EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EMERGING COMMUNITIES IN HOUNSLOW & WEST LONDON:
MAPPING & NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Afghan, Algerian, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Romanian & Bulgarian communities

October 2014
Community Partnerships Unit, London Borough of Hounslow

CPU takes a corporate lead in the strategic development and management of the council's partnership with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to deliver key organisational objectives. The team also advise Members on work relating to: a stronger and empowered community - more people participating in local decision making; a cohesive and resilient community - people from different backgrounds getting on well; a sustainable and independent voluntary and community sector - building the capacity of the third sector and supporting sustainable growth; encourage neighbourhood partnerships consisting of local stakeholders - facilitating regeneration within the borough’s communities. These objectives are delivered through management of the council's VCS funding programme, 'on-the-ground' community development and capacity building programmes, development and implementation of the Prevent Strategy work stream and the council’s community cohesion and community engagement strategies.

Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), Middlesex University

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at Middlesex University, London, initiates and supports high quality research of national and international standing. Its researchers use innovative methodologies to undertake research on new and emerging topics within the social sciences, in particular with neglected and marginalised communities, at a local, national and international level. The Centre actively promotes interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. Staff are involved in a wide range of projects funded by research councils, the EU, government departments and the major charities. The SPRC publishes academic papers and books, as well as reports and briefs for policy makers, practitioners and community groups. The Centre runs events, including conferences, seminars and short courses including research training. For further information and to view reports from our recent projects please visit: www.sprc.info

West London BMER Network and Acton Community Forum

The West London BMER Network consists of established agencies which emerged from and are embedded in a range of BMER communities across the Boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Harrow, and Hounslow. Affiliated to the larger BMER Advice Network, BAN (which represents 40 refugee and migrant organisations across London), the West London BMER Network also aims to ensure BMER people can access quality support and develop stronger partnerships across the advice sector and to ensure policy makers, local authorities, statutory services and funding bodies have a clear view of these diverse communities and strengthen and ensure the survival of much-needed support services. The West London BMER Advice Network works in consultation with Acton Community Forum (ACF), which has been a central delivery and policy development partner in West London, including undertaking research, consultation and focus groups with hard-to-reach and BMER communities. ACF’s core staff has extensive skills, contacts and experience working in London’s voluntary sector, with a key focus on BMER communities.

Project Team

Within the Social Policy Research Centre at Middlesex University, Alessio D’Angelo was the project coordinator and Preeti Kathreca the lead researcher and report writer. Prof. Eleonore Kofman and Dr Dominic Pasura contributed to the literature review; Magdolna Lorinc conducted the mapping of organisations and stakeholders. Misak Ohanian and Matt Friedson facilitated the community outreach and engagement for the project.

Acknowledgements

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Afghan Academy  HCN (Hounslow Community Network)  National Algerian Centre
Afghan Community Organisation  Hounslow Libraries  ROTA (Race on the Agenda)
Alzheimers Hounslow  Hounslow Race Equality Council  Tamil Community Centre
CAB Feltham and Hounslow  Islamic Integration Community Centre  TisaranaVihara
Ealing CVS  London Buddhist Vihara  The Moonstars Café
East European Advice Centre;  Multi Cultural Centre  The Upper Room
Hounslow Clinical Commissioning Group  National Algerian Centre

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Introduction

The executive summary provides an overview of the main report findings and recommendations (refer to this for further information).

The Social Policy Research Centre at Middlesex University has been commissioned by the London Borough of Hounslow (hereafter LBH) to aid a better understanding of its newest and emerging communities. The project was conceived based on information from the 2011 Census, which shows Hounslow has among the highest proportion of Afghan, Burmese and Sri Lankan ethnic communities in the UK. The Algerian community was identified by LBH as an emerging community based on feedback from frontline service providers. The Council was also keen to explore the potential impact for new communities arriving from Bulgaria and Romania when the restrictions on entering the UK were lifted on the 1st January 2014. Members of these six communities are considered to be isolated in the Borough and may not approach the Council or other organisations for support and advice services.

