

Equalities and Access Workstream Interim Report



Community impacts of COVID-19 lockdown on women, BAME, faith, LGBTQ and disabled communities in Brighton & Hove

August 2020

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Executive summary

This interim report summarises impacts thus far of the COVID-19 lockdown and social restrictions on women, BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic), faith, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer/Questioning) and disabled communities in Brighton & Hove and has been produced by the Equalities & Access Workstream (EAW) of the Vulnerable People Cell at Brighton & Hove City Council.

Recommendations are designed to support the response to COVID-19, including outbreak and recovery planning.

COVID-19 lockdown and social restrictions have generally not created inequality but revealed where it already exists and often exacerbated it.

There are a range of specific and complex impacts for communities as described throughout this document, the key issues identified by the EAW include:

- Disproportionate financial and economic impacts, both short-term and long-term particularly impacting women, BAME, and disabled people, those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and places of worship and community groups reliant on income from community venues and events;
- Disproportionate impacts of home schooling and its effect on future attainment and career opportunities especially for BAME young people, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers;
- Barriers to accessing support and following guidelines due to lack of trust and confidence in statutory service provision and information, especially for some BAME communities including migrants. Language barriers for people with English as an additional language, and barriers to access of information for some BAME communities and disabled people;
- Digital exclusion limiting accessibility of information and ability to connect with others, particularly for older people and those in poverty, from across all communities considered in this report;
- Specific issues around isolation and impact on mental wellbeing experienced by all communities considered in this report, due to fears of increased susceptibility to the virus, loss of safe spaces, and patterns of home and household environments, and loss of connection including for faith communities;
- Heightened health concerns for BAME, LGBTQ, and disabled people;
- COVID-19 related hate incidents and fear of prejudice particularly impacting BAME communities including Chinese and South East Asian people, disabled people, and LGBTQ people;
- Safety of women during the lockdown period particularly relating to domestic abuse and housing provision; and

- Lack of trust and confidence in 'Test and Trace' systems especially for migrants, people with HIV, people experiencing domestic violence and abuse, and some LGBTQ people.

Please note, we recognise that many issues cut across all the communities our work focused on, and the experiences of an individual will be shaped by the intersecting parts of their identity.

In addition, city communities bring a wide range of strengths, perspectives, skills and assets and it is also important to utilise the opportunity to strengthen and maximise relationships between services and communities during recovery.

Work undertaken to address identified barriers and concerns has been noted in the report.

Recommendations address each topic above and propose actions based on best practice and/or locally identified solutions.

Introduction

This report outlines a summary of the findings thus far related to the impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown and social restrictions on women, BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), faith, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer/Questioning) and disabled communities in Brighton & Hove. The findings have been produced by the Equalities & Access Workstream (EAW) of the Vulnerable People Cell based on a review of local and national qualitative and quantitative data, and engagement with different communities across the city.

The remit of the EAW is to look at the specific and disproportionate community impacts of COVID-19 lockdown and associated restrictions on women, BAME, faith, LGBTQ and disabled communities in Brighton & Hove. Our BAME focused work includes impacts on refugees and migrants, but does not focus on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities as that work has been progressed under a separate workstream. Work focused on the impacts on older people has been addressed under a number of separate workstreams, but the EAW has taken an intersectional approach (for example, considering the impacts on LGBTQ older people).

This workstream is focused on the wider community impacts of COVID-19 lockdown, rather than the health impacts, although it is recognised there is a link between these areas. For national reports in relation to health disparities please see:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/

The workstream members are from Brighton & Hove City Council, Brighton & Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and the Community and Voluntary Sector.

This report is the interim summary of findings. Some actions that have progressed based on these findings are listed below, followed by a set of recommendations designed to support Brighton & Hove City Council, the Community and Voluntary Sector, and other statutory partners to respond to some of the challenges for these communities in ongoing phases of the COVID-19 response. An action plan will now be developed in response to the recommendations.

“Partnership working with the Community and Voluntary Sector is the vital first step when trying to tackle inequalities, giving a voice to equalities groups. The Equalities & Access workstream also identified that there is still a way to go. By keeping communication open and transparent and taking a proactive approach to supporting equality groups, Brighton & Hove City Council can achieve this.”

