

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S
CONFERENCE
RECOMMENDATIONS
23 April 2004**



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About Camden BME Alliance

Camden BME Alliance was established in 2002 at the end of a series of consultations between the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary sector and Camden Council.

The primary function of the new umbrella organisation is to represent the collective voice of BME communities in Camden at a strategic level. The organisation also supports BME communities to participate and engage in community development through open dialogue within the voluntary sector as well as the statutory sector.

Members of the Board of Trustees represent the diverse ethnic groups in Camden. Currently there are representatives from African, Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Cypriot, Irish and Somali communities.

Background to the Conference

According to 2001 Census, black and minority ethnic people represent 47% of the total Camden population. The largest population is from the Bangladeshi community followed by the Somali community. Connexions Mapping Report (2004) noted that Camden's BME youth population (between the ages 10-19 years) accounts for 44.9% of the total young population while the percentage of young BME people in Camden schools is 44.4%.

The BME community in Camden is very diverse and there is a considerable amount of variation between different ethnic groups, particularly in terms of experience and the length of stay in the UK. Despite this, there is a clear determination within BME communities to work with agencies, both voluntary and statutory, in order to remove barriers that have contributed to their disadvantage.

One of the priority areas of work for the Camden BME Alliance over the next three years concerns BME Young People's issues. The BME voluntary sector raised concerns about the support and advice available to BME young people to make informed choices about their education and career futures.

Camden Black and Minority Ethnic Alliance organised a conference event on 23rd April 2004 in order to establish a picture regarding current careers advice service provision and the needs of BME young people and their parents. The conference was successful and attracted a large audience. The Alliance encouraged the various BME communities to participate and contribute to different aspects of the conference from the planning process to the delivery stage. Many agencies, community groups and voluntary organisations worked in partnership and employed mechanisms which would support the continuation of networking and sharing of knowledge and information.

Conference Aims and Objectives

- To identify gaps in career advice services for BME young people
- To identify the current role of parents, career advice services and BME organisations in supporting BME young people
- To identify gaps in the flow of information to BME young people and their parents
- To encourage BME communities, particularly young people, to participate in the shaping of service delivery
- To encourage partnership working and networking
- To establish a holistic approach to young people's issues by bringing together different agencies

Method and Sample

Conference Planning Group

A Conference Planning Group (CPG) was set up to oversee the planning, methodology and development of themes in order to realise the conference objectives.

Members of the CPG included representatives from Camden Black Parents and Teachers Association, Bengali Workers Association, Chinese Community Centre, the British Somali Community, the Winchester Project, Camden LEA, and Youth and Connexions. The group was later enlarged to include young people, parents and school governors. Support was provided throughout the planning process.

This approach was needed to encourage networking and partnership working between the stakeholders. It also empowered young people and parents who did not have the expertise to advocate on issues affecting them; helping them build their confidence and willingness to participate in the shaping of services. This process encouraged participatory learning about services and systems in Camden and the mechanisms employed to lobby on important issues.

The group also agreed on involving elements of cultural celebration through the provision of one of the BME community's cuisine.

Childcare facilities were provided at the conference encouraging participation by women.

Workshops

The CPG agreed a series of focus groups/workshops concentrating on three themes. There were 8 workshops running simultaneously, each lasting 45 minutes. The questions of the workshops were semi-structured. Interpreters in different community languages were provided and participated in workshops when required.

- *Workshop 1*: Focus on quality of education and careers advice services available to BME young people
- *Workshop 2*: Explore ways by which both BME voluntary organisations and parents could work together to support young people
- *Workshop 3*: Explore the level of existing education and careers advice services and any gaps or needs that are not currently being met

Main Findings and Recommendations

Young People

Their experiences

- Current advice provision is limited and young people are often encouraged down certain specific paths
- Most of them had experienced careers advice at 14, 15 or 16 years of age
- Some young people were given advice before their GCSEs
- Sometimes careers advice is provided at lunch times
- One young person said that she had received good advice from her teachers because she had a good personal relationship with her teachers
- Sometimes teachers tend to de-motivate students by only concentrating on their weaker points, rather than being an inspirational role figure for the students
- There was recognition that schools and Personal Advisors (PA) have a large work load
- Young people feel that their parents don't really understand the system

