



# Connecting with Culture an insight from Time To Shine

2018



**NATIONAL  
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## About Time to Shine

Run by Leeds Older People's Forum, the Time to Shine (TTS) programme aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness of the older population in Leeds.

Our vision is that older people in Leeds need not experience loneliness and isolation as an inevitable consequence of ageing but that our project will offer opportunities for fulfilment by breaking down barriers and building strong communities.

Time To Shine is one of the 14 areas which form Ageing Better; an ambitious, large scale programme funded by the National Lottery and developed by the Big Lottery Fund. It aims to improve the lives of people aged 50 and over by reducing social isolation and loneliness.

## Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide some insights to commissioners and practitioners to help shape inclusive services. It is drawn from emerging evidence and learning from Time to Shine so far and more specifically Time to Shine projects focusing on BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities.

The report identifies some of the barriers experienced by older BAME people and gives examples of approaches Time to Shine have used.

We hope the report will act as a catalyst for further discussion around developing further work with Older People from diverse communities.



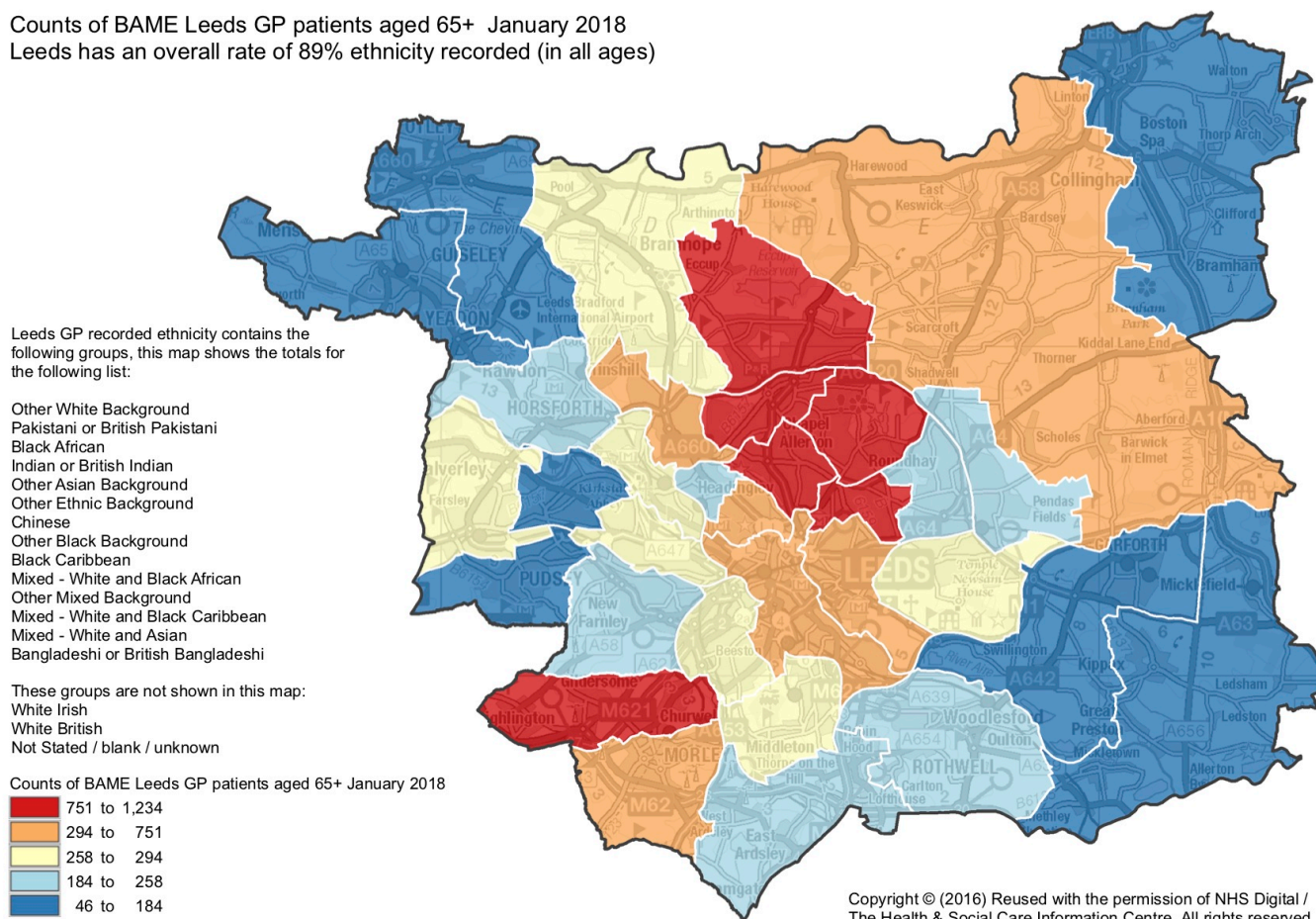
Data from GP registration shows that in January 2018, 5% of the BAME population in Leeds is over 65 years old. When we look at data for over 50 years old this rises to 15%. Highlighting that the older BAME population in Leeds is growing.