Nora Mzaoui, Voices In Exile and Community Works Representative

Methodology

To inform the research and recommendations outlined in this report, we have used qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis – and utilised the EAW as a space to explore and collate the information.

Data methods and sources include, national data and research, desk-based research, qualitative data from local communities through Community and Voluntary Sector partners, direct feedback from communities (and two-way engagement) via email, virtual meetings with Community and Voluntary Sector groups, specialist advice from key council officers and partners across different services, including communities and equalities practitioners, anecdotal data from residents, and local data and research from Public Health and Brighton & Hove CCG.

Due to the intersectional nature of communities - many of whom experience similar or overlapping impacts during COVID-19 - we have broken down this report by impact theme rather than by the communities we are focused on (i.e. women, BAME, LGBTQ, disabled communities etc). However, we have highlighted which group is most impacted based on our research in bold throughout the document.

This report covers the findings of the EAW for the period April - June 2020.

Dissemination

This report will be shared with Brighton & Hove City Council's Executive Leadership Team, Brighton & Hove City Council's 'Recovery' Working Groups, council Corporate Equalities Delivery Group and Directorate Equalities Delivery Groups, political Administration, lead members for equalities for all political parties, leads for key council services, Community and Voluntary Sector Partners, and city-wide Equality and Inclusion Partnership (EquiP).

The report is also available to any individual by request to: equalities@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Data and Terminology Restrictions

While we have used a variety of data sources, there are some limitations with data. These include a lack of up to date data, or data not being collected in some areas.

For population data we rely on data from the Census (2011) which is now out of date and so can only be used as an estimate in any comparator assessment. In addition, some council services do not capture data for ethnicity and other characteristics. This prevents us from building a clearer picture about who is accessing council services – particularly during the emergency response where there is an increased need for support but we do not know if this support is being accessed equitably.

In addition, even though we reached out to as many communities as we could, we recognise that not all voices in the city will be represented, and some people might not have trust and confidence to directly engage with the council, which may lead to gaps in our understanding.

We also acknowledge that the use of language and terminology can be subjective and personal to an individual. We are using the term 'BAME' throughout this report to ensure consistency with other reports. However, we are aware of the limitations of this term and try wherever possible to put information in context or disaggregate the data where relevant.

“Brighton & Hove City Council taking a focussed partnership approach to equalities and access has enabled the Community and Voluntary Sector to raise concerns on behalf of the equalities groups they work with and find common solutions where possible. The wider emergency response system that developed did not necessarily build equalities into its planning consistently, moving forward Equality Impact Assessments for each working group will help but maintaining a dedicated focus will still be needed.”

Laura Williams, Community Works

Summary of findings

COVID-19 lockdown and social restrictions have not created inequality, but have shone a light on where inequality exists, and in the current context this inequality is likely to be exacerbated. Concerns raised by communities include disproportionate financial and economic impacts and the long term effect this will have on individuals and communities; disproportionate impacts as a result of home schooling and its effect on attainment and career opportunities for young people; specific issues around isolation and impact on mental wellbeing; heightened health concerns for BAME, LGBTQ and disabled people; issues of trust and confidence in mainstream statutory services; barriers in communications; COVID-19 related hate incidents; safety of women during the lockdown period; and lack of trust and confidence in 'Test and Trace' systems and measures from different communities.

It is important to note that there are issues which cut across different communities, and also that the experiences of an individual will be shaped by the intersecting parts of their identity (for example, someone who is a woman with caring responsibilities from a BAME background may experience cumulative impacts associated with different aspects of her identity).

It is also important to note the strengths and contributions made by the range of communities bringing their unique perspectives and skills in the response to COVID-19, and it is important to continue to strengthen and maximise relationships between services and communities.

A more in-depth overview of the findings is outlined below by theme (the group(s) most impacted by each theme based on our research is highlighted in bold throughout):

Economy and poverty

Data shows that **BAME communities** are much more likely to be living in existing poverty. Locally people from BAME communities are more likely to be unemployed and residents from some BAME communities are more likely to be in our most deprived neighbourhoods.

