

Engaging with specific community groups –

BME Communities

Understanding the community: what do we know?

The BME community is not a single cultural group, but is made up of different and diverse communities with different needs; some groups have a long history as residents of the borough, where others do not.

Lambeth is a highly diverse community which is home to nearly a third of a million people. 142 languages are spoken and only 40% of residents are white British, with 25% being black, as well as significant Latin American and Portuguese speaking populations. Lambeth is a destination for many migrants, particularly young people, and 12% of the population changes each year.

Black people make up a quarter of the population (25%). Lambeth's largest non-white ethnic group is black African (11.5%), followed by black Caribbean (9.8%). Lambeth has the second largest proportion of black Caribbean people in London (9.5%) after Lewisham (11%). Lambeth has a very small Asian population compared to many places in London. Only 7.8% of Lambeth residents are from Asian backgrounds (including Chinese), much less than the inner London average (14.5%).

Do's

- **Try to understand the different cultures within the BME community in relation to things like dress, physical contact, cultural behaviour, community languages and food**
- **Engage with BME organisations as they have links across the community. These groups may respond better to voluntary sector organisations**
- **Support BME organisations to make wider links with existing networks and statutory organisations**
- **Consider the need to translate information**
- **Provide culturally-specific food such as halal, kosher and vegetarian**
- **Be aware of cultural celebrations, and ensure there are no clashes with events– consult a faith calendar**
- **Go into the community to hold events so the community is comfortable and the location is neutral**
- **Encourage BME residents to join in civic life e.g. taking part in events, joining tenants' organisations or the boards or steering groups of projects or initiatives in the borough**

Don'ts

- **Assume that all BME cultures are the same**
- **Ignore the networks that BME organisations have**
- **Engage with BME organisations in a silo without making wider connections for them in the community**
- **Only provide information in one format**
- **Assume that all communities work on the same schedule as the council**
- **Make the community come to the council**
- **Think that just because BME residents are not currently involved in civic life it means that they are not interested in further opportunities in this area**

Faith Communities

Understanding the community: what do we know?

Faith groups are conduits to large numbers of people. Over 60% of Lambeth residents have a religion and 28% have no religion. Christians (53%) and Muslims (7%) are the largest group of residents by religion, which have differing ethnic profiles. In broad terms, Lambeth's Christian population is about 34% white British, 18% other white, 15% black African and 13% black Caribbean. The Muslim population is about 31% Asian, 33% black African and 10% other ethnic group. Over a quarter of residents have no religion. These are overwhelmingly white British (60%), white other (15%), and 9% of mixed ethnic groups.

Do's

- **Ensure you have the contacts of the key organisations that represent faith groups: mosques, churches, temples, synagogues, gurdwaras etc.**
- **Make sure that meetings are timed appropriately e.g. not during the time Muslims break fast in Ramadan.**
- **Ensure refreshments are appropriate e.g. kosher, halal, vegetarian**
- **Dress appropriately when visiting or hosting faith representatives**
- **Engage with local interfaith organisations as they will help you gain a greater understanding of the communities, as well as having links with faith groups**
- **Develop relationships with people in faith community to develop an awareness of community politics or specific issues**
- **Develop relationships within communities. There are usually communities within communities who do not often get an opportunity to be involved- do research to find out where these sections come together**
- **Have meetings at a neutral location or, if multifaith, try and vary the faith-based venues**
- **Consider the need to translate information**

Don'ts

- **Initiate physical contact such as hand shaking with faith members as some orthodox communities may not be comfortable with this**
- **Assume that members of the same faith will be the same- there is a mix of liberal and orthodox in any faith group and a range of sects and denominations**
- **Hold meetings at places where this is alcohol**

Portuguese community

Understanding the community: what do we know?