The research project aimed to help the LBH better understand the current position of these communities in the Borough through the following objectives: Map the location, size and defining characteristics of the six ‘emerging communities’ (Afghan, Algerian, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Romanian and Bulgarian); identify the needs of these communities and any gaps in service provision; investigate whether (and how) these communities are engaging with the LBH or other service providers; explore how best to engage effectively with the six communities, and identify best practice in this area both within the Borough and from national examples; identify which voluntary and community organisations are working with and within each of the six communities.

Methodology

Adopting a community-based ethos and participatory approach, the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) worked in partnership with the West London BMER Advice Network and Acton Community Forum (ACF). The partners helped co-ordinate community outreach and engagement support by the network and other third sector organisations.

To be able to map the six communities, understand their needs, how they are engaging with service providers in Hounslow and what the best engagement approaches are for the council, we used the following methodology: Review and analysis of secondary data; review of literature and policies; focus groups with individuals of the six communities; stakeholder interviews service providers both mainstream and from the community sector, community leaders and representatives from the Council; community observation by visiting some of the key hubs in Hounslow such as the high streets, libraries and community centres as well as talking to local people and businesses about perceptions of Hounslow and the six communities; and an online survey of organisations. We also

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conducted a mapping exercise of service provision for community organisations working with the six groups.

It is important to note some of the gaps and limitations of the study to give the findings further context. Each of the six communities should not be seen as homogenous but as made-up of subgroups with a range of diverse affiliations. Given the timeframe it was not always possible to reflect this diversity.

Key Findings

1. There is a distinct **absence of literature** on the six communities in the UK, particularly some of the smaller communities such as the Burmese and Algerians.

2. Although respondents generally have positive perceptions of Hounslow most have **aspirations to move out** into areas that are perceived as more aspirational such as Twickenham and Richmond. **Common pull factors** to Hounslow include: existing family and social networks, the convenience of Heathrow Airport and cheap private rental accommodation.

3. There are **no obvious community hubs** in Hounslow for each of the six communities. Although places of worship serve as hubs for the Afghan and Sri Lankan community, they do not provide any formal or structured support for worshippers. Many actually visit larger places of worship outside the Borough, where there is also a larger population.

4. Similarly, there are **no formal organisations** that exist in Hounslow representing the Algerian, Burmese, Romanian and Bulgarian communities. Tamils from the Sri Lankan community are represented by the Tamil Community Centre (TCC) although the organisation is running over capacity, has little or no funding and relies heavily on one community champion and a number of volunteers. Some Afghan organisations in Hounslow were forced to close because of funding cuts, they are also affected by fragmentation based on socio-religious and political differences. All communities except the Algerian and Burmese communities say they **use other formal organisations outside the Borough**.

5. The main reasons for **engaging with the Council revolve around meeting a basic need** such as housing, welfare support, immigration and employment support. The Burmese community has the least engagement with the Council. There is a **poor awareness of council services** and what they do as well as how they can help. People perceive most services as council led and cannot distinguish which are central government and/or outside agencies.

6. Those with children describe contact with **schools as their most positive experience** with a ‘service’ due to the consistent provision of advice, and translators. Negative perceptions revolve around reported **poor frontline experiences**, enquiries not being followed through or reaching a dead end leaving communities frustrated and with a negative image of the Council.

7. **The lack of language support and provision** has implications for every interaction the community has with the Council. Language is the biggest barrier to engagement including: a lack of language provision at the point of contact; lack of translated literature (including online); lack of suitable English language education; and poor use of interpreters and translators.

8. **Housing is a key advice need** for all communities. There are particular concerns around length of time in temporary accommodation, housing benefit calculations, negative experiences in the private rented sector and problems using the online Locata system (a choice based lettings system which allows you to apply for vacant Council and Housing Association properties in Hounslow and in neighbouring boroughs that are part of the Locata scheme).
9. **Isolation** is a key theme for all six communities particularly for women and elders. The lack of community hubs and organisations means women will revolve their life around the home and family; this is linked to high levels of domestic violence and **poor mental health** particularly for Afghan and Sri Lankan women. Algerian and Burmese women find it difficult to meet other women because of a lack of accessible specialist networks and organisations in the Borough.

