

Tower Hamlets Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission

Health Recommendations and Action Plan

September 2021



Introduction



This action plan sets out the commitment of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together partnership to tackle inequality and improve health outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Tower Hamlets.

It has been written in response to the nine health recommendations made by the Tower Hamlets Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission, which concluded its review in March 2021.

The action plan looks at each of the nine recommendations:

- Summarising the key activity that has been carried out to date
- Setting out future actions to be taken via the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) and via the Tower Hamlets Together (THT) partnership.

Partners welcome the recommendations in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission report. Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic has of course been a key focus for the health and care system over the last year, and much of the work done to date to tackle Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic inequalities has been done through this lens (for example, work to tackle disparities in Covid-19 vaccination take-up levels). As lockdown lifts and we move into a different phase of the pandemic, this plan represents the commitments of the Tower Hamlets Together partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board in response to the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission report.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will hold oversight of the action plan and will be responsible for the actions assigned to it. The Tower Hamlets Together partnership and Board will be responsible for the actions delegated to it by the Health and Wellbeing Board and will be accountable to the Board for delivery.

R1: Digital exclusion



Organisations address digital exclusion facing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities which is having an impact on their ability to access services, employment, engage in community life and achieve their life outcomes.

What we have done

- ✓ The THT Executive agreed to tackle digital exclusion as a priority in summer 2020. As part of this, THCVS is leading on a co-production project to identify those most at risk of digital exclusion through its Digital Support programme due to financial poverty, lack of access and skills to use digital resources and language barriers and delivered a set of outcomes to address these.
- ✓ The public health response to the pandemic adapted to consider digital exclusion. A Covid-19 helpline was set-up to resolve issues and book vaccines, with call handlers who speak community languages. Posters and signs in community languages were placed around the borough in relation to Covid-19. Somali and Bangladeshi community organisations delivered outreach and support and codesigned tailored prevention and protection messages to the life course groups within these communities.
- ✓ The Communities Driving Change programme brought residents together in the 12 most deprived neighbourhoods. Most of the registered residents were Asian-Bangladeshi females between the age of 25 and 45, whose socioeconomic status was unwaged and who often had caring responsibilities. During Covid lockdowns WhatsApp groups, phone zoom and phone calls kept people in contact and projects running.
- ✓ In Barts Health renal medicine has been in the lead with remote access (telephone or video) to outpatients and undertook an equity analysis of patients who didn't attend for appointments. Results suggest that patients from some ethnic minorities were more likely not to attend appointments. Work was then undertaken with renal medicine (the largest user of remote access), which included reviewing access to bilingual health advocacy, advocacy staff calling non-English patients prior to video consultations to assess their needs and any concerns. As a result, setting up setting up 3-way consultations when necessary.
- ✓ Barts Health reviewed equipment needs, additional training for administrative and clinical staff in conducting 3-way video consultations and introducing a flag on the clinical records system so that patients with type needs are identified. This work is being conducted with a range of stakeholders adopting a coproduction approach.

R1: Digital exclusion



Organisations address digital exclusion facing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities which is having an impact on their ability to access services, employment, engage in community life and achieve their life outcomes.

What we will do

Action	By who	By when
1. The Health and Wellbeing Board will carry out more non-digital outreach to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to access health and social care. Partners will promote the Covid-19 helpline with staff who speak community languages & translate Covid-19 signage and leaflets. Adult social care will carry out outreach in the community and health centres and will target Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities	HWBB / Council	Dec-21
2. The Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure there is always an option to interact with health and care services in non-digital ways, and will promote these to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities through a variety of communication channels. Non-digital health & care options that paused during the pandemic will be restored as soon as is safe to do so. Digital exclusion in new virtual care settings will be addressed.	HWBB / CCG	Mar-22
3. The Health and Wellbeing Board will carry out more initiatives to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities who are digitally excluded to get online. This will be done via the new Tower Hamlets Connect service through outreach, the Carer Centre through outreach activity and through the THCVS Digital Support programme aimed at tackling the digital divide.	HWBB / Council / THCVS	Mar-22

R2: Campaign & social determinants



Lead a high-profile local campaign for the government to provide adequate funding to address health inequalities including socio- economic factors.

