerian women were described as mostly staying at home, visiting each other’s houses, doing the shopping, attending the mosque and undertaking some part-time work. This informal support network appears to be the only social network for Algerian women in Hounslow and there may be greater levels of isolation and loneliness among women. The National Algerian Centre describes how difficult it is for Algerian women to meet other women:

“We had one [woman] who’s been twelve years in this country and says that she comes around as she is lonely and she’d like to be a member of our organisation because the fact that she doesn’t know where to meet Algerian women and all the rest of it. So we do often have, unfortunately, those queries but then because Algeria is a Muslim country then you’re going to have people who do not want to be in the same room, for instance, as [a] man.”

Housing

Algerian men describe experiencing problems with housing. Those in private rented accommodation are unhappy with their private landlords; single Algerian men will share with other Algerian men and often face prejudice. Some describe experiencing problems with housing benefit and it not being paid because of problems with landlords. Many also describe specific problems with Locata including losing registrations, being downgraded or even removed.

People, Culture and Community

Two opposite views on Algerians in Hounslow emerge when talking about community cohesion. Some Algerians in Hounslow believe that Algerians cannot integrate with UK society or interact with other ethnic communities and, therefore, the Council will have a hard time engaging them, “people are
"different, traditions are different." However other Algerians in Hounslow believe in the benefits of interaction and suggest there has not been an opportunity or motivation to do this in any structured way and that Algerians are open to the concept. Some Algerians describe their efforts to ‘integrate,’ for example, in Algeria men describe walking in groups as the norm, but in the UK they feel it is seen as intimidating and viewed with suspicion by the police; they have learned to walk in separate pairs instead. Although there is a strong sense of UK citizenship, they describe feeling ‘mistrust’ from white British citizens who may feel, “migrants are not truly British in their eyes.”

Those who work with the Algerian community describe a number of issues concerning Algerian young people especially as they reach teenage years: they become detached from their roots; are unable to speak home languages; and there are no facilities in the UK for them to learn about their heritage. As this happens they can also detach from their parents. Similarly, Algerian parents face challenges in the UK around how to bring up their children in what is considered a culturally acceptable way. Algerian organisations describe a strong need for parenting classes and that parents fear what may happen to their children as a result of ‘Western’ influences, as indicated below:

“Parenting skills are something also that we’ve got on our programme…You cannot shout and scream…So there is different ways, how to communicate with teenagers. They were born here so you have to be more lenient. So it’s just to educate adults, parents how to go about finding the right route for their kids to grow up in this country because it’s a fear. Although they’ve made the conscious decision to come and immigrate to this country, they fear when they have kids.”

Parents are particularly keen to maintain a religious identity and for their children to learn home languages and be taught the Qur’an by Algerian teachers, as the following comment indicates:

“That’s something that’s quite important in the community. Having maybe a Saturday school or something like that. Even teaching extra-curricular activities or having youth groups as well. Having groups where the kids could go and relate. Again, it’s all going back to not losing the heritage.”

The National Algerian Centre feel there is an overall lack of existing Algerian organisations across Hounslow, London and the UK. In particular there are very few specialist services such as for LGBT people and addicts. They also feel it is important to have a non-religious and non-political organisation. One Algerian community leader describes Algerians as being often envious because other communities have managed to get a community hall, as he states:

“You know and I know it’s not as simple as getting a hall and that’s it. The Council don’t just give you a hall, you have to show what you can deliver as well and not everything is free. So just to educate them as well. What they hate is meeting after meeting and not seeing the quick results…So, accomplish something ready, deliver it because otherwise they’re going to be disappointed and, let’s say, we’re not Coca-Cola. Because we’re a small community.”
Strategies for Better Engagement

Overall, Algerians in Hounslow tend not to rely on Council services but on informal support networks particularly through café style advice giving. As a result they do not know what services are available from the Council. There is a need for better access to advice, information, guidance and formal support. Services need to be well advertised and marketed, preferably through a trustworthy source such as GPs and schools, for there to be sustained interest. There is an obvious gap in engaging with Algerian women, and fostering a social space where women can interact may help develop their informal networks to something more formal. Also, specific services that target employment issues and tackle language proficiency would attract women.

Specific Ideas for Engagement:

- A community centre/hub for Algerian and other ethnic communities that encourages interaction - a well-organised, well-managed space that promotes cohesion/inter-community relations
- Targeting Algerian community leaders to develop their capacity and leadership skills to implement an effective engagement strategy with their respective communities
- More interactions/engagements with Councillors outside of election cycles - mainly felt all previous visits/interactions have just been attempts to get votes and then they are never seen again and do not deliver on any promises
- Family oriented events/activities

Figure 5: Potential Points of Engagement: Algerian Community
3.3 The Burmese Community

The Burmese community in London is relatively small (5,162) and fairly evenly spread across London. Although Hounslow is home to the largest Burmese community in the capital, it is still a very small population (526). The main language spoken is Burmese. In Hounslow Burmese residents are concentrated in Hounslow Central and Hounslow Heath.

The absence of both data and literature about the Burmese community in the UK is striking and Hounslow could take a lead in producing smaller scale studies of its Burmese community. What literature there is suggests religion (Buddhism) plays an important role in fostering individual and collective identities hence this may be a way in for the Council to connect with and learn about the community and its needs. The literature suggests there may be two distinct groups: a) those who are young and well educated and with good knowledge of their entitlements and b) Burmese refugees with low levels of education, poor knowledge of English and poor knowledge of entitlements. Studies suggest this latter group are more likely to be isolated and need more practical help to ease them into British society such as assistance with transport, technology and English language. Another area of concern is how differing customs may hinder access to health and education suggesting the need for culturally sensitive services; depression, loneliness and lack of social support as well as the stigma around mental health were identified as key issues. These and other barriers to accessing public services outlined in the literature are exacerbated by poor English and a key concern for the Council should be to ensure that the Burmese community know where to go for help and advice. (See ‘What the Literature says’ for further details).

Figure 6: Key findings – Burmese in Hounslow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact with the council</th>
<th>Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• No negative experiences of face-to-face contact with the Council because no real contact with the Council</td>
<td>• Remain with GPs in neighbouring Boroughs because the surgery offers Burmese language support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong need for translated literature</td>
<td>• Do not know they are required to register with a local GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of awareness of what Council services are available or where to access services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

#### Education & employment
- Lack of proficiency in English
- Lack of Burmese language support
- English language skills are particularly lacking among older people and recently arrived young people
- Schools are a good point of engagement for Burmese parents for example to promote ESOL studies
- Welcome the idea of teachers directing them to help and information.
- Concerns about employment and career opportunities – lack of English language skills makes it difficult to find work
- Qualifications are not recognised in the UK

#### Housing
- Describe a lack of space to maintain social networks

#### People, culture & community
- Describe there are no community leaders in Hounslow
- No Burmese community groups in Hounslow
- None of the respondents belonged to any other community groups both within and outside Hounslow
- Find it difficult to maintain social networks
- Older age groups experience social isolation – their health and social care needs are increasing

*NB - as reported by interviewees and stakeholders*
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

2011 Population Born in Burma
Ranked by Most Populous

Hounslow
Foreign Born 0.36%

London
Foreign Born 0.16%

Top 5 Boroughs by Burmese Born
1. Hounslow
2. Brent
3. Croydon
4. Ealing
5. Barnet

Top Five Boroughs for South Asian Language (Burma)
1. Brent
2. Hounslow
3. Harrow
4. Ealing
5. Newham
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Number of Burmese Born in 2001 and 2011, Ranked by Most Populous in Hounslow in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Speakers of South Asian Language (All Other) (for Burma)
Ranked by Most Common Language, 2011

Hounslow

London

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language as Additional Language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hounslow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Geographic Distribution of Burma-Born Residents in London

Burma-Born

- 4 to 135-Low
- 135 to 165
- 265 to 396
Looking at the Literature...Burmese

Data

The absence of academic work as well as grey literature (i.e., literature that has not been formally published, such as reports) on the Burmese community in the UK is striking.

The only notable study to be conducted on the Burmese community in London is a cross-sectional descriptive study about access to and utilisation of GP services among Burmese migrants. On the basis of 137 questionnaires and 11 in-depth interviews, the study concluded that, ‘age being younger than 35 years, lacking prior overseas experience, having an unstable immigration status, having a shorter duration of stay, and resorting to self-medication were the main barriers hindering Burmese migrants from accessing primary health care services.’

The 2011 UK Census recorded 12,000 Burmese-born residents in the UK with 4,000 thought to be living in London. Yet key informants in the study of Aung et al. (2010) suggest there were about 10,000 Burmese migrants in London.

We know very little about the socio-demographic characteristics of the Burmese

Key characteristics

Buddhism:

The majority of the people in Burma are Buddhist and religion plays an important role in fostering individual and collective identities.

Existing research reports contrasting socio-demographic characteristics, for instance, respondents who participated in the cross-sectional study (Aung et al., 2010) were, ‘comparatively young, well educated, had a fair level of communication skills in English, and a good knowledge of their entitlements to health care.’

By contrast, Burmese refugees who are being resettled in the UK from camps in Thailand, part of the Gateway Protection Programme, are known to have low levels of education, poor knowledge of English and poor knowledge of entitlements.

Isolated communities:

Examining the integration outcomes of some 174 Burmese refugees from the Thai-Burma border resettled in Sheffield between May 2005 and September 2007, Hynes and Thu (2008) argue that better preparation and assistance that is more practical could have eased their integration into British society. The authors identified problems of transport and technology as hindering Burmese migrants venturing out of their houses.

Adjusting to different customs and systems:

In access to health and education and the ways in which migrants had to adjust to different customs and systems, taking the example of ante- and post-natal care, Hynes and Thu (2008) noted how Burmese post-natal care involved women staying in the house for 45 days and following specific health treatments whereas the UK’s focus on post-natal depression was something Burmese women had not encountered before. The health and social care needs of the older migrants are increasing suggesting the need for culturally sensitive services, including day centres and sheltered accommodation – all of this is combined with a sense of social isolation for elders and women.

Mental health needs: In addition, depression, loneliness and lack of social support as well as the stigma around mental health were
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

community in the UK.

Migration Patterns

From 1962 to 2011, Burma (Union of Myanmar) has been under military dictatorship and the country has gone through phases of economic and political turmoil as well as armed conflict in the border areas. Available evidence suggests that close to half a million were internally displaced and over three million people emigrated to neighbouring countries as well as to Western countries, for example United States, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden (Aung et al., 2010).

An estimated two million Burmese live in Thailand and a significant population reside in Bangladesh, India, China and Malaysia (Brees, 2008).

Since March 2004, the UK, like other Western countries, has been running a resettlement programme for Burmese refugees from the Thai-Burma border.

identified as key issues. We know very little about the mental health needs of Burmese refugees in the UK, people coming from extended periods of conflict in their homeland. Hynes and Thu (2008) observed how counselling was often declined in favour of pills due in part to translators coming from within the community and refugees’ fear of having their problems made public.

Multiple barriers to accessing public services (exacerbated by poor English):

One study reports Burmese migrants in Sheffield faced barriers in accessing public services because of their low levels of education, poor knowledge of English and poor knowledge of their entitlements.

Hence, the main areas of interest were language issues, problems with technology and difficulties associated with living within a different culture and new environment.

This is echoed by a small study for the Myanmar-Burmese Relief and Welfare Association (MBRWA) in London, which outlines the profile and needs of the Burmese community. Poor English language skills increase and exacerbate all barriers. There was lack of knowledge about where to go for help and advice and concerns about employment and career opportunities.
Use of Services and Needs of the Burmese Community in Hounslow

Summary of Findings

The Burmese community in Hounslow is the largest in London yet this is still relatively small and very much a silent minority. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, contact with the Council is minimal and this is highly likely to be a symptom of an overall lack of awareness about Council services in the Borough. As a result, Burmese people may be missing out on vital opportunities and entitlements such as free school meals for their children.

A large gap in the provision of services for Burmese people is a lack of English language support, particularly written translation of correspondence. This is partly because of an overall lack of English proficiency among the community but also because the community are not aware of how to request translated material. Burmese residents describe how there are no community leaders they can turn to in Hounslow, similarly, aside from religious places of worship there are no Burmese community organisations in the Borough. The only other informal point of contact is through schools. Burmese people also describe the lack of social networks. This is worrying because it leaves fewer pathways for the Council to engage with this community but suggests the community may be extremely isolated, which is particularly worrying for its more vulnerable members such as the elderly.

Contact with the Council and Public Services

There are no negative experiences of face-to-face contact with the Council; in fact, except through letters, there is no real contact with the council, as one person says “we hardly go there so not much negative experiences.” There is however evidence that Burmese people are not aware of what Council services are available or where to access services. For example one parent did not know he could get a voucher for his child to have free school meals and ‘free nursery’ and missed out by the time he had found out (only through another parent at the school gate).

Burmese respondents describe receiving letters from the Council and have strong concerns around their eligibility criteria and whether they are missing out on any entitlements. They describe experiencing mistakes in benefit calculations, entitlement decisions being overturned; they do not understand benefit calculations despite the accompanying information from the Council. As a result, many do not follow their concerns up with the Council and there is a strong sense of just getting on with things; this is due partly to cultural factors as they have a more passive nature towards authority and partly to a lack of confidence with English. They also say they receive lots of leaflets through the door that they do not understand. The 2011 S. H. Barnett report for the Myanmar/Burmese Welfare Association on the needs of the Burmese Community in London highlighted that there was a lack of knowledge about where to go for help and advice, and people only seek advice from an organisation that they said they trusted; this confirms that there is a need to raise awareness about where to go for help and the range of services the community can access.
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Very few had heard of the CAB and, for those who had, similar to other communities the Burmese also complain of long queues at the CAB and not being able to wait in line because of work commitments.

Education & Employment

The lack of proficiency in English and lack of Burmese language support, including no translation of written material are the biggest barriers for Burmese people in accessing Council services as well as the Council website which is seen as hard to navigate and understand, especially for those who do not read or write English well. Importantly, most people did not know a translation service existed and that help could be requested. From what few leaflets the group had seen, they contained no indication that they could be translated to Burmese, “we only see the Asian languages.” Ideally they would prefer to receive information in Burmese and communicate through translation. English language skills are also particularly lacking among older people and recently arrived young people:

“This makes it difficult for them to participate confidently in everyday life and access services, and limits their opportunities, for example in the employment market.”

Schools are a good point of engagement for Burmese parents; for example, a Burmese woman took up ESOL studies only after she found out about the course ‘at the schools gates’ from a fellow parent, she said she would not have known about English language classes. One parent described being able to talk to a teacher at his son’s school and felt it would be helpful if the teacher could direct him to help and information.

Health

There are a few Burmese families who describe remaining with their GP in a neighbouring Borough (Ealing) simply because the surgery offers them Burmese language support; they would not feel comfortable moving to a surgery in Hounslow West and did not know that they are required to register with a local GP.

People and Community

Respondents describe how there are no community leaders they can turn to for advice and so they tend to rely on each other (family and friends). There are no Burmese community groups in Hounslow and none of the respondents belonged to any other community groups both within and outside Hounslow. Many describe that it even becomes difficult to maintain social networks because their houses are small and they work unsociable hours. They say their strongest network is word of mouth. Although people have access to the Internet, they sometimes find it “too difficult to read or understand.” The S. H. Barnett report (2011) highlights:

“Some, especially those in the older age groups, experienced social isolation. Although familial relationships were strong among many, social contact with people outside the family was limited. The need for more social events and
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

access to community centres free of charge to organise events for local Myanmar/Burmese communities was highlighted.**xxxi**

Other findings highlighted in the S. H. Barnett report (2011) on the needs of the Burmese community in London include:

- The health and social care needs of the older migrants are increasing
- A need for culturally sensitive services, including day centres and sheltered accommodation.
- Concerns about employment and career opportunities – lack of English language skills made it difficult to find work.
- Qualifications are not recognised in the UK.
- Young people did not seem to have aspirations and needed guidance, advice and mentoring.**xxxii**

**Strategies for Better Engagement**

What is striking about this community is the lack of face-to-face contact and isolation from services. Although there is a desire for formal one-to-one support, there is the perception that there is no means or motivation to provide such support both from the Council and within the community (there are no formal groups in Hounslow). The community needs to be guided through processes with better access to translated material and translators, but also through encouraging community leadership and raising the visibility of Burmese people in Hounslow community networks. Places of worship could be a good start in fostering links with the community and developing leadership.

