



Ethnic Minority Communities in Liverpool

Insights Report for Public Health Liverpool

Written by Annette Burghes and Aidan Jolly with Francisco Carrasco, Harriet Warnock, Kindah Ali, Maya Mitter, Nikki Hayden

Foreword: Matt Ashton, Director of Public Health Liverpool

I am pleased to introduce the “Ethnic Communities in Liverpool – Insight Report for Public Health Liverpool” report.

Both the insights in this report and the work of the Community Champions have contributed greatly to increasing vaccine take up by some of the most disadvantaged members of our communities in Liverpool.

Whilst the objectives of the work has been to increase vaccine take up, the legacy of the programme will go far beyond that.

You all have worked really collaboratively together, and gone the extra mile whenever you were asked to, or indeed when you yourselves felt it necessary.

This report, and the work of the Community Champions is of wider significance across the council and to all strategic partners.

How we engage communities is vital to improving public health and wider public services, which is why I want to say a huge **Thank You** and a massive **Well Done** to you all.

Matt Ashton
Director of Public Health Liverpool



Liverpool
City Council

Contents

Contents	2
Background.....	4
Research Approach.....	5
Ethnic Minority Community Groupings	7
Summary of Findings	8
Polish and other European Communities	14
Chinese Community	30
Irish Travellers, Travellers and Gypsy Traveller Communities	38
Black, African and Middle Eastern Communities	46
Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities	57
Addendum to Report (APRIL 2022)	63

Background

In June 2021 the network of Creative Organisations of Liverpool (COoL) was approached by Public Health Liverpool and Liverpool City Council to work collaboratively with local ethnic minority communities to:

- increase compliance with Covid-19 guidelines and vaccine take up.
- dispel Covid-19 myths.
- gain insights into barriers which were stopping or delaying people to access services.
- increase the take up of mental health support and healthier lifestyle behaviours.
- provide engagement vehicles Liverpool City Council could use to help engage audiences.

This work is funded by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government via Liverpool City Council (LCC) and Public Health Liverpool. The main body of this grant will be used to fund 11 Community Champions whose role is to provide communication channels between Public Health Liverpool, and local ethnic minority communities.

The scope of the work undertaken by COoL is:

- Insights: created with the communities they are designed to benefit.
- Participation: finding relevant and innovative ways for communities to engage in public life.
- Assets: recommending assets that can be used by Community Champions to achieve the objectives outlined above.

This report was prepared in August 2021, and represents the first stage of the work undertaken by COoL. Collective Encounters, a COoL member, has led on the research and preparation of this report and have been supported by LUMA Creations, who are also responsible for the management of the whole project.

Research Approach

The information in this report has been compiled by associate artists and researchers working with Collective Encounters and LUMA creations. The information was collected through Zoom interviews with voluntary sector organisations, high-profile individuals from different ethnic minority communities and desk-based research which focussed mainly on corroborating facts and figures mentioned within interview transcripts.

Research participants were selected for interview by Public Health Liverpool, Liverpool City Council, Collective Encounters and LUMA Creations on the basis that they:

- Were working for an organisation hosting a Community Champion, or
- Had specific insight and were representative of the community they were sharing information on, and
- Fell within the four priority categories for Public Health Liverpool and Liverpool City Council - Polish and Other European; Irish Traveller; Black, African and Middle Eastern and the Chinese community.
- Were available to meet with a researcher during August 2021.

Research participants or their organisations were offered a small donation for their time in taking part in interviews, unless they were working for a well-funded organisation. A total of

- 49 potential research participants were identified.
- 39 potential research participants were approached.
- 23 interviews took place during August 2021.
- 2 interviewees supplied information via email (1 of which is with the Indian community and is included in the addendum to this report).
- 1 further interview happened in September

All but 3 interviewees were from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and covered the following questions:

- Name, role, time spent working with culturally diverse communities in Liverpool?
- How would you describe your own ethnicity/heritage?
- Can you tell me who you work with, and which ethnic minority communities use your services?
- In your opinion what would you estimate as the size/scale of these communities?
- Are there specific locations in Liverpool where these communities are concentrated?

- What are your key methods/networks for communicating information?
- Which of these are most difficult to reach?
- Could you describe any observations you have on who, how and when people engage and those that don't?
- Are there any key events/celebrations where many people from these communities convene?
- Is there anyone you would recommend we should talk to in relation to this research?
- What would you say are the main concerns within these communities?
- How would you describe the relationship between these communities and local health provision/services?
- How do you think these communities have reacted to Covid-19 (restrictions, vaccines, mask wearing, other government strategies)?
- What steps (such as those by religious groups, community support groups, new initiatives) have members of this community taken in relation to the challenges Covid-19 has created?
- In your opinion what types of activities do the community you work with most enjoy?
- What would you say are the key challenges facing these communities in relation to health and wellbeing?
- What one thing would help vaccine uptake?