Their recommendations

- Would like careers education to start in Year 8
- Want new one-to-one sessions from an early age
- Career advice should be provided at set times and not during lunchtimes
- Advice given to young people should take into account their hobbies
- Would like Work Experience to be more useful
- Young people want information about skills shortages
- Interested in having Peer Mentoring
- Would like young people who are working to come and speak about the jobs they do
- Wanted more careers support and advice for students who did not have problems
- Would like young people as role models
- Time should be allocated for parents to talk to careers advice service in schools – maybe 3-4 times a year – this would break down the generational gap between the parents and the young people
- Professional parents should come to schools to give presentations on career development
- Wanted parental support but felt that parents needed information themselves
- Invite ex-students to the schools to talk about their experience and further education so that students can learn from these experiences

Their recommendations regarding PAs

- Would like the PAs to be more pro-active by visiting students in their tutorials
- Would like young people working as PAs
- Want PAs to develop one-to-one relationships
- Would like three-way meetings between PA, parents and themselves

Parents

Their recommendations

- There needs to be joint working between the child/young person, the school and the parents – a cross sector partnership
- There needs to be better communication between parents and teachers
- The child needs to be supported and encouraged at every new stage of information and advice
- Parents need encouragement to learn how to support their child through education
- The education system and advice providers need to raise awareness among parents and young people about various options available as the system is very complex
- Felt that the generational gap could be bridged by more contact with teachers and PAs
- There is a need for more parenting courses for parents to understand the different needs of their children at different points of their lives and how to respond
- Parents need to provide positive role models for their children
- Parents need to be involved when key advice is being given to young people
- Important to form a partnership with Connexions

BME Organisations

Their recommendations

- Connexions to include outreach to BME organisations
- Work with schools to provide support for parents
- Have achievement award ceremonies for BME children
- Organise homework clubs, supplementary schools and other activities including developing home language
- There needs to be a better working relationship between different communities and the statutory services – listening to community concerns
- There should be more diversity training for teachers
- There should be an effective language service which different communities can access.
- Act as mediators with schools and take on bullying and harassment issues
- They should lobby the needs of BME communities
- They should monitor the achievements of children from different communities
- BME organisations should provide CRE information to families

What next?

The Camden BME Alliance is supporting the formation of a Steering Group which will include members from all the stakeholder groups. The Group will meet after the dissemination of this report to discuss ways in which to progress the ideas put forward at the conference.

The Steering Group will have to prioritise certain issues and work in a constructive manner. The issues raised cannot be solved easily – there has to be recognition of the barriers which exist as well as the opportunities available. The fact that the conference was well attended by the different stakeholders indicates a willingness to work together on this very important matter of the future of BME young people.

The Steering Group will have to explore how parents, schools and advice services can provide information and support to young people in a coordinated way. The role of BME organisations in this process will also have to be clarified. The suggestions put forward by young people should be integral to any action plan.

The Steering Group will be supported by the Camden BME Alliance. It will need to consider in detail the solutions to this task in hand. It will have a realistic work programme to ensure that the conference has a long term impact on the support

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the BME Community workers, workshop facilitators, childcare workers, exhibitors, caterers, the Camden Centre, guest speakers, parents, young people and everyone who gave their time to make the conference a success.

Conference Planning Group

John Oke	Camden Black Parents and Teachers Association
Anne-Marie Morris-Daley	Camden Black Parents and Teachers Association
Peter Okoye	Camden Black Parents and Teachers Association
Joseph Ho	Camden Chinese Community Centre
Richard Graham	Winchester Project
Enayet Sarwar	Bengali Workers Association
Khadija Shireh	British Somali Community
Vivien Culter	Camden Education Authority
Elaine Twitchin	Youth and Connexions
Laily Thompson	Camden BME Alliance

Partners Involved

Camden BME Alliance (Conference organisers)

Board of Trustees

John Oke, Angela Nairne, Koulla Ioannou, Khadija Shireh, Enayat Sarwar, Sew Peng, Nahar Choudhury, Christopher Aboga, Omar Yusuf and Jerry Kivlehan.

Staff

Laily Thompson, Warsan Fowzi

Voluntary Organisations

- The Caraf Centre (Camden Black Parents and Teachers Association)
- Winchester Project
- Sudanese Women Against Violence
- Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre
- British Somali Community
- Camden Cypriot Women's Organisation
- Camden Chinese Community Centre
- Somali Community Centre
- Centre for Filipinos
- Bengali Workers Association
- Congolese Action Group in the UK
- Somali Youth Development Resource Centre

Statutory

- Vivien Cutler (Camden Education Authority)
- Elaine Twitchin (Connexions)

Commission for Racial Equality

- Audrey Quansah-Abakah

Young People

- Amir Deng
- Imani Graham
- Pervin Aktar
- Hooda Abdi

School Governors

- Abdul Jalil
- Abdul Farah
- Marcia Bonner

Interpreters, Facilitators and Note Takers:

Muna Khugali, Fowzia Abdi, Kifaya Tinay, L.K. Chong, Ragia Ishag, Fathia Mohamed, Naheem Choudhury, Arti Nanda, Jeba Waheed, Patrick Mesquita, Adam Demosthenous, Dave Francis, Shahida Rahman, Marcia Bonner.