**Specific Ideas for Engagement:**

- Family oriented events/activities
- A Burmese adviser/liaison
- Identify community leaders and develop their capacity and leadership skills to implement an effective engagement strategy with their respective communities
- Specific advice surgeries on housing need and private rented accommodation
- Targeted written information (translated) to Burmese residents
- Seeing the Burmese language on relevant literature to indicate translation is available
Figure 7: Potential Points of Engagement: Burmese Community

- **Schools/Colleges**: Learn English, Relay advice and information
- **Temples**: Foster community relations, Encourage leadership
- **Leisure**: Library activities, Family activities
- **Through Council Literature**: Relay information, Raise awareness of Council services
3.4 The Sri Lankan Community

The largest concentration of Sri Lankan born residents in London is in Harrow. Hounslow has the ninth largest Sri Lankan population in London. Although the 2011 Census data show the largest concentration of Sinhalese ethnic group in London is in Hounslow and Brent, the population in Hounslow is still very small and smaller still compared to the Tamil speaking Sri Lankan community. The main languages spoken by the Sri Lankan population are Tamil and Sinhalese and Hounslow is the third largest Borough for Sinhalese speakers (675) and thirteenth for Tamil speakers (1,776). Within Hounslow the largest concentration of Sri Lankan born residents can be found in Hounslow West, Hounslow Heath and Hounslow Central. Sinhalese residents are concentrated in Hounslow West.

According to the 2011 Census, the Sri Lankan born population included 2,660 people (3.15% of those living in London). However, analysis of the data by declared ethnicity indicates that 3,199 stated their identity as ‘Sri Lankan,’ 103 Sinhalese and 377 Tamil. These figures are made up of both Sri Lankan born and UK-born populations and include only those who decided to write down their identity in a Census questionnaire rather than only ticking a box such as ‘other ethnicity.’ Additional research, both of official datasets and in the field is required to better understand the composition of this group.

Recent research on the socio-demographics of the Sri Lankan community in the UK is extremely limited. Studies describe earlier migrants having a higher socio-economic status and less likely to integrate with both the wider and newer Sri Lankan community in London.

The literature describes Sri Lankans in the UK as having strong education and religious hubs developed to maintain and reinforce the group’s identity and which play an important role in transmitting core values and fostering group identity. Importantly these are sites of worship as well as spaces to find employment—something that the Council could tap into—but by being immersed in this Sri Lankan ethnic economy, it could hinder individuals’ chances of integration into the wider British society. Available literature also suggests generational culture conflicts and tensions between the first generation Sri Lankans and the younger second generation.

Knowledge about the experience of Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK is limited, being described in the literature as a ‘largely hidden group.’ Key themes in the available literature include their collective experience of trauma (the setting up of Tamil schools and Temples in London can be seen as efforts to reproduce the Tamil identity in the Diaspora) and violence amongst Tamil youth gangs (attributed to pre-migration feuds, cultural conflicts, the experiences of social exclusion and economic disadvantage in the host society as well as to the culture of street violence in many of London’s deprived Boroughs). (See ‘Looking at the Literature’ for further information).
### Figure 8: Key findings – Sri Lankans in Hounslow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact with the council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Interpretation requests are not being met (asked to bring family or friends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In some cases, perceived prejudice against Sri Lankan women from Council staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sinhalese Sri Lankans: rare contact with frontline Council services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sinhalese Sri Lankan business owners want to foster relations between Council and local businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for translated literature (Tamil and Sinhalese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tamil refugees tend not to trust authorities because of experience of war – prefer to deal with recommended charities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• No specialist services to help deal with trauma – need better signposting of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor mental health, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (sometimes goes undiagnosed at GP level and is unrecognised within some families)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of access to free counselling services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong need to raise awareness among the community to combat stigma attached to mental illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fatalism(^{11}) – a predominant attitude among Tamil refugees that affects people’s motivation and quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alcoholism – is often a coping strategy for those suffering from trauma and depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High incidence of domestic violence among Tamil Sri Lankans – low take-up of services and lack of one-to-one support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education &amp; employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• High demand for pre-entry level English classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Those who do not have the proficiency to reach Level 1 classes are excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organisations that provide classes describe a significant increase in demand – there may be a huge unmet need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The literature suggests problems of transport and technology as hindering Burmese migrants venturing out of their houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Barriers to accessing public services because of their low levels of education, poor knowledge of English and poor knowledge of their entitlements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People, culture and community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Have a strong sense of cultural identity – stay within known hubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tend to use recommended and known networks for socialising, religious practice, leisure and known hubs and will rarely venture outside these</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) Fatalism refers to an attitude of resignation or a feeling of powerlessness to do anything in the face of a future event or events.
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- Majority of users of existing services are women and the majority of outreach work is done by women – take up of services by men is very low
- Fears for children amid Tamil gang violence, drug taking and high teenage pregnancy across London
- Older Sri Lankan migrants who stay at home and are vulnerable to loneliness and depression

NB - as reported by interviewees and stakeholders
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SRI LANKAN

2011 Population Born in Sri Lanka
Ranked by Most Populous

Hounslow
2,660
Foreign Born 1.84%

London
84,542
Foreign Born 2.66%

Top 4 Boroughs by Sri Lankan Born
1. Harrow
2. Brent
3. Redbridge
4. Ealing
5. Hounslow

Top 4 Boroughs of Tamil Speakers
1. Harrow
2. Redbridge
3. Newham
4. Brent
5. Hounslow

Top 4 Boroughs of Sinhalese Speakers
1. Brent
2. Harrow
3. Hounslow
4. Redbridge
5. Barnet
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Number of Sri Lankan Born in 2001 and 2011, Ranked by Most Populous in Hounslow in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Sri Lankan Born</th>
<th>Percentage Increase</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,446</td>
<td>84.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2,660</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speakers of South Asian Languages
Ranked by Most Common Language, 2011

**Hounslow**

- Sinhala: 675
- Tamil: 1,776

**London**

- Sinhala: 7,945
- Tamil: 70,565

EAL: English as an Additional Language
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Geographic Distribution of Sri Lanka-Born Residents in Hounslow

Geographic Distribution of Sri Lankan Ethnic Group in Hounslow

1. Bedfont
2. Brentford
3. Chiswick Homefields
4. Chiswick Riverside
5. Cranford
6. Feltham North
7. Feltham West
8. Hanworth
9. Hanworth Park
10. Heston Central
11. Heston East
12. Heston West
13. Central
14. Hounslow Heath
15. Hounslow South
16. Hounslow West
17. Isleworth
18. Osterley & S. G.
19. Syon
20. Turnham Green
Looking at the Literature: Sri Lankans

**Data**

The 2011 Census statistics shows that 127,242 Sri Lankans live in England and Wales and in 2001 the figure was 67,832 (Jones, 2013). While there is a geographical spread of Sri Lankans across London, they are located mainly in Newham, Wembley, East Ham, Walthamstow, Tooting, Harrow, Southall, Croydon, and the Borough of Merton. In these areas, culture specific Temples, shops and travel agents are common. Recent research on the socio-demographics of the Sri Lankan community in the UK is extremely limited and therefore it is difficult to identify current settlement figures, obtain information on class, gender, employment, family size and other important variables (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2008). Sinhalese and Tamil are the two predominant demographic divisions in Sri Lankan society. While there is a history of political strife between the two groups, the Sri Lankan government defeated Tamil guerrillas in 2009 to stamp out the Tamil secessionist movement. Sinhalese live in the Central, Western and Southern parts of Sri Lanka and adhere to Therawada Buddhism. Tamils live in the State of Tamil Nadu in India, northern and eastern region of Sri Lanka and as Diasporas all around the world, and two-thirds of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka are living alongside Sinhalese in the south and central part of Sri Lanka (15% of the Sri Lankan population are Tamil). The majority of Tamils are Hindus with a significant number practicing Christianity and Islam, and a small minority practicing Buddhism, Jainism and atheism. The literature describes Sri Lankan Tamils in the UK as a ‘largely hidden group’ which has received little political, public or scholarly attention.

**Key characteristics**

**Migrant profile changes:** Whereas earlier migrants in the 1950s to the 1960s were wealthy, better educated and have adopted British standards and values, recent refugees struggle to find work to meet their transnational obligations and, as Cowley-Sathiakumar (2008) observes, the high socio-economic status of first generation migrants has meant that they are more integrated into the British society and they rarely interact with a larger Sri Lankan community in London.

**Generational culture conflicts and tensions:** Characterise the relationship between the first generation Sri Lankans and the younger second generation. For the first generation, Sri Lanka remains the main frame of reference in terms of their standards and values, whereas, for the second generation, they have to balance traditional cultural norms with their everyday lives in a diverse and multicultural Britain (Cowley-Sathiakumar, 2008).

**Strong hubs:** In order to maintain and reinforce the group's identity, the Sri Lankan community in the UK established every Borough (IOM, 2007) and these sites play an important role in transmitting the group’s core values and fostering group identity as well as being spaces to find work and accommodation. Research among Tamils in Newham found that they spoke frequently of a sense of local belonging and familiarity (Morrell, 2009).

**Sri Lankan ethnic economy:** Importantly these are sites of worship as well as spaces to find employment, but, ‘work within the ethnic economy may create a ‘portfolio of obligations’ which can limit individual’s opportunities to leave and look for employment in the wider labour market.’ Again, by being immersed in the Sri Lankan ethnic economy, it hinders individuals’ chances of integration into the wider British society.

**Collective experience of trauma:** What is distinctive about Sri Lankan Tamils is what Jones (2013) describes as the ‘collective experience of trauma.’ Their life stories are filled with narratives of deaths of loved ones, displacement, violence, and routinized humiliation.

The experiences of Tamils in London are centred on long-distance nationalism towards the achievement of Tamil Eelam (independent state in Sri Lanka). The setting up of Tamil schools and the building of Temples in London can be seen as a social and cultural project of reproducing the Tamil identity in the Diaspora (Morrell, 2009).
Similarly there is little data and literature on the Sinhalese community.

**Migration Patterns**

Three phases of Sri Lankan migration to the UK can be identified (Cowley-Sathiakumar 2008): 1) 1950s wealthy Sri Lankans migrated to the country in the wake of Sri Lanka's independence; 2) 1960s and 1970s, a group of middle class students came to the UK to pursue a university education; 3) migration in the 1980s through to the present time because of the country’s civil war (Jones, 2013).

Sri Lanka’s 19-year civil war prompted massive internal displacement and compelled an estimated 800,000 Tamils to flee the country and seek sanctuary in neighbouring Tamil Nadu and in Europe, North America and Australia producing what has been termed an ‘asylum diaspora’.

In the past decade, Sri Lankans have been among the top ten of nationalities seeking asylum in the UK.

From the 1980s, almost 55,000 Sri Lankan nationals claimed asylum in the UK. However, since the end of the conflict in June 2009, failed Sri Lankan asylum seekers have been one of the targets of the Government’s programmes of voluntary return or deportation. In early 2009, the rate of forced removals to Sri Lanka began to increase with a number of specially chartered flights operated for deportations.

Although there has been a decline in asylum migration, there has been an increase in family-oriented migration, particularly of Tamils from Europe to Britain (David, 2012a).

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Use of Services and Needs of the Sri Lankan Community in Hounslow

Summary of Findings

The Sri Lankan community in Hounslow consulted for this research was made up of Sinhalese and Tamil Sri Lankans. Both groups have a distinct set of needs. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, the Sinhalese Sri Lankans have little contact with the Council, are more ‘established’ financially and socially, some are business owners, all are Buddhist and the majority are British citizens.

In contrast, the Tamil Sri Lankans that we spoke to have a more insecure immigration status, have frequent contact with Council frontline services, are Hindu and Christian and have a lower level of English language ability and are more likely not to trust authority (based on experiences of civil war).

Both groups feel there is a strong need for access to translated literature and promotion of English language classes.

Tamils also have strong health needs that are related to trauma as a result of civil war. There are higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), poor mental health, alcoholism and domestic violence and all require specialist-targeted support.

More broadly, there are also concerns about Sri Lankan elders who may suffer from isolation and loneliness and dementia and Sri Lankan youth who may be exposed to a gang culture and drugs as well as teenage pregnancy (based on experiences of Sri Lankan youth across other parts of London).

Overall, public health engagement with the Sri Lankan community is poor, there is very little targeted work and more specialist services are needed to tackle mental health concerns, preferably from trained community members.

Sri Lankans have a very strong cultural and religious identity and informal social networks resulting in less engagement with mainstream services and organisations. Organisations like the Tamil Community Centre (TCC) working with the community are providing the specialist services that the community needs but are oversubscribed and underfunded with a question mark around sustainability.

Contact with the Council and Public Services

Some respondents describe having asked for interpreters at the job centre, benefits office, GPs, CAB and Town Hall but being told to bring a family member or friend. This can be a deterrent especially if sensitive information is discussed. When talking about their experience of frontline Council services, all the Tamil Sri Lankan women felt Council staff treated them poorly. Examples given include being discriminated by South Asian staff, i.e. being made to feel inferior because they have dark skin, being looked down upon because they are refugees and being denied interpreters.
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

In contrast, Sinhalese Sri Lankans did not have much contact with frontline Council services; the only contact they described was with schools or if they had to complain about airport noise. Some Sinhalese Sri Lankan business owners felt more could be done to foster relations between the Council and local businesses.

Both Sri Lankan groups would like to see the Tamil and Sinhalese languages on more of the literature on the Council website, including letters received, as well as encouraging the take up of services and adult education. They would also like the opportunity to request translators with the confidence that they will be provided. Those who are Tamil refugees describe their experience of war and how as a result they tend not to trust the authorities (the Council), preferring to deal with recommended charities instead.

**Education & Employment**

People who had recently arrived from Sri Lanka describe a high demand for pre-entry level English classes and often find it difficult to get a place. Sri Lankan organisations report that often entry Level 1 classes will receive funding but those who do not have the proficiency to reach that level are excluded; organisations that provide classes describe a significant increase in demand and confirm that there may be a huge unmet need within the Borough.

**Health**

Sri Lankan refugees describe their experience of and the effects of civil war and feel there is a strong need for specialist services to help them through their trauma especially for the following areas:

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** – often goes undiagnosed at GP level, is unrecognised within some families and people do not know who to turn to for help;
- **Poor mental health** – lack of access to free counselling services and a strong need to raise awareness among the community for example to combat the stigma attached to mental illness;
- **Fatalism** – a predominant attitude among Tamil refugees that affects peoples motivation and quality of life, as the following comment exemplifies:
  
  “There is often no ambition or personal hope in these individuals – they can waste their lives in the belief that they’re not going to be around for much longer.” [Tamil organisation]

- **Alcoholism** – is often a coping strategy for those suffering from trauma and depression – there is a lack of specialist advice and treatment as well as raising awareness within the community and families (especially as many will cover up their family member’s addiction due to shame and stigma).