10. This is made worse by the **lack of specialist support** available to communities, for example, the lack of tailored mental health support such as counselling, and support for alcoholism (a concern among Sri Lankan men). There is a perceived lack of awareness at GP level.

11. All communities describe that **poor representation** of their communities at council and councillor level help enforce a negative view that the Council is not interested in them. High levels of South Asian representation results in perceptions that the South Asian community are more ‘privileged’ or more likely to be heard and taken seriously by the Council. All communities identify that having better representation within the Council would encourage more contact.

12. **Employment** is a key concern for Algerians, Bulgarians and Romanians **whose qualifications are not recognised** in the UK making it harder for them to find employment. There are no support structures in place to help these communities with the transfer of qualifications and specialist advice on employment. There appear to be high levels of exploitation for Bulgarians and Romanians who will often take contract work.

13. All six communities use the **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) as a key point of contact** for advice but feel it is **oversubscribed and difficult to access**. There is no substantial longer term one-to-one support for these communities and advice is often sought once they reach crisis point.

14. Advice organisations in Hounslow and West London feel the **CAB has a monopoly on advice commissioning** but many are ill equipped and lack experience to handle the ‘complex’ tenders for advice commissions. Other community and voluntary organisations also feel the Council funding processes are too difficult and have resulted in lost opportunities for funding and subsequent closure of organisations; this will potentially prevent new organisations from forming. The CAB suggests that the older communities who migrated to Hounslow earlier, such as the Afghan community, may have fewer advice needs than the newer communities. However, **changing advice priorities** may contribute to a lack of specialist support services for some communities, and a community that is still in need may unwittingly become victim to a decline in specialist or targeted services. For example, Afghan and Sri Lankan people who participated in this research complain of a lack of English language provision.

15. **A lack of community partnerships** between the Council and the six communities combined with poor engagement with these communities has resulted in zero representation of these communities in known networks to the council such as the Hounslow Community Network (HCN). If the HCN is to be the desired model for collective VCSE sector representation in Hounslow, then more work needs to be done to increase BMER membership, such as targeted outreach and language support.

16. There is evidence that the Council needs to **better champion equality and diversity** and awareness of the voluntary community and social enterprise sector so that staff understand the issues faced by its diverse residents, avoid conflict and prejudice and understand what the voluntary community and social enterprise sector is and can offer them.
Use of Services and Needs of the Community

The Afghan Community

- Population size, location: 4,463 Afghans in Hounslow, 3.08% are foreign born, main areas of settlement include: Cranford, Heston East and Heston West Hounslow.

Contact with the Council for Afghans in Hounslow revolves around meeting basic needs such as housing and welfare support. Interestingly, Afghan women are unaware of any other ways to contact the Council except through Housing services. As a result, this will be the only point of reference people have with the Council and they know little about what other services are available to them. Poor experiences at these points of initial contact and thereafter result in negative impressions of the Council. This is made worse by a perception that poor representation and visibility of Afghan people in public life is seen as a reflection of how seriously the Council takes a community, for example, Afghan men in this study feel that South Asian people are given priority because they are more visible in public and civic life. The lack of adequate language support and provision impacts on the ability of Afghan people to feel confident in communicating their needs to the Council.

An exploration of the types of mental health provision for the Afghan community is essential if the Council is to tackle the concerns of residents (particularly women) facing isolation, depression and loneliness, often as a result of poor language support, but also as a result of cultural practices. The Council needs to be more informed of and sensitive to cultural practices as there are perceptions of basic mistakes in service provision, for example, having a male lifeguard at women only swimming sessions or GPs neglecting to acknowledge depression.

All the positive contact experiences described by Afghan women such as with schools and with Councillors involve a long-term person to person contact rather than a one-stop-stop style interaction with someone ‘behind a desk’. It is only then that women feel they are being listened to and get the support they require. For Afghan men the priority is English language support and a dedicated Afghan organisation through which other services could be provided and other needs met.

The Algerian Community

- Population size: 629 Algerians in Hounslow, 0.43% of foreign born
- Main areas of settlement include: Hounslow Heath and Osterley & S.G.