In Brighton & Hove, Bangladeshi residents are most likely to live in one of the 20% most deprived areas in England. **BAME residents** (particularly Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean) are more likely to be employed in sectors most impacted by COVID-19 and therefore are more likely to face unemployment. National data also shows that BAME people are less likely to have savings to support themselves if they become unemployed. In particular, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean people have the most limited savings with only 30% in households which have enough to cover one month of income compared to nearly 60% of the rest of the population. ¹

National reports have highlighted the disproportionate financial impact of lockdown on **women**. A study by the Fawcett Society found that 33% of women in employment said their workplaces have been closed compared with 25% of men.² A report by Agenda has also found that women, particularly young women and asylum-seeking women, have faced increased poverty throughout the pandemic, and have faced difficulties accessing food and basic essentials³. These concerns have been echoed by women's groups locally.

Whilst there is currently support available e.g. through the furlough scheme, there is significant concern regarding what will happen as this support ends, that those struggling will be pushed further into poverty, and existing inequality will be heightened. Groups supporting **disabled people** have also raised concerns about financial impacts, as well as the need for accessible and timely communications about any potential changes to direct payments and Care Act assessments. Not having this information adds additional pressure to individuals and this might impact on their mental health.

Asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable migrants. Brighton & Hove is a 'dispersal area' for asylum seekers, meaning there is a small number of single adults

¹ IFS Deaton Review: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/inequality/chapter/are-some-ethnic-groups-more-vulnerable-to-COVID-19-19-than-others/>

² <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/women-are-bearing-the-emotional-brunt-of-the-coronavirus-crisis>

³ <https://weareagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AGD-A-Chance-For-Change-Summary-v4-p2.pdf>

living in Home Office contracted accommodation. The pandemic has prompted central government to communicate more with local government about the asylum seekers living in their areas which enables local services to improve the support offered to asylum seekers. However, the pandemic has added additional delays to the asylum determination process nationally, adding extra pressures to those awaiting the outcomes of their claims, and risking the deterioration of their mental health.

There are concerns that the vulnerable migrant population with **No Recourse to Public Funds** (NRPF), who would usually survive on low paid jobs or within the informal/ 'black economy', are becoming destitute but have no access to universal credit or other benefits. Approximately 27 single adults without access to welfare benefits were originally picked up in the 'Everyone In' housing response for rough sleepers. Most of these people were EU nationals but some were migrants from outside the EU with NRPF. Creating personal housing plans for people in this position is particularly challenging. More people in this position may present to services over the coming months, with no local authority duty or budget which can be engaged to house and support people in this position. This is partly a consequence of the lack of immigration legal advice across Sussex⁴, Without sufficient qualified legal advisors to help people to apply to have the NRPF condition lifted or to regularise their status, this situation becomes even more intractable.

As well as individual poverty, there are wider economic impacts. **Places of Worship** have identified significant impact on revenue, e.g. with loss of funds from hiring out rooms, and not being eligible for support schemes, with concern over long-term impacts. Changes to funding opportunities have been more difficult to negotiate for grassroots **BAME community groups**, for example who may not have access to technology or where English is not the first language of members.

Brighton & Hove has many **LGBTQ** pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants, cafés and shops, providing safe spaces for LGBTQ city residents to come together as well as attracting visitors nationally and internationally. When the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions came into force all LGBTQ spaces closed, some of which may be closed permanently because of the financial impact. LGBTQ events - Brighton Pride, Trans Pride and Brighton Bear Weekender were all cancelled, impacting both the wider economy, LGBTQ Community and Voluntary Sector organisations (who benefited from event fundraising), and LGBTQ communities. This also affects **all communities** through the reduction of funding for intersectional activities and support.

These economic impacts are occurring at a time when there is greater and, due to COVID-19, more complex demands on Community and Voluntary Sector organisations which may impact provision and support available to **all communities**.

⁴ This and other additional pressures facing International Migrants were raised in *International Migrants in Brighton & Hove*, Part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Programme, published in January 2018.

There is a lack of clarity on government support available to charities, and capacity of volunteers is not always equally spread where the community need is.

