



## **WRITTEN EVIDENCE: A SUBMISSION BY THE HOUSING LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT NETWORK (LIN) TO THE WOMEN AND EQUALITIES SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE RACE EQUALITY AUDIT**

**7 December 2017**

### **Introduction**

- The Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) is a sophisticated, national peer-to-peer network bringing together over 40,000 housing, health and social care professionals to exemplify innovative housing solutions for an ageing population, and to meet the needs and aspirations of disabled people, of all ages.
- The Housing LIN engages with its members via a number of channels, including online, and through a regional offer, which enables professionals to meet, learn, exchange knowledge and experience and develop innovative solutions to the shared challenges which face us. This includes 9 English regional networks, and a growing network in Wales.
- This submission to the Women and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry into the 2017 Race Equality Audit will first highlight findings within the Audit which are relevant to older people from BME communities, as well as disabled BME people, and their housing and care needs. The document will go on to identify the key evidence gaps (in these areas) within the Audit.
- Finally, the submission will look beyond the Audit, and will offer a brief survey of the main sources of relevant evidence in this area which the Committee might wish to consider, and the key evidence gaps which appear to remain outstanding, in relation to the groups and issues with which the Housing LIN has an interest.

### **1. Race Equality Audit – relevant findings**

- There are a number of findings within the Race Equality Audit which shed useful light on the groups and issues which are the Housing LIN's focus. From a housing perspective, this includes the finding that some BME groups are far more likely to rent privately, and indeed to rent social housing, compared to White British groups; and that BME groups, on average, spend a higher proportion of their income on rent.
- The Audit also finds that some BME groups are more likely to live in non-decent housing (particularly Pakistani communities) and also to be living in overcrowded conditions (especially Bangladeshi households). Unfortunately, this data is not provided by age, or disability, so it is not possible to draw intersectoral conclusions about BME older and disabled people specifically.
- The Audit also finds that older people from four specific BME groups have especially poor health related quality of life - i.e. older people from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Gypsy and Irish Traveller and Arab backgrounds. Again, however, this data is not set within the context of older people's living conditions or indeed care needs, so it is not possible to explore the housing

and care implications of the additional health needs for these groups or indeed for their families and communities.

- The Audit finds that adults from a Bangladeshi and Pakistani background, primarily those in the older age groups, were the most likely not to speak English well or at all.
- Finally, the Audit reports that people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods tend to be disadvantaged across multiple aspects of life, and that there is a strong relationship with ethnicity. For example, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people were overrepresented in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England, as were all the Black ethnic groups.

## **2. Race Equality Audit – key areas of omission**

- Overall, the Housing LIN would suggest that the intersectional issues affecting BME elders, and disabled people, and their housing needs are under-explored by the Race Equality Audit; indeed, the needs of BME older people, and indeed of BME disabled people in general, are insufficiently addressed. Curiously, the word ‘disabled’ is only mentioned once in the Audit (referring to the number of Black British or Black Caribbean adults who were in contact with ‘learning disability’ services in 2014/15, see page 50).
- It is suggested that this is an area which would strongly merit further investigation and study, particularly as both age and disability are protected characteristics, and are, themselves, already areas of heightened vulnerability, potentially leading to individuals being at risk of multiple disadvantage.

## **3. Other relevant sources of evidence**

- There are some important sources of evidence which are relevant to the study of the life chances and experiences of older and disabled BME people, particularly in relation to their housing and social care needs.
- On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017, the Centre for Ageing Better published their ‘Inequalities in Later Life’ scoping review, which includes analysis of the housing and care needs of older BME people.
- <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Inequalities-scoping-review-full-report.pdf>
- Key findings, which have relevance to housing and care, include that:
  - BME older people (both men and women) are disadvantaged financially and in terms of their pensions provision, which will clearly have an impact on their housing choices, as well as – potentially – on their care options;
  - historic assumptions that BME families and communities are more likely to provide informal care and support to their older relatives than White British families, are not based on evidence; indeed, the review quotes research which finds ‘no evidence for ethnic differences in the provision of care and support to household members (apart from to older Indian people)’ (see page 87);
  - older women, in particular, from minority backgrounds, can find it difficult to access formal statutory services;

- Language and communication issues create a particular barrier, particularly for older Chinese and Somali women;
- Many BME older people are much more likely to be 'lonely' than White British older people;
- Specific community centres, informal social networks and community-based advocates play a key role in enabling BME older people to access help and support when they need it.
- Most importantly, for the purposes of this submission, the review comes to some striking conclusions about the lack of an evidence base in relation to older BME people and their housing needs, experiences and aspirations. So clear are these conclusions, I will quote the key points below, verbatim:

'While housing design, home adaptation needs, housing wealth, and adequacy of homes represent important topics in the field of research on ageing, the review identified few studies which look at the relationship between living environments and inequalities in later life.

The relative paucity of research eligible for review highlights an important characteristic of the literature examining living environments in later life, namely that this area continues to look at older people as a single group rather than investigating how different subgroups of older people might experience different outcomes in housing and their surroundings.

