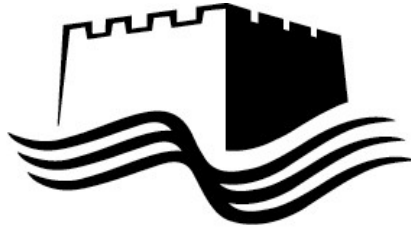


# **Supporting New Communities, Case Study of the Somali Community**



**TOWER HAMLETS**

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
May 2011**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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The Working Group would like to thank the officers and partners that supported this review. The views and perspectives of all those involved have been fundamental in shaping the final recommendations. We would like to particularly thank the service users that participated in the various focus groups and so willingly shared their experiences with us. We hope that this report goes some way in responding to the many issues they raised.

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**Contributions to focus groups were received from the following organisations and their service users:**

Ocean Somali Community Association

Somali Integration Team

Somali Senior Citizens Club, Granby Hall

Somali Luncheon Club, Mayfield House

Women's Health and Family Service, Brady Arts Centre

Praxis

## Chair's Foreword

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One Tower Hamlets is our aspiration to reduce poverty and inequality, bring local communities closer together and providing strong leadership by involving and empowering people and giving them the tools and support to improve their lives.

We have one of the most diverse boroughs in London; the borough has historically been a settling ground for migrants and new communities. Today, we still see new communities making the borough their home. But how do we as a Council support these new communities? How do we engage with them? And how do we integrate them into mainstream society? These were some of the key questions that led me to undertake a scrutiny review on what more we can do to support new communities in the borough, particularly considering a period where local authorities have less money to spend.

I was keen to use the Somali community as a case study to see what more we could do for new and small communities. The Working Group went out into the community and spoke to women, young people who attend youth centres, older people who attend luncheon clubs and also third sector organisations that work with our Somali residents. We also heard from the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Greater London Authority and the Migrants Rights Network on programmes currently being delivered nationally and regionally to support new communities. Evidence was also received from Council Officers on our current approach to supporting new and small communities. Can I take this opportunity to thank everyone for their valuable contributions in shaping our recommendations.

Our recommendations focused on local concerns which have emerged from the extensive engagement we undertook with different groups. We have highlighted the need to better understand new and small communities and this was linked to having better data to inform policy and service development. Better access to services was also highlighted and in particular how we engage with new and small communities and the role of advocacy work. The voice and representation of new and small communities was also key, particularly how the Council and third sector organisations can facilitate a platform for these communities to speak out and become community leaders and champions. Finally we have made recommendations around community cohesion and the need for our services to work closer together rather than just concentrating on specific communities, this is not to say that specialised services aren't needed in some instances.

I see this piece of work as a start to us better supporting new communities. I have recognised the important impact the public sector finance will have on local service provision and therefore it is now more important than ever to help new communities integrate and access services they require rather than being sidelined. I hope the Mayor and his Cabinet fully consider our recommendations.

**Cllr Ahmed Omer**  
**Scrutiny Lead, One Tower Hamlets**

## **Recommendations**

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The working group recommendations set out the areas requiring consideration and action by the Council and the Tower Hamlets Partnership to support new communities in the borough.

### **Understanding the Needs of New and Small Communities**

- R1 That the Chief Executive's Directorate supports the Council and Partnership to better understand the needs of new and small communities by:
- Developing more sophisticated data gathering techniques so we know the demographics of our communities better. This data should then be used to plan policy and service developments.
  - Undertake consultation exercises to pick out common needs between new and small communities and use this when planning mainstream services.
  - Amend the equalities analysis template and guidance to include how mainstream services will meet the needs of new and small communities in the borough.

### **Access to Services**

- R2 That the Employment Strategy and subsequent action plans specifically outline how it will support new and small communities access employment with key public sector organisations
- R3 That the Third Sector Team and the Council for Voluntary Services supports advocacy work in the borough aimed at new and small communities. This should include mapping which organisations currently deliver advocacy work and how this can be improved through greater joined up and partnership working.
- R4 That the Corporate Communications Team refreshes how it engages and reaches out to new and small communities and explores innovative methods of communication considering a reduction in public finances.
- R5 That the Chief Executive's Directorate ensures any new communities welcome packs are updated and refreshed on an annual basis and this is easily available and acts as the first point of call for new communities to access local services.

### **Voice and Representation**

- R6 That the Citizen Engagement Strategy clearly outlines how the Partnership will engage with new and small communities in the borough.

- R7 That the Third Sector Team, The Partnership and the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services capacity build community organisations to act as a mechanism to encourage greater voice and representation within small and new communities and develop pathways to which their voice can be heard, such as through area based forums.

### **Community Cohesion**

- R8 That the Third Sector Team and the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services encourage and support third sector organisations to work in partnership and build consortiums when applying for bids in order to increase cross cultural working and promote greater cohesion.
- R9 That the Council's procurement and commissioning process encourages greater integration and cohesion between communities by including elements of how prospective organisations will be inclusive of new communities during the tendering process.