Recommendations

- Equalities & Access Workstream, Hardship working group and Events & Economy recovery working group to collaborate on actions to mitigate the disproportionate financial and economic impacts of COVID-19 on women, BAME, faith, LGBTQ, and disabled communities.
- Equalities & Access workstream to collaborate with Events & Economy recovery working group on support for BAME businesses.
- Equalities & Access workstream to collaborate with Events & Economy recovery working group on the supporting the recovery of LGBTQ businesses and events in recognition of their contribution to the city economy, to LGBTQ Community and Voluntary Sector organisations, and to LGBTQ communities
- Brighton & Hove City Council to explore how it can best support the Community and Voluntary Sector to respond to increasing need, reduced capacity and growing digital delivery of their services
- Brighton & Hove City Council to produce proactive, explicit and accessible communication that encourages individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) to approach the local authority for advice and support and that clearly explains the assessment processes that will be followed
- BHCC to maintain a cross-council and multi-sector working group to develop ways of supporting people with NRPF and increasing the provision of immigration legal advice in the city
- BHCC to join other Local Authorities to lobby central government to review the impact of immigration-based exclusions from welfare and homelessness assistance

Children and young people

Existing and exacerbated economic inequality creates increased challenges for undertaking home schooling. Families with fewer resources are at risk of their children having worse attainment outcomes than families with more financial security and social capital. This may be due to lack of suitable space to study and/or lack of ICT. Due to existing inequality, this will disproportionately affect **BAME communities** and children of single parents. Where family members do not have English as their first language, or have knowledge of the UK educational system, there are additional barriers. In addition, many **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children** (UASC) had already missed months or even years of education before their arrival in the UK and were just forming habits of learning in a place of stability

and safety – so the impact of the closure of schools and colleges may be disproportionate.

There are additional challenges for single parents, disproportionately **women**, in undertaking home schooling and balancing this with other work or caring responsibilities. Local women's organisations have received some anecdotal reports of domestic abuse perpetrators being allowed to return to the home as single mothers struggle to manage. Women's groups have also reported an increase in child to parent violence and abuse.

Research shows teacher-assessed grades tend to under-predict for **BAME pupils**. The use of predicted grades this year has implications for future life and career opportunities.

Parents from **BAME communities** are particularly concerned about their children returning to school: from those surveyed by Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, no Bangladeshi or Chinese parents wanted their children to return to school.

There are a range of impacts for the cohort of **international students** who have remained in the city and may have been unable to travel home as planned, including anxiety over family at home; isolation; loss of part time work; impact on studies; and food poverty.

There are also concerns about **women** whose children are taken into care in having lost face-to-face contact, and the impact of remote hearings.

Children and young people with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** have been significantly affected during lockdown with 70- 80% reporting worsening mental health concerns (evidenced by Amaze research, mirrored nationally by the Disabled Children's Partnership). Parent carers have concerns about their child's progress or plans for the future as access to (Speech and Language, Physiotherapy, CAMHS and Occupational) therapies or contact with other health services has been reduced. Some families are concerned that their CYP with SEND will be falling (even further) behind in school attainment. Many are highly anxious about returning to school in September, which may have a detrimental impact on their transition back.

Recommendations

- Children & Young People recovery working group to further consider return to school messaging, supporting an inclusive approach, especially for BAME young people and those with SEND.
- Children & Young People recovery working group to consider the specific needs of young refugees and migrants, particularly those who are separated from their families, in the full reopening of schools and other educational provision for young people.
- Children & Young People recovery working group, Community Safety and Cohesion working group, and domestic abuse workstream to raise awareness

amongst appropriate council and partner services about increased risk of child to parent violence and abuse.

Trust and Confidence

The current context has highlighted the issue of lack of some communities' trust and confidence in mainstream statutory services. For example, local community and Voluntary Sector organisation, BMECP reported that people were contacting their **BAME** wellbeing telephone line for COVID-19 support as the households were not confident that if they contacted mainstream services call-takers would be empathetic and adapt their communication appropriately.

Across all communities, we have seen a lack of trust in services and official sources of information including the local and national government and police. This may lead to people not trusting or complying with national guidelines. Some people from **migrant communities** follow news from other countries rather than the UK, leading to misunderstanding of local guidelines. There have been reports of some **BAME women** thinking they cannot go outside at all.

