

'The Changing Population of York' Seminar - 2007

Key Messages

1. All sectors in York need to be aware of and take into consideration, the benefits to all of addressing the needs of the increasing numbers of BME citizens and migrant (workers) coming to live and work in the city. The Without Walls LSP is best placed to take the lead in this through established partnerships.
2. There is a statutory requirement for ethnic monitoring in the city. Better use should be made of information that is already available. Without accurate information, planning appropriate services is problematic. It was suggested that a 'BME observatory' should be set up for York.
3. Several participants observed that York was not a welcoming city, and that racist attitudes were prevalent. There needs to be further research into this and appropriate action taken.
4. The conference was informed that racial harassment was increasing, especially in rural areas. The evidence of this in York needs to be established and steps taken to deal with it?
5. Work to improve social and emotional cohesion within communities was felt to be crucial. This should meet emerging government guidance on best practice.
6. As part of a wider strategy to improve the availability of information to all residents, York should consider improving information services for newcomers to the city, including a 'welcome pack'.
7. The Building Bridges Forum should be reactivated, and the Open Forum developed.
8. Frontline staff, in all sectors, need to be made aware of the changes taking place in the BME population and given appropriate training.

9. There is a need to look at best practice in other parts of the country.
10. Work with children and young people is particularly important.
11. Free, 'social' language classes should be extended.
12. There is evidence that individual BME citizens do not have the confidence, and groups do not have the necessary capacity, to be effective in expressing the needs of BME citizens. All stakeholders must address this.
13. The remit, and the capacity of existing organisations working with BME groups need to be reviewed, and evaluated.
14. Following this review, existing partnerships, and provisions in both the voluntary and public sectors should be developed and resourced to meet the increasing needs of the BME population. Wherever possible, specialised services within mainstream provisions should be developed.
15. Positive messages regarding the benefits that immigrants are bringing to the city need to be publicised through the media.

21st November 2007