The Portuguese speaking community in Lambeth is large and embedded, and can be difficult to penetrate and research. The community possesses many valuable people and organisations that make a noticeable effort to act in a socially responsible manner. Recent successes show that people are working hard to improve their own community. Furthermore, the vast majority of key stakeholders and endorsers display a willingness to work with the communications team to improve the lives of Portuguese speakers in Lambeth

Do's

- **Talk to as many and as varied an amount of people as possible (less than 3 people present, 30m-1h30m, had over 30 face to face meetings and more via email)**
- **Ask interviewees for recommendations for further contacts for engagement**
- **Undertake a thorough scoping exercise before starting engagement (work out what the desired outcome would be so that research can be structured and focused accordingly)**
- **Keep it sustainable (build a contact list of stakeholders and endorsers so that they can get feedback and be kept in the loop for future actions)**
- **Make people feel at ease so they share information (stop idea that they could get in trouble talking to the council, be personable, share reasons behind research- by the end people were talking about it and approaching researcher themselves)**
- **Consider the need to translate information**
- **Use established social media platforms**
- **Help to explain how the council's works, both in terms of services and politically**
- **Use existing events to engage e.g. Day of Portugal**

Don'ts

- **Assume all members of the Portuguese community want have the same needs- older generations are more likely to speak less English and suffer from isolation, women have less access to formal social gatherings**
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Polish community

Understanding the community: what do we know?

Polish people have become a major presence within Lambeth. The Polish population are increasingly visible in the borough, especially in Streatham, where there are an increasing number of Polish shops and restaurants. However, this visibility is in stark contrast to the representation of Poles within local political forums and decision making processes, where the community is virtually silent.

Do's

- **Work with Polish speaking groups, as these have a much wider reach through the community**
- **Consider the need to translate information**
- **Help to explain how the council's works, both in terms of services and politically**
- **Engage with families as this helps to capture a wide age range**

Don'ts

- **Assume all members of the community are the same. There is a generational gap between older members who do not speak English well and are more isolated, and younger members who have more of a European identity and focus on their careers**
- **Use negative stereotypes when referring to the Polish or Eastern European community**

Business community

Understanding the community: what do we know?

Businesses are important to the borough. Lambeth is a place where businesses are welcome and encouraged to grow and engaging with businesses to help create this sustainable business base is vital. It is important to remember that businesses are users of local public services; services provided in an area and the physical environment can have a big impact on their profitability.

When engaging businesses in Lambeth, remember that in Lambeth there are many sole-person and family businesses owned and run by local residents who will also engage with local services in that capacity. Remember also that businesses will be keenest to engage on the issues that have an immediate impact on their trade.

Do's

- **Hold meetings when business are not open**
- **Make the issues relevant to the business**
- **Think local and have smaller events close to businesses**
- **Reduce the burden on businesses by joining up with other engagement activities**
- **Use local business networks that bring together business support organisations**
- **Use businesses to engage with other similar businesses e.g. geographical area, sector**
- **Show results from the work**
- **Be clear on timelines**
- **Remember that business owners are people too! Avoid jargon and be clear and concise**

Don'ts

- **Hold events during working hours as businesses may lose money by attending**
- **Be vague about the outcomes of the work**
- **Make businesses have to travel a long distance**
- **Forget that businesses are their own community with existing networks**

Children and Young People

Understanding the community: what do we know?

Clarity is particularly important when working with young people. If you have £20,000 to improve an existing youth facility – say that. Be clear about the context in which you are engaging and what the boundaries are. It is extremely important that the findings of any engagement and subsequent action that has been taken is fed back to young people.

Lambeth has a well-established Youth Council and a number of peer educators. Be sure to inform them of any events you plan and seek their advice and support.

The Protection of Children Act 1999 requires that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are conducted for anyone working with children. The definition of ‘working with children’ is contained within the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. Lambeth Council has a CRB policy which it may be useful to consult before undertaking a project involving consultation with children. Remember that when working with young people of certain age groups or tackling specific issues you may be required to gain the permission of their parent/carer in advance.