'Test and Trace' systems and measures are also a key concern for all communities. This includes for **migrant communities** who believe their data will be shared with the police; **people with HIV** who are concerned about data security and disclosure of their status; **Womens'** groups have raised concerns for domestic abuse survivors and concerns about security of location and data and how this may be used by perpetrators and **D/deaf** people have highlighted the need for the system to have a range of contact methods to ensure they are not excluded.

LGBTQ people have concerns over the ability for 'Test and Trace' technology to record the proximity information of people in physical spaces that are used by LGBTQ communities, including public sex environments. They have fears over confidentiality and gathered data being used now or in the future to disclose their identities and lead to discrimination against them. This is impacted by historical experiences of communities being 'outed' in the UK and news of the impact in other countries such as South Korea – where some LGBTQ people have been persecuted as a result of 'Test and Trace' technology.

Recommendations

- Brighton & Hove City Council to work with city partners to develop specific communications that build trust and confidence with communities who are at the highest risk of contracting COVID-19.
- Brighton & Hove City Council Public Health teams to work with Community and Voluntary Sector groups to explore equality issues and communities' concerns about 'Test and Trace', providing reassurance where possible.

Communications and digital exclusion

Both **BAME** and **disability community groups** have raised the need for all communications to be in accessible formats, specifically the importance of information being easy to understand (especially for individuals with a learning disability), culturally appropriate, and translated, including into BSL where required.

Much communication by statutory services throughout the pandemic has been online, community members have also benefited from increased online community activity. However, **all communities** have raised the need to consider those who are digitally excluded, in particular for **older people** from across the communities. **Faith communities** have noted that online communication is not a replacement for the sense of connection built via face-to-face contact. Local feedback is that some **LGBTQ people** do not engage with online activity due to fears of discrimination.

BAME groups have raised issues in accessing GPs, particularly for migrants and refugees due to long and complicated answerphone messages, interpreting services not consistently being used, and an inability to book an appointment in person.

Communicating health messages and guidelines to those with **sensory impairments** and **disabled people** is key, as well as communicating to the wider public about being mindful of the challenges disabled people are facing at this time. People with sight loss are affected by difficulties navigating and seeing changes to signage, barriers and judging distances from other people. Guide dogs are not able to recognise queues, and some people are restricted to being guided by a household member. Social distancing and use of face masks make it more difficult for those with a hearing loss or condition to hear or to lip read, including at GP appointments and on public transport. People with certain cognitive conditions may find it hard to maintain or understand social distancing. Some conditions prevent people from being able to wear face masks.

Recommendations

- Brighton & Hove City Council to work in partnership with the Community and Voluntary Sector on the Local Outbreak Communications Plan to ensure that communications are accessible and inclusive, with translated materials and alternative formats used when required.
- Work to increase digital inclusion for older people, and people with learning disabilities (including people with low levels of support and individuals in residential care settings).
- Brighton & Hove City Council to develop a public communications campaign to raise awareness of hidden disabilities, sensory impairments and vulnerabilities that make it more difficult for some residents to follow government guidelines and to encourage considerate behaviours amongst general public.

- PPE Working Group to research alternative PPE to face masks to aid communication and share findings with Community and Voluntary Sector and residents.

Mental and physical health

All communities have faced impacts on their mental and physical wellbeing during this time. **Womens' organisations** have noted an increase in significant mental health concerns including self-harm and suicidal ideation. It has been noted that current services already have long waiting lists (e.g. 18 months for local Community and Voluntary Sector organisation, RISE) and the lockdown will increase this. Mental health support and therapy is likely to be provided online for some time, with issues around trust in the format and access to digital platforms.

Awareness amongst **BAME communities** of their increased risk to COVID-19 causes significant anxiety. This anxiety, in addition to misunderstandings about guidelines, and being less likely to have outdoor space at home, impacted on people's ability to go outside and do physical exercise, also affecting mental health. COVID-19, the lockdown situation and increased police presence has also caused levels of re-traumatisation for **refugees** and for those who are from countries where genocides have taken place. Concerns about the additional impact of COVID-19-related fear and anxiety on those already suffering the effects of complex trauma as a result of conflict, persecution and the experience of forced migration.