The Algerian community in Hounslow have little contact with the Council. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, Algerian men tend to consult informal networks before contacting the Council or after any correspondence from the Council. This informal support is often found in a café culture type network that exists in Hounslow, where advice, signposting and support are offered by other men in the community. This is not the case for women, and a lack of English language skills combined with a culture of gender separation may mean that women are more isolated or have much smaller social networks to rely on and find it difficult to meet other women. Algerian women tend to be more qualified than Algerian men but both groups find it difficult to transfer their qualifications so that they can find work. These factors combined may contribute to higher levels of isolation and depression among Algerian women.
There are opposing views of community cohesion and belonging in the Borough with sections of the community believing that integration is not possible because they will not be accepted by Western culture, and others who feel that integration needs to happen but in a structured way to gain the trust and respect of the Algerian community. This conflict could explain why there are so few Algerian organisations in London. The tension could explain why some older Algerians describe a culture gap between them and the younger generation; organisations suggest there may be a need for parenting styles to adapt to a more Western context as well as a need for positive role models. One pathway for integration could be through sport - Algerian men describe a need to play football with other communities in a more structured way. Finally, Algerians in private rental accommodation describe facing prejudice from private landlords, and those who are in social housing describe problems using Locata.

Overall, Algerians in Hounslow tend not to rely on Council services but on informal support networks; as a result they do not know what services are available from the Council. There is a need for better access to advice, information, guidance and formal support. There is an obvious gap in engaging with Algerian women and fostering a social space where women can interact may help develop their informal networks to something more formal. Also, specific services that target employment issues and tackle language proficiency would attract women.

The Burmese Community

- Population size: 526 Burmese in Hounslow, 0.36% of foreign born
- Main area of settlement is Hounslow Central.

The Burmese community in Hounslow is the largest in London yet this is still relatively small and very much a silent minority. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, contact with the Council is minimal and this is highly likely to be a symptom of an overall lack of awareness about Council services in the Borough. As a result, Burmese people may be missing out on vital opportunities and entitlements such as free school meals for their children. A large gap in the provision of services for Burmese people is a lack of English language support, particularly written translation of correspondence. This is partly because of an overall lack of English proficiency among the community but also because the community are not aware of how to request translated material. Burmese residents describe how there are no community leaders they can turn to in Hounslow. Similarly, aside from religious places of worship there are no Burmese community organisations in the Borough. Burmese people also describe the lack of social networks. This is worrying because it leaves fewer pathways for the Council to engage with this community and suggests the community may be extremely isolated, which is particularly worrying for its more vulnerable members such as the elderly.

What is striking about this community is the lack of face-to-face contact and isolation from services. Although there is a desire for formal one-to one support, there is the perception that there is no means or motivation to provide such support both from the Council and within the community. The Burmese community needs to be guided through processes with better access to translated material and translators but also through encouraging community leadership and raising the visibility of Burmese people in Hounslow community networks. Places of worship could be a good start in fostering links with the community and developing leadership.
The Sri Lankan Community

- Population size: 2,660 Sri Lankans in Hounslow, 1.84% of foreign born
- Main areas of settlement include: Hounslow Heath and Hounslow West.

The Sri Lankan community in Hounslow consulted for this research was made up of Sinhalese and Tamil Sri Lankans and both groups have a distinct set of needs. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, the Sinhalese Sri Lankans have little contact with the Council, are more ‘established’ financially and socially, some are business owners, all are Buddhist and the majority are British citizens. In contrast, the Tamil Sri Lankans that we spoke to have a more insecure immigration status, have frequent contact with Council frontline services, are Hindu and Christian, and have a lower level of English language ability and are more likely not to trust authority (based on experiences of civil war). Tamils also have strong health needs that are related to trauma as a result of civil war e.g. there are higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), poor mental health, alcoholism and domestic violence and all require specialist targeted support. Both Sinhalese and Tamil Sri Lankans feel there is a strong need for access to translated literature and promotion of English language classes.