What we have done

- ✓ Tower Hamlets Together has led on tackling health inequalities by highlighting local health inequalities and drivers behind them.
- ✓ The council and its partners carried out analysis of the wider impact of Covid-19 in Tower Hamlets, and this included explicit analysis of the current and potential future impact of the pandemic on health inequalities. (This was presented to Cabinet in July 2020).
- ✓ The council and its partners have responded to national consultations and calls for evidence, using this as an opportunity to highlight health inequalities and the causes behind them.
- ✓ The council made a formal submission on adult social care funding to government committee. This set out how Covid-19 has impacted the adult social care sector in Tower Hamlets and its long-term funding needs following the pandemic. The response also provided a view on how additional funds can be raised to ensure the long-term stability of the sector and how the social care market can supported to improve innovation.

R2: Campaign & social determinants



Lead a high-profile local campaign for the government to provide adequate funding to address health inequalities including socio- economic factors.

What we will do

Action	By who	By when
4. The Health and Wellbeing Board will agree a new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Partners will use this in a planned communications campaign to describe a shared narrative about health inequalities in the borough, their causes and the need for adequate funding.	HWBB / all	Mar-22
5. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together Board will collectively respond to future government consultations over above organisational requirements and national calls for evidence.	HWBB/ THT Board	Mar-22
6. The Health and Wellbeing Board will act on and promote insights and analysis to tackle health inequalities. This includes Council analysis on the wider impacts of Covid-19 and Healthwatch insights into language, ethnicity and inequality.	HWBB / Council / Healthwatch	Mar-22

R3: Hostile environment



Local NHS organisations to lead a local campaign for the government to review hostile environment policies which seeks to reduce the profile of the checking of immigration status of service users it is statutorily required to undertake.

What we have done

- ✓ The GP Care Group has supported GP practices/clinics to campaign on this issue and many have taken the opportunities to do so
- ✓ Covid-19 vaccine clinics for people who are undocumented or with no recourse to public funds have been organised, explicitly promoted to people who may be worried

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What we will do

Action	By who	By when
7. The Health and Wellbeing Board will support a local campaign - led by the GP Care Group - for the government to review hostile environment policies and reduce the profile of the checking of the immigration status of service users and patients .	HWBB / GP Care Group	Mar-22 Mar-22
8. The Health and Wellbeing Board will continue to support Covid-19 clinics for people who are undocumented or with no recourse to public funds.	HWBB / GP Care Group / Council	Ongoing

R4: Partnership



That partnership structures and strategies are reviewed to deliver radical changes at pace on health inequalities in the borough.

What we have done

- ✓ The THT Board has invested in an anti-racism leadership development programme provided by the equality charity Brap. They are facilitating four sessions to guide and challenge THT board as individual and collective system leaders. This has included a focus on systemic racism and systemic change.
- ✓ The Associate Lay Member for Patient and Public Engagement on the THT Board has an expanded remit that now includes equality and diversity
- ✓ The Local Delivery Board (part of Tower Hamlets Together) is now reviewing Healthwatch insights on inequalities and the relationship with health outcomes
- ✓ Wider health inequalities have been captured in the recently agreed strategies, including the Community Safety Partnership Plan.

R4: Partnership



That partnership structures and strategies are reviewed to deliver radical changes at pace on health inequalities in the borough.

What we will do

Action removed p	By who	By when
9. All new and refreshed strategies commissioned by the Health and Wellbeing Board will have an explicit section on tackling Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic inequality and health inequalities. The new Health and Wellbeing Strategy will have a core principle of equality and anti-racism embedded in the strategy	HWBB / Council	Sep-21
10. The Tower Hamlets Together Borough Plan will be reviewed to make clearer the health needs and inequality facing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Tower Hamlets Together life-course groups will have race equality goals in each plan to address needs and under the overall mission of becoming an anti-racist borough.	THT Board/ CCG	Dec-21
11. The Tower Hamlets Together Board will invest in an anti-racism leadership programme beyond 2021 to drive deep cultural change and tackle the pervasive racial microaggressions, bias and stereotypes we know exist in our society and services. Actions beyond 2021 will be agreed.	THT Board / CCG	Dec-21
12. The Tower Hamlets Together Board will look into investing in a programme of anti-racism training throughout all partner organisations – to be part of mandatory and refresher training for all staff and/or managers.	THT Board / CCG	Apr-22
13. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together Board will regularly scrutinise data on the ethnic background of people accessing health and care, their experience and their outcomes at a system-wide level, to understand areas of over or under-representation; with additional qualitative insights.	HWBB / THT Board / CCG / Council	Apr-22
14. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together Board will further diversify their membership, reviewing their Terms of Reference and membership to facilitate this.	HWBB / THT Board	Mar-22