Organisations working with the Tamil Sri Lankan community in Hounslow say there is a higher incidence of domestic violence and a lack of one-to-one support for those who are affected. Take up of services is also limited because many Tamil women may not be able to tell anyone about their abuse, partly because of the stigma attached, partly because it is almost ‘accepted’ by the community and partly because there are few pathways for them to ask for help.
Some Sri Lankan Tamils are fearful of what will happen to their children especially as some young Tamils across London are involved in a gang culture linked to drug dealing and usage. They talk about a need for counselling for teenagers who may suffer from a culture clash and sexual health services to raise awareness of teenage pregnancy. There are also concerns about older Sri Lankan migrants who stay at home and are vulnerable to loneliness and depression. One organisation also mentioned there are concerns about dementia among this group.

Overall, there is little or no public health engagement with the Sri Lankan community across the specialist health issues mentioned above as well as broader health issues such as diabetes and smoking. This is made worse by the unavailability of interpreters and lack of awareness among professionals, including GPs. The result is that people will be unable to access statutory health services. Recently, the TCC, working with Race on the Agenda (ROTA), is providing specialist support through training community members and, although, this is a successful model for reaching the community, it is struggling to meet demand.

People, Culture and Community

Sinhalese Sri Lankans describe the importance of identity and many send their children to religious, cultural and language classes at the Buddhist temple. Similarly, Tamil Sri Lankans stress the importance of their cultural and religious identity, particularly for refugees, and maintaining that identity by educating the next generation. As a result, both Sri Lankan groups tend to use recommended networks for socialising, religious practice, leisure and known hubs including specialist TV channels and press and will rarely venture outside these networks.

Community leaders and respondents report the majority of users of existing services are women and the majority of outreach work is done by women and although there is still a need for women’s groups it is important to note that the take up of services by men is generally very low.

Strategies for Better Engagement

The Sri Lankan Community cannot be treated as a whole and there are distinct issues affecting Sri Lankan Tamils and refugees affected by the civil war. There needs to be tailored and specialist support capturing the various issues and working from within the community—using community members to deliver training. Based on poor experiences of frontline services and a general mistrust of authority, there needs to be more targeted work for the Council to be effective in engaging with this community. Sri Lankan men are less likely to access services so again targeted work using community members would be more effective. Sinhalese Sri Lankans are less likely to engage and so religious hubs are a good point of contact for any outreach work or to relay information to the community. Looking at existing community spaces and helping sustain those spaces will not only help engagement but will also help build trust towards the Council.
Specific Ideas for Engagement

- Identifying funding sources to sustain TCC premises as a community hub – act as a central point of contact for the Council.
- Targeting Sri Lankan community leaders to develop their capacity and leadership skills to implement an effective engagement strategy with their respective communities.
- Outreach and liaison work with religious hubs.
- Networking with Sinhalese businesses.
- Training community members to deliver specialist services – domestic violence and mental health support.
- Promote English language classes at the Benefits office and Jobs Centres.
- Teenage outreach work at schools/colleges

Figure 9: Potential Points of Engagement: Sri Lankan Community
3.5 The Bulgarian and Romanian Communities

Hounslow has one of the smallest Romanian populations in London: 829 compared to just under 45,000 in London. Similarly, the Bulgarian population is small, 713 compared to 27,207 across London. The largest Bulgarian-born population in London is in Haringey (2,789) and the largest Romanian-born population is in Brent (6,182). Although, in Hounslow both populations have seen a large growth rate, actual population size remains small. In Hounslow the largest concentration of Bulgarian-born residents can be found in Brentford, the largest concentration of Romanians is in Hounslow Heath, Hounslow Central and Hounslow West.

The continued Eastern expansion of the European Union has seen a ten-fold rise in Bulgarian (1108%) and Romanian (949%) communities in Hounslow since the 2001 Census. It is, however, not clear how much growth there will be as a result of the removal of the final restrictions to immigration from Bulgaria and Romania in January 2014 and the absolute size of these communities is not currently as large in Hounslow as it is in other London Boroughs. The data suggest a young migrant profile: 44% of Bulgarians applying for a national insurance number in 2009 were under the age of 24 and 81% were under 34 years.

Despite the availability of data there is very little literature and research about Bulgarian and Romanian populations in specific places. Much of the literature on Bulgarian and Romanian communities has focused on issues of future immigration following the removal of restrictions to work in the UK on 1 January 2014, the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of these communities compared to other migrants in general, and the impact of EU accession migrants on public services.

Some studies identify housing in the private rented sector as a key problem faced by Bulgarian and Romanian migrants including overcrowded housing with rapid tenant turnover. Studies also show that Romanian and Bulgarian citizens currently in the UK are younger and statistically less likely to either have children of school age or to need intensive support from health or social care services. A number of studies have found that EU migrants have relatively little impact on demand for health services in different parts of the UK, and do not pose a disproportionate burden on them. Eastern European migrants are less likely to be registered with a GP than other more long-standing migrant groups. Other studies have shown that newer migrants often (although not always) prefer to return to their own country if they need medical treatment; often because migrants do not always know what health services they are entitled to in the UK. Some migrant workers requiring primary health care services go directly to accident and emergency departments in hospitals rather than seeking treatment from a GP.

The literature covering migrants from the Eastern European countries which joined the EU in 2004 (the so called ‘EU10’) find them to be less likely to claim benefits than other migrant groups and of those who claim benefits, the majority claim child benefits. Studies have consistently found that the greatest impact on services has been in the demand for translation and interpretation services. There is also evidence from local studies that lack of English language skills among migrants reduces the use of services and increases reliance on friends and family. More generally, there is evidence of ‘self-sufficiency’ among EU10 migrants. However, while this may reduce pressure on services, it may also result in exploitation of migrants where they are not aware of their rights and of available support.

Overall, workers are concentrated in four sectors: hospitality, cleaning services, construction and trade. As with other migrants from accession countries, there is a process of down-skilling. The European
Commission estimates that, on average, about 30% of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in the EU perform jobs well below their education or skill level. People in self-employment are particularly open to exploitation as their employers can avoid paying minimum wage and other statutory entitlements such as holiday pay and adequate rest breaks.

Romania is the most common country of origin among people trafficked to the UK. People are known to be trafficked for a range of exploitative work. Of the total number of cases of sexual exploitation in the UK, a fifth have involved Romanian people, and recent research by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime suggests this is an even larger issue than currently recorded. It identified growing numbers of Romanian women working in street prostitution. Visible examples of destitution such as rough sleeping or squatting have been identified among A2 migrants\textsuperscript{13}, and reports of migrants living in caves, in abandoned buildings and in parks in Westminster have received widespread coverage in the run up to the removal of transitional controls.

Finally there is a common misconception among service providers and the public between Romanian migrants and ‘Roma’ or ‘Romani’ and these groups are often thought of as being the same. This is incorrect and Romanians would find it insulting to be classed as Roma because of deep ethnic differences in the region. Roma are nomadic people (classed as gypsies/travelers). Romanian is an ethnic group who lives inherently within the borders of Romania and comprise the nation of Romania whereas the gypsies do not form a nation. There are numerous studies on the problems of access to public services for Roma people but very few for Romanians.

\textsuperscript{13} A2 migrants refer to the two countries (Bulgaria and Romania) that joined the EU in January 2007.
Figure 10: Key findings – Bulgarians and Romanians in Hounslow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact with the council</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Education &amp; employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Little or no awareness of Council services and external advice giving organisations  
- Little or no contact with the Council  
- Romanians: no experience of the benefits system  
- No requests for translation made – lack of knowledge of what translated languages are available  
- Bulgarians: lack of translated literature at all points of contact with the Council  
- No awareness of where to seek advice or legal help – rely on word of mouth  
- Lack of access to mainstream support services means people become dependent on specialist organisations for every need – none exist in Hounslow  
- Perception by both communities of being on the receiving end of racism and prejudice – fears the Council may also have a negative view of them and withhold services  
- High level of mistrust towards agencies in general | - Rise in the number of older Eastern Europeans coming to the UK – outreach work needed for the infirm, isolated or very vulnerable  
- Both communities are vulnerable to mental health problems  
- Organisations are oversubscribed for their work in mental health  
- High levels of substance misuse and alcoholism – especially among the newly arrived | - Distinct lack of English language skills for new arrivals  
- Poor awareness of English language courses available to them  
- Bulgarians: qualified people struggling to find relevant work  
- Qualifications not recognised in the UK  
- Approach known agencies (used by friends and family) and placed in low skilled and low pay jobs  
- Lack of IT skills to help with online job applications  
- Hard to find stable employment, forced to take quick employment to meet basic need – especially in high staff turnover industries like cleaning and hospitality  
- Feel insecure about jobs and sceptical about British employers  
- Romanians: unlawful deductions being made from their pay, not being paid enough and feeling as if they were ‘dispensable’ i.e. did not have to serve a notice period or receive severance pay |
## Housing
- Poor treatment from private landlords – passports often taken
- Lack of awareness of how to complain or seek help for issues with landlords

## People, culture and community
- Bulgarian and Romanian communities have similar needs but they are not a homogenous group
- Common mistakes made by Councils across London include mixing both groups together and incorrectly presuming all Romanians are Roma

*NB - as reported by interviewees and stakeholders*
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

2011 Population Born in Bulgaria
Ranked by Most Populous

Top 4 Boroughs by Bulgarian Born

1. Haringey – 2,789
2. Waltham Forest – 2,375
3. Newham – 2,221
4. Enfield – 1,980

Top 4 Boroughs of Bulgarian Speakers

1. Haringey – 2,393
2. Waltham Forest – 2,155
3. Newham – 2,022
4. Enfield – 1,721

15. Hounslow – 713
13. Hounslow – 640
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Number of Bulgarian Born in 2001 and 2011, Ranked by Most Populous in Hounslow in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>+1,108.50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>713</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speakers of Bulgarian
Ranked by Most Common Language, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hounslow</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>23,032</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of English as Additional Language

Geographic Distribution of Bulgarian-Born Residents in London

Bulgarian-Born Residents
- 17 to 700-Low
- 700 to 1,400
- 1,400 to 2,100
- 2,100 to 2,792-High
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

Geographic Distribution of Other Eastern European (Including Bulgarian) Ethnic Group in Hounslow

Other Eastern European (Bulgarian) Ethnic Group
- 42 to 73-Low
- 73 to 104
- 104 to 135
- 135 to 166-High

1. Bedfont
2. Brentford
3. Chiswick Homefields
4. Chiswick Riverside
5. Cranford
6. Feltham North
7. Feltham West
8. Hanworth
9. Hanworth Park
10. Heston Central
11. Heston East
12. Heston West
13. Hounslow Central
14. Hounslow Heath
15. Hounslow South
16. Hounslow West
17. Isleworth
18. Osterley & S. G.
19. Syon
20. Turnham Green
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

**ROMANIAN**

**2011 Population Born in Romania**
**Ranked by Most Populous**

- **Hounslow**
  - Foreign Born: 829
  - Foreign Born: 0.57%
- **London**
  - Foreign Born: 44,848
  - Foreign Born: 1.41%

---

### Top 4 Boroughs by Romanian-Born

1. **Brent**
   - 6,182
2. **Newham**
   - 4,816
3. **Harrow**
   - 4,784
4. **Barnet**
   - 4,475
14. **Hounslow**
   - 829

---

### Top 4 Boroughs of Romanian Speakers

1. **Brent**
   - 5,722
2. **Newham**
   - 4,555
3. **Harrow**
   - 4,492
4. **Waltham Forest**
   - 4,031
13. **Hounslow**
   - 732
Looking at the Literature: Bulgarians and Romanians

Data

Much of the literature has focused on issues of future immigration after the end of the transition on 1 January 2014, the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of these communities compared to other A8 xxxix migrants in general (A8 refers to 8 of the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004), and the impact of EU accession migrants on public services, such as housing, education, health and welfare.

The media debates about Eastern European migrants have focused particularly on the integration of new Roma migrants from Romania and Bulgaria and are often mistakenly combined with ‘Romanians.’ Roma migrants have come to the UK from the A8 and other European countries in recent years, often moving to escape prejudice and experiences of discrimination in other countries. As a group, they are frequently stereotyped as being work shy and prone to criminality, even though many migrate to other countries to settle and to work.

The ONS Labour Force Survey estimate of Bulgarian and Romanian nationals living in the UK is: Bulgaria 15,000 (2007), 55,000 (2013) and Romania 14,000 (2007), 122,000 (2013). xl

In the UK, existing migrants from both countries are concentrated in London (72,055) and the South East (14,850) in 2011: 56% of people born in Romania and 60% of people born in Bulgaria live in the Capital. The majority of migrants from Romania are of working age: 82% Key characteristics

Housing:

The impacts of migration on housing will depend on housing supply as well as the buoyancy of the local housing market. The demands on housing are highly dependent on the rate of permanent settlement of A2 migrants and particularly family formation. xlv Furthermore the new Localism Act requires local authorities to allocate housing to those with a strong local connection, thus preventing newcomers from accessing social housing. Temporary migrants use housing less intensively and add little to overall housing demand. However, this can lead to high concentrations of overcrowded housing with rapid tenant turnover. A report by Glennie and Pennington (2013) has identified housing in the private rented sector as a key problem faced by A2 migrants.

Education:

Romanian and Bulgarian citizens currently in the UK are younger and statistically less likely to either have children of school age or to need intensive support from health or social care services (Poppleton et al., 2013). The high (although self-reported) English language abilities of Romanian citizens for whom Romanian is a first language recorded in the 2011 Census suggests that this might not be a major issue for A2 groups. Data from the European Labour Force Survey suggests that 60% of Bulgarian and Romanian workers coming to the UK have an ‘intermediate’ level qualification and an additional 18% have a ‘high’ level educational qualification (Rolfe et al., 2013). In addition, many Romanian migrants self-reported a high level of English competency. Of respondents who gave ‘Romanian’ as their main language in the 2011 Census, 82% stated that they ‘can speak English very well or well.’

Health:

A number of studies have found that EU migrants have relatively little impact on demand for health services in different parts of the UK, and do not pose a disproportionate burden on them. One study found that A2 and A8 migrants are less likely to be registered with a GP than other more long-standing migrant groups (Collis et al., 2010). Other studies have shown that newer migrants often (although not always) prefer to return to their own country if they need medical treatment.
are aged between 20 and 65, and 69% between 20 and 39 years. A slightly higher proportion of migrants from Romania are male (52%) than are female (48%).

The 2011 Census records that Romanians are concentrated in particular Boroughs such as Brent (6,182), Newham (4,816), Harrow (4,784), Barnet (4,475) and Waltham Forest (4,291).

The continued Eastern expansion of the European Union has seen a ten-fold rise in Bulgarian (1108%) and Romanian (949%) communities in Hounslow since the 2001 Census. It is however not clear how much growth there will be as a result of the removal of the final restrictions to immigration from Bulgaria and Romania in January 2014 and the absolute size of these communities is not currently as large in Hounslow as it is in other London Boroughs.

Despite the availability of data there is very little literature and research about Bulgarian and Romanian populations in specific places.

**Migration Patterns**

On 1 January 2014 the 7-year period of transitional arrangements since 2007 for Bulgarians and Romanians (classed as A2 nationalities) came to an end. During the transitional period, this group had an initial right to reside for 3 months in any EU member state regardless of the purpose of the visit, as long as they did not become an ‘unreasonable burden’ on the social assistance system.

Prior to the end of the transitionary period there were already a number of Bulgarians and Romanians who had

One problem is that migrants do not always know what health services they are entitled to in the UK. Some migrant workers requiring primary health care services go directly to accident and emergency departments in hospitals rather than seeking treatment from a GP, which would be more appropriate and cost-effective (Rolfe et al., 2013).