Disabled people have noted anxieties about increased health risk and are also impacted by isolation from support systems and reduced access to physical and mental health care. Anxiety around coming out of shielding, return to work (and how this will be managed) and job losses have also been noted.

Faith communities have been impacted by being unable to go to their place of worship and to connect with their congregation, mark and celebrate religious periods and festivals as usual, and changes to burials and funerals.

Local Community and Voluntary Sector partners state that community spaces (pubs, cafes, clubs) and support services are a lifeline to many **LGBTQ people**. The closure of these because of lockdown left many LGBTQ people feeling isolated, impacting their mental health. LGBTQ people are also more likely to have 'chosen family' that they don't live with and so many lost their social support networks due to lockdown restrictions. Many LGBTQ migrate to Brighton from across the UK.

Many of the services that support and enrich the lives of **people with learning disabilities** will not be resuming in the immediate future. For many people these present the only opportunity they have to see friends and socialise, undertake physical activity, education and volunteering. The prospect of ongoing isolation became daunting and caused mounting distress. Those who are independent or had

support to go out into the community faced a rising anxiety about the changes to social distancing rules. People with learning disabilities reported feeling forgotten as they continued to be isolated and not able to mix with their peers.

Many parents whose **SEND children** were eligible for a school place had not taken up places; mainly because of either concern about their children's health or because the right provision was not available. Having children with SEND at home 24/7 is exhausting and challenging, especially without the ability to access other support services, respite or activities. SEND families are also facing financial pressures, through either, or both, a reduction in income or increased costs. One in five said they will go into debt as a result (DCP Disabled Children's Partnership).

Recommendations

- Brighton & Hove City Council-led risk assessments and recovery planning to take account of the needs of people with sensory loss, physical impairments, and mental health problems.
- Brighton & Hove City Council and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust to continue to develop targeted mental health and physical health messaging (e.g. 'Talking Heads' approach) including for BAME, faith, LGBTQ and disabled communities.
- Brighton & Hove City Council and Community and Voluntary Sector to develop alternative physical exercise opportunities for people with learning disabilities, who are often unable to exercise independently or without special venues, equipment or support.
- CCG commissioners to work together with mental health care providers, Brighton & Hove City Council and the Community and Voluntary Sector to restart the development of a specialist trauma care pathway for vulnerable migrant residents based on best-practice in the UK
- CCG and Brighton & Hove City Council to support the development of a network of 'Safe Surgeries' to encourage migrant residents to access primary healthcare, following the guidance of national charity 'Doctors of the World' and their local supporters within the medical profession.

Community Safety

There were anecdotal reports of prejudice and hate incidents at the start of the pandemic, in particular targeting **Chinese and South-East Asian communities**. There have been subsequent reports of international students not wanting to leave university campus due to fear they will be targeted.

There has also been concerns of divisive comments, increased racist messaging, and misinformation about **BAME people** in relation to COVID-19 in national media and materials distributed locally which has caused harm and may have longer term impacts on feelings of safety.

Disabled people, particularly those exempt from wearing face masks, people with hidden disabilities or who experience difficulties with social distancing reported increasing prejudice and hate incidents.

As lockdown restrictions eased there were anxieties from some **LGBTQ residents**, with some **trans and non-binary** and **older LGBTQ** residents feeling particularly vulnerable. People were fearful of discrimination based on their appearance, having not had access to treatments such as electrolysis for hair removal, or access to testosterone. Local feedback indicated that Gender Identity Clinics had also frozen their waiting lists and some gender affirming surgeries have been cancelled. This is within a context of pre-existing concerns of increased transphobia.

Nationally there has been concern about increased domestic violence during lockdown which disproportionately affects **women**. Locally there have been concerns about suitability and safety of emergency housing for women and lack of women-only accommodation. The information was shared with Brighton & Hove City Council's Vulnerable Housing Cell.

With the changing of guidelines and how people meet in public there were reports of sexual harassment incidents targeted at **women** on the beach: the information was shared with local police.

Recommendations

- Homelessness and Housing Working Group to consider feedback and recommendations from Brighton Women's Centre on safety of women in homelessness provision and move-on accommodation.
- Equalities & Access workstream, Domestic Abuse workstream and Community Safety working group to collaborate on understanding the community safety impacts of COVID-19 on different communities and include response in recovery planning.
- Safer Space Working Group to develop guidance and practical advice, as appropriate and viable, to Community and Voluntary Sector groups to support their service users and communities to feel safe and secure accessing outdoor space, including designated 'safe space' areas.