## Introduction

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1. Tower Hamlets has one of the most diverse communities in the country, its demographics have changed dramatically in the past half century with the Huguenots, Irish, Jews, Bangladeshis and, more recently, Somalis making the borough their home. The purpose of this review was to look at how the Council and partners meet the needs of new communities that settle in the borough and how it meets the requirements of the borough's smaller existing communities. The review used the Somali Community as a case study and examined three key areas:

- Identify methods of increasing access to service provisions for new communities
- Increase the voice and representation of new communities, particular in community leadership positions
- Examine how the Partnership can continue to meet the needs of new communities considering a period of efficiency savings

2. The Working Group held the following meetings and visits;

### **Review meeting 1**

- Members agreed the scoping document for the review and heard evidence from the Department for Communities and Local Government, Greater London Authority and the Migrant Rights Network on the national and regional context of new communities and what support was currently available to them.

### **Review meeting 2**

- The Working group heard evidence on the Council's current approach to meeting the needs of new communities and considered current statistics relating to new communities in the borough.
- Evidence was received from the Equalities Team, Strategy and Performance and Third Sector and External Funding teams.

### **Review meeting 3**

- A round table discussion was held with various service providers based in the borough to identify what services were currently being delivered to meet the needs of the Somali community and new communities in the borough.
- Evidence was received from those working in education, employment, youth services, policing, housing and supporting elder people.

#### **Review meeting 4 – Focus Group 1**

- The first focus group took place with young people from the Somali community to hear their concerns. A total of 17 young people attended this session which also included representation from the Council's youth service.

#### **Review meeting 5 – Focus Group 2**

- A focus group took place at the Grandby Day Care Centre's Luncheon Club with 8 service users from the older Somali Community participating.

#### **Review meeting 6 – Focus Group 3**

- A focus group with 5 service users took place at the Council run Mayfield House day care centre. Evidence was also given by the Adult, Health and Wellbeing Directorate at this session.

#### **Review meeting 7 – Focus Group 4**

- Members heard from a group of 9 elder women from the Somali community at the Brady Centre's Women's Health and Family Support Project.

#### **Review meeting 8 – Focus Group 5**

- The final focus group meeting took place with third sector organisations that are involved in delivering services for the Somali community in the borough in order to identify possible gaps in services as well as how services can work closer together considering a period of efficiency savings.

#### **Review meeting 9 – Focus Group 6**

- Members visited Praxis to find out about the work carried out by the organisation to support new communities as well as some of the challenges that are currently being faced locally in these areas.

#### **Review meeting 10**

At this final session Members discussed and agreed draft recommendations for the review.

3. The final report of this review will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Mayor and his Cabinet will then prepare an action plan outlining their response to the recommendations which will be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis.

## Background

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### National context

4. Migration to the United Kingdom and the emergence of new communities in the country is common. Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show that net migration to the UK rose by 36% in 2010 to 226,000 with 572,000 entering the UK and 346,000 emigrating<sup>1</sup>.
5. The statistics can further be explored in that<sup>2</sup>:
  - Of those granted settlement in the UK in 2009, 68% were dependants of those already living in the country
  - Migrants from the Indian sub-continent made up to largest proportion of settlement grants, 34%. Of the remainder 25% were from Africa and 21% from elsewhere in Asia
  - The number of Polish migrants coming to the UK in 2009 fell 22% to 118,675, from 151,870 in 2008
  - But the number from Latvia and Lithuania increased considerably - the former from 6,005 to 16,020, and the latter from 10,550 to 15,815
  - Nearly a quarter of all births, 24.6%, in 2009 were to mothers born outside the UK
  - In the London borough of Newham, which has the highest number of births to foreign-born mothers in the country, the figure was 75.7%
6. The Working Group heard from Don Flynn, Director at the Migrants Rights Network (MRN) who suggested that the top 10 nationalities registering for National Insurance numbers in 2009/10 were from India, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Romania, France, Nigeria and Nepal. Furthermore, 66.9% of non-UK citizens were employed compared to 70.1% of UK citizens. Reasons for this included the fact that there is a younger age profile of new migrants and a high number are economic migrants.
7. Jane Everton from the Department for Communities and Local Government presented on the Coalition government's policy on supporting new communities and neighbourhood working in general through its Big Society Agenda. The notion that greater power be given to local authorities was a key aspect. Local people knew their community best and hence service delivery should be determined at a local level by how local authorities feel best rather than have central government dictate to them where they should spend.
8. Although there would be a reduction in funding, it was highlighted that there would be more freedom on how this money was spent rather than local authorities having to worry about feeding back to central government and responding to a number of National Indicators and targets. The decentralisation of power coupled with greater flexibility in spending also meant fewer ring fenced funds; an example here included the Migration Impact Grant, which has now been mainstreamed. Members heard that a bottom up approach would be used

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/mig0211.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11094468>

to identify and solve local priorities and issues. However if issues could not be solved at a local neighbourhood level then central government could be engaged with in order to overcome local problems when and where needed.