R5: Representation



Tower Hamlets Board to develop initiatives to support more Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents to become health professionals (particularly underrepresented and smaller Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities).

What we have done

- ✓ THT partners have agreed a joint Workforce and Occupational Development (OD) Strategy in March 2021 with commitments to tackle Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic inequality. One of the key priority areas is 'equalities, diversity, and inclusion' to which there is commitment "to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion across the THT workforce" to achieve "a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community it serves" and "creating a diverse and inclusive culture." The intention is to continue to develop values-based processes and create a culture of care where staff feel empowered to raise concerns, innovate and continuously improve.
- ✓ Barts Health has reviewed the senior recruitment process and statutory reporting metrics (Gender pay gap, Workforce Race Equality Standard, Workforce Disability Equality Standard).
- ✓ Public health are recruiting to Public Health Apprentice roles from the local community.
- ✓ Barts Health has revised its senior recruitment process to be more inclusive. This includes (amongst changes to recruitment material, and the advertising/selection process) the use of an "inclusion Ambassador" – a specially trained, diverse panel member that must be present on all 8a+ panels to oversee a fair process. Barts Health have committed to providing 1-2-1 career coaching for every member of staff from a group that is not proportionately represented at senior levels.
- ✓ Barts Health has committed to 3% year on year growth of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff in senior positions. This has been achieved over the last year, maintaining this growth would allow us to achieve representative leadership by 2028, a key target in the London Race Equality Strategy.
- ✓ Barts Health has a number of established programmes that bring members of the community into work (e.g. Project Search, Healthcare Horizons). These local employment and careers programmes have been successful in increasing the numbers of Tower Hamlets residents into jobs and career paths in the NHS. The Healthcare Horizons scheme works with a number of Tower Hamlets schools and provides careers advice, mentoring, work experience and careers events involving healthcare professionals. Both employment and careers programmes have 60%+ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic participation.
- ✓ ELFT has completed a large project on 'values based recruitment'. One of the central aims behind this project is to 'enable those with potential and from more diverse backgrounds into the NHS than with traditional education and experience-based assessments'. Within their workforce priority to 'attract people into the NHS', there are 5 workstreams all with a strong focus on equality and diversity and inclusion at every level. They are designed to address the workforce challenges highlighted in Workforce Race Equality Standard.

R5: Representation



Tower Hamlets Partnership to develop initiatives to support more Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents to become health professionals (particularly underrepresented and smaller Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities).

What we will do

Action	By who	By when
<p>15. The Tower Hamlets Together Board will deliver the THT Workforce and Organisational Development strategy so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversity targets are agreed - Progress against goals to have representative leadership is published. - Inclusion Ambassadors are included in more Interview Panels (starting in Barts Health and potentially rolled out across the partnership) - Each partner will review governance arrangements to ensure staff networks can contribute to and inform decision-making processes. 	<p>THT Board / CCG</p> <p>Barts</p> <p>All</p>	<p>Mar-22 Sep-21</p> <p>Apr-22</p> <p>Mar-22</p>
<p>16. The Health and Wellbeing Board partners will systematically and inclusively engage with local schools to promote careers in health and social care amongst young people from diverse background</p>	<p>HWBB / Barts Health</p>	<p>Sep-22</p>
<p>17. Health and Wellbeing Board partners will encourage recruitment from the community by giving greater access to health and care staff, facilitating preliminary career discussion with candidates identified by QMUL, job centre, ELBA, Tower Hamlets School Forum; and will agree an approach to providing work placements to local young people from underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>HWBB / Barts Health</p>	<p>Mar-22</p>
<p>18. Health and Wellbeing Board partners will increase Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation in leadership positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CCG aim to have a leadership that is representative of the overall Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workforce by 2028 - Barts Health will carry out the first phase of their talent management approach, identifying high-potential candidates and those that have been through the Barts career development programme for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff. 	<p>HWBB / CCG / Barts Health</p>	<p>Mar-23</p>
<p>19. An apprentice will be appointed by Public Health</p>	<p>Council</p>	<p>Mar-22</p>