**Welfare – language services:**

There is a limited evidence base on the impact of migrants on the welfare system (Portes, 2013). Studies covering EU10 migrants find them to be less likely to claim benefits than other migrant groups, and of those who claim benefits, the majority claim child benefits. Studies have consistently found that the greatest impact on services has been in the demand for translation and interpretation services. This area of service provision has not been well funded and migration from A8 countries has put additional pressure on budgets and existing services. However, there is also evidence from local studies that lack of English language skills among migrants reduces services use and increases reliance on friends and family (Rolfe and Metcalf, 2009). More generally, there is evidence of ‘self-sufficiency’ among A8 migrants. However, while this may reduce pressure on services, it may also result in exploitation of migrants where they are not aware of their rights and of available support (Sumption and Somerville, 2010).

**Employment:**

The number of Bulgarian and Romanian migrants employed in skilled occupations is higher than that of A8 migrants: 26% of A2 migrants are in skilled occupations, compared to only 15% of A8 migrants. These include more than 4,000 doctors and nurses from Romania alone. Overall, workers are concentrated in four sectors: hospitality, cleaning services, construction and trade (Rolfe et al., 2013). Construction is particularly popular: 8% of construction workers on the Olympic Park were Romanian.

A2 migrants also show higher rates of self-employment than other migrants from Eastern Europe, which is probably the result of current restrictions on their employment.

As with other migrants from accession countries, there is a process of down-skilling. The European Commission estimates that, on average, about 30% of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in the EU perform jobs well below their education or skill level.
obtained permission to work and the right to reside in the UK.\textsuperscript{xl} Although restrictions applied to their access to the labour market, those who were self-employed or self-sufficient had the right to reside during the transitional period. Workers, on the other hand, either had to fit into existing schemes such as the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme scheme for the highly skilled, obtain a work permit for the skilled, seasonal workers schemes or apply for a worker authorisation document before commencing work. After working legally in the UK for 12 months, they became exempt from the worker authorisation document and acquired the same rights and entitlements as other EU nationals. Family members of other EEA (European Economic Area) nationals were also exempt from the worker registration document.\textsuperscript{xlii}

The difference in the statistics reflects the different measurements. Long-term migration does not include seasonal migration or the children born to A2 migrants since arriving in the UK. Estimates of future flows vary wildly from the scare-mongering Migration Watch (50,000) per annum to the 20,000 put forward by Migration Matters, an all-party parliamentary committee whose estimate is close to current immigration levels. Unlike A8 migrants in 2004, A2 migrants can select any EU country and large numbers have already settled in Germany, Italy and Spain.\textsuperscript{xliii}

Data suggest a young migrant profile: 44% of Bulgarians applying for a national insurance number in 2009 were under the age of 24 and 81% were under 34 years (Rolfe et al., 2013).

**Self-employment and Exploitation:**

People in self-employment are particularly open to exploitation as their employers can avoid paying minimum wage and other statutory entitlements such as holiday pay and adequate rest breaks. As from 1 January 2014, it will be easier for migrants to leave exploitative work and exercise their employment rights in other jobs. Access to particular benefits will ensure that those who fall on hard times can be given short-term support to prevent them becoming trapped in situations of worklessness and homelessness. However workplace protection has been reduced. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) power of enforcement was weakened in 2011 and not extended to care and construction (Glennie and Pennington, 2013: 33-4).

**Trafficking and Exploitation:**

Romania is the most common country of origin among people trafficked to the UK. Of the 2,255 people referred to the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) in 2012, 12% were Romanian. This represents a 26% increase on figures in 2011 (when Romania was also the top country). Trafficking affects both adults and children and men and women.\textsuperscript{xliv} People are known to be trafficked for a range of exploitative work. Of the total number of cases of sexual exploitation in the UK, a fifth have involved Romanian people, and recent research by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime suggests that this is an even larger issue than currently recorded. It identified growing numbers of Romanian women working in street prostitution.

**Destitution and Exploitation:**

Some migrants who find themselves destitute in the UK as the result of exploitation. Visible examples of destitution such as rough sleeping or squatting have been identified among A2 migrants, and reports of migrants living in caves, in abandoned buildings and in parks in Westminster have received widespread coverage in the run up to the removal of transitional controls (see Littlejohn, 2013).
Use of Services and Needs of the Bulgarian and Romanian Communities in Hounslow

Summary of Findings

Organisations like the East European Advice Centre and Hounslow Race Equality Council working with both Romanians and Bulgarians and the wider Eastern European communities say that many of their needs and use of services are very similar.

Based on the interviews conducted in this study, awareness of Council services is almost non-existent. The Romanian and Bulgarian participants in this research highlight the importance of learning about basic Council processes such as how to make appointments which they do not currently know how to do. Basic advice needs are not being met and there is a need for critical support, advice and advocacy as well as general information.

Members of Romanian and Bulgarian communities also feel that the Council is not successfully raising general awareness of aspects of successful life and settlement in the Borough as well as options to return to their home countries to avert the risk of homelessness, poverty and destitution.

Both communities report that they have faced prejudice in the Borough, which exacerbates feelings of mistrust towards authority, and these communities are more likely to stick to known networks and organisations or persevere alone, rather than approach mainstream services.

There is a distinct lack of English language skill particularly for new arrivals, many of whom are also struggling to get their qualifications recognised. As a result many highly qualified Romanians and Bulgarians are forced to take employment through existing contacts in cleaning and hospitality and may be in danger of exploitation from unscrupulous employers who know they are desperate for money to survive. Organisations working with Bulgarian and Romanian migrants stress that this state of desperation can lead to poor mental health and state their mental health services are oversubscribed. For both communities there were numerous complaints about poor treatment from private landlords and again many felt they were exploited because of their migrant status and struggle to meet basic needs.

These factors combined with poor language skills suggest these communities are among the most vulnerable in Hounslow.

Contact with the Council and Public Services

For Bulgarians and Romanians there is little or no awareness of Council services and external advice giving organisations in Hounslow and, therefore, little or no contact with the Council. Several Romanian respondents said that they had no experience of the benefits system, and had not checked to see if they were eligible for welfare. No one had made any requests for translation services, although, some recall seeing Council literature with ‘foreign languages’ on the back of the leaflet and wondered if the Romanian language was listed. Some of the Bulgarians who participated in this study describe a lack of translated literature at all points of contact with the Council, “not even one document translated into
No one knew where to go for advice or legal help and all relied on word of mouth for information. Organisations working with the Romanian community agree, as they maintain:

“They just don’t know how the system works. They don’t know where to go for things…[for example] why some things are being done by Job Centres and it just doesn’t make any sense for people. So they are going to claim housing benefits from the Job Centres and they are being dragged out by the security personnel because they think they are being discriminated.” [EEAC]

Organisations also say that the lack of access to mainstream support services for both communities means people become dependent on them for every need; organisations do not want to breed dependency but this is difficult to change when there are no appropriate Council services in place.

All of the Romanian and Bulgarian participants in this study describe being on the receiving end of racism and prejudice. One Romanian woman recalls poor treatment at the registry office, another at the Library—both experienced obtuse behaviour and unexplainable delays despite having the correct paperwork. Sometimes just hearing an accent provoked poor treatment. Most of the Romanians said they had also experienced prejudice on Hounslow buses from both drivers and passengers, as they comment:

“You can just tell when someone is being, you know, like that with you...sometimes it is as soon as they hear my accent.”

The Bulgarians sense a negative political rhetoric in the media and feel embarrassed by this but they also worry because of fears that the Council may also have a negative view of them, affecting service provision for the community. This view is understandable when you consider there is a culture of mistrust of authorities in both countries. Organisations state that with all Central European communities there is a very high level of mistrust towards agencies in general, as the following comments indicate:

“People, first, do not like anything that looks like institution because they don’t trust them. They believe they will be hurt or abused somehow. And the second thing is they don’t distinguish between different types of generally speaking institutions. So they do not understand that this is a charity. It’s a part of the Council for your average person who doesn’t have any experience in the Third Sector...” [East European Advice Centre]

“Mistrust towards public services makes people get into trouble. So they will not report things to the police. They will not report things to the Council. They will not go to the Council to deal with their issues. Everything will be delayed to the point where it’s too late for anything. Social Services would get involved, for example.” [East European Advice Centre]

**Education & Employment**

There is a distinct lack of English language skill particularly for new arrivals. One Bulgarian participant who has been here for 9 months is a highly qualified economist in Bulgaria but currently works for a cleaning community doing contract/agency work. He does not speak English well but does not feel
embarrassed by his job as he knows he needs to support his family. He is starting an English language course at a local college and suggests more people in his situation need to be aware of the English language courses available to them.

Even though many Bulgarians have educational qualifications they are still struggling to find work that is relevant to their profession in Bulgaria or that meet their career aspirations because their qualifications are not recognised. Instead they approach known agencies (used by friends and family) that place them in low skilled and low pay jobs, often cleaning contracts. For example, one Bulgarian lady states she has a Master’s degree but does not want to clean. The agency she is subscribed to send her on several courses because her “Master’s is not enough over here.” Another young Bulgarian (who had been in the country for 6 days) said he has already had negative experiences, for example, he has international personal trainer qualifications but then adds:

“They don’t recognise qualifications here. They are international…they won’t take them over here, anything here that is not English is not acceptable.”

Some feel that they do not have the IT skills to be able to fill out long job applications. One Bulgarian lady thought her ability to speak five languages (Russian, Dutch, French, Spanish and Bulgarian) would help her employment prospects in the UK but it has not. A Romanian participant states that her Spanish qualifications are also not recognised in the UK.

One of the key issues for Romanian residents is finding stable employment. In order to meet basic needs people have to find employment quickly so they tend to use known networks; again, many of these contacts are cleaners and despite being qualified, they will take the job, “a friend will get me a job quicker and easier.” One Romanian participant describes finding work quickly as a temporary waiter.

Some Romanian participants in this study complain of unlawful deductions being made from their pay, not being paid enough and feeling as if they were ‘disposable’ i.e. they did not have to serve a notice period or receive severance pay. As a result, many Romanians feel insecure about jobs and sceptical about British employers.

**Health**

Organisations working with Bulgarian and Romanian communities feel that there is a rise in the number of older Eastern Europeans coming to the UK and vital outreach work is needed for those who are infirm, isolated or very vulnerable, and one commented:

“To our surprise, we discovered a few years ago that there is a growing population of newly arrived older immigrants who believe that, led by some sort of myths and misinformation probably, that they would get some job and just get some money to patch shortfall to their pensions and they kind of stay here in a very vulnerable position because very often they don’t have anywhere to go back. Family wouldn’t want them back... And it’s really distressing the situation how they live.” [East European Advice Centre]

There is also a perception that both communities are vulnerable to mental health problems and organisations describe working well beyond their capacity. Similarly they see high levels of substance
misuse and alcoholism among these communities, especially among the newly arrived, as the following comment indicates:

“People started to come over and they just don’t cope with problems and they start to drink; it’s very simple. But then throughout the years, the problem often settles or minimises or people are returning home. I would expect that this is going to be a big thing for the next two to four years among Romanian and Bulgarian communities.” [East European Advice Centre]

Housing

Both Bulgarian and Romanian participants in this study complain about poor treatment from private landlords, from belongings going missing, passports being kept to poor facilities and maintenance. One Bulgarian participant was visibly distressed because his landlady had taken his passport and the police had said they could not help; he had no idea where to turn. Romanians describe feeling vulnerable and exploited but would not think to seek advice or help with their situation. Similarly, they are not aware of what support or advice structures are in place for them to access.

People and Community

Although Bulgarian and Romanian communities have similar needs they are not a homogenous group and common mistakes made by Councils across London include mixing both groups together and incorrectly presuming Roma are Romanian. It is important to clarify that not all Romanians are Roma (and probably the vast majority of those in London are not Roma) even though they may have migrated from Romania, as the following comments illustrate:

“Bulgarians don’t want to be mixed with Romanians” [East European Advice Centre]

“Romanians refuse to be in any way taken for Roma people” [East European Advice Centre]

Strategies for Better Engagement

Most community organisations are formed only after basic needs such as employment and housing have been met. The Bulgarian and Romanian communities are at this stage and the nature of their work is contract based; they often move around or go back to their home country and this may explain why community organisations have not been established. A way to combat this is to tap into older more established organisations to help these newer communities. To combat an overall lack of awareness of UK/Council processes, there is a strong need for information delivered in the right way. For example, organisations feel “Eastern Europeans don’t tend to congregate anywhere,” hence, they would benefit from tailored online services and literature. Also, more visibility of Bulgarian and Romanian languages would inspire confidence.
Specific Ideas for Engagement

- Romanian and Bulgarian literature e.g. public agencies to explain what they do
- Targeted written information (translated) that publicise services
- Seeing the Bulgarian and Romanian languages on relevant literature and the website
- Specific advice surgeries on employment rights
- Targeted English language classes
- Targeting Romanian and Bulgarian community leaders to develop their capacity and leadership skills to implement an effective engagement strategy with their respective communities

Figure 11: Potential Points of Engagement: Bulgarian and Romanian Communities
Section 4

Advice services, Networks and Organisations
4. Advice Services, Organisations and Networks in Hounslow

This chapter explores the views of advice and welfare organisations in the Borough in relation to better understanding of the needs of the migrant community and the relationship between the voluntary community and social enterprise sector and the Council. It also looks at the limitations in advice provision across the Borough.

4.1 Advice needs of migrant communities in Hounslow

4.1.1 The CAB: The Citizens Advice Bureau is the main advice service in the Borough with offices in Chiswick, Feltham and Hounslow Central.

- **Profile of clients**
  Staff at the CAB describe the changing profile of clients across the years as generally reflective of the profile of residents in an area and migration into the Borough from newer communities. Although the majority user group is described as ‘White British,’ the CAB staff also see a large number of ‘Asian,’ ‘Afro-Caribbean’ and ‘Middle Eastern’ clients. Over the last few years, the number of Polish clients has risen dramatically, Nepalese clients have increased and there has been a surge in Portuguese clients and more recently Sri Lankan, Romanian and Bulgarian clients. Staff at the CAB report that they have not seen many Algerian or Burmese clients (but this could also be because they have not been categorised as such e.g. Afghans often categorised as Middle Eastern).

- **Waves of need**
  Staff at the CAB describe that certain communities display different needs at different points in their settlement in Hounslow. They suggest that the older communities who migrated to Hounslow earlier such as the Afghan community may have fewer advice needs than the newer communities, as they comment:

  “Then Afghans, I would say were the tail end of that where that community has picked up a lot of knowledge of English. They don’t need a special provision...”

Changing advice priorities may contribute to a lack of specialist support services for some communities, and a community that is still in need may unwittingly become victim to a decline in specialist or targeted services. For example, Afghan and Sri Lankan people complain of a lack of English language provision.

The CAB Annual Report 2012-13 highlights the top three areas of advice for its clients and these are: Benefits & Tax Credits (34%), Debt (26%) and Housing (11%). For BMER clients, in particular, 43% of the CAB work has been in the area of welfare benefits with key issues described as:

- Employment support and allowance
- Debt advice
- Problems with contacting agencies e.g. job centre, tax credits office
- Council tax reduction scheme
Emerging Communities in Hounslow and West London – Mapping and Needs Assessment

- Shortfalls in housing benefit
- Rent arrears

CAB staff also describe a continuing rise in the number of applications to discretionary housing payments and discretionary crisis payments as well as the number of referrals made to food banks. Other key advice needs for the migrant communities in Hounslow including the six communities are:

4.1.2 Housing advice needs: An emerging trend following the Localism Act and Welfare Reforms have combined to make housing “very difficult for people” resulting in increased homelessness and evictions (according to CAB staff). In particular:

- **Housing applications** – people arriving in the Borough are not allowed to make their housing applications and often face having to go back-and-forth from housing services to advice services, as indicated by CAB staff:

  “We tell them that we think you’ll fit the criteria, go and make the application; they come back and say ‘oh, they said this and fobbed us off with whatever.”