9. The Greater London Authority currently has a programme of support to help integrate new communities into mainstream society. According to the most recent estimates, 32% of London's residents and nearly 36% of its workforce were born outside the UK. At the last census in 2001, 27% of Londoners were born abroad. The skills of migrants make a massive contribution to London's economy; the average migrant has more qualifications than those born in the city. Migrants play a big role London's workforce; in 2007 68% of care assistants and 48% of social workers were born outside the UK. The NHS is highly reliant on doctors and nurses from overseas. London's catering industry, essential to its role as a tourist destination, also relies heavily on migrant labour. Workers from abroad in many sectors help drive the growth that makes London the powerhouse of Britain's economy.
10. The Mayor's refugee integration strategy is at the core of this and includes the London Strategic Migration partnership and the Migrant and Refugee Advisory Panel. The strategy has seven core themes which includes English, housing, employment and skills, health, children and young people, community safety and community development. The strategy is currently in its second year; however its first year actions included the following which are relevant to this review:
  - Access to services for new communities:
    - ensure housing information is available to refugees
    - support establishment of mental health practitioners forum for better access to mental health
  - Integrating young people from new communities into mainstream services:
    - Ensure that 14-19 service meet the needs of refugee children and young people
    - Support engagement by refugee children and young people through peer outreach
  - Increasing the voice and representation of new communities:
    - Promote access to volunteering and mentoring opportunities for refugees
11. The Working Group at the outset identified the Somali Community as a case study for this review. Somalis have migrated to the UK since the late nineteenth century. The first Somalis came to live in England in the 1880s as seamen in the British Merchant Navy, usually settling in major ports around the UK. Recent research indicates that the Somali community are one of the largest refugee

communities in London. According to Harris (2004)<sup>3</sup>, there have been Somali arrival patterns in the UK in different phases and stages.

12. The initial stages of settlement began in the nineteenth century, during the colonial association with the northern part of Somalia (formerly Somaliland). By the turn of the twentieth century there was a sizeable presence of the Somali community in the dockland areas of London, Cardiff, and Liverpool, with smaller settlements in Newport, Southampton, Bristol, Hull, and South Shields. The second stage of the early settlement began at the end of the 1950s. The demand for seamen reduced, but economic growth in Britain meant that there were opportunities for employment in the steel and coal industries. Somali communities began to re-settle and move to areas such as Sheffield, Manchester and Bristol. It was during this time that the present Somali community was established in Tower hamlets.
13. Although this review will look particularly at the Somali community as a case study, the context of the many waves of migration amongst this group is similar to that of asylum seekers and migrants from other communities. For example the outbreak of civil war in 1971 coupled with economic opportunities for migrants had also led the Bangladeshi community to the UK.

### **Local context**

14. Tower Hamlets has a unique demographic profile even in comparison to other diverse boroughs across Britain. In 2001 just over half the population was White British, a third was Bangladeshi and the rest of the population was made up of a large number of much smaller but significant ethnic minority communities including African, Caribbean, Somali, Indian and Chinese communities. New migrants continue to move into the borough with some of the highest numbers coming from Bangladesh, Poland, Australia, Lithuania, India, France and Italy<sup>4</sup>.
15. Since 2001 the population of Tower Hamlets has grown significantly from 202,000 to around 239,000, four times higher than the rate of increase across London as a whole. Over the next 10 to 15 years the borough is expected to see the largest and fastest growth in population in London; by 2012 the population is expected to rise by 9% and by 2026 by a further 27%. This huge growth in population is not however expected to change dramatically the relative proportions of the White British and Bangladeshi communities living in Tower Hamlets will continue to account for approximately a half and a third of the population.
16. Although smaller minority communities will continue to account for a much smaller proportion of the population than White British and Bangladeshi groups, in absolute terms the increase in the numbers of people from smaller BME groups living in the borough will be significant. Over the next few years a 9% rise in the White British population, a 6% rise in the Bangladeshi population and an 11% percent rise in all other smaller minority groups. Of the smaller communities

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<sup>3</sup> The Somali Community in the UK: What we know and how we know it, Harris, H. (2004)

<sup>4</sup> New Communities in Tower Hamlets: Characteristics, Trends and Challenges, Praxis, 2007

the biggest change expected is in the Chinese population (18%) and the smallest change amongst the Black Caribbean population (0%)<sup>5</sup>

17. The term 'new migrant' refers to people who migrated to Britain within the last five years. Research on new migrants in Tower Hamlets shows that there is a growing trend of people emigrating to the borough from Bangladesh and Somalia. However the rate of people arriving from Eastern Europe is higher and increasing, particularly from Lithuania and Poland. A less steep increase is evident in people from Latin America particularly Columbia and Brazil. In addition there are other new communities from a wide range of different countries, but frequently in small numbers, which suggests a tendency towards hyper diversity in the population.
18. The trend of newcomers from refugee and asylum seeking communities continues, but it is not as steep as that of those entering from the "Accession 8" (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) countries which joined the European Union in 2008. Findings also confirm that new communities tend to be young (under 40) and that there are more women than men.
19. There are three main reasons why people come to live in Tower Hamlets:
  - Social networks including friends or family already living in the area
  - Employment opportunities
  - Availability of comparatively affordable accommodation
20. Contrary to assumptions many new communities, including those from Eastern Europe, intend to stay in the borough for a long time. This development suggests that people from these communities will be increasingly represented in take up of services including housing, healthcare and schools. With the exception of those from Latin America, new communities tend to be relatively less well qualified than other groups living in Tower Hamlets; 15% have no qualifications and 55% have only graduated from secondary school. There are some differences between people of different regional origin. For example, 22% of Eastern Europeans have some sort of diploma and 20% of Latin Americans have a first degree. Many newly arrived communities experience extremely high levels of unemployment. Local research confirms that levels of unemployment among new communities varies significantly, with rates varying from 79% of people from Africa, 58% from Asia and 36% from European Union Accession states.
21. Although some research has been carried out on the Somali community nationally there is not a substantial amount of literature on the Somali community. Some of the research and report findings are as follows;
22. The London Metropolitan University carried out a 'Needs Assessment of Somali Young People Living in Tower Hamlets'<sup>6</sup> (2001). The assessment identified:

