

Beyond COVID: Race, Health and Inequality in Gloucestershire

We will all remember 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all areas of society and our physical and mental wellbeing, sometimes for the better but often for the worse. We quickly saw evidence of an uneven impact on different parts of society; for example, older people, men and some geographic areas. But by far the biggest impact was seen in people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

This is my fifth annual report as the Director of Public Health for Gloucestershire and I am thrilled that Gloucestershire County Council's Black Workers Network has agreed to co-author it.

I hope this report helps you to think more about the inequalities affecting our BAME communities and what you can do to address this. If you would like to contact me, please email:

sarah.l.scott@gloucestershire.gov.uk



SARAH SCOTT, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH September 2020

As we look back on 2020, many of us will be reminded of two moments in history that really changed the world we live in.



Covid 19 - Placed record amounts of pressure on health and social care and other essential services, and many lost loved ones, friends and colleagues. Whilst many of us were able to work from home, BAME communities, who are often in key worker roles, were more likely to be out on the frontline.



The killing of George Floyd in May and the Black Lives Matter movement started a new conversation around structural racism and its impact on communities of colour.



Black History Month is celebrated annually in October. Its theme this year is Let's End Racism.

Now is the time to have conversations about race. These conversations are very important for us to have, no matter how uncomfortable, if we are serious about changing the lived experience of BAME people in Gloucestershire. Whilst this report does not hold all the answers, it aims to open a conversation about the issues.

As we face the second wave and look forward to recovery planning we must ensure that BAME communities and employees remain at the heart of the conversation and are able to guide the discussion. The council's Black Workers Network are committed to working in partnership with colleagues across the system to improve the lived experience of BAME communities in Gloucestershire.



ALTHIA LYN, CO-CHAIR BLACK WORKERS NETWORK September 2020

Report Summary



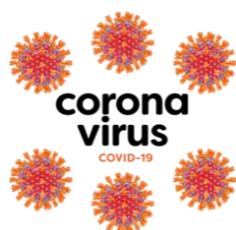
BAME Communities, Health Inequalities and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted longstanding health inequalities which already existed in our society. Health inequalities are the unfair differences in people's health across various population groups which are a result of social inequalities in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. The social and economic impact of the virus and lockdown measures has shown that people on low incomes and people from a BAME background are at an even greater risk of physical and mental ill-health.

Root Causes of Health and Wellbeing

These differences are largely the result of long-standing structural racism which produces social and economic inequalities in the conditions in which BAME people are educated, work and live.

	<p>Black pupils in Gloucestershire perform below the average for Black pupils in England. The closure of schools this year is likely to have widened this gap.</p>
	<p>BAME people in Gloucestershire are more likely to live in poor-quality, overcrowded private-rented housing than White British or White Irish people.</p>
	<p>BAME people often work in key worker roles, health and social care, and low paid roles which are not possible to perform from home.</p>
	<p>People aged 65+ from Asian and Black backgrounds were more likely than people from other ethnic backgrounds to have a long-term illness and to be in poor health.</p>



The Impact of COVID-19 on Gloucestershire's BAME residents

Belonging to certain ethnic groups increases the chances of contracting COVID-19, developing severe symptoms, and dying from the virus. The pandemic has shown how important it is to have thorough equality data including faith and ethnicity.



Community Resilience

The community support during lockdown and the Black Lives Matter movement has shown the wealth of knowledge and experience in our BAME communities and the huge role they can play in making Gloucestershire a more successful, healthy and inclusive place to live. To carry on playing this vital role, it is important that the sector get the necessary support.



Workplace Health and Wellbeing

The nature of BAME people’s employment has been a key factor in the increased risk faced by them during the pandemic. Measures to lower this risk, including issuing of PPE have been implemented unevenly. There is a need to work with BAME employees to create healthy and supportive workplaces that have zero tolerance for discrimination and empower BAME staff to raise concerns about risk and safety at work.



COVID-19 and Communication

Research found a lack of awareness, fear and mistrust among BAME people regarding public health messaging. Building confidence in the messaging and public services generally, requires working with faith and BAME communities to create and distribute culturally competent and easy to understand versions of guidance in multiple languages.



COVID-19 and Pre-existing Conditions

Pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes, and excess weight among BAME populations is likely to explain some of the risk to COVID-19. Health improvement solutions should be informed by the views and experiences of BAME service users and ideally co-produced with the target audience to help identify and address barriers to access and participation.