BAME communities include (but not limited to):

- Pakistani or Pakistani British
- Black African
- Indian or British Indian
- Chinese
- Black Caribbean
- White Irish
- Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi

The statistics highlight the changing make-up of the ageing population in Leeds. Our work has highlighted the importance of cultural identity and has given us insight into the many benefits of targeting approaches to older people who identify themselves as belonging to different ethnic groups.

Counts of BAME Leeds GP patients aged 65+ January 2018  
Leeds has an overall rate of 89% ethnicity recorded (in all ages)



## Key learning

Loneliness can be defined as a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want (Perlman and Peplau, 1981).

Loneliness can be experienced by people of all ages, but as we get older, risk factors that might lead to loneliness begin to increase. Such risk factors include:

- Poor health,
- Sensory loss
- Loss of mobility
- Lower income
- Bereavement
- Retirement
- Becoming a carer

Older people from BAME groups may face additional risk factors which can act as a barrier for engagement and connecting with others, including Cultural factors, discrimination and racism.

What do we know about Social isolation among older BAME people?

While the BAME population in the UK is diverse, research tells us that cultural factors can increase social isolation and loneliness for some.

BAME individuals tend to experience a greater number of health, social and economic inequalities compared to the overall population (Jivraj and Simpson 2015).

BAME individuals are more likely to experience discrimination and racism over the course of their lives, which can increase the risk of loneliness by limiting social opportunities and interactions (Burholt 2016)

Some BME individuals may be more vulnerable to hidden forms of loneliness, particularly those who have large family networks.

The experience of migrants differ considerably, some BAME migrants, especially men learnt English after arriving in the UK as it was crucial to work. Women, however were given fewer opportunities which may lead to increased difficulties in making connections with the wider community.

The stigma of loneliness in many communities can affect an individual's desire to ask for help.

Time to Shine commissioned projects to specifically focus on the needs of BAME communities

- Time to Shine BME network at Health for All working with Sikh and Hindu Elders
- Raat Di Roti at Touchstone working with Sikh Elders
- Leeds Irish Health & Home's Cara project working with the Irish community
- Lychee Red at Health for All working with the Chinese community

## Key learning (cont.)

The projects worked to engage social isolated older people from the specific BAME groups and develop activities and support which improve their quality of life.

Learning from these projects together with learning from the wider Time to Shine programme, has given us insight into the following emerging themes:

- Language
- The importance of cultural understanding and heritage
- Assumptions and stigma

### Language

A lack of confidence due to language was mentioned by many as a barrier to participation, and beneficiaries from non-English speaking backgrounds particularly welcomed projects that allowed them to chat in their own language:

Chinese participants referred to language as having a direct association with levels of social contact:

“I am a single woman and live alone , Most of time I miss my families in China , I am always feel lonely ,No one couldn't understand me. That's why I came, [I had] no-one to talk to, my neighbours are not Chinese” (Lychee Red)

The support of bi-lingual staff and volunteers across projects enabled older people to participate.

A lack of confidence in both spoken and written communication have a detrimental effect on older people and provide an additional barrier. For example some people have told us that due to language issues they are unable to read the bus schedules. Most of their life they have relied on their partners or family members for transport.