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<sup>5</sup> London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Race Equality Scheme, 2009 - 2012

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/dass/research/cser/papers\\_reports/](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/dass/research/cser/papers_reports/)

- High levels of unemployment and patterns of long-term unemployment across the Somali population;
- High levels of dependence on state welfare and support;
- An over-representation of Somalis in manual forms of work and an under-representation in managerial employment; and
- A very limited presence and impact on the local economy as the Somali population lacks any extensive economic footprint in terms of business owned and the size of business establishment owned.

23. In another research carried out by the London Metropolitan University about the Somali Children's Educational Progress and Life Experiences in the UK<sup>7</sup> found that:

- London hosts the largest Somali community, with Camden/Islington/Haringey, Ealing/Brent and Tower Hamlets/Newham/Redbridge being the largest areas of settlement.
- Outside London the largest communities are in Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Cardiff and Leicester. Many cities have smaller Somali communities.

24. The social welfare issues emerged among research is mostly, unemployment and extreme poverty;

- Male unemployment is probably in excess of 70%.
- Overcrowded housing is also an issue highlighted in many studies. Clearly there are implications for school aged children as it is difficult to study in a severely overcrowded house.

25. The Tower Hamlets Partnership commissioned a report on the Somali Community in July 2009<sup>8</sup> with the main research findings revealing a community of increasing numbers while exact numbers were difficult to confirm but some difficulties in terms of accessing some services. The report highlighted that:

- **Language barrier** is a major issue for access to Council services
- **Cultural barrier** there are certain beliefs and perceptions that also contribute to preventing some Somalis from tapping into services. This inadvertently creates a lack of integration and community cohesion. In addition it is believed that some Somalis often make negative comparisons between services here and those they experienced in Somalia.
- **Communication:** there is a concern echoed by the Somali residents that there is an increasing gap between the service provider's consultation groups and the Somali community; the community's lack of involvement in Council-led initiatives is evident.

## Tower Hamlets Community Plan

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/library/y24534\\_3.pdf](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/library/y24534_3.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Tower Hamlets Somali Community Research, Isman Warsama, July 2009

26. The importance of new communities in the borough is highlighted in the Tower Hamlets Community Plan<sup>9</sup> which states:

*'Tower Hamlets is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country. About half of the total population are from black and minority ethnic communities, and around 110 different languages are spoken by our school pupils. There are many new communities moving into the borough which will contribute to a changing community profile over the next ten years. Our population is expected to reach nearly 300,000 by 2020.'*

*'Delivering improvements for all our residents means a focus on easily available and high quality support services for key groups - such as older people, 'looked-after' children, youngsters leaving care, disabled people, offenders, victims of domestic violence, those with drugs and alcohol issues, homeless people and new communities. Research also shows us that it is not enough simply to provide a strong set of services to tackle deep disadvantage affecting all age groups. The most disadvantaged often fall through the net. What enables people to access and stay engaged with services are qualities such as resilience, confidence, and the ability to develop strong relationships.'*

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.onetowerhamlets.net/your\\_community\\_plan.aspx](http://www.onetowerhamlets.net/your_community_plan.aspx)



## **Key Findings**

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27. A number of research methods were used to gather evidence for this review. Members heard evidence from experts in the field on migration and the impact of new communities both nationally and regionally through meetings with the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Greater London Authority and the Migrants Rights Network. The Working Group was also keen to go out into the community and speak to residents. As the Somali community were used as a case study on how the Council can increase support for new communities the Working Group undertook a number of focus groups with various residents within the Somali community including young people, the elderly, women and third sector organisations that work with this community.
28. The information gathered from the meetings and focus groups together with secondary research taken from best practice of other local authorities in how they meet the needs of new communities were used to formulate the key findings for this review and the subsequent recommendations.

### **Understanding the Needs of New and Small Communities**

29. At the various focus groups it was clear that residents within the Somali community felt that the needs of new and small communities were not entirely being met. Residents highlighted that a number of researches had been undertaken on small communities but very little action was delivered. At the evidence gathering session with Council Officers it was noted that a key reason for the lack of understanding on the needs of new and small communities was due to the availability of good data.
30. Members heard about data gathering techniques to identify the numbers from new and smaller communities as well as the Somali community in general. At present the diversity indicators that are primarily used include Country of birth and Ethnic group. However Faith, Language, Nationality and National identity have also been used recently to identify a resident's background.
31. The Migrants Rights Network (MRN) stated that in terms of support available to new communities there was a poor evidence base at a Central Government level, however local government knew their communities better. This was attributed also to poor data and the over reliance on the ten-yearly census figures which were not sensitive to shorter-term population movements. It was also noted that there was a high concentration of worklessness amongst migrants due to restrictions to social housing, child benefits and other public funded benefits. MRN highlighted a number of challenges facing local and national government. There was now a process of transition from migrants to long term ethnic minority communities in the UK. This also occurred in the 1970s and 1980s and is happening again now, however with a more diverse range of communities who have their own personal needs which have to be met.
32. The 2001 Census counted at least 130 different migrant populations in the borough (i.e. populations of ten or more people born in one country). One half of the population in the borough was from a BME group with Tower Hamlets having

a high proportion of BME residents compared to the London average (50 vs. 35 per cent). One third of residents were Bangladeshi which is by far the largest Bangladeshi population both in London and England.