R6: Research



The Health & Wellbeing Board, by the end of 2021, undertake detailed external research on causes of health inequalities amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities which puts engagement of the community at the forefront of its work to identify issues and solutions.

What we have done

- ✓ The Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together partnership have gathered community insights to support better understanding of causes of health inequalities amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Healthwatch community insights have been reviewed by THT and will inform recommendations. Community insights gathered through Covid-19 community engagement has been collated into themes and will inform future learning and support outbreak control plan.
- ✓ Barts Health Trust has taken equity and inclusion as part of its key objectives, including how it will support and develop staff from ethnic minority backgrounds. A long-standing programme reviewing equity of healthcare is in place. As well as monitoring disparities in Covid-19 rates, this has identified significantly different backgrounds for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic patients when looked at by site when it comes to prioritisation for elective care and waiting times in A&E.
- ✓ The Urgent Treatment Centre undertook a heart audit to determine which patients needed an ECG with epigastric pain, this influenced our protocols as we changed our age group down to 40 years old and adjusted in respect of people from different ethnicities.

R6: Research



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What we will do

Action	By who	By when
20. The Health and Wellbeing Board will commission research in line with this recommendation and will agree solutions with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities when the research is complete.	HWBB/ Council	Dec-21
21. Healthwatch will gather insights on the experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic ethnic communities at the Royal London Hospital. Solutions will be agreed with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities when the insight work is complete.	Healthwatch	Dec-21

R7: Clinical training



Review and strengthen clinical training in order to increase understanding of different cultural needs and deliver better health services to all communities.

What we have done

- ✓ The council has further developed anti-racism practice in adult social care. An anti-racism board has been established in social care with clear objectives and outcomes.
- ✓ Barts Health have launched an Academy Charter aimed at tackling inequalities in education and training
- ✓ Barts Health have put a focus on differentials in attainment – a particular concern for junior doctors in training
- ✓ Urgent Treatment Centre staff have been offered suitable training to increase better understanding of cultural needs

R7: Clinical training



Review and strengthen clinical training in order to increase understanding of different cultural needs and deliver better health services to all communities.

What we will do

Action	By who	By when
22. The Health and Wellbeing Board will oversee the further development of anti-racism practice in partner organisations. Partners will share training materials with each other. This includes Barts Health training to managers (currently being reviewed) & Council training on anti-racism in social work practice.	HWBB / Barts Health	Mar-22

R8: Co-designed services



That NHS organisation undertake meaningful engagement and involvement of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in design, development and delivery of services. Health organisations need to improve the way services are understood and support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents so that they are empowered and confident to access them. This may mean they need to change the way that services are configured to make them more culturally appropriate.