... 'ageing in place' has become an important goal to help fulfil older people's own desires as well as reduce transitions into residential care and the associated costs. And while design, adaptation needs, housing wealth, and adequacy of homes are all important subjects that feature in analysis for older people, the review process did not identify a significant body of literature that considers how this relates to inequality' (pages 98-99)

- More broadly, the Centre for Ageing Better Inequalities Review, in its accompanying 'Implications for Policy and Practice' report, makes the following observation (in this case looking beyond housing and care, and across many key aspects of life):

'This review illustrates stark contrasts in people's experiences of later life in terms of health, financial security and social connections. Whilst the literature paints a vivid picture of inequalities in these outcomes, there is also an astonishing lack of evidence relating to the inequalities in later life experienced by Black and minority ethnic groups, LGBT groups and people with disabilities' (page 3).

<https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Inequalities-insight-report.pdf>

- The Review makes a key point about the importance of these intersectoral issues, noting that:

'With such great and increasing diversity among the older population in England, there are a number of specific groups that may experience particular disadvantage as various aspects of inequality combine to shape a unique experience for them. A key argument of this approach is that multiple factors do more than add up, instead combining with each other to shape new forms of potential disadvantage' (main report, page 108).

#### **4. Outstanding gaps in the evidence base – Older People, housing and care**

- One key connection to draw is with the recent Age UK evidence about the often poor and precarious experiences of older people living in the private rented sector, in their October 2016 report 'Ageing in Squalor and Distress: older people in the private rented sector'. Although this report makes no specific reference to BME older people, the evidence from the Race Disparity Audit suggests that BME people in general are more likely to be living in the private rented sector, and so it is a reasonable supposition that BME older (and indeed, disabled) people may be more at risk from the poor outcomes outlined in the Age UK report. However, in order to confirm this, further research and analysis of the data would need to be conducted. [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/safe-at-home/rb\\_oct16\\_ageing\\_in\\_squalor\\_and\\_distress\\_report.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/safe-at-home/rb_oct16_ageing_in_squalor_and_distress_report.pdf)
- Otherwise, in order to find other sources of relevant evidence to this area, it is necessary to look further back in time, and draw upon increasingly historic studies and pieces of research.
- For example, the Joseph Rowntree report from 2012, 'Supported Housing for Older People in the UK – An Evidence Review', found that the number of BME older people living in sheltered housing appeared to be representative of the number of BME older people in the general population, but that sheltered housing was not always successful in meeting the cultural needs of people from ethnic minorities - <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/supported-housing-older-people-uk-evidence-review>
- A report by Oldham Housing and AKSA Homes – focused on the housing needs and aspirations of older BME people in Oldham in 2013 – found that:
  - There was historically low take up of housing, care and support services by BME groups. Very few BME older people lived in sheltered or extra care housing, about which there were low levels of awareness and understanding among the communities surveyed. Many people did not know how to access services if they needed them.

- The survey also found that in planning ahead, the majority of BME elders interviewed were most concerned to stay in their existing locality and near family / social connections.
- The biggest barriers to accessing support related to language, culture and religious concerns, and in terms of moving into supported housing, a sense of shame about having to rely on this kind of help.
- Many older people who did aspire to moving home either wanted to move into a larger family home (with other generations of their family), or into a well-designed level access home suitable for their own needs.
- There was some interest in the idea of a 'clustered' move into group sheltered housing – i.e. a number of elders from the same ethnic background moving in together.
- Looking to the future, there was evidence that the next generations of older people may be less affected by language barriers, and will be more confident about accessing and taking up mainstream services.

[http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Housing\\_LIN/Aksa\\_BME\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa-lga-evidence/Housing_LIN/Aksa_BME_Report.pdf)

- A report by the Runnymede Trust, in 2012, looked at 'Retirement Decisions among Older Black and Minority Ethnic People' and concluded that:
  - BME elders 'are not often part of the discussion either on the increasing diversity of the UK (which tends to focus on immigration or younger people); or on the ageing of UK society' (page 2).
  - The study noted that as younger generations of BME people enter later life, the older population of the UK as a whole is – and will increasingly become - more ethnically diverse, and they predict that 'their needs, preferences and experiences may differ from those of their overseas-born parents'.
  - The report notes both declining household size and declining fertility rates amongst BME households, with fewer multi-generational households. At the same time, the report highlights that there are still far more multi-generational households and larger families within BME communities compared with the White British population, leading to ongoing problems of overcrowding.
  - The report echoes the findings of the Centre for Ageing Better review, that BME older people have less wealth and fewer savings, which will impact negatively their housing and retirement options.
  - A number of suggestions are made for policy makers, commissioners and service providers who need to plan for the needs of ageing BME communities.
  - The report concludes by recommending that further research is needed about BME household structure and family trends, and the implications of these for BME older people's future housing and retirement options and aspirations.