33. A key issue for the borough was not knowing the number of residents from the Somali community. A reason for this was due to the fact that the Somali community still come under the banner of 'African'. Although the ethnic group question in the Census has increased from 9 categories in 1991 to 16 categories in 2001 and now 18 categories for 2011, Somali's still come under the African ethnicity strand. It was noted that the Office for National Statistics decides on which new ethnicity categories to add on the Census. ONS took into consideration areas such as user views, consultation on ethnicity questions which attracted 600 replies and how comparable the strands are to previous Census.
34. There was a big demand for new categories with the strong argument that the Black African group needed more detailed information as it included those such as Somalis, Nigerians and the Sudanese. Having scored the different new ethnicities it was however decided that 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and 'Arab' would be added as new ethnicities to the Census. However the 2011 census does have a number of new questions such as Main language, Proficiency in spoken English, National identity, Year of arrival and Passports held in order to identify a persons' background.
35. The complexity of trying to find out how many Somalis lived in the borough was highlighted with various organisations having their own estimates as detailed below:

<b>Summary of numbers and inferred percentages of Somalis living in Tower Hamlets</b>		
<b>DATA SOURCE</b>	<b>NUMBERS</b>	<b>AS % OF TH POPULATION</b>
<b>2001 Census – Born in Somalia</b>	1,353	0.7%
<b>Experian origins 2008 (based on names on GP register)</b>	2,081	0.9%
<b>Hospital admissions data (2008)</b>	4,114	1.7%
<b>Local Authority housing data (2008)</b>	5,808	2.4%
<b>Schools data (2008)</b>	5,324	2.2%
<b>Academic research &amp; voluntary sector estimates – various (2004)</b>	8 – 12,000	3.3% - 5.0%

*Source: Somali Population in Tower Hamlets: A Demographic Analysis, Tower Hamlets PCT (December 2008). Report concludes that likely figure is somewhere between 2-3 per cent of population (~5,000 residents).*

36. As it was difficult to understand the needs of the communities when service planning due to a lack of up to date and correct data the Working Group felt that more sophisticated data gathering techniques were needed when developing policies and planning services.
37. In a period where public sector funds have been reduced, Members also felt that such data, along with more consultation with new and small communities, could be used to identify common needs between communities which could then be used when planning mainstream services. This was seen as a key part of this review in that mainstream services needed to be more inclusive.
38. The Working Group suggested that it would be useful to replicate how the Bangladeshi community empowered and built itself and transfer this to other smaller communities. There was a need to look at the commonality between different communities and mainstream those areas as the foundation was already in place. In addition to this it was also highlighted that there was too many instances of organisations working with their own communities and not enough cross community working and there was a real need for this. This point was very much linked to the mainstream Vs Specialist debate. The Department for Health<sup>10</sup> suggests two main approaches to commissioning or developing services which meet the needs of minority groups:
- A service which is specifically and exclusively designed for a particular group. This may be a standalone service, or one which forms part of a mainstream service.
  - Mainstream services which are able to be flexible and skilled enough to meet the needs of all older people.
39. In looking at BME services the debate is about whether, and when, a “culturally specific” service should be developed, or whether it is sufficient that mainstream services should be “culturally competent”.
40. Southampton City Council<sup>11</sup> developed a new communities strategy following recognition that there had been a significant increase in migrant workers to the city which had an impact on service delivery. The key objectives of the strategy were to understand the needs of the community and allow this to influence service delivery:
- Co-ordinating thematic working groups for health, education, employment, housing, children’s services, media, and community safety.
  - Providing outreach support to specific communities (i.e. EU Accession States, Kurdish, and Somali communities).
  - Mapping new communities living in the city.
  - Providing basic information on employment rights, health, children’s education and accommodation.
  - Mainstreaming provision of services to new communities.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Reports/Minority\\_Groups\\_in\\_ECH.pdf](http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Reports/Minority_Groups_in_ECH.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.coventry.ac.uk/researchnet/d/331/a/1658>

41. The institute for Community Cohesion at Coventry University highlighted the strategy as good practice with its key success including:

- Increasing understanding and goodwill between new and existing communities living in the inner city, resulting in reduced community tensions
- Creation of community groups to address issues of concern specific to particular new communities.
- Greater awareness and confidence in exercising basic rights, particularly employment rights.
- Greater community engagement by new communities, particularly in sports.
- Researching and mapping the profile of new communities.
- Distribution of Myth busting material and CD Rom on new communities.

42. It was felt that a number of these successes could be utilised in the borough to aid services to be more inclusive and also encourage residents from new and small communities to access mainstream services.