Overall, public health engagement with the Sri Lankan community is poor, there is very little targeted work and more specialist services are needed to tackle mental health concerns, preferably from trained community members. Sri Lankans have a very strong cultural and religious identity and informal social networks resulting in less engagement with mainstream services and organisations. Organisations like the Tamil Community Centre (TCC) that provide specialist services are oversubscribed and underfunded with a question mark around sustainability.

The Sri Lankan Community cannot be treated as a whole and there needs to be tailored and specialist support capturing the various issues and working from within the community – using community members to deliver training. Sri Lankan men are less likely to access services so again targeted work using community members would be more effective. Looking at existing community spaces and helping sustain those spaces will not only help engagement but will also help build trust towards the Council.

The Bulgarian and Romanian Communities

- Population: 713 Bulgarians, 0.49% of foreign born, main area of settlement is Brentford.
- Population: 829 Romanians, 0.57% of foreign born, main areas of settlement include: Hounslow Central, Hounslow Heath and Hounslow West.

Organisations like the East European Advice Centre and Hounslow Race Equality Council working with both Romanians and Bulgarians and the wider Eastern European communities say that many of their needs and use of services are very similar. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, awareness of Council services is almost non-existent. The Romanian and Bulgarian participants in this research highlight the importance of learning about basic Council processes such as how to make appointments. Basic advice needs are not being met and there is a need for critical support, advice and advocacy and as well as general information. Both communities report that they have faced prejudice in the Borough which exacerbates feelings of mistrust towards authority, and these
communities are more likely to stick to known networks and organisations or persevere alone, rather than approach mainstream services.

There is a distinct lack of English language skill particularly for new arrivals, many of whom are also struggling to get their qualifications recognised. As a result, many highly qualified Romanians and Bulgarians are forced to take employment through existing contacts in cleaning and hospitality and may be in danger of exploitation from unscrupulous employers who know they are desperate for money to survive. Organisations working with Bulgarian and Romanian migrants stress that this state of desperation can lead to poor mental health and state their mental health services are oversubscribed. For both communities there were numerous complaints about poor treatment from private landlords and again many felt they were exploited because of their migrant status and struggle to meet basic needs. These factors combined with poor language skills suggest these communities are among the most vulnerable in Hounslow.

Most community organisations are formed only after basic needs such as employment and housing have been met. The Bulgarian and Romanian communities are at this stage and the nature of their work is contract based; they often move around or go back to their home country and this may explain why community organisations have not been established. A way to combat this is to tap into older more established organisations to help these newer communities. To combat an overall lack of awareness of UK/Council processes, there is a strong need for information delivered in the right way. For example, organisations feel “Eastern Europeans don't tend to congregate anywhere”, hence, they would benefit from tailored online services and literature. Also, more visibility of Bulgarian and Romanian languages would inspire confidence.

**Recommendations**

This research focuses on six migrant communities in Hounslow, however many of the findings are relevant to the wider BMER communities in Hounslow. This view is supported by the organisations working with the six communities who identify that many of their needs and use of services are very similar.

1. **Research:** This report has highlighted the overall lack of research and data for most of the six communities. If the Council wants to commit to a better and more tailored provision of services and increased engagement then it needs to commit to future research. Research needs to inform service provision, policy and strategy and be an integral part of a decision making process.

**Suggested Actions:**

- A more in-depth exploration of what existing settlements and networks there are in Hounslow that may contribute to greater levels of migration.
- Conduct a research audit to determine what research/data is held by whom and any gaps in knowledge.
- Map and review data monitoring and evaluation procedures for council services.
- Undertake community-led research and action research activities, including training and capacity building.
- Work with the VCSE and academics to determine research priorities based on gaps in knowledge and research gaps highlighted in the report.
• Develop an overall research strategy on diversity and equality in Hounslow.

2. **Language:** Based on the experiences of residents from the six communities, provision and publicity of language support across the Borough is poor and this has implications for every interaction people have with the council as well as impacting on their ability to feel confident in communicating their needs.