What we have done

- ✓ The THT Executive Board user voice slots have focused on Black and Asian community leaders and service users, bringing much needed focus and challenge.
- ✓ Targeted engagement activity with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities took place over Covid-19.
- Covid Ambassadors and Champions that are representative of the communities in Tower Hamlets were set-up so that important messages can be reached to all communities.
- Targeted outreach with engagement bus & ambassadors – based on epidemiology – was carried out and targeted focus groups – Bengali men, Somali women etc.
- Vaccination clinics were run in culturally appropriate settings such as the Granby Hall community centre (used by the Somali Senior Citizens Club).
- Door knocking took place to promote key messages re vaccines/testing – community languages spoken in the teams for greater reach/conversation/understanding and targeted leaflet door drops to promote local vaccine clinics.
- The Covid-19 helpline offered advice in several locally spoken languages.
- Local GPs have taken part in discussions on Bangladeshi TV channels such as Channel S and TVOne
- Information webinars in community languages were held
- ✓ Service re-design has been informed by insights from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. This includes the redesign of day support in adult social care agreed in 2021, and what people wanted from targeted or universal services.
- ✓ The Family Contact Centre was set up to support families with loved ones at the Royal London Hospital (RLH). As a result of visiting restrictions, the trust reviewed its PALs service due to feedback from families about access and information about inpatients particularly from the Bengali and Somali community. The centre was set up after co-design work with East London Mosque and WIT. It is hoped that with its relocation to the bottom floor of the RLH it will provide more accessibility for families and patients.
- ✓ The Barts faith and community network met to support issues such as COVID resilience across NE London, it has also helped to tackle vaccine hesitancy across boroughs such as Tower Hamlets by promoting the vaccine across BME groups and trusting the views of faith leaders. The faith leads have also helped design and take part in communication campaigns. The group is also helping to promote and co-design specific work areas access to Endoscopy and digital appointments.

R8: Co-designed services



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What we will do

Action	Milestone	By who	By when
23. Health and Wellbeing Board partners will continue to undertake meaningful engagement and involvement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in relation to the Covid-19 response.		HWBB / Council	Jan-22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Covid-19 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic projects to raise awareness, codesign solutions and reduce disparities commissioned by public health will continue until January 2022. - Public health will commissioning outreach to the Black Caribbean community to gain insight into and overcome vaccine hesitancy. 			
24. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together Board will keep what worked well with our Covid-19 response on co-design. The partnership will develop and support Ambassadors and Champions that are representative of the communities in Tower Hamlets so that important messages on other health issues reach all communities.		HWBB/ THT Board / Council	Mar-22
25. The Health and Wellbeing Board will oversee the THCVS 'disparities project', working on capacity-building with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community-led organisations to voice structural inequalities, initially focusing on mental health.		HWBB / THCVS	Mar-22
26. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together Board commits to always considering and acting on feedback & will produce an annual 'you said, we did' to describe this.		THT Board / HWBB / CCG	Apr-22

R9: Communication



NHS organisations review their communication and engagement strategy which ensures guidance and important message is culturally appropriate and available in different languages and uses different approaches to ensure message is reach to different audiences.

What we have done

- ✓ The THT Executive Board have discussed how to develop culturally appropriate communications and engagement supported by feedback from the lived experience slots e.g. with Women's Inclusive Team, Deputy Young Mayor for Health, and Coffee Afrique CIC.
- ✓ Information and learning has been collated information from the Communications Silver Pandemic group to inform communications and engagement activity going forward
- ✓ The partnership has developed better understanding of how to support multiple generation households and the complexities created by poor government messaging on pandemic safety measures whilst families are off work and school during lockdown. This type of confusion made lives very difficult to manage and delayed Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents getting vaccinated.
- ✓ The partnership has collaborated with Faith leaders and faith settings to disseminate key information and support testing and vaccine take up
- ✓ The partnership has utilised social influencers to reach large numbers of residents' particularly younger people

Please also see “what we have done” on digital exclusion and on co-design for further updates on this area.

R9: Communication



NHS organisations review their communication and engagement strategy which ensures guidance and important message is culturally appropriate and available in different languages and uses different approaches to ensure message is reach to different audiences.

What we will do

Action	By who	By when
27. The Health and Wellbeing Board and Tower Hamlets Together Board commit to working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic -led organisations and service users to develop culturally appropriate communications and engagement. The THT Board will continue to have dedicated sessions to hear from people with lived experiences of services and act on messages related to communication and engagement.	THT Board / CCG	Ongoing
28. The Health and Wellbeing Board will carry out a 'lessons learned' exercise to identify good practice on communication on health issues with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Board partners will replicate initiatives that worked well in the Covid-19 response on other health issues. Initiatives include utilising media targeted at the Bangladeshi community, ensuring signs and printed information in community languages, and targeted webinars and meetings.	HWBB / Council	Apr-22
29. The Health and Wellbeing Board will carry out an audit of what key information is available and translated in community languages and will pool resources to address key gaps.	HWBB / CCG	Mar-22

Please also see the digital exclusion actions, which apply to this section.