R1 That the Chief Executive's Directorate supports the Council and Partnership to better understand the needs of new and small communities by:

- Developing more sophisticated data gathering techniques so we know the demographics of our communities better. This data should then be used to plan policy and service developments.
- Undertake consultation exercises to pick out common needs between new and small communities and use this when planning mainstream services.
- Amend the equalities analysis template and guidance to include how mainstream services will meet the needs of new and small communities in the borough.

### **Access to Services**

43. At a number of focus group sessions residents highlighted that access to services was a key barrier faced by the Somali community. The Working Group heard from the elderly and women from the Somali community who felt that the Bangladeshis could access services easier than them due to the amount of front line staff who were from the Bangladeshi community. Language barrier was seen as being crucial here in accessing services.

44. In addition to this the Working Group heard, particularly during the focus group with young people and third sector organisations, of the lack of Somali's in the public sector and in particular within the Council and NHS. It was also noted that

the borough did not have any Somali Police Officers. Concerns were raised by residents who felt that the public sector had targets of attracting residents from the BME community into employment but these targets were being met by getting mostly those from the Bangladeshi community into employment.

45. A number of researches have been undertaken on the Somali community which has highlighted the issues of unemployment and worklessness. This review has again highlighted this as well as the frustration from those who participated in the focus group who aired concerns that very little was being done about it. A study by Sheffield Hallam University<sup>12</sup> stated that there are no readily available figures on employment or unemployment among the Somali population, but anecdotal evidence suggests very high levels (over 70%) of unemployment. Some of the major barriers to employment included the expectation and experience of discrimination, language barriers, lack of recognition for academic and professional qualifications gained in Somalia; and the decline of industries in which Somali people traditionally worked.
46. A number of projects nationally can be identified which specialise in engaging with new and small communities in order to help residents acquire the relevant knowledge and skills for the labour market, one of which includes the Coventry Ethnic Minority Action Partnership.

**Coventry Ethnic Minority Action Partnership (CEMAP) - Working to employment Workshops<sup>13</sup>**

CEMAP exists to promote harmony, leading to prosperity, within and between all communities in Coventry. Specifically CEMAP aims to work with people, organisations and agencies to improve the delivery of services to Ethnic Minority Communities in Coventry.

CEMAP brings together people, organisations and groups from within the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Statutory Sector with a specific focus on Ethnic Minority issues. The network celebrates the coming together of people from diverse ethnic Minority communities, including the New Communities, different Faith Groups, voluntary organisations and colleagues from the Statutory Sector to improve the quality of life for all Coventry residents

The Working to employment Workshops are part of CEMEPs employment programme aimed at unemployed people from BME and new communities in Coventry. They provide a wide selection of workshops that help residents overcome barriers to work and provide skills to increase chances of successful employment.

47. With the Working Neighbourhood Fund coming to an end and reduction in public sector finances, Members felt this could have a detrimental effect on those from new and small communities. It was felt that support for these communities needed to be preserved and that the pending employment strategy should clearly

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.somalicommunity.org.uk/files/SOMALi\\_Housing.pdf](http://www.somalicommunity.org.uk/files/SOMALi_Housing.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.vacoventry.org.uk/working-towards-employment-training-programme>

outline how the needs of residents from new and small communities would be met in the labour market.

R2 That the Employment Strategy and subsequent action plans specifically outline how it will support new and small communities access employment with key public sector organisations

48. During the focus group session with residents it was brought to the attention of the Working Group during the focus group sessions with residents and in particular that of advocacy and support. At the session with Third Sector organisations it was clear that those around the table were not sure who else was delivering advocacy work aimed specifically at the Somali community as well as how many Somali advocacy workers existed in the borough. This suggested a lack of co-ordinated or joined up working between third sector organisations.

49. The importance of advocacy support and in particular bespoke advocacy support to new communities is well documented. The Advocacy Resource Exchange<sup>14</sup> states that:

*'There is a significant need for BME advocacy to be developed as it is well documented that Communities described in the term "BME" can often experience widespread racial harassment and racist crime, and are over represented on almost all levels of social exclusion. Additionally it is well evidenced that people from minority ethnic groups experience poorer health than their white counterparts.'*

50. Although the Working Group felt that advocacy in the borough was being delivered to new and small communities in both empowering the guiding them it was felt that peer advocacy support and an increased role for faith organisations in delivering advocacy support would be beneficial. The borough has many organisations such as MIND, Praxis and numerous smaller organisations all delivering advocacy support but the key however was to identify which organisations were currently delivering advocacy work and manage this by making sure those organisations were aware of each other and the services they deliver.

51. On a London wide level MRN highlighted access to specific services as an issue as this was withheld until the individual had been granted specific status (such as indefinite leave) even though the person might be paying full tax and National Insurance contributions. This increases pressures on low income families and prolongs the period in which they might be living in poverty. MRN stated that there was a need for programmes to address the housing needs of migrants. On a final note a specific problem which faced London was that there were in the region of 500,000 long term undocumented migrants living in the Capital. There was little prospect of significantly reducing this figure through enforcement action

<sup>14</sup> [www.advocacyresource.org.uk/gen2-file.php?id=28](http://www.advocacyresource.org.uk/gen2-file.php?id=28)

in the foreseeable future. MRN suggested that consideration should be given to supporting the London Mayors advocacy of regularisation programmes.

