Carers Workshop

What we will achieve in the workshop

- Identify some of the key issues for BME carers
- Appreciate the barriers for BME carers, including young carers, in accessing and using services and support
- Discuss the practice and training needed to help health professionals and others to identify and support BME carers
- Discuss whether any changes in commissioning need to be made in relation to the above

Snapshot of what we know

Evidence suggests that all carers:
- are more likely to develop health problems than other people – both physical and mental health are affected by caring
- may experience difficulty accessing health services as they need to arrange visits around their caring responsibilities
- should be treated as expert care partners as this improves health outcomes for people who they care for

For young carers, as a whole group, issues include:
- providing care at a variety of levels, whether or not they should be doing so and whether or not we (society) should condone that care by supporting it
- the question of how we identify their needs and those of their family and ensure needs are met, where caring continues
- isolation from peers, underachievement at school and poorer health

For BME carers evidence shows that they:
- make up 10% of carers
- are more likely to be caring for a sick or disabled son or daughter, in particular into early adulthood, reflecting long term caring roles
- are more likely to be caring for someone with a mental illness

In workshop discussion keep in mind:
- How commissioning can meet needs across minority ethnic communities
- People rather than services
- Diversity within minority ethnic communities eg age, physical, sensory and learning ability, sexual and gender identity, faith, language and life experiences
- Importance of avoiding stereotyping a community or group of people
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- often don’t self-define as carers, and direct translation of the word is not easy in some languages
- may experience stigma attached to caring for someone with a particular condition eg mental illness and HIV
- may experience language and literacy barriers in accessing information, advice and support
- may experience cultural barriers to accessing services, for example they may not access support that would be beneficial because of notions of duty to care for relatives
- provide more care proportionately than White British carers, so suffer greater risk of ill health, financial losses and social exclusion. Isolation has been identified as a particular issue for Pakistani and Bangladeshi carers
- may take on roles inappropriate for their age eg young carers may be expected to interpret for family members in primary and secondary care settings and may have access to confidential and at times distressing health information

For professionals issues include:

- lack of awareness of BME carers' issues and therefore misconceptions and a lack of choice in provision. This is compounded by fewer opportunities historically for BME carers to “have a voice” in influencing service provision and commissioning
- lack of understanding by some professionals of the role of faith and religious requirements and how this impacts on care
- the danger of seeing BME carers as one group, rather than recognising that appropriate care and support may be different for people across BME communities

Snapshot of national and local action

**Carers UK** has developed an interactive toolkit to improve outcomes for carers from minority ethnic communities. The toolkit follows the Half a Million Voices Report (click on: [Half a Million Voices: Improving support for BAME carers](#)) and has good practice examples from London boroughs. Click on: [BAME_Toolkit_2011.pdf](#)

**Carers Centre Newcastle** provides services and support to carers and enables them to support one another and to have a voice in influencing carers strategies and services. The centre works with BME carers through its Carer Support and Development work, and is currently working in partnership with other local organisations to do some targeted development work to identify and support carers from long standing BME communities. The Carers Centre is working with the
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Angelou Centre which runs ‘Angelou Carers’, a forum for BME women carers which aims to develop skills and confidence, extend social networks and support them to have a ‘voice’ in influencing service providers (for more information email: admin@angelou-centre.org.uk)

**Newcastle Young Carers:** Barnardo’s Young Carers provides a service to young people with caring responsibilities in Newcastle. Young carers needs and the needs of their family are assessed, and families are helped to access support from other services (for more information email: YoungCarersNewcastle@barnardos.org.uk)

References

Cattan M and Giuntoli G (2010), Care and support for older people and carers in Bradford, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Department of Health (2008), Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities: A caring system on your side, a life of your own, London: DH

Department of Health (2010), Recognised, valued and supported: Next steps for the Carers Strategy, Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the Carers Strategy (2010)

Afiya Trust and the National Black Carers and Carers Workers Network (2008), Beyond We Care Too: Putting Black Carers in the Picture, Beyond We Care Too—North East Mental Health Development Unit

The Children’s Society (2008), Supporting refugee young carers and their families: A toolkit for ALL practitioners. A good practice resource designed to enable all service providers to stay informed about the needs, rights and entitlements of refugee and asylum seeker young carers and their families and to carry out effective and appropriate signposting and joint working.