**Suggested Actions:**
- Offer full time or intensive classes to those who want to enter the job market.
- Offer more Basic English provision to up-skill people that want to study for ESOL.
- Review availability of written translation of correspondence for Burmese residents.
- Increase access to translated literature and promotion of English language classes to Tamil residents.
- Review English language support for new arrivals e.g. Bulgarians and Romanians to help with transfer of qualifications, combat exploitation and poor mental health.
- Collaborative working between the Council and the VCSE sector to identify opportunities to provide informal settings for language learning and integration.

3. **Contact with the Council:** This report shows that an overall awareness of Council services is poor to non-existent and contact ranges from meeting basic needs and crisis support to none at all. The pathways to Council services are not understood and described as confusing and poorly signposted resulting in a low level of contact with the Council and a high level of mistrust.

**Suggested Actions:**
- Review and revise preferred method of contact information for residents and ensure communication needs are being met both at point of contact (frontline services or website) and in any correspondence/communication/literature. One possible solution is for the Council to produce ‘welcome to Hounslow’ packs which provide a map of how to access services and step by step engagement/contact. This needs to be followed up with targeted outreach work to ensure that this information is being received in the most useful format.
- Review the availability of translators on frontline services, GP and hospital appointments when requested. Look at methods of increasing the pool of community translators by tapping into informal networks and existing organisations and offering training and development.
- Publicise ‘how to’ style descriptions of basic Council processes that ease citizenship and settlement in the Borough such as how to make appointments, registering with a school (e.g. free school meals and nursery vouchers), registering with a local GP.
- Encourage equality and diversity audits or EQIA/Equality analysis of public services such as leisure centres to ensure communities are not unwittingly being excluded. Raise awareness among frontline staff of the needs of migrant communities and develop training that explores how to make points of contact a more positive experience for migrant communities. This could also be done by tapping into existing training and inductions for new staff.
- Explore models of relational governance and best practice in the provision of frontline services e.g. person centred care. This could include a literature review to inform future discussion.
- Work with community leaders to act as sources of information with their respective communities and strengthening signposting to mainstream services.
• Targeted support for the Burmese community, whose contact with the Council is almost non-existent.

4. Health: Support for and knowledge of the specific health needs of the six communities is distinctly lacking. All communities face numerous barriers that may exacerbate health problems and combined with a perceived lack of existing support services means there may be a large number of residents missing out on vital care and support. In particular communities with poor language skills and engagement with the Council face isolation, depression and loneliness; more so for the more vulnerable members of a community such as the elderly and women at home.

Suggested Actions:
• Review of mental health provision to BMER communities in the Borough.
• Work with the CCG to identify and best support the health needs of BMER communities and prioritise specific health campaigns across the Borough.
• An exploration of the types of mental health provision for the six communities and wider BMER community.
• Targeted help for women and elderly facing isolation, depression and loneliness.
• Work with GPs to raise awareness of depression among BMER communities in the Borough and highlight reasons behind their depression.
• Targeted support for Sri Lankans who have suffered trauma as a result of civil war e.g. counselling for PTSD, mental health support, alcoholism and domestic violence.
• Targeted support for Bulgarians and Romanians for whom evidence suggests that they suffer high levels of poor mental health and alcoholism as a result of migration and not being able to find work.
• Explore ways of providing training for community members to deliver mental health and domestic violence support to their own communities.
• Explore the impacts of loneliness, isolation and depression on migrant communities (particularly women and elders) and develop outreach work to combat this.

5. Housing: There is an overwhelming feeling across all six communities that the Council is not providing effective support and communication for residents in both social housing and the private rented sector. As a result, there remain questions around the transparency of housing processes and health problems related to stresses as a result of issues with housing. For some communities the only contact they have with the Council is through housing services and many describe experiences of frontline housing services as poor.

Suggested Actions:
• Review of information (and its format) provided at points of contact.
• Review how housing services can better signpost residents to other Council services.
• Explore the issues raised around housing need and work with Housing services to develop initiatives to help combat any barriers, in particular, support with: housing applications, raising deposits for private renting; assess criteria for Discretionary Local Crisis Payment (Crisis loans) and help using Locata.
Although there is no regulatory body for private landlords, the Council needs to explore initiatives that help educate/raise awareness among private landlords of the issues affecting residents and maintain an open and continual dialogue between them and the Council to help combat the effects of unscrupulous landlords on residents. This could be a regular forum or group of stakeholders that meet to discuss key issues and forward any recommendations to the Council/Housing services as well as helping to develop a set of standards for good practice.