R3 That the Third Sector Team and the Council for Voluntary Services supports advocacy work in the borough aimed at new and small communities. This should include mapping which organisations currently deliver advocacy work and how this can be improved through greater joined up and partnership working.

52. How the Council engages with new communities was another area which was widely discussed by the Working Group. Members felt that the East End Life was a good tool but one dedicated Somali page wasn't enough. However it was noted that it was not possible for the paper to be expanded to include all languages and the notion that questions remain on the future of the paper considering national guidelines on the production of Council newspapers.

53. Members felt that better communication was needed in order to engage with new and small communities that were hard to reach. Members questioned how the Council were engaging with those such as the Chinese community and the increasing Brazilian community in the borough.

54. West Yorkshire Police undertook research funded through the Migration Impact Fund to look at how they could engage with hard to reach migrants. The research identified that most bilingual people, particularly those with links abroad, use the internet (email, skype, facebook etc) as their main form of communication with friends and family as it is inexpensive and easily accessible through home computers, cafes, mobile phones and libraries. The use of new technology was therefore seen as key to engage with small and new communities in the borough as well as publicising at internet cafes which are excessively used by new migrants in the borough.

R4 That the Corporate Communications Team refreshes how it engages and reaches out to new and small communities and explores innovative methods of communication considering a reduction in public finances.

55. Welcome packs typically give introductory information about the local area, and more general information about living in the UK. Some packs are designed for all new arrivals to an area, others are especially relevant to particular groups, for instance refugees, asylum seekers or migrant workers. Members heard at the session on the Council's current approach to supporting new communities that a new communities pack were devised a few years ago as part of a pilot scheme by both the Council in partnership with Praxis which still exists both online and in hard copy. It was however felt that this needed to be updated and readily available through other local organisations and the Council's website.

56. Welcome packs for new communities are very common in most local authorities. Lincolnshire County Council<sup>15</sup> created a welcome pack for residents from new communities as a response to identified needs in the community. The pack focuses on giving basic information and signposting to further information to enable people to live, learn, work and play safely in Lincolnshire. A steering group with representatives from across the service areas had been involved in the development of the pack including; the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Fire & Rescue, Culture & Adult Education, Chief Executives and Adults Social Care teams. Initially the packs were in English, Polish, Portuguese, Latvian and Lithuanian and were made available in Libraries, receptions, schools and other public facing outlets.
57. In addition to this a number local authorities including Bedfordshire, Luton, Suffolk and Watford have used the migration Impact Fund<sup>16</sup> as a means to devise welcome packs for residents from new communities and migrants.

R5 That the Chief Executive's Directorate ensures any new communities welcome packs are updated and refreshed on an annual basis and this is easily available and acts as the first point of call for new communities to access local services.

### **Voice and Representation**

58. The Council is currently refreshing how it engages with citizens in the borough. A scrutiny review was undertaken at the beginning of the current municipal year to feed into the citizen engagement strategy with recommendations around the need to engage hard to reach communities and the use of innovative methods of engagement considering a cut in public sector finances.
59. Members felt that the citizen engagement strategy provided an opportunity to consider the role of new communities and how we engage and involve them into society. This was seen as key to integration rather than communities living together but in parallel lives.
60. The Working Group suggested that Local Area Partnership (LAP) steering groups needed to be better co-ordinated in order to take into consideration the many different communities in the borough. It was suggested that if communities haven't accessed the LAP steering groups or governance arrangements such as this then they were probably not settled communities. It was highlighted that every community has to have a champion, although at different levels. An example here was the Bengali community which has champions in the higher end in terms of Councillors in decision making positions. The importance of community leadership positions for those from new and small communities was also noted in order to make sure those communities were settled. In particular it was highlighted that greater work needs to be done in order to attract residents

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/residents/community-and-living/equality-and-diversity/migrant-workers-and-new-arrivals-welcome-pack/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.dacorumcvs.org.uk/downloads/MIF%20report%202010.pdf>



from these communities into School Governor positions and on the board of local housing associations.

61. The importance of community development and increasing the voice and representation of new communities is well noted. A recent study by Oxford University<sup>17</sup>, on behalf of the Greater London Authority, suggested the importance of the role of migrant community organisations, which need support, as well as the key role of local authority community development – but also the need to harness the potential contribution of a wider range of stakeholders, including trade unions and employers. These stakeholders have the capacity to promote the voice of migrants, to reach the ‘hardest to reach’ migrants, to provide support and leadership in this field, and to create spaces where migrants and others can interact and build a shared future for all Londoners.
62. Further research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>18</sup> shows that new communities want their views to be heard, and they want to participate. For many new arrivals, ‘being heard’ means being recognised, having a safe space to meet, providing mutual support and gaining the knowledge, confidence and skills to engage more widely. New communities experience a number of common barriers, such as lack of information, difficulties in the use of English, lack of time, or barriers to recognition, making it more difficult for them to get involved or be heard. These barriers are exacerbated by the growing fluidity and fragmentation of governance structures. This complexity poses problems enough for established communities who are already used to navigating their way around. For new arrivals the shifting landscape of service provision and governance is even more bewildering, making community engagement correspondingly more problematic.
63. Much of the emphasis on community engagement is directed at the neighbourhood level but research suggests that area based forums are not the most appropriate level for some new communities who are geographically dispersed, and because many of their concerns – e.g. jobs, refugee/asylum status and language skills are managed outside the neighbourhood. New residents are less likely to be represented in democratic processes and are also less likely to approach their local councillor for support.