Do's

- **Use facilities that CYP use on a regular basis e.g. schools, play centres, nurseries, libraries, sport centres, community workers, youth workers, Connexions etc.**
- **Involve parents and carers**
- **Make sure the literature being used is attractive to young people and age appropriate**
- **Organise fun activity-based events**
- **Tailor your work to specific ages- only a few years difference can mean the engagement needs to be altered**
- **Think about the timing and venue depending on the season**
- **Consider your clothing**

Don'ts

- **Randomly approach children in informal settings**
- **Assume that all CYP have the same views and priorities**
- **Make CYP come into formal and intimidating professional settings**
- **Wear formal office wear or try too hard to wear ‘youthful’ fashions**

Carers

Understanding the community: what do we know?

Men, women and children may have childcare and other caring responsibilities. Your methodology and approach needs to take this into account. There will be different approaches dependent on the group, your aims and your budget.

Do's

- **Remember carers have very busy lives and may have jobs alongside their caring responsibilities**
- **Seek help and support from statutory or voluntary agencies that also support and deal with issues relating to the people they care for e.g. Age Concern**
- **Find out if crèche provision is needed**
- **Post notices of events in local day care centres, GPs surgeries, health centres, community centres, schools etc.**
- **Use events like Carers Week to target activities**

Don'ts

- **Forget that carers have other responsibilities**
- **Have events when carers would need to collect their children or during holidays (unless there are child-friendly activities)**
- **Ignore the other organisations that carers interact with**

Disabled people

Understanding the community: what do we know?

Disabled people are often more likely to use a range of services from all key partners including the voluntary, faith and community sectors, health, police and social services.

You may find it difficult to identify the groups that need to be engaged. A good place to start is to make use of those people who have existing expertise in this area. External agencies can often act as intermediaries and it may be possible to work with community leaders to build relationships.

The Care Standards Act 2000 requires that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are conducted for anyone working with vulnerable adults. This ensures the suitability of those working with vulnerable people, thus protecting them from neglect or abuse.

Do's

- **Consider the barriers for access, not just in terms of physical barriers but accessible language and information**
- **Ensure that you find out people's requirements when organising the event**
- **Use existing networks and organisations run by and/or for disabled people**
- **Remember that not all impairments are visible or obvious**
- **Consider involving people in their home or in a venue that they are used to**
- **Allow for longer comfort breaks due to the scarcity of disabled facilities**
- **Ask if people would like a family member, carer or support worker present**
- **Make it clear that it is the disabled person's opinion that you are interested in, not the person they are with**

Don'ts

- **Forget that accessibility is about more than just physical access but also how language and information is presented**
- **Make assumptions about people's abilities or needs**
- **Focus on the supporter or advocate they are with instead of the person themselves**
- **Assume that traditional group settings are the best way to engage**

LGBT Community

Understanding the community: what do we know?

In addition to its own Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) resident population, Lambeth also hosts a substantial LGBT social and commercial scene.

Do's

- **Use existing research and consultations that have been done with the community e.g. LGBT Matters**
- **Use the LGBT police liaison officer in the borough**
- **Work with existing community champions and officers**
- **Work with outreach workers**
- **Work with LGBT organisations that exist**
- **Use LGBT channels that already exist e.g. cafes, bars, publications, internet**
- **Facilitate in neutral spaces**
- **Remember that there are communities within the community who don't always get involved who need to be accessed**
- **Remember that LGBT overlaps with other areas like faith, age, ethnicity**

Don'ts

- **Assume that all LGBT communities are the same**
- **Ignore existing LGBT channels or organisations and the networks that these bring**
- **Have a narrow focus and ignore the broader London or national LGBT context**

Older people

Understanding the community: what do we know?

Engaging with older people is a principal means of empowering them. Although there is increased awareness of the need to engage with older citizens when formulating and delivering policies and services, the challenge is to identify and use effective models that will ensure active engagement.

Do's

- **Find out where the concentrations of older people are in the borough**
- **Engage with groups, organisations and networks that work with older people already e.g. Age Concern**
- **Hold events in places where older people go e.g. lunch clubs**
- **Think about the time and place for meeting e.g. is it after dark, is it an accessible venue**
- **Ask how older people want feedback as not all will want or use technology**

Don'ts

- **Make assumptions about older people and the amount of energy, enthusiasm or experience they may have**
- **Ignore the wider networks that are already in place**
- **Hold events in hard to reach places or late at night**