This indicates problems around what information is being given, knowledge about the housing application process and a frustration with the application process. Furthermore, CAB staff describe that when people’s applications are successful and they get into some form of housing, they are faced with even more worrying issues around affordability of that housing combined with a lack of knowledge of entitlements and higher levels of unemployment and poor English language ability.

- **Raising deposits for private renting** – Advice service staff in Hounslow report that the Council focus is on private renting, especially with the growth of new accommodation that has emerged in Feltham and across Hounslow. Staff report there are not enough deposit schemes to support the demand for meeting deposits on private rental accommodation. They also report that the vast majority of people are told to look for a place for private rental and then claim housing benefit however in practice they are not provided with landlord details and so often do not know where to look. There are a number of problems associated with this process: if they cannot raise a deposit they are unable to find housing; if they are in receipt of benefits private landlords will often not accept them as tenants; those landlords that do accept tenants in receipt of benefits are in a position of power over their tenants (there are many reports of exploitation and poor upkeep of properties); and finally there is no approved Council list of private landlords so people are again more vulnerable to exploitation. The result is that people may become stuck in a vicious cycle.

- **Bedroom tax & welfare benefits** – advice services and welfare organisations in the Borough report that the combination of the effects of cuts and extra tax combine and act as an additional barrier to migrant communities in Hounslow, as indicated below:

  “So at the moment, I can see that probably the minorities are affected quite drastically...it’s really a chain of events. People get in rent arrears because of the bedroom tax. They get in debt. They then get, of course, court action, they can’t afford the Council Tax, the bailiffs arrive. They get into all sorts of...”
People trouble because of this and then eventually they are homeless. They make a homeless application. Poor gate keeping, so they get fobbed-off...So they get sent away possibly not even offered emergency accommodation...there are stringent rules about the right to reside and other immigration restrictions as well. So it all combines to create an environment where it’s almost impossible to survive.”

4.1.3 Discretionary Local Crisis Payment (Crisis loans): CAB staff describe how previously residents could apply for a crisis loan from the Social Fund administered by the Department of Work and Pensions which in many cases would help pay for a deposit to secure private rental accommodation.

The abolition of the Social Fund and changes to the crisis loan payments scheme means the payments are now administered by the Council and vouchers have replaced cash payments.

This scheme is in place to:
- Help households to establish themselves in the community following a stay in institutional or residential care
- Help households remain in the community instead of entering institutional or residential care
- Ease exceptional pressures and stress on households
- Avoid serious risk to health and safety where it may be prevented

Examples of where the scheme may assist are:
- Household facing exceptional stress i.e. family/marital breakdown or because one of them has a long-term illness
- Household facing exceptional pressure i.e. high washing costs due to the needs of a child with a disability, clothing needs due to disability or illness or repair/replacement of items damaged by a family member with challenging behaviour
- Households with unexpected expenses i.e. visiting someone who is critically ill, in hospital, to attend a relative’s funeral, or to alleviate another domestic crisis.

Staff at the CAB and welfare organisations report that the criteria are quite stringent and do not fully acknowledge the needs of migrant communities in the Borough and this incurs various difficulties:
- Often the voucher amount awarded is not enough to cover basic need
- Vouchers awarded that have to be redeemed at specific places may be exclusionary as many people may not be able to travel to a place where the vouchers can be spent
- Awards are not monitored and the support provided is not monitored
- Similarly the Council’s decision-making process is not monitored e.g. amount of voucher, length of support nor is it known what data are collected

4.1.4 Interactions between Immigration status and benefits: Staff at the CAB and welfare organisations describe how migrants who come into the Borough with ‘indefinite leave to remain’ find it difficult to access the advice and welfare systems i.e. welfare benefits and housing, and are extremely

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14 For further information about the crisis loan payments scheme: www.hounslow.gov.uk/index/advice_and_benefits/benefits/housing_benefit/discretionary_housing_payments/dlcp.htm
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poorly informed about various procedures (particularly the time frame involved in both qualifying for and receiving support), and lack knowledge about access to services as well as who they can turn to for help.

Although many Afghans and Sri Lankans have been in Hounslow for some time, when their relatives join them and have no recourse to public funds, they have to support them and end up in a worse position. Even when communities have permanent residency rights, there is a distinct lack of knowledge about how to access council services such as housing, employment advice and children’s services.

4.1.5 Language: Many members of the six communities have English language limitations and, as a result, they are unable to access information and acquire an adequate understanding of their rights. Local community organisations are calling for more funding to support English language programmes.

4.1.6 Mental health: Organisations have noted a higher number of mental health issues among migrant communities, in particular, Sri Lankans and Eastern Europeans.

Figure 12: Summary of key advice needs of the six migrant communities in Hounslow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare benefits</th>
<th>Employment support and allowance</th>
<th>Debt advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contacting agencies e.g. job centre, tax credits office</td>
<td>Council tax reduction scheme</td>
<td>Shortfalls in housing benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent arrears</td>
<td>Raising deposits for private renting</td>
<td>Bedroom tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary Local Crisis Payment (Crisis loans)</td>
<td>Interactions between immigration status and benefits</td>
<td>Language support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>The ageing migrant community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Limitations in Advice Provision

4.2.1 CAB Limitations

The CAB is well aware that the need for advice in Hounslow is much larger than the provision of advice within Hounslow. Although the CAB is seen as a one-stop-shop, in practice they also have to deal with the fallout and follow up of cases. The demands for free high quality service from a high volume of clients are immense. The CAB is very open about their limitations:

- **Being a responsive service and being dependent on resources** – if there is a growing language need they have to find the money to provide interpreters or recruit volunteers with a particular skill set
- **Constraints of funding requirements** mean they are bound to what the funders require, e.g. if that includes a certain number of new clients per year then they have to deliver, similarly, they can only deliver advice in a certain way and then rely on referrals and other organisations.
- **Oversubscribed** – being the main advice provider with 26,874 enquiries in 2012/2013 the service is oversubscribed and relies heavily on its volunteers. Their capacity to undertake in depth casework is also oversubscribed (not enough staff to be able to meet the demand for one-to-one casework).
- **Not enough specialists** to deal with the follow up and case work of particular clients, as the following comments illustrate:

  “We have to leave by 7am, I will be there at 7:30 (they open at 10), to queue, that is just to get a letter or a number…” [Afghan Resident]

  “You have to go there 6 in the morning, queue up, all they put inside is 2-3 people, the rest has to go back the other day.” [Algerian resident]

4.2.2 Advice commissioning

Organisations in Hounslow feel that the CAB has the monopoly on advice commissioning and feel there needs to be a new, ‘fairer’ strategy in terms of the way that advice is commissioned. The CAB feels that although they may win the commissions they still network with other organisations. Furthermore, they agree that they are fortunate to be part of a national framework and the support that comes with it, especially when applying for the complex tenders associated with the Council. The latter is illustrated by the following comment:

“Honestly, I can say half of the stuff, I didn’t understand. The layout, the material, what’s in the tenders. So we do need somebody to help. A lot of the communities just do not have that knowledge and are never going to acquire that. So they can’t engage. They can’t go through that process even if they want to.” [Welfare organisation]

The commissioning process has been heavily criticised by organisations as overly complex, cumbersome and bureaucratic and, as a result, a large majority of organisations (particularly smaller organisations) are unable to put forward a bid in the way required by the Council and lose the opportunity for funding. Even though the process is open, there are calls for a review of that process or more support for organisations to be able to take part in bidding for advice commissions. Existing
forums that could help facilitate this include: HCN, Hounslow Together LSP – Local Strategic Partnership and Councillors, as the following comments exemplify:

“So it’s understanding what we’re telling them, then developing the contracts around it is a better way of doing it. That’s what to me commissioning means. You know the need and you target and then you provide.” [HCN]

“Sometimes there’s a mixed message between the Council saying ‘we welcome expressions of interest from the voluntary sector’ but the conditions that are placed on making applications basically make it impossible. But there is something around appropriateness and plain English and these practical barriers that can really get in the way of a decent conversation with community groups.” [HCN]

“Putting a two week timeframe on putting together a bid when you’re a small group that maybe has two part-time members of staff, you’re just never ever going to be able to engage with that process.” [Welfare organisation]

4.2.3 Focus on delivery rather than ‘need’
Organisations that have been through the commissioning process criticise the Council for having unrealistic expectations for the amount of money awarded, as they maintain:

“They [the Council] wanted everything for a minimum amount of money” [BME advise organisation].

“They [the Council] were like ‘you tell us what you can give us for that money’” [Advice organisation]

The perception is that the Council does not focus on the needs of a community as much as it could or should, as staff at an advice organisation pointed out:

“They [the Council] never ever looked at what we’re telling them the demand is or how many people we’re having to turn away or what the depths of the work is as well.”

Similarly, there is too much of a focus on numbers of users (often new users) to the detriment of the longer term hand holding that is an essential part of advice giving, as staff at the same organisation maintain:

“We are left with people who need more help from us. They’re more demanding as well but needy quite often. They just need that, for us to go through their bills for them or their debts and things which generally for debt issues, you might have three to four interviews that are an hour long before you can get to the point that you’re looking at solutions to their issues. But most of the commissioning bodies, whether it’s the local authority or other funders, they always think of ‘we want new clients.’ I mean, what do you do with this group? You can see it at once, they’re new. Next time they’re not new but for us to conclude the matter or for that person to solve that issue, we need to see them three or four times. How do we fund it?”
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“We can’t just say to them ‘you come in today, we spend an hour, half an hour or whatever then you go away. We don't want to know you because you don't fit into the statistics, what our funders want.’”

Organisations agree that this approach is simply ‘scratching the surface’ and want the Council and other commissioning bodies to review their focus and invest in quality advice provision that does not rely on volunteers. Furthermore, organisations are not prepared to reduce their standards to meet demand, as staff at an advice organisation state:

“The commissioning in terms of what Council does...they are concerned with a pot of money; what are they going to get for it. That's it. They don't go beyond that...when it comes down to it, yes we are dependent on volunteers we do relatively cheaper but it can't be that free. If you want standards, it's going to cost.”

4.2.4 Using client/service user data
Organisations that cannot record service user data are already at a disadvantage when approaching funders and may lose existing funding. Those who do record data such as the CAB find their data may not be able to distinguish the smaller ethnic and white other communities.

4.2.5 Lack of community partnerships
Organisations feel there needs to be more partnership working in Hounslow where the Council help organisations to procure funding, develop the organisations and then work in partnership with those organisations to help deliver advice, as indicated by the CAB staff:

“They could develop and deliver an approach, some kind of project on how to support these communities and the particular enquiry areas or the areas they need more assistance on and everything else.”

4.2.6 Poor engagement with communities
Organisations agree that some communities are always difficult to engage with no matter what you do; some will only come forward after reaching crisis point. They suggest that the Council should promote the following methods to improve engagement:

- Support service users in their language
- Communities need to make an effort – encourage/support own community groups/organisations
- Create own liaison groups and outreach work

4.2.7 Sustainability of smaller organisations
Smaller organisations that do vital work with pockets of the BMER community in Hounslow such as the Tamil Community Centre (TCC) tend to be oversubscribed and underfunded and are facing an increase in users not only from their ethnic group but the wider BMER groups as well. This raises questions about the sustainability of these organisations that are almost destined to collapse under the strain. These organisations feel there is no one to support them including the Council and other voluntary groups, and no central focus within the Council for these groups to liaise with. Groups like the TCC have stronger links with other Boroughs and charities outside the Borough and are even receiving calls for help from across the country and Europe.

4.2.8 Lack of community spaces
Linked to this is the perception among organisations that there is a lack of community spaces. Not just spaces to hold meetings but spaces where a community can properly come together. Some organisations describe scrounging for space from other local organisations and even businesses. For example, one organisation managed to get a space from ASDA superstore to provide keep fit classes to its elderly members. Although, they understand the nature of the sector is hand to mouth and revolves around survival strategies, they feel strongly about having representation or a network that they can tap into instead of having to ‘scrounge’ for survival.

A common characteristic of organisations representing the six communities is they often start in a small residential property with aspirations to buy a larger property or neighbouring properties when they have the funds. These spaces are vital to the local communities but often face problems with neighbours and planning permission and are forced to limit their activities or shut down. There needs to be some consideration of the dynamics of smaller community spaces and how this could be improved so the interests of service users and neighbouring residents are considered.

4.3 Community Networks

4.3.1 Community Climate in Hounslow

Organisations identify that the voluntary and community sector climate in Hounslow has not been conducive to community engagement; some feel this is only recently beginning to change. Groups that were not prepared for the loss of support or trained in sustaining their organisation, lost funding and disappeared, as they comment:

“All because there was a complete misunderstanding within the local authority of how the voluntary sector works. And it was expected that lots of people would – ‘oh right, you apply for grants and funding. You’d know how to fill in all these strange forms that ask you for things like public liability insurance of the size that you would need if you were doing the Olympics and expecting local groups to be able to go ‘oh, yeah we’ve got that.’ So it was bad. It was really bad.”

Some of the local voluntary groups have had problems with each other particularly if one group received funding and another did not and there was little or no communication of why certain groups were refused funding. The Hounslow Voluntary and Community Service closed leaving organisations ‘hanging.’ Although that has now changed, the impact can still be felt by organisations or a lack of organisations in Hounslow today.

4.3.2 The Hounslow Community Network (HCN)

The Hounslow Community Network (HCN) emerged from this climate (2012). The Council were looking to set up a body of the voluntary sector so that it could interact with the voluntary sector in a much more immediate way. HCN aims to provide a collective voice for voluntary and community groups within Hounslow and is able to offer organisations in Hounslow a means of tapping into support from the wider voluntary community and social enterprise sector regardless of size, experience and skills. The Council is promoting the HCN as the key hub of information or first port of call for the voluntary community and social enterprise sector, as illustrated below:
“They love the fact that they don’t have to go through this huge search that they used to do to find a group; they can come straight to us and say ‘have you got any groups that are related to this who you’d think would want to come to this meeting?’ and they use us to advertise their meetings as well. All Council officers are welcome whatever project they’ve got going, to come and talk to us because we can probably disseminate their information faster than they can” [HCN].

Whilst this model is well received by many mainstream organisations in Hounslow there still needs to be an awareness that not all migrant organisations have heard of the HCN. Although well known by the larger advice agencies, HCN is less known among the six communities. Only 2% of member organisations say they work with BMER communities. The HCN report that only Afghan organisations have come forward and that this is only very recently. BMER representation in the network is very low and not representative of the population. Even though it is still relatively ‘early days’ (a few years old), there needs to be a strong focus on attracting more BMER organisations to the HCN.

The HCN are aware that many smaller communities tend to rely on self-help from within the community and do not formally meet or organise themselves, as the following comment illustrates:

“Afghan elders don’t normally pop along to Age Concern. They’re much more likely to talk to somebody that they know who’s seen as a leader of the community.”

HCN suggest that a community will not formally organise itself until it has grown in numbers and there is a greater demand for the community to meet or there is a rise in the number of visible hubs (businesses, cafés) from that community; similarly, the community will not merge with the mainstream. For the Bulgarian and Romanian communities, there may be the added pressure of feeling like they are not wanted due to the negative press that they have received in the national media:

“It’s only really after a larger number of Bulgarians start to live in Hounslow that you will be able to identify something as being particularly Bulgarian.”