6. Employment: Evidence from this research suggests that these six communities are in particular need of specialist support to enable them to find employment. There is no substantial data on the employment patterns of these communities in Hounslow but this research and wider studies suggest BMER communities face higher levels of unemployment made worse by language barriers, poor qualifications or the inability to transfer existing qualifications from their home countries into similar employment in the UK.

Suggested Actions:
- Look at methods to provide targeted and specialist support in the six communities to tackle the transfer of qualifications and improving language skills (particularly for Bulgarian, Romanian and Algerian residents) – work with existing organisations that are providing this support.
- Improve resources for residents from these communities to be able to search for jobs.
- Work with local business networks to raise awareness of issues facing the six communities and develop programmes that may help foster better employment links i.e. apprenticeships.

7. Visibility, representation and participation: There are a number of concerns around the visibility and representation of the six communities in the Borough. These include, the lack of representation on Council frontline services, in local advice giving organisations, in civic life i.e. Councillors and in the local media. Similarly, the six communities are underrepresented in the voluntary community and social enterprise sector in Hounslow; the HCN has no organisations from these communities and low BMER representation overall. This is partly because existing organisations do not know how to tap into more formal networks but partly because there are little or no community organisations in the Borough that represent the six communities, for example, there are no Burmese organisations in Hounslow.

Suggested Actions:
- Targeted advertising of Council jobs among the six communities.
- Longer-term initiatives to increase visibility of the six communities in public life – champion existing community leaders, have a community leader’s programme or training that fosters future leaders.
- Schemes to encourage formation of community groups or support existing informal networks to grow.
- Outreach work with the voluntary community and social enterprise sector and HCN to increase membership and participation from the six communities.
- Better signposting of social, cultural and leisure activities across the six communities.
• Explore avenues for engagement through sport, in particular, local activities that engage with migrant communities (e.g. Algerian football).
• Develop partnerships with schools to foster engagement and participation.

8. **Supporting the community and voluntary sector:** The need for advice in Hounslow is much larger than its current provision. The organisations that were interviewed in this study criticise the Council’s approach to advice commissioning and feel processes make it impossible for smaller and less established advice giving organisations to secure funding, in particular, the focus on delivery over need means many organisations with expertise but less capacity lose out to organisations that may not have these specialist skills. As a result, organisations providing specialist services to the BMER community are oversubscribed and underfunded with a question mark around sustainability. The perception here is that the Council needs to support organisations that are often a lifeline for residents in the Borough. At the same time, however, it should be recognised that Hounslow Council faces extreme financial challenges as a result of funding cuts by the UK Government. This has prompted the Council to consider more innovative and effective ways of managing service demand by supporting and developing the capacity of local communities and residents to meet their own needs. This can be achieved by the Council working in partnership with the VCSE sector, who are best placed to empower residents and local communities, to build alternative networks of support.

**Suggested Actions:**

- Work with the CAB and HCN to explore sub-contracting and partnership working.
- Review the ‘complex’ tender and application process to reflect the focus on need and service evaluation as opposed to just delivery.
- Specialist advice and support through the commissioning process e.g. advice on how and what data should be collected to help organisations secure funding.
- Explore the possibility of a Community Liaison Post that will focus on liaison, signposting, fostering contacts, generating opportunities for one-to-one support and outreach work.
- Engage with the existing hubs in the Borough such as places of worship (including developing informal hubs such as Algerian cafés) and maintain links for community outreach work.
- Engage with organisations highlighted as case studies to explore partnership working in the Borough, building collaborative relationships and developing the capacities of lay communities, and help develop similar models in Hounslow.
- Look to develop online hubs particularly for Eastern European migrants who tend to access these.
- Follow up the dissemination and engagement activities to help build an open dialogue between LBH and the six communities.

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2 Hounslow Council (forthcoming) Thriving Communities Funding Plan 2015-2019. Community Partnership Unit.