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/ASenseOfPlace-2012.pdf>

- In 2010, the Housing LIN published a useful report looking at ‘Minority Groups in Extra Care Housing’.
  - The report referenced HACT (the Housing Association Charitable Trust) as bemoaning inadequate progress amongst housing providers and others in understanding and meeting the basic needs of BME older people. HACT emphasised the need to work in partnership with local BME, refugee and migrant community organisations, and highlighted the “desperate shortage of knowledge” about some minority groups, particularly where they were scattered over large geographical areas (page 9).
  - The report – dated as it is – references the still relevant At Home: Audit Tool for Housing and Other Related Services for Older Minority Ethnic People, developed by HOPDEV (the Housing and Older People Development Group, 2006). The HOPDEV tool provided a useful set of questions which providers, policy makers and commissioners should be asking themselves in order to assess their approach to understanding the needs of their BME communities. <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/Meeting-the-needs-of-minority-groups-in-extra-care-housing/>

## **5. Outstanding gaps in the evidence base – BME disabled people, housing and care**

- Overall, the evidence base in this area appears to be even more sparse than that relating to older people.
- One report, by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, ‘Reaching Out to people with learning disabilities and their families from Black and Minority Ethnic communities’, from 2012, found that ‘underlying issues of family poverty, chronic ill health of the primary carer (sometimes at a relatively young age) and poor housing were significantly impacting on people with learning disabilities from BME communities’. The report makes some recommendations for improvements in this area. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/file/2068/download?token=RPQ259aL>
- Another report from 2012, ‘Over-looked Communities, Over-due Change: how services can better support BME disabled people’ by Scope, notes that ‘there are at least one million disabled people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK – and this number is growing’. The report suggests that ‘services are not yet fully inclusive for disabled people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and many report poor experiences of accessing statutory and voluntary services’. Unfortunately, the report does not address the housing issues experienced by BME disabled people in any depth. <http://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Images/Publication%20Directory/Over-looked-communities-over-due-change.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- Disabled people of working age are more affected by welfare reform than older people, and some research has been undertaken which looks at the impact of this along intersectional lines, including disability and ethnicity.

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/research/centres/chrp/spendingcuts/resources/reports-uk/#BAME>

- <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/impact-tax-and-welfare-reforms-between-2010-and-2017-interim-report>

## **6. Evidence Recommendations**

- Overall, the Housing LIN is keen to welcome the publication of the Race Disparity Audit and the consequent focus on this area. However, the survey of the content of the Audit, and the findings of the other evidence reviews and research in this area, would suggest that there are some significant gaps, in relation to:
  - BME older, and disabled people, and how the needs and experiences of these groups intersect with other areas of (in)equality;
  - In particular, the housing and social care needs of BME older, and disabled people, their preferences and aspirations;
  - Planning ahead, it would be important to apply any new evidence to enable analysis as to what the increasing ethnic diversity of our older population will mean for policy makers, commissioners and providers in the areas of housing and social care.

## **7. Strategic Policy Recommendations**

- As the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) considers the guidance which should be issued to councils regarding their responsibilities to assess and plan for the current and future housing needs of older and disabled people, it is recommended that this should reflect the need for these groups to be understood as highly diverse populations within themselves. The intersectional issues which impact on inequalities should be incorporated into local housing needs analysis, including the consideration of the ethnic and religious profile of localities, as well as evidence about older people's sexual orientation, gender and disability, and the implications of these characteristics for their housing needs.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>
  - A review of the evidence (sparse as it is) surrounding race, age, disability and housing demonstrates how diverse and localised many of the most pressing issues are, in relation to older BME people's housing needs, and the dangers of over-generalisation. Therefore, it will be important for those responsible for conducting housing needs assessment in each area to have a truly nuanced, granular understanding of the ethnicity and age profile of their local populations, and to conduct meaningful consultation and engagement with local communities about their hopes, needs and aspirations.
  - The Housing LIN would be keen to offer any support which may be needed to assist DCLG and other colleagues in thinking these issues through, and developing guidance which is fit for purpose.
- 8.** The Housing LIN has developed a range of resources over the years looking at these issues. Looking ahead, the Housing LIN is currently engaging in an

active dialogue with our 40,000 members across the country (including London) in order to identify the key housing issues faced by older and disabled people from minority communities; and exploring how the Housing LIN might work with partners to understand and highlight these issues for a wider audience.

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingOlderPeople/MinorityGroups/>

### **About the Housing LIN**

The Housing LIN is recognised by industry as the sector leading 'knowledge hub' on specialist housing. Its online and regional networked activities:

- Connect people, ideas and resources to inform and improve the range of housing choices that enable older and disabled people to live independently
- Share thought-leadership, learning and intelligence on latest funding, research, policy and innovate developments to spread practice faster
- Engage with industry to raise the profile of specialist housing with developers, commissioners and providers to plan, design and deliver aspirational housing for an ageing population, and for people with physical and learning disabilities

For more information on the work of the Housing LIN, visit: [www.housinglin.org.uk](http://www.housinglin.org.uk).

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6 December 2017