If the HCN is to be the leading voluntary community and social enterprise network in Hounslow, it needs to ensure:

- Hounslow residents receive proper representation via the voluntary groups – “I want to be able to go to the voluntary sector and for them to help me and negotiate with the Council so I don’t get bombarded by lots of words I don’t understand. That I have some support.’ And that we have the voluntary groups in place to give that support.”
- Every voluntary community and social enterprise group in Hounslow become members of the HCN

4.3.3 Ideas for encouraging community participation include:

- **Targeted outreach activities** – community meetings, advertising in Borough wide magazine, find a community champion, food festivals.
- **Decision-making and influencing** – promote the idea that members have a say – they can engage with Councillors, provide representatives on various bodies within the Council.

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15 HCN Annual Report October 2013. pp6
• **Provide language services for smaller organisations** – promote the network in the community’s own language.

• **Research and knowledge** – the HCN feel that not enough is known about the communities in Hounslow, where they are, what their needs are and how they access services.

• **Combat prejudice between communities** and tackle divisions that exist between BMER communities that have resulted in the fragmentation of the sector.

• **Support for formation of new community organisations** – a forum or group organised between the voluntary sector and the Council that actually introduces new communities to the wider community; providing proper communication tools;

• **Language support** – Council focus needs to shift back to providing language support for people whose first language is not English.

• **Stabilisation fund** – would be a good use of money to support groups that might be going through a period of transition; rather than closing down services to give them an opportunity to continue.

• **One-on-one development support** – funding advice, development support e.g. developing policies, supporting trustees.

• **Community spokesperson** – from within the community but visible at higher levels.

### 4.4 The Voluntary and Community Sector and the Council

The relationship between the Council and the voluntary community and social enterprise sector is key to understanding the needs of the Borough’s emerging communities. The Council’s knowledge of the range of organisations in the Borough is limited; for example, as part of this research the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at Middlesex University was asked to map organisations representing the six communities (see Appendix 1). Existing organisations in the local voluntary community and social enterprise sector also feel there is a need for the Council to show greater commitment to the sector and its cause. In particular:

#### 4.4.1 Inconsistency between departments:

There is a view that some Council individuals are excellent in championing the voluntary community and social enterprise sector and will make a good impact in their work, but this will only last as long as that individual is there. This inconsistency in how the sector can engage with different parts of the Council can make things difficult.

#### 4.4.2 Commitment to the cause:

Organisations feel that there are parts of the Council that view the voluntary community and social enterprise sector as “an afterthought.” They stress that the Council needs to provide information/training across its staff (possibly at the induction stage) so there is a better understanding of the sector, particularly how it can help the work of the Council, and this should be considered at all stages of Council service design, delivery and evaluation, as indicated by the following comments:

> “With certain parts of the Council, it’s not very clearly understood why to try and engage, why to maybe persevere when things are challenging working with the voluntary sector because there’s value in it and not all departments get that.” [HCN]

> “People working in different [Council] department[s] they just don’t understand what the voluntary sector does; don’t understand the value of grass-roots action;
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*don’t understand how it reaches people that the Council otherwise wouldn’t be able to get to.* [HGN]

4.4.3 Equality objectives: The Council’s equality objectives for 2014 to 2018 are: Minimising disadvantage experienced by rough sleepers; minimising disadvantage experienced by blind and partially sighted residents; reducing the incidence of hate crimes; ensuring that employment practices are fair and consistent with the Council’s employment policies—there needs to be a stronger focus on (new) migrant communities.

4.4.4 Equality and Diversity (E & D) project work: Work being done by the council’s E & D Unit is an excellent model for community engagement and is an example of smaller project work being done based on a particular need/evidence with positive outcomes. For example, targeted work with mums around isolation, working with mosques to improve community participation.

4.4.5 Taking the E & D message seriously: Organisations and members of each of the six communities have cited many examples of their perceived experiences of prejudice from Council service staff, both frontline staff and internal staff. Currently, E&D training is only delivered by request and it is not a significant part of staff induction, and the responsibility for implementing actions from Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) rests with service managers with no real monitoring or follow up. This could be contributing to an overall lack of awareness of the various migrant communities in the Borough and allowing prejudice and misconception to fester.
Section 5

Community Hubs and Successful Engagement
5. Community Hubs and Successful Engagement

5.1. Community Hubs

Over the course of the research we attempted to gain an understanding of where some of the key hubs in Hounslow for each of the six emerging communities are located. A hub can be a conveniently located public place that is recognised and valued in one or more of the six communities as a gathering place for people and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programmes, services and events. Appendix 1 shows the organisations in Hounslow and London that have been identified as providing support for the six communities.

**Challenges in gathering data:** There were some challenges involved in making contact with the six communities made worse by the fact that the majority of these communities are statistically very small. In particular:

- The process of identifying hubs was much easier to do for the ‘more established’ communities such as the Afghans and Sri Lankans compared to the smaller (Algerian and Burmese) and ‘newer’ (Bulgarian and Romanian) communities.
- The Burmese community and Algerian communities are very much hidden communities in Hounslow, they do not easily feature in official statistics and the size of the UK population is unclear as well as where the populations in London are mainly located.
- Some people from the six communities (particularly Algerian and Burmese) were reluctant and unsure of how to respond to approaches made to them to participate in the research.
- The lack of or non-existence of community organisations representing the six communities meant hubs were harder to identify.
- The use of services and community hubs outside Hounslow was high particularly among the Sri Lankan, Romanian and Bulgarian communities.
- There was no representation of these groups in existing voluntary community and social enterprise networks e.g. HCN.
- Each community comprises of groups representing multiple identities such as religion, country of birth, caste and political affiliations and, within the time frame, it was not possible to capture all of these dimensions for all of these communities.
5.1.1 Afghan Hubs

Afghans like the diversity of Hounslow. Most came to Hounslow because they had friends/family in the Borough, some because of affiliation to a mosque. Afghan Women tend not to have many hubs outside of the home. All respondents say they visit Hounslow High Street for shopping at the local halal shop (butchers); some attend Adult Education e.g. English classes at Twickenham College. One of the few opportunities for them to meet friends and talk to other women is when they drop and collect their children from school and when they attend Friday Prayers at the mosque. All admit their main focus is the home and their children. Afghan men also identify the mosque as a key hub and that there are no other Afghan organisations in Hounslow that act as community hubs.

Islamic Integration Community Centre, TW4

The Islamic Integration Community Centre (IICC) is a non-profit charity organisation that was established in the year 2008 by a group of Afghans under Qari Abdul Wakil. The IICC is a place of worship as well as a community centre providing a range of services including: Funeral and wedding services; Family advice centre; Language classes; Supplementary classes and Hajj Services. The venue also houses a library, computer lab and organises sports activities. It also describes itself as a Centre for Islamic Studies and has regular events and speakers in its many conference and meeting rooms. Although the organization relies solely on community donations, it has ambitions to become part of the voluntary community and social enterprise sector in Hounslow and provide services to the wider Afghan and non-Afghan community in line with its broader and encompassing vision and mission (see http://iicck.org/aboutus).

5.1.2 Algerian hubs

Algerians say they came to Hounslow because of family, although, some Algerians came to work at Heathrow airport and were drawn to Hounslow because of its close proximity to the airport and “cheap rental housing.” Whilst those who moved from within London aspire to move out of the Borough, there are some who want to stay in the Borough because they feel settled, have built a social circle and enjoy the balance of ethnicities, high level of cohesion and perception that people get along. Some of the younger Algerian men play football with other Algerians near Feltham school grounds, or in local parks, “there was a coach who organised 22 young Algerians to play regularly.” Other examples of Algerian hubs include the mosque, coffee shops and Internet cafés. Many attend the mosque on Fridays in particular; the main Algerian mosque is Feltham Community Hall (Assembly Hall). But while the mosque is described as, “the centre of community life,” providing Arabic mother-tongue classes for children and young people and access to informal advice, information and guidance/peer support, many still feel there is nowhere for Algerians to meet; they have to meet in coffee shops ‘like gangsters’ and at the mosque “everyone prays and then leaves.” Those with children say Algerians will use the library (e.g. Bedfont Library) especially to find Arabic books.

Both Algerian hubs described below provide strong opportunities to engage with the Algerian community. Suggestions put forward by Algerians at these hubs as to what form that engagement should take include: providing semi-formal/informal advice/information/guidance/services, drop-in
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surgeries; building the skill set of highly committed and keen members of the Algerian community, through access to minimal training plus information resources (particularly around where to signpost to further support/services) to provide community-led advice/assistance. It was felt a wide range of social/welfare/service issues could be addressed in this way with very minimal investment/resources, while also increasing the accuracy, quality and access to services.

Moonstars Café, TW3

The Moonstars café functions as a regular, well-known informal community centre. Algerian men congregate to drink coffee and provide each other with support, so extensively that the café can be seen as offering ongoing, community-led informal advice, information and guidance. Similar cafés exist in Kingston and Twickenham. Coffee shops have a special importance in Algeria and the Arab world. During the French Algerian War, political rival parties, the FLN and the MNA carried out bombings and assassinations in local coffee shops; known as the cafe wars. They were places where men met to discuss politics and matters of importance. Algerian coffee shops are the Arabic culture’s version of a men’s club and they are still places where men go to socialize and discuss religion, business and important topics of the day. Although Women do not visit the more traditional coffee shops, more are beginning to visit the newer community centred cafés in London.

Hounslow Islamic Relief Association, HIRA @ Feltham Assembly Hall, TW14

This is not an actual mosque but a multi-faith prayer room used by the Algerian Community. Hounslow Islamic Relief Association evolved out of a need to organise a place where people could gather to pray and celebrate festivals.

Currently they have up to 700 men and 50 women who attend and to accommodate numbers they hire Feltham Assembly hall from the Council.

They also run evening classes for Muslim families to teach Arabic and Islamic Studies and Maths GCSE and A level support.

5.1.3 Burmese hubs

Overall, Burmese respondents are positive about Hounslow and the communities they live in. They enjoy the diversity and that their children have friends to play with. Some aspire to move to areas such as Twickenham and Richmond which they perceive as “much nicer.” Most will stay in Hounslow because their children are in local schools.

There are very few hubs for the Burmese community in Hounslow outside of family and social networks. Places of worship are the only formal external hubs; one is a Christian ‘Kachin’ group that meets occasionally at a Baptist Church, the other is the Tisarana Vihara Association, a Buddhist temple on
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Nelson Road and one in Richmond. Families tend to use the libraries in Hounslow and will occasionally go for dinner at a local restaurant.

Both hubs described below provide an opportunity to communicate information to a relatively small and unassuming community in Hounslow who tend not to congregate or socialise outside of friends and family homes and existing social networks in other Boroughs.

**Tisarana Vihara, TW2**

This is a Burmese Buddhist monastery with a large following. It operates from a private house. It was previously known as the Buddhist Welfare Association and was established by constitution on July 1986 changing its name to Tisarana Vihara Association in March 1992.

As a place of worship it provides a hub for religious spiritual and social events such as marriage as well as regular community lectures. The property has limited capacity and larger events are organised in hired venues across Hounslow.

The Vihara provides an opportunity to communicate information from the Council to the wider community. The organisation would like to engage in more community activities but is limited because of the size of the house they operate from.

**The Shwe Mandalay Oriental Supermarket, TW5**

A grocery shop and one of the main providers of specialist products for the Burmese community. Serves as an informal hub for Burmese people in the Borough.

5.1.4 Sri Lankan Hubs

Most of the Tamil Sri Lankans that participated in this research live near Hounslow Central and generally enjoy the close proximity of shops, transport and family and friends. Sinhalese Sri Lankans appeared to be more affluent and aspirational but this is something that would need to be explored in more detail. Their perceptions of Hounslow were overall very positive but non-committal and related to their children’s schools above anything else. Tamil and Sinhalese communities tend not to socialise with each other and most use religious and cultural services outside the Borough.

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16 Similar to other Burmese centres across the UK.
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A number of examples of services for the Sri Lankan community across Hounslow and West London were given: Tamil School in Heston; Sutton Lane Temple; Aman Temple Ealing; Southall Community Centre, No. 10 School Road, and Buddhist Vihara. People also attend West Thames College, visit Lampton Leisure Centre and Park and the libraries.

Due to historic and political factors in Sri Lanka, the two Sri Lankan Communities do not share community and social networks and so the two hubs offer a chance to reach out to both very distinct communities.

**Tamil Community Centre & No. 10 School Road, TW3**

The Tamil Community Centre (TCC) is a voluntary organisation based in Hounslow established to cater for the needs of the Tamil community in the West London area. It works out of 2 venues in Hounslow and other venues across North and West London. The TCC caters to and fosters good community relations between local people of all races; providing a community centre for various activities from advice on health and well-being to social, education, leisure and dance activities. The venues are central and well known among the Tamil community but rely heavily on volunteers and donations. They would be an excellent conduit for delivering further classes, disseminating information and working with the Council.

**London Buddhist Vihara, W4**

The London Buddhist Vihara in Chiswick is a centre for Theravada Buddhism and maintains strong links to Sri Lanka.

Similar to some of the other communities it was previously run from a smaller residential property.

It is a place of worship for the Sri Lankan Buddhist Sinhalese community in Hounslow as well as a hub for classes, educational activities and social events such as marriages.

It reaches hundreds of Sinhalese Sri Lankans across Hounslow and West London.

5.1.5 Romanian Hubs

Overall, perceptions of Hounslow among members of the Romanian community who participated in this research are good, the ethnic diversity of the Borough is seen as a positive. However, they have all reported that they have experienced prejudice from Hounslow residents against Eastern Europeans.
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Some members of the Romanian community do not see Hounslow as a ‘place to settle’ and said they may move on either to another part of London, or another European country.

There are no distinct hubs in Hounslow where the Romanian community regularly meet, socialise or organise themselves. Other residents of Hounslow find it difficult to distinguish Romanian from Eastern European groups in general, hence, their perceptions that Eastern European stores are generic. In reality there are strong intragroup tensions between some Eastern European groups. Examples of hubs include: Romanian restaurants and cafés in other parts of London and include Romanian Churches, although, none are located in Hounslow. There is also some use of leisure services and open spaces and Internet cafés. One of the Romanian participants in this research described the Children’s Centre in Ealing as a hub as it offers English classes. Many also visit the job centre. Charities that work with homeless people in the Borough report that a small percentage of rough sleepers are Romanian.\(^{17}\)

5.1.6 Bulgarian hubs

Most of the Bulgarian participants in this research describe coming to the Borough for work; work in Bulgaria “was not going well” be it a failed business or a low wage. One lady recently moved to Hounslow to be near the Armenian community; she is now a carer. Most have travelled alone with their families still in Bulgaria (those with older children) and some work for an agency. There is a strong perception that Hounslow provides cheap rental accommodation.

There are no overt hubs for Bulgarians in Hounslow. Similar to the Romanian community Bulgarians are also grouped together with the wider Eastern European community in Hounslow and may use selected specialist food shops and restaurants across the Borough. Some Bulgarians describe visiting Brentford Leisure Centre and a Bulgarian Church in Kensington, near the Bulgarian Embassy but feel this is not an advice hub. All describe using online communities for information and others know of the Bulgarian Cultural Centre which is part of the Bulgarian Embassy.

5.1.7 Generic hubs

Whist speaking to the various communities, stakeholders and organisations in Hounslow we identified a number of hubs that are generic and used by members of all six communities as well as by many other local residents.

Generic hubs

Hounslow High Street, Feltham High Street
Treaty Centre
Blenheim Centre
Shopping stores – Asda, Aldi, Lidl – (Asda have supplied a venue for community keep fit classes)
Heston Pool
Hanworth Air Park Leisure Centre and Library
Feltham Library
Hounslow Library
Bedfont Library
Kingsley Adult Education Centre
Feltham Cineworld – especially Tamil, Bollywood and ‘Eastern European’ films
Schools and children’s centres
Coffee shops
Religious centres
Open spaces, e.g. parks etc.
5.2. Successful Engagement

There follow some examples of successful engagement with the six communities both in Hounslow and across London and the UK.