### The importance of shared heritage and culture

Shared experiences and culture bring people together, all worked hard to ensure all activities included a cultural element, such as location of activities, music, dance and food.

“It's that Irish connection, although Leeds is my home, I will always have a soft spot for Ireland... I love Irish music, I go to the Irish Centre, it's the connection” (Cara).

Projects found a reported reduction of loneliness when activities reconnected them to their heritage. Projects also found that religion and spirituality were important for many of the older people the projects worked with: Being able to spend time with people with shared beliefs provided additional comfort.

“I miss going to the Sikh Temple because I miss talking to my old friends”.(BME network)

Lychee Red found that a lot of Older People previously worked in the restaurant trade, anti-social hours meant it was difficult to make friends and connections outside of work. By attending groups to bring people of a similar background together; friendships were developed.

## Case study

The BME Network is a network of eight volunteer led groups which provide weekly activities for Sikh and Hindu Older People, supported by Health for All. Activities are fun, sociable, culturally appropriate and delivered by committed bilingual group leaders and volunteers.

Mrs Landa came heard about the Time to Shine BME network through a Health Trainer, after the death of her husband. She became depressed, lost confidence and had no interest in going out.

“Bally from Time to Shine BME Senior’s Network visited me and introduced me to one of the group. She took me to a community group and organised an access bus for me. She stayed with me in the group till I felt comfortable.

The group’s leader, Mrs Gunwati Surah, welcomed me to the group. In couple of months I made some friends. I attend the group every week now.

I feel very happy now. I am not depress anymore. I have learnt a new way of living life. I look forward to attending the group. I also help out in the group as a volunteer now. This has given me courage to come out of grieving.”



### Chinese Breakfast Club

Born in China, but moved  
to Hong Kong as a refugee.  
Thirty six years here,  
working in the UK.

Different jobs: chef’s assistant,  
restaurant, take-away.  
Now? Mostly alone.  
Sudoku, TV.

I need to get out,  
step out of the home,  
at least once a day.  
Church, casino, anywhere  
to find activity.

Sometimes I sit on the bus,  
take a trip around the city.  
At The Breakfast Club,  
we care for each other,  
look after each other.  
Like family.

For Lang

## Key learning

There are many assumptions made about the role of family to BAME older people. Our projects found that family was important but that family dynamics are often complicated.

Family members can act as an enabler as well as a gatekeeper. The views of family members were important for many older people whether the family lives with the older person or in another city/country.

BME network worked hard to receive support in the initial stages from family members. Some traditional assumptions that Older People who live with their family weren't isolated were challenged and this assumption added an additional barrier for Older People seeking support; Older People spoke of upsetting their family members by seeking peer support and acknowledging loneliness.

Stigma was also highlighted, some people feel ashamed to admit that they are isolated and they need to join in any group: Many people feel that they will be stigmatised by their relatives if they told them that they felt isolated and that they felt the support from the family was not enough.

Raat Di Roti changed their intended delivery model due to a concern that family members would view this negatively and as receiving charity:

“I do not want my relatives to think I am getting charity. They will mock and indicate I have not earned enough for my own food. They will not understand that eating together is something special”.



## Recommendations and references

### Recommendations

- Recruit volunteers and staff with community languages and who share cultural values
- Consider of culture – if you don't know, ask
- Consider the images portrayed in publicity; are they diverse and representative of the people you are seeking to engage
- Avoid generalisations
- BAME groups face additional barriers to engage, being open to all isn't the same as being inclusive
- Participants appreciate interventions which link to their culture and create a sense of belonging

### Links to other reports and further information:

Alden, S and Wigfield, A. 2016, Time to Shine Evaluation Interim Report: The Beneficiary Experience, Available online at [https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.667374!/file/TtoS.full.report.pdf](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.667374!/file/TtoS.full.report.pdf) [Accessed 10 June 2017].

Wigfield, A and Alden, S. 2017 Evaluation of Time to Shine: Year 2: Interim Findings, Available online at <https://timetoshineleeds.org/projects/local-evaluation>.

Also check out the Time to Shine programme website on: <https://www.timetoshineleeds.org>