"The pre-existing challenges faced by our beneficiaries have been worsened by the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown. Social isolation has primarily impacted on mental health, loneliness, relationships, addiction, and women's safety. While Brighton Women's Centre has continued to support women remotely, there are limitations to reliance on technology as an equitable long-term solution for those who are marginalised in society. Given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women, particularly single mums, it is imperative that organisations working hard to meet their needs are put at the heart of recovery and renewal planning".

Lisa Dando, Brighton Women's Centre and Community Works Representative

Equalities and Access Actions Progressed

During the emergency response phase of COVID-19, a lot of work in relation to equalities and access took place across many of Brighton & Hove City Council's Cells and Workstreams responding to some of the findings above. This work has taken place alongside the breadth of work being undertaken in the city by Community and Voluntary Sector partners.

Actions progressed, supported by the EAW in this phase included (but were not limited to):

- Links established between EAW and existing cells, ensuring that relevant issues are passed to be actioned, and cells linked directly to communities (e.g. bereavement, domestic abuse, housing, mental health, and children and young people).
- Targeted messaging on funding for BAME businesses and BAME community groups to encourage take-up.
- Consultation on a hardship timeline shared with different community groups to help them best support their clients and mitigate disproportionate financial impact.
- Regular targeted inclusive communications distributed to a diverse list of community groups.
- Translated COVID-19 posters commissioned and provided to retail spaces across the city.
- A newsletter was distributed to homes in the city, including information on support for different communities and translated information about Brighton & Hove City Council's 'Community Hub'
- LGBTQ 'safe spaces' were developed alongside Community and Voluntary Sector partners.
- 'Test and Trace' working group established to respond to the specific findings outlined above.
- Sussex CCG engaged with all local GP surgeries about the accessibility of recorded messages and use of interpreters.
- Targeted mental and physical health messaging was developed.
- Communication of reassurance messaging and hate crime reporting information directly to community groups and via social media.
- Communication of information about Brighton & Hove Buses including a "face covering exemption card".
- Brighton & Hove City Council's Health and Adult Social Care (HASC) team contacted all people in receipt of HASC support, and those who are extremely vulnerable, to offer support.

- HASC contacted all people in receipt of direct payments to ensure they are still receiving support / if they need alternative support.
- British Sign Language (BSL) video on Brighton & Hove City Council website on accessing the Council's 'Community Hub'.
- The EAW met with local University officers and linked them to BAME support organisations in the city to aid a coordinated approach to supporting international students
- Brighton & Hove City Council, schools and health services worked closely with parent carer representatives to hear the most pressing issues from SEND children and young people.
- Risk assessments completed by schools on children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Conclusion

COVID-19 lockdown has caused a wide range of impacts on women, BAME, faith, LGBTQ, and disabled communities. It is likely that these impacts will have a long-term effect, exacerbating existing inequalities.

It is vital that both outbreak and recovery planning includes actions to mitigate these impacts where possible. It is important that the EAW continues to bring partners together, including the Community and Voluntary Sector, to ensure that we continue to understand the development of these impacts and support the implementation of our recommendations into recovery planning.

“Disabled people have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. ‘Conservative estimates’ from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that disabled women are 2.4 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than non-disabled women and disabled men are 1.9 times more likely to die than non-disabled men, with this rising to 11.3 times for disabled females aged nine to 64 and 6.5 times for disabled males aged nine to 64. We look forward to working the Brighton & Hove City Council to support disabled people who have been shielding, those who are struggling with social distancing rules because of their impairment and those are fearful and lack confidence to emerge from lockdown other challenges that have and will confronted disabled people because of the pandemic.”

Geraldine Des Moulins, Possability People and Community Works Representative.

Recommendations

The EAW have generated a range of recommendations to support Brighton & Hove City Council, the Community and Voluntary Sector, and other statutory partners to respond to the challenges above. Many of the issues affect residents across the range of communities our work has focused on. We also have taken an intersectional approach, unless we have explicitly specified that the recommendations are specifically for women, BAME, faith, LGBTQ or disabled communities.