Established in 2002, Paiwand is a multicultural organisation based in North West London which aims to improve and enhance the quality of life of the Afghan, refugee and migrant communities in London and throughout the UK. The organisation promotes equality and social inclusion for all Afghan, refugee and other migrant communities (since 2009) whilst upholding their cultural identity and endorsing integration into the wider society. It aims to ensure the provision of quality, that needs are met in terms of the provision of culturally aware and innovative services that reaches women, men, children and young people in London and the UK.

Paiwand's advocacy and advice services offer free and professional advice on benefits, housing, debt and immigration. It provides supported accommodation for unaccompanied migrant children and refugee youths (aged 16-18), with support from their team of qualified Key Workers who encourage the young people to gain the necessary skills to transition into independent living. Paiwand’s Education Project works in partnership with voluntary organisations, local authorities and mainstream schools in order to test a new model of high quality, sustainable supplementary school provision that raises the attainment of targeted disadvantaged children in critical National Curriculum subjects, such as Maths and English. They run four Saturday schools, three in Harrow and one in Barnet, through which they support over 500 children and young people from low income families from the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Camden, Enfield, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon and Westminster. They also run ESOL and Parenting classes.

Paiwand’s Young Refugees Mentoring Project is funded by Lloyds TSB and Harrow Council. It aims to address the specific needs of young refugees, asylum seekers and unaccompanied migrant children in Northwest London who are in need of one-to-one and group social, academic and community support. The Mental Health Project aims to provide a safe space for refugees and migrants facing emotional hardship and provides support to clients, from counselling to workshops with professionals. They also run a number of successful youth projects.

Paiwand is a great example of how an organisation can grow if supported through the funding process; its main funder is now the Big Lottery. It also has an amazing volunteer force and excellent language support. With its hand holding approach it has gained the trust of the Afghan and wider BMER community.

www.paiwand.com
The National Algerian Centre is a private independent organisation registered for business in the UK as a Community Interest Company (CIC). They embrace tourism, culture and education and bring Algerians and the wider community together as a mutually supportive community through the work its centres carry out.

One of their most successful projects is the Concord Café situated in the Brent Adult and Community Education Service (BACES) Carlton Centre and will soon be opening another in a local leisure centre. The Café provides a hub for the Algerian community as well as other locals within a Council educational or leisure setting. In addition to serving coffee, it offers various education activities such as English language classes, employment workshops, health awareness activities, and language clubs. It also tries to attract professionals after work hours through exhibitions, poetry and book clubs. It provides use of computers and a free phone number. Being in a college may inspire those who attend to take up an educational activity and the café has seen a rise in the number of Algerian women attending and some are now studying childcare and media; there is also a nursery next door which again may encourage more women to attend as one person commented:

"Because it’s an open space, women don’t feel threatened. They’ll come and sit down with their kids, Algerian women. Even when they don’t come to study, they still come and sit down with their friends and children and have something to eat."

As well as serving Algerian food they offer food from different parts of the world; their global menu is extremely popular. They try to promote other cultures and one of their trademarks is to have dolls from around the world on display, they also offer cooking courses and strongly believe that food is a key part of their success:

"Food gets people together… It gets them talking, gets them to socialise… But even with very little English, they do manage to get by and exchange numbers."

One of their main challenges initially was talking to the Algerian community and building trust. But as more people have benefitted from classes, the Café encourages them to move up to the next level or become a volunteer and encourages further involvement and growth, educational or health atmosphere. It has become a thriving hub for Algerians and the wider community.

www.nationalalgeriancentre.co.uk
Burmese Community Reporters Project

The Transformation Fund (2009/10) created new opportunities for informal adult and community learning in England. Over 1 million adults were given the chance to get involved and learn something new. One of these projects was the Burmese Community Reporters Project led by the Communication and Computer Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University and provided teaching services, distance learning and research and business services. The project aimed to: build the confidence of individuals who took part; increase their digital communication skills by using new technologies such as blogs and wikis and by sharing audio, images and video; and give Burmese refugees the opportunity to air their views and communicate their needs.

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) worked with People’s Voice Media (PVM) and the Refugee Council to develop a community media training course for members of the Burmese refugee community in Sheffield. Groups targeted were those who had established refugee status and leave to remain in Britain. Sheffield has the second largest Burmese community outside London. The project ran a series of evening and weekend workshops within the university, using experienced community workers, journalists and researchers. They worked with members from the Burmese, Burmese Karen and latterly with the Iraqi communities.

The project gave the refugees additional skills in order that they would find it easier to integrate whilst in this country, including possibly finding more skilled work, and to have skills that would be of use should they be able to return to their own countries. Throughout the project, the partner organisations were able to build relationships and trust within the refugee communities. 47 learners were engaged from different ethnic backgrounds via the project and developed specific editing and editorial skills. Once trained, the Community Reporters were able to comment on issues in their homelands as well as sharing their experiences in Sheffield with other refugees across the world.

The lessons from this project include:

- the importance of being flexible and realistic in approach - particularly about what can be achieved within a particular timescale;
- ensuring all staff members are aware of cultural sensitivities from the start of the project;
- having a shared understanding amongst staff about what is being delivered and why; and
- realising those different, sometimes opposing, cultural groups can work harmoniously together given the right learning environment.
The Myanmar/Burma Relief and Welfare Association (MBRWA)

Based in Leyton, it is a non-political, non-religious and non-profit making voluntary organisation. It was set up in 2001 by a group of like-minded individuals resident in the UK, wishing to facilitate culturally effective and sensitive social care and development to Myanmarese/Burmese people who are in dire need of various kinds of Support services,

“Some of us have been settled in the UK for many years and some have started a new life in this country not so long ago. However we all need to setup effective development and support facilities for ourselves and for our younger generations.”

Its main aims and objectives are to assist the mental, physical, social and economic development of Burmese people, both in the UK and in Burma. MBRWA is working to address the issues of the needs of people of Burmese origin in the areas of housing, employment, further education, vocational training, entrepreneurial skills development, health and social services and have facilitated:

- Employment support, including work experience, training and Career guidance to the Burmese/Myanmarese youth and those of working age.
- Culturally sensitive personal and family support services.
- Access to mainstream facilities, opportunities and support mechanisms.
- Essential and accessible advice, information and guidance on matters of relevance and importance to Burmese/Myanmarese people including education and training, IT and ICT, career opportunities, social welfare, health care, housing, independent living etc.

“We organize events for social interlocutory and friendship purposes and to bring UK’s Myanmarese/Burmese community together for networking and to share skills and expertise for mutually beneficial improvements in the lives and positions of Myanmarese/Burmese people.”

www.myanmar-burmarelief.org.uk
The Tamil Community Centre is a voluntary organisation, which provides the Tamil community with support of all kinds. Its small premises are in Hounslow but it works across London. It aims to improve the quality of life for the Tamil society in the United Kingdom and to foster good community relations. Its long-term aims are to provide a community centre to be used by the whole community. The organisation provides advice on: Health - Stress, Counselling, Harassment, Alcohol and Drug Misuse; Employment - Job Search and CV Preparation, Unemployment, Financial Problems, Retirement; Personal and Public Relationships - Domestic Violence, Immigration, Advice on Law; Other: IT Training, PowerPoint/Word, Administration, Multimedia/Graphic Design, Language help, Gardening, Cooking, Cake Making/Icing, Tamil Library, Applications and Form filling. Specific services in Hounslow include:

- Family Counselling
- Alcohol Counselling
- Entry 3 English Course
- Tamil Elders Group
- Elders English Class
- Free lunches and free access to computers
- Free legal and immigration advice for refugees
- ‘Preparing for interpreting’ course
- Tamil class for children
- Yoga Classes
- English and Maths for children (up to GCSE level)
- Sewing class for women
- Pool table/watching TV

The organisation relies heavily on volunteers and is championed by dedicated individuals who have a particular passion for the community and what they do. It struggles for funding but provides a free service to a growing number of people in Hounslow. Importantly it supports a large number of non-Tamils including Burmese, Algerian and Eastern European refugees and migrants in need.

[www.tccentre.co.uk](http://www.tccentre.co.uk)
The East European Advice Centre (EEAC)

The East European Advice Centre (EEAC) based in Hammersmith is a charity that provides advice and support to people from Eastern Europe living in London. It offers free and independent information and advice to help East Europeans to live independently in the community. The Centre was established in 1984 and developed from the Polish Refugee Rights Group set up in 1981 in response to the plight of Poles stranded in Britain during the time of Martial Law in Poland. Since then, it has developed into a service for people from all East European countries. Advice and support is given in the fields of homelessness, welfare rights, employment, housing, health, debt management, and financial inclusion, social and economic deprivation.

“We offer a full range of services with the overall aim of preventing the worsening of the client’s circumstance and to enable self-sufficiency. We do so by diagnosing the problem, explaining options, giving advice and offering practical support. We identify and discuss further action the client can take. We sign-post to other agencies where relevant.”

The centre describes the demand for its services have increased, especially among the wider Eastern European countries. They have recruited more volunteer and translators from these communities as well as conducted new research into the needs of these communities.

The EEAC has embarked on a new East European Peer Navigator Project. The project will run in partnership with Lift18 throughout 2014, and is being supported by the Homeless Transition Fund. The East European Peer Navigator Project has been formed to help East European nationals who are at risk of becoming rough sleepers, to prevent homelessness, or where they are already homeless, to help them build a life away from the streets. The project will work closely with Thames Reach, The Upper Room, The Passage and West London Churches Homeless Concern. Lift will create a team of 40 volunteer Peer Navigators who, between them, speak all of the major East European languages. The Peer Navigators will work with staff from front line homelessness agencies to help connect their East European clients into services which already exist in the community, but which they are currently not using for reasons of lack of knowledge, language or cultural barriers. The project is not a stand-alone service. It depends for its success on creating partnerships between the project, front line homelessness agencies, and services based in the East European community as well as more mainstream services. The project aims to build a robust network of links and partnerships, which will continue beyond the period for which the project is funded.

www.eeac.co.uk

18 Lift is a non-profit organisation that adopts a community driven approach to tackle the causes of disadvantage and homelessness.
The Upper Room

Based in Ealing, The Upper Room is a street level charity with a Christian ethos and it has been working to help socially disadvantaged people in London since 1990. The Upper Room works with homeless people, economic migrants and ex-offenders to help them improve their lives and conditions and give them the self-confidence to become economically independent.

**UR4Jobs** was launched by The Upper Room in 2006 to break the vicious circle of homelessness and unemployability among Central and Eastern Europeans by providing a multilingual and holistic mixture of: 1) personalised support; 2) entry level skills training, and; 3) access to jobs. UR4Jobs is set in a sociable, Internet café style environment. All its services are free and without the requirement to be in receipt of benefits. It is user driven, volunteer dependent and delivered in up to seven languages. It starts at the beginning, assesses each individual's needs and progressively breaks down their personal barriers, one by one, until they are job ready and can start looking for work. It helps clients register with Jobcentre Plus and offer ESOL classes and conversational English. Clients requiring specialist services or advice are referred to relevant organisations, e.g. law centres, housing departments or drug and alcohol clinics. If or when there is a need to repatriate someone, the organisation works closely with the Barka Foundation to facilitate it. Clients who are ready to begin work but have no financial means to cover their basic expenses may be eligible for help with both travel and uniform costs (at the Project Manager's discretion). The organisation also helps to pay for the CSCS training, exams and cards, which are obligatory Health and Safety requirements for work on construction sites. English classes and conversational English are offered on a weekly basis and other basic training in areas such as catering may also be available. Clients can also receive advice on writing or updating CVs and assistance with job search and filling in applications. Psychological counselling is available on a one-to-one basis for up to 12 individual sessions and there are also a number of workshops for group counselling on a variety of topics.

Since November 2006, 1,531 people have registered with the Project. During 2012, UR4Jobs had a footfall of 1,439 visits over 87 operating sessions and made 269 new assessments, of which 48% were Polish, 31% Romanian, 6% Lithuanian, 5% British, 3% Latvian, 2% Bulgarian, 2% Hungarian, 2% Czech and 1% German. 41% of people who have registered with the project have had to sleep rough at some point since their arrival in the UK and 54% live ‘homeless,’ either as rough sleepers, in squats, or church run night shelters.

“A typical client from Eastern Europe is Michai, who is Romanian and asked for help in finding work. Following advice to place a job ad on the Gumtree website and in a shop window, he found a temporary job as a waiter very quickly, which helped him plan how to achieve what he wanted to become – a driver or accountant. UR4Jobs helped him exchange his Romanian licence for a British one, and supported him in obtaining a private vehicle hire licence. Michai is now working full-time as a chauffeur, and is planning to validate his Spanish accounting qualification here, and attend further accounting training in the UK.”

www.theupperroom.org.uk
Section 6
Conclusions
6. Conclusions

There is a distinct absence of literature on the six communities in the UK, particularly some of the smaller communities such as the Burmese and Algerians.

The fieldwork conducted within this project indicates that members of these six communities generally have positive perceptions of Hounslow and most arrived in the Borough because of existing family and social networks, some for the convenience of Heathrow Airport and some for the cheap private rented accommodation. However, most have aspirations to move out of the Borough into areas that are perceived as more aspirational such as Twickenham and Richmond.

There are no obvious community hubs in Hounslow for each of the six communities. Although places of worship serve as hubs for the Afghan and Sri Lankan community, they do not provide any formal or structured support for worshippers, and many actually visit larger places of worship outside the Borough, where there is also a larger population.

Similarly, there are no formal organisations that exist in Hounslow representing the Algerian, Burmese, Romanian and Bulgarian communities. Tamils from the Sri Lankan community are represented by the Tamil Community Centre (TCC), although the organisation is running over capacity, has little or no funding and relies heavily on one community champion and a number of volunteers. Some Afghan organisations in Hounslow were forced to close because of funding cuts; they are also affected by fragmentation based on socio-religious and political differences. All communities except the Algerian and Burmese say they use other formal organisations outside the Borough. However, as suggested earlier, in identifying strategies for engagement of these new and emerging communities, the Council should aim to identify/target communities’ leaders to develop their capacity and leadership skills to implement an effective engagement strategy with their respective communities.

The main reasons for engaging with the Council revolve around meeting a basic need such as housing, welfare benefit, immigration and employment. The Burmese community has the least engagement with the Council. There is a poor awareness of Council services and what they do as well as how they can help. Those with children describe contact with schools as their most positive experience with a ‘service.’ Most negative experiences revolve around enquiries not being followed through or reach a dead end, leaving communities frustrated and with a negative image of the Council. Building trust is important for the Algerian, Bulgarian and Romanian communities who display a culture of mistrust based on negative experiences of government and authorities in their home countries.

The lack of language support and provision has implications for every interaction that the community has with the Council. Language is the biggest barrier to engagement including: a perceived lack of language provision at point of contact; a perceived lack of translated literature (including online); lack of suitable English language education, and poor use of interpreters and translators.

Housing is a key advice need for all communities. There are particular concerns around length of time in temporary accommodation, housing benefit calculations, negative experiences in the private rented sector and problems using the online Locata system.
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Isolation is a key theme for all six communities particularly for women and elders. The lack of community hubs and organisations means women will revolve their life around the home and family; this is linked to high levels of domestic violence and poor mental health particularly for Afghan and Sri Lankan women. Some Algerian women find it difficult to meet other women because of a lack of accessible specialist networks and organisations in the Borough.

This is made worse by the lack of specialist support available to communities, for example, the lack of tailored mental health such as counselling, and for alcoholism (a concern among Sri Lankan men). There is often a perceived lack of awareness at GP level.