Becoming a Culturally Competent Organisation

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with, and interact well with people across cultures. In public service it is ‘the ability of providers and organisations to deliver services that meet the social, faith, cultural, and linguistic needs of service users’. Gloucestershire County Council has set up a BAME COVID-19 Task and Finish Group who are working with agencies to build their cultural competence. If you would like to find out more please contact bwn@gloucestershire.gov.uk



Co-operation and Co-production

A combination of discriminatory policies and processes, unconscious bias among staff, and a lack of representation of BAME people at all levels of organisations has a harmful impact on the access, experiences and outcomes of BAME residents in public services. While inequality persists, more joint action is needed that works with individuals and communities, using the assets they have to contribute.



Beyond COVID-19 in Gloucestershire

When Gloucestershire moves out of fighting Covid, it is even more important to honour and expand on commitments to tackle the root causes of health inequalities. As organisations develop their recovery plans, we have a critical opportunity to rethink the methods of the past that led us to this point and to instead work in partnership with communities to create long-term, sustainable change. Read the full report on Gloucestershire County Council’s website: [add link]



Recommendations



Ensure good quality ethnicity data collection in all public services. Put in place good cultural training and messaging to improve response rates



Provide the resources for joint research with BAME employees, organisations and community representatives to understand the social, cultural, structural, economic, religious, and commercial factors related to COVID-19.

Using the results from this research, co-produce and fund solutions to reduce the risk of catching COVID-19 and improve health outcomes.



Review commissioning procedures and practice to make sure that Equality Impact Assessments, BAME service user data and feedback are used in a meaningful way to inform services

Training for commissioners should clearly cover the differences in access, experience and outcomes for BAME residents and their responsibilities in addressing these.



Complete commitment to putting into practise culturally competent occupational risk assessment tools, including assigning the required capacity and resource.

Use our influence in the public sector to gather knowledge and share best practice to support the health of key workers in the private sector



Work with BAME and faith communities to develop and give out culturally competent COVID-19 prevention and health improvement communication plans at an organisation level and through Local Resilience Forum.



Ensure that COVID-19 recovery plans actively cut down inequalities caused by the wider factors of health.

The Recovery Coordination Group should regularly review the equality implications and seek input from BAME staff, residents and other side lined groups.



Undertake a stocktake of the BAME voluntary sector, looking to further the input it makes towards reducing health inequalities in Gloucestershire. Seek to build capacity and sustainability longer term within this sector.



Create a Race Equality Panel for Gloucestershire, adding to the work of Gloucester City Council, to drive forward this agenda and create long term sustainable change.

Where to go for further information



	<p>There is information on COVID-19 for BAME communities on the Gloucestershire County Council website: gloucestershire.gov.uk/covid-19-information-and-advice/information-and-resources-for-bame-communities</p> <p>Get a test sent to your home or book an appointment at a local testing centre: gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test</p>
	<p>Gloucestershire Community Help Hub – gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/</p> <p>Find out about financial and other support available if you've lost your job, are self-employed, have been furloughed, cannot work due to illness, need help with childcare: gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support</p> <p>Healthy Lifestyle Service - get free help with smoking, healthy eating, physical activity, pregnancy, alcohol, gambling or general wellbeing: hlsqlos.org</p> <p>Barnardo's - Our staff can talk to you in English, Urdu or Hindi. helpline.barnardos.org.uk/helpline</p> <p>Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) - email info@garas.org.uk</p>
	<p>Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team –visit ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/crhtt For 11 year olds and up who need immediate support with a mental health crisis.</p> <p>Qwell- visit qwell.io for free, anonymous online counselling and self-</p>



help resources for adults.

Kooth – visit [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com). For 11 to 18 year olds. An online support platform where young people can access free anonymous counselling, join discussion boards, keep online journals, goal trackers, and read self-help articles.



Get a COVID-19 test sent to your home or book an appointment at a testing centre call **119**

Gloucestershire Community Help Hub – call **01452 583519**
Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm

Healthy Lifestyle Service - call **0800 122 3788** (Freephone number)

Barnardo's - call **0800 1512 605** (Freephone number)

Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) - call **01452 550528**

Mental Health Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team – call **0800 169 0398** (Freephone number), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week