1. Equalities & Access Workstream, Hardship working group and Events & Economy recovery working group to collaborate on actions to mitigate the disproportionate financial and economic impacts of COVID-19 on women, BAME, faith, LGBTQ, and disabled communities.
2. Equalities & Access workstream to collaborate with Events & Economy recovery working group on support for BAME businesses.
3. Equalities & Access workstream to collaborate with Events & Economy recovery working group on the supporting the recovery of LGBTQ businesses and events in recognition of their contribution to the city economy, to LGBTQ Community and Voluntary Sector organisations, and to LGBTQ communities
4. Brighton & Hove City Council to explore how it can best support the Community and Voluntary Sector to respond to increasing need, reduced capacity and growing digital delivery of their services
5. Brighton & Hove City Council to produce proactive, explicit and accessible communication that encourages individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) to approach the local authority for advice and support and that clearly explains the assessment processes that will be followed
6. BHCC to maintain a cross-council and multi-sector working group to develop ways of supporting people with NRPF and increasing the provision of immigration legal advice in the city
7. BHCC to join other Local Authorities to lobby central government to review the impact of immigration-based exclusions from welfare and homelessness assistance
8. Children & Young People recovery working group to further consider return to school messaging, supporting an inclusive approach, especially for BAME young people and those with SEND.
9. Children & Young People recovery working group to consider the specific needs of young refugees and migrants, particularly those who are separated from their families, in the full reopening of schools and other educational provision for young people.
10. Children & Young People recovery working group, Community Safety and Cohesion working group, and domestic abuse workstream to raise awareness

amongst appropriate council and partner services about increased risk of child to parent violence and abuse.

11. Brighton & Hove City Council to work with city partners to develop specific communications that build trust and confidence with communities who are at the highest risk of contracting COVID-19.
12. Brighton & Hove City Council Public Health teams to work with Community and Voluntary Sector groups to explore equality issues and communities' concerns about 'Test and Trace', providing reassurance where possible.
13. Brighton & Hove City Council to work in partnership with the Community and Voluntary Sector on the Local Outbreak Communications Plan to ensure that communications are accessible and inclusive, with translated materials and alternative formats used when required.
14. Work to increase digital inclusion for older people, and people with learning disabilities (including people with low levels of support and individuals in residential care settings)
15. Brighton & Hove City Council to develop a public communications campaign to raise awareness of hidden disabilities, sensory impairments and vulnerabilities that make it more difficult for some residents to follow government guidelines and to encourage considerate behaviours amongst general public.
16. PPE Working Group to research alternative PPE to face masks to aid communication and share findings with Community and Voluntary Sector and residents.
17. Brighton & Hove City Council-led risk assessments and recovery planning to take account of the needs of people with sensory loss, physical impairments, and mental health problems.
18. Brighton & Hove City Council and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust to continue to develop targeted mental health and physical health messaging (e.g. 'Talking Heads' approach) including for BAME, faith, LGBTQ and disabled communities.
19. Brighton & Hove City Council and Community and Voluntary Sector to develop alternative physical exercise opportunities for people with learning disabilities, who are often unable to exercise independently or without special venues, equipment or support.
20. CCG commissioners to work together with mental health care providers, Brighton & Hove City Council and the Community and Voluntary Sector to restart the development of a specialist trauma care pathway for vulnerable migrant residents based on best-practice in the UK
21. CCG and Brighton & Hove City Council to support the development of a network of 'Safe Surgeries' to encourage migrant residents to access primary healthcare, following the guidance of national charity 'Doctors of the World' and their local supporters within the medical profession.

22. Homelessness and Housing Working Group to consider feedback and recommendations from Brighton Women's Centre on safety of women in homelessness provision and move-on accommodation.
23. Equalities & Access workstream, Domestic Abuse workstream and Community Safety working group to collaborate on understanding the community safety impacts of COVID-19 on different communities and include response in recovery planning.
24. Safer Space Working Group to develop guidance and practical advice, as appropriate and viable, to Community and Voluntary Sector groups to support their service users and communities to feel safe and secure accessing outdoor space, including designated 'safe space' areas.

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