All communities describe that poor representation of their communities at Council and Councillor level help reinforce a negative view that the Council is not interested in them. A high level of South Asian representation results in perceptions that the South Asian community are more ‘privileged’ or more likely to be heard and taken seriously by the Council. All of the communities say that having better representation would encourage more contact.

Employment is a key concern for Algerians, Bulgarians and Romanians whose qualifications are not recognised in the UK making it harder for them to find employment. There are no support structures in place to help these communities with the transfer of qualifications and specialist advice on employment. There appear to be high levels of exploitation for Bulgarians and Romanians who will often take contract work.

All six communities use the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) as a key point of contact for advice but feel it is oversubscribed and difficult to access. There is no substantial longer-term one-to-one support for these communities and advice is often sought once they reach crisis point. Advice organisations in Hounslow and West London feel that the CAB has a monopoly on advice commissioning but many are ill equipped and lack experience to handle the ‘complex’ tenders for advice commissions. Other voluntary and community organisations also feel that the Council funding processes are too difficult and have resulted in lost opportunities for funding and subsequent closure of organisations; this will potentially prevent new organisations from forming.

A lack of community partnerships between the Council and the six communities combined with poor engagement with these communities has resulted in zero representation of these communities in known networks to the Council such as the Hounslow Community Network (HCN). If the HCN is to be the desired model for collective VCSE sector representation in Hounslow, then more work needs to be done to increase BMER membership, such as targeted outreach and language support.

There is evidence that the Council needs to better champion equality and diversity and awareness of the voluntary community and social enterprise sector so that staff understand the issues faced by its diverse residents, avoid conflict and prejudice and understand what the voluntary community and social enterprise sector is and can offer them.

In closing, it is important to note that many of the reported experiences and perceptions of Council service provision among the six communities and their relationship with the Council are not unique to LBH but is apparent across other local authority areas in the UK due to the socio-economic and political climate that local government is currently operating within. As a result, the Council is seeking more
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proactive measures to enhance engagement with new and emerging communities in the Borough as referred to below.
Section 7

Recommendations
7. Recommendations

This research focuses on six migrant communities in Hounslow, however, many of the findings are relevant to the wider BMER communities in Hounslow. This view is supported by the organisations working with the six communities who identify that many of their needs and use of services are very similar. In addition, this study has highlighted the need to provide cultural awareness and language-specific support to the diverse communities of Hounslow and the importance of developing initiatives which are effective and appropriate to each group.

1. Research

This report has highlighted the overall lack of research and data for most of the six communities. If the Council wants to commit to a better and more tailored provision of services and increased engagement then it needs to commit to further research. Research needs to inform service provision, policy and strategy and be an integral part of a decision making process. Although, this can be done on an ad hoc basis i.e. to fill knowledge gaps, there also needs to be some consideration of a longer term vision of the more integral role of research and data collection and how analysis of existing data, particularly from frontline services, can highlight gaps in knowledge or any research needs. It is also important that community organisations, local groups and individual members of different communities are directly involved in the research process and engaged in activities for dissemination and discussion.

Future research based on findings from this report could revolve around some of the common themes, for example access to mental health service provision or the experience of BMER elders as well more specific issues such as alcoholism among Sri Lankan Tamils or experiences of exploitation of Bulgarian and Romanian workers.

Suggested Actions:

- There is clearly scope for a more in-depth exploration of what existing settlements and networks there are in Hounslow that may contribute to greater levels of migration.
- Conduct a research audit to determine what research/data is held by whom and any gaps in knowledge.
- Map and review data monitoring and evaluation procedures for council services.
- Undertake community-led research and action research activities, including training and capacity building.
- Work with the VCSE and academics to determine research priorities based on gaps in knowledge and research gaps highlighted in the report.
- Develop an overall research strategy on diversity and equality in Hounslow.

2. Language

Based on the experiences of residents from the six communities, provision and publicity of language support across the Borough is poor and this has implications for every interaction people have with the Council as well as impacting on their ability to feel confident in communicating their needs. As a result,
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these communities are among the most vulnerable in Hounslow and subject to exploitation, unemployment and poor mental health. Language support should be made a priority across all service areas and efforts should be made to raise awareness of why support is required; including working with existing advice agencies to influence their advice priorities. There needs to be better English language support for migrant communities across the Borough in two key areas 1) English Language classes including a review of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and pre ESOL provision and 2) translation and communication in people’s home languages including addressing the quality of support provided and better communication of Council processes such as how to request translated material.

Suggested Actions:

- Offer full time or intensive classes to those who want to enter the job market.
- Offer more Basic English provision to up-skill people that want to study for ESOL.
- Review availability of written translation of correspondence for Burmese residents.
- Increase access to translated literature and promotion of English language classes to Tamil residents.
- Review English language support for new arrivals e.g. Bulgarians and Romanians to help with transfer of qualifications, combat exploitation and poor mental health.
- Collaborative working between the Council and the VCSE sector to identify opportunities to provide informal settings for language learning and integration.

3. Contact with the Council

This report shows that an overall awareness of Council services is poor to non-existent and contact ranges from meeting basic needs and crisis support to none at all. First contacts with the Council and experiences of frontline services are often described as poor. The pathways to Council services are not understood and described as confusing and poorly signposted resulting in a low level of contact with the Council and a high level of mistrust/disappointment.

The Council needs to raise awareness of its services and processes (including online services) among the six communities as well as understand the best methods to do this with each community; for example Romanian and Bulgarian residents rely heavily on online networks, Burmese respondents say they want more translated literature and Tamil Sri Lankans and Afghans say they need better access to translators. Residents describe the poor availability of translators at frontline services and a perceived lack of effort from the Council to adhere to requests for translators, and a reliance on and promotion of family and friends to provide this service. Residents draw attention to some worrying experiences of prejudice, and perceived discrimination and cultural ignorance at points of contact with Council services and this has serious implications for the Council’s equality and diversity obligations. Poor experiences at points of initial contact and thereafter result in negative impressions of the Council.

Suggested Actions:
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- Review and revise preferred method of contact information for residents and ensure communication needs are being met both at point of contact (frontline services or website) and in any correspondence/communication/literature. One possible solution is for the Council to produce ‘welcome to Hounslow’ packs which provide a map of how to access services and step by step engagement/contact. This needs to be followed up with targeted outreach work to ensure that this information is being received in the most useful format.
- Review the availability of translators on frontline services, GP and hospital appointments when requested. Look at methods of increasing the pool of community translators by tapping into informal networks and existing organisations and offering training and development.
- Publicise ‘how to’ style descriptions of basic Council processes that ease citizenship and settlement in the Borough such as how to make appointments, registering with a school (e.g. free school meals and nursery vouchers), registering with a local GP.
- Encourage equality and diversity audits or EQIA/Equality analysis of public services such as leisure centres to ensure communities are not unwittingly being excluded. Raise awareness among frontline staff of the needs of migrant communities and develop training that explores how to make points of contact a more positive experience for migrant communities. This could also be done by tapping into existing training and inductions for new staff.
- Explore models of relational governance and best practice in the provision of frontline services e.g. person centred care. This could include a literature review to inform future discussion.
- Work with community leaders to act as sources of information with their respective communities and strengthening signposting to mainstream services.
- Targeted support for the Burmese community, whose contact with the Council is almost non-existent.

4. Health

Support for and knowledge of the specific health needs of the six communities is distinctly lacking. All communities face numerous barriers that may exacerbate health problems and, combined with a lack of existing support services, means there may be a large number of residents missing out on vital care and support. In particular, communities with poor language skills and engagement with the Council face isolation, depression and loneliness; more so for the more vulnerable members of a community such as the elderly and women at home. Similarly many communities have distinct mental health needs as a result of their experiences of events in their country of birth, experience of migration and/or cultural practice. There is also strong concern in the way services are provided through GPs which again may be exacerbating or overlooking specific health issues. The Council firstly needs to find out more about the specific health needs of these communities and secondly look at methods to improve and increase targeted support. It also needs to develop relationships with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), local health providers and the third sector to identify, acknowledge and facilitate targeted improvements in health services.

Suggested Actions:

- Review of mental health provision to BMER communities in the Borough.
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- Work with the CCG to identify and best support the health needs of BMER communities and prioritise specific health campaigns across the Borough.
- An exploration of the types of mental health provision for the six communities and wider BMER community.
- Targeted help for women and elderly facing isolation, depression, and loneliness.
- Work with GPs to raise awareness of depression among BMER communities in the Borough and highlight reasons behind their depression.
- Targeted support for Sri Lankans who have suffered trauma as a result of civil war e.g. counselling for PTSD, mental health support, alcoholism and domestic violence.
- Targeted support for Bulgarians and Romanians for whom evidence suggests that they suffer high levels of poor mental health and alcoholism as a result of migration and not being able to find work.
- Explore ways of providing training for community members to deliver mental health and domestic violence support to their own communities.
- Explore the impacts of loneliness, isolation, and depression on migrant communities (particularly women and elders) and develop outreach work to combat this.

5. Housing

There is an overwhelming feeling across all six communities that the Council is not providing effective support and communication for residents in both social housing and the private rented sector. As a result, there is an increased sense of frustration with the Council, questions around the transparency of housing processes and health problems related to stresses as a result of issues with housing. For some communities, the only contact they have with the Council is through housing services and many describe experiences of frontline housing services as poor. The Council needs to review how housing advice is delivered; residents would be more open to one-to-one style support rather than a one-stop-shop more ‘impersonal’ approach. Similarly, the Council needs to manage people’s expectations and ensure housing processes have been understood via translated material or better availability of interpreters, better follow up of complaints and regular communication. Evidence of the true impact of problems experienced in the private rented sector is lacking as well as its true size in the Borough. Residents describe disturbing exploitation by private landlords and currently the Council is perceived as offering no support in this area.

Suggested Actions:

- Review of information (and its format) provided at points of contact.
- Review how housing services can better signpost residents to other Council services.
- Explore the issues raised around housing need and work with Housing services to develop initiatives to help combat any barriers, in particular, support with: housing applications, raising deposits for private renting; assess criteria for Discretionary Local Crisis Payment (Crisis loans) and help using Locata.
- Although there is no regulatory body for private landlords, the Council needs to explore initiatives that help educate/raise awareness among private landlords of the issues affecting residents and maintain an open and continual dialogue between them and the Council to help combat the effects of unscrupulous landlords on residents. This could be a regular forum or
6. Employment

Evidence from this research suggests that these six communities are in particular need of specialist support to enable them to find employment. There is no substantial data on the employment patterns of these communities in Hounslow but this research and wider studies suggest BMER communities face higher levels of unemployment made worse by language barriers, poor qualifications or the inability to transfer existing qualifications from home countries into similar employment in the UK. The Council is not providing enough targeted and specialist support to enable BMER residents to enter the job market particularly intensive support linked with improving language skills and fast tracking residents into employment. Without this specialist support residents will continue to work ‘under the radar’, be open to exploitation, work well below their qualification level and suffer from poor health.

Suggested Actions:

- Look at methods to provide targeted and specialist support in the six communities to tackle the transfer of qualifications and improving language skills (particularly for Bulgarian, Romanian and Algerian residents) – work with existing organisations that are providing this support.
- Improve resources for residents from these communities to be able to search for jobs.
- Work with local business networks to raise awareness of issues facing the six communities and develop programmes that may help foster better employment links i.e. apprenticeships.

7. Visibility, Representation and Participation

There are a number of concerns around the visibility and representation of the six communities in the Borough. These include the lack of representation on Council frontline services, in local advice giving organisations, in civic life i.e. Councillors and in the local media. Some residents describe this lack of visibility as a sign that the Council has no interest in them and, instead, prioritises the majority (White and South Asian people). Similarly, the six communities are underrepresented in the voluntary community and social enterprise sector in Hounslow; the HCN has no organisations from these communities and low BMER representation overall. This is partly because existing organisations do not know how to tap into more formal networks but partly because there are little or no community organisations in the Borough that represent the six communities, for example, there are no Burmese organisations in Hounslow. Similarly, these six communities are not engaging in existing social and cultural networks beyond the library and leisure centres because of a lack of awareness and poor signposting from the Council combined with poor to non-existent outreach work; the Council has not made any effort to understand the social/cultural and leisure needs of these communities, for example, Afghan women enjoy swimming and Algerian men enjoy football. All communities describe schools as a positive point of engagement and the Council can use this point of contact to promote initiatives around greater visibility representation and participation from the six communities.
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Suggested Actions:

- Targeted advertising of Council jobs among the six communities.
- Longer-term initiatives to increase visibility of the six communities in public life – champion existing community leaders, have a community leader’s programme or training that fosters future leaders.
- Schemes to encourage formation of community groups or support existing informal networks to grow.
- Outreach work with the voluntary community and social enterprise sector and HCN to increase membership and participation from the six communities.
- Better signposting of social, cultural and leisure activities across the six communities.
- Explore avenues for engagement though sport, in particular, local activities that engage with migrant communities (e.g. Algerian football).
- Develop partnerships with schools to foster engagement and participation.

8. Supporting the Community and Voluntary Sector

The need for advice in Hounslow is much larger than its current provision. The Council is perceived as not adequately meeting this need. Similarly, the Council’s framework of support for organisations providing advice is not meeting needs. The organisations that were interviewed in this study heavily criticise the Council’s approach to advice commissioning and feel processes make it impossible for smaller and less established advice giving organisations to secure funding, in particular, the focus on delivery over need means many organisations with expertise but less capacity lose out to organisations that may not have these specialist skills. As a result, organisations providing specialist services to the BMER community are oversubscribed and underfunded with a question mark around sustainability. The perception here is that the Council needs to support organisations that are often a lifeline for residents in the Borough. At the same time, however, it should be recognised that Hounslow Council faces extreme financial challenges as a result of funding cuts by the UK Government, having £60 million removed from their budget in the last four years and a similar level of savings expected over the next four years. This has prompted the Council to consider more innovative and effective ways of managing service demand by supporting and developing the capacity of local communities and residents to meet their own needs. This can be achieved by the council working in partnership with the VCSE sector, who are best placed to empower residents and local communities, to build alternative networks of support – this proposed strategy of engagement engages with the notion of co-production and community-assets based which views reciprocal relationships between professionals, services users and lay communities, pooling knowledge and skills from lived experience and professional learning, as vital to improving public services.

In addition, in order to have a better understanding of the use of services in the Borough, there needs to be an effort to collate or centralise service user data including from smaller organisations and those outside the Borough that provide support to people in Hounslow, and then using that data to develop commissioning priorities. If the Council is championing the HCN as the key voluntary community and

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19 Hounslow Council (forthcoming) Thriving Communities Funding Plan 2015-2019. Community Partnership Unit.
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social enterprise sector network in the Borough, then more work is needed around the development of existing and new community partnerships as currently there is very little BMER representation.

Suggested Actions:

- Work with the CAB and HCN to explore sub-contracting and partnership working.
- Review the ‘complex’ tender and application process to reflect the focus on need and service evaluation as opposed to just delivery.
- Specialist advice and support through the commissioning process e.g. advice on how and what data should be collected to help organisations secure funding.
- Explore the possibility of a Community Liaison Post that will focus on liaison, signposting, fostering contacts, generating opportunities for one-to-one support and outreach work.
- Engage with the existing hubs in the Borough such as places of worship (including developing informal hubs such as Algerian cafés) and maintain links for community outreach work.
- Engage with organisations highlighted as case studies to explore partnership working in the Borough, building collaborative relationships and developing the capacities of lay communities, and help develop similar models in Hounslow.
- Look to develop online hubs particularly for Eastern European migrants who tend to access these.
- Follow up the dissemination and engagement activities to help build an open dialogue between LBH and the six communities.
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References


6. Oeppen (2009)


10. IOM. (2007); Oeppen (2009)

11. Khan (2013a); Oeppen (2009)