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| R6 | That the Citizen Engagement Strategy clearly outlines how the Partnership will engage with new and small communities in the borough.  |
| R7 | That the Third Sector Team, The Partnership and the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services capacity build community organisations to act as a mechanism to encourage greater voice and representation within small and new communities and develop pathways to which their voice can be heard, such as through area based forums. |

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/An%20evidence%20base%20on%20migration%20and%20integration%20in%20London.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Community Engagement and Community Cohesion, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, June 2008

## **Community Cohesion**

64. During the focus group sessions it was noted that there was widespread concerns in terms of community cohesion amongst different communities in the borough. At the session with young people and women it was highlighted that gang conflicts between Somali and Bangladeshi young people both in and out of School was common and an increasing problem. This was echoed at the session with third sector organisations. Members felt that with the Council continuing to fund organisations to work primarily with their own communities, this was supporting segregation and was a barrier to integration. It was felt that, particularly with the current reduction in public services which may effect smaller third sector organisations, consortiums of organisations should be built with different demographics in order to promote better cohesion. There were concerns from small organisations that this may lead to them ceasing to exist, however it was noted that all organisations should still have a right to exist in any consortium.



Focus group sessions with residents from the Somali Community

65. Members agreed that there was a greater need for inter community working and a greater sharing of resources between different communities. In addition to this there was also a need to educate Youth Workers to integrate different communities both inside and outside of community centres. The Working Group stating that there was cross organisational working but not enough cross cultural working which was the key issue that needed to be resolved.

66. Community cohesion has been an important policy of both the current and previous governments. In 2006, the Government commissioned a review of community cohesion, led by the Commission of Integration and Cohesion (ICoCo)<sup>19</sup> under the leadership of Ealing Borough Council's then Chief Executive, Darra Singh. The Commission explored examples of good practise and looked at what additional support was needed to help local communities flourish and thrive.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/communitycohesion>

67. As of 2006, every local authority in the UK has had a statutory responsibility to explore local issues surrounding community cohesion and put together a tangible local delivery plan for delivering and effectively monitoring projects that bring local people together. Local authorities are asked to lead a 'whole council approach' to community cohesion; ensuring that all of the council's principal services are engaged with the agenda and are delivering cohesion through their everyday activities.
68. The Working Group noted that although some great work had taken place in the borough to promote cohesion, a lot still needed to be delivered in tackling issues between minority and smaller communities as the focus groups suggested. The Cantle Review<sup>20</sup> which highlighted the findings into the 2001 riots between White and Asian communities in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford concluded that residential and institutional segregation had contributed to tensions between local communities. The report identified the danger of divided communities living parallel lives, a term that has been synonymous with cohesion discourse ever since. Members related this to Tower Hamlets where concerns exist that different communities are living together but with very little integration and once again, the local authority was promoting this by funding organisations to work within their own communities.

- R8 That the Third Sector Team and the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services encourage and support third sector organisations to work in partnership and build consortiums when applying for bids in order to increase cross cultural working and promote greater cohesion.
- R9 That the Council's procurement and commissioning process encourages greater integration and cohesion between communities by including elements of how prospective organisations will be inclusive of new communities during the tendering process.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.oldham.gov.uk/cantle-review-final-report.pdf>

## Conclusion

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69. Tower Hamlets has one of the most diverse communities in the country and has historically been a settling ground for new communities and even today we still see new communities coming to Tower Hamlets and making the borough their home. Using the Somali community as a case study this review looked at how the Council and partners meet the needs of new communities that settle in the borough and how it meets the requirements of the borough's smaller existing communities.
70. Evidence was received from a variety of local, regional and national organisations on some of the work being delivered to support new communities. This included Council Officers, Praxis, the Greater London Authority and the Department for Communities and Local Government. From the outset the Working Group made it clear that a key part of this review was to engage with local residents and hear their opinions and concerns. To this end a total of 6 focus groups were organised with those including the elderly, women, young people and third sector organisations.
71. Recommendations centres on three key areas. It was felt that the Council needed to understand the needs of new and small communities more. A reason for this was due to the lack of up to date data on new communities which could be used to plan services. It was therefore suggested that sophisticated data gathering techniques on the demographics of our communities should be devised to act as a basis for service and policy development.
72. Access to services was also highlighted as an important area and in a period where Councils have less money to spend we need to make sure that our mainstream services are inclusive as much as possible and meet the needs of all communities but it was also acknowledged that some services still need to cater for specific communities. Members also felt that the Council needed to refresh how it communicates with new communities; particularly those who are hardest to reach with the upcoming Citizen Engagement Strategy clearly state how we will do this.
73. On a final note during the focus groups sessions, community cohesion was an area that many residents had concerns about. The Working Group felt that the Council needed to do more to encourage different communities to engage and work with each other rather than in parallel and isolation to one another. The Working Group therefore recommends that the Council encourages consortiums of third sector organisations with different demographics to bid together for funding.

## **Scrutiny and Equalities in Tower Hamlets**

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