



Connecting with culture to reduce loneliness amongst ethnic minority communities examples from the Time to Shine programme Leeds

Introduction

Research shows that for some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people, cultural factors play a role in their loneliness. Some BAME communities have large family networks yet people within them may nevertheless experience loneliness due to having less involvement with peers, or activities that interest them. There is also an identified link between loneliness and the relatively high levels of poverty experienced by some BAME groups.

Emerging findings from an ongoing evaluation of a programme in Leeds, called Time to Shine, which includes targeted projects

What have we learned from Time to Shine about supporting older BAME people?

Cultural differences mean that support aimed at the general population will not always reach or engage some older BAME people. One Punjabi speaking participant talked about how older people in some Indian communities are influenced by the views of their family members. This is why support involving a volunteer cooking a meal at a home had mixed success, as some participants were concerned that family members would view this as charity, which they perceived in a negative way.

Providing support sensitive to cultural attitudes and practices is important when reaching and engaging some older BAME people, and enables the support to link to their culture to create a sense of belonging. Activities aimed at older Irish men successfully reduced loneliness by providing links to their Irish cultural heritage, such as holding events in an Irish pub or showing an Irish film. Similarly, activities aimed at Chinese older people involved purchases of chopsticks, bowls and Chinese tea for participants to use, which was viewed as helping to reinforce the