Speakers

Cllr Nash Ali is the first Bangladeshi Mayor of Camden. He has lived in Camden for twenty years and attended South Camden Community School where he later went on to become co-opted Governor. Since the age of fourteen, Cllr Ali has been involved in voluntary work. He has a keen interest in, and commitment to, valuing and promoting the views of young people and diverse communities.

Amir Deng is a Year Ten student at Maria Fidelis Convent School.

Vivien Cutler is Assistant Director of Education for Camden. Her role covers Early Years and Sure Start, School Standards, Youth and Connexions, Training and Media and Adult and Community Learning. She chairs Camden Children's Fund Partnership and the borough wide 14-19 steering group. Vivien worked as the Head Teacher of two secondary schools in Tower Hamlets and then Islington before joining Camden four years ago.

Audrey Quansah-Abakah is the Commission for Racial Equality's Public Duty Officer, Education in the London and South Region.

Imani Graham is 17 years old and studying at Hampstead School 6th form. She is currently doing her A-levels in Psychology, Sociology and English. She is planning to do Psychology at university in September.

Pervin Aktar is 18 years old and planning to become a beautician aspiring to owning her own business. She will be attending a beauty therapy course next month at the London College of Beauty Therapy.

Hooda Abdi finished high school last year and is currently studying for a BTEC in I.T. at City and Islington College.

Abdul Farah has been living and working in Camden since he came to London from Somalia in 1991. He is involved in many community initiatives including being one of the founding members of the Somali Community Centre where he has been working since 1996. He was also Chair of Abbey Community Centre for three years as well as being involved with the setting up of Camden Training Network. Abdul is currently a parent governor at Primrose Hill Primary School.

Marcia Bonner has lived in Camden for the last seven years and currently works as a Community Involvement Worker for Sure Start Kentish Town and heads the Educational Project working in primary schools for the Caraf Centre. Marcia also runs a Strengthening Families Parenting course. She is mother to 3 children and has been a school governor for the past three years. She is passionate about working in the community and is currently volunteering to teach Black History.

Abdul Jolil grew up in Camden and attended South Camden Community School. He is passionate about education being a vehicle to self improvement and success. He is now a co-opted Governor at South Camden School Community School and works as an IT Consultant.

Elaine Twitchin works for Camden LEA as Connexions Manager in the Youth and Connexions Service. Previously she worked as a Work Related Learning Advisor in Camden Education Business Partnership. Her careers background working as an advisor to Prospects Career Services and as a careers co-ordinator in Haringey schools has given her an understanding of the need for all young people and parents to receive information and guidance around career choices.

Laily Thompson is the Director of Camden Black and Minority Ethnic Alliance. She has worked in Camden for the last 10 years in the voluntary and community sector. Apart from working at Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre, Laily has also chaired Camden Racial Equality Council and SureStart Euston.

Programme

Young People's Conference

9.30am - 2pm, 23 April 2004

Camden Centre

09.30-10.00	Registration and coffee
10.00-10.10	Cllr Nash Ali, Mayor of Camden
10.10-10.20	Hopes and aspirations of a student at Maria Fidelis School Amir Deng
10.30-10.40	Camden context – where do BME young people go for further studies Vivien Cutler – Assistant Director of Education, Camden
10.40-10.50	Race Relations Amendments Act - statutory duty around raising achievement and further education and careers advice Audrey Quansah-Abakah, Public Duty Education Officer, CRE
10.50-11.00	Current experience of young people in terms of careers advice Imani Graham, Pervin Akhtar and Hooda Abdi Winchester Project, Bengali Workers Association and British Somali Community
11.00-11.10	Role of parents, role models, what are the issues Camden Black Parents and Teachers Association and Camden's Governor Support Team Abdul Jolil, Abdul Farah, Marcia Bonner
11.10-11.20	Role of good advice – what is being done, how is quality being evaluated Elaine Twichin, Youth and Connexions in Camden
11.20-11.30	Role of BME organisations Laily Thompson, Director Camden BME Alliance
11.30-12.30	Workshops
12.30-1.00pm	Feedback from workshops
1.00-2.00	Lunch

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