Interviews were recorded, transcribed and then coded under the different ethnic community groups and common themes that occurred across a number of communities.

Ethnic Minority Community Groupings

The original priority community groupings were identified by Public Health Liverpool and Liverpool City Council based on the data they held on first dose vaccine take up, and these were: Polish and Other European; Irish Traveller; Black, African and Middle Eastern and the Chinese community.

As interviews progressed it was clear the data collected expanded beyond these priority groupings. The information contained in the detailed findings section of this report documents the experiences of people whose country of origin, heritage or place where they have spent the most time prior to living in the UK are outlined in the table below.

Original grouping	Countries/ethnicities/identities mentioned in data
Polish and Other European Communities	Albania (also referenced in Asylum Seeker and Refugee community), Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Roma, Romania, Slovak, Spain.
Chinese Community	China, Hong Kong, Taiwan or other parts of South East Asia.
Irish Traveller	Irish Traveller, Traveller, Gypsy Traveller
Black, African and Middle Eastern	Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kurdistan, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen Black, African, Caribbean and Black British
None	Latin America Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Summary of Findings

The communities that this research focuses on are **incredibly complex**: many have a long history in Liverpool and play, and have played, an important role in its culture and prosperity across the centuries. Other communities have more recently migrated to the city and are still becoming established in terms of identity, infrastructure and presence.

All interviewees placed **much higher estimates on the population sizes of their communities than official records** (such as Census records, Parliamentary Briefings or data held by Liverpool City Council) suggest. It is recommended a comparison with the results of the 2021 Census is undertaken when these figures are available, in particular for the Roma community whose ethnicity has been included on the Census for the first time ever. The Latin American population is still not able to record their ethnicity on the Census or other official forms¹, despite reports of Latin Americans being one of the fastest growing ethnic groups across the UK.²

New arrivals have historically first settled, in the 'cheaper' areas of Liverpool, on the outskirts of the city centre. Specific patterns and locations vary from community to community but all have broadened the range of locations from historic points of initial settlements. Many community members reach out to new arrivals to the city, establishing support groups and plugging people into networks, although divisions between settled and long-standing migrants and recent arrivals were mentioned.

Language and interpretation were cited as a key barrier for most communities. One of the challenges of meeting these needs is any given service may have up to 100 different languages present in a given space at any one time. Some communities (Polish) also cited problems with the quality of translation services. The Roma community is particularly complex with regard to language and this has meant that services often struggle to provide adequate interpreting, advertising availability but then not being able to provide it.

Many communities, and particularly the Arabic, Iranian, Chinese and Asylum Seeker and Refugee communities are able (often through volunteers) to pass information on in an appropriate language. However many voluntary sector groups cited a lack of funding and that the use of volunteers was not a sustainable approach to working with ethnic minority communities, in particular when they were **fulfilling roles that should be fulfilled by the state** and other public services.

¹ <https://lab.org.uk/lost-in-translation-uk-latin-americans-language-poverty/>

² <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2019/12/latin-americans-are-one-uks-fastest-growing-groups-so-why-arent-they-recognised>

Language barriers led to a reluctance within communities to access health services such as emergency departments and GP practices. This is compounded by first having to navigate automated phone systems, or having to provide an initial explanation of health issues to providers without a translator. This meant some Covid-19 cases are likely to have not been recorded, or those suffering serious illness may not have sought help. There were also reports (in particular within the Chinese community or those with some but not proficient English skills) of patients not fully understanding the implications of a diagnosis, the support available to them and/or treatment pathways and their implications.

Literacy skills in general were cited as a challenge across all communities, meaning literature translated into different languages may still not be assimilated and understood. Services had made efforts to adapt messages by using photographs, film and illustration to, for example, demonstrate how to book a vaccination appointment online, book a Covid-19 test or register a test result. These initiatives had limited success.

Most communities have organisations that represent them, but these **organisations rarely speak for the whole community**, or are sometimes dominated by a larger bloc within a community. For example, the Irish community can be divided between Protestant and Catholic, and also, Irish students form another group who are more represented by organisations within the Universities or sporting affiliations (Gaelic Football). Arabic organisations were historically dominated by the Yemeni community, but this appears to be changing.

However, **some communities are not well represented**, for example we found no advocacy or community organisation exclusively representing the interests of Albanian people in Liverpool, although Asylum Seeker and Refugee services were being accessed in significant numbers by Albanians.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees are not necessarily well served by related settled communities and tend to rely heavily on specific refugee support networks and agencies. One of these agencies mentioned the importance and **success of facilitating informal groups and social networks for the Asylum Seekers and Refugees** placed in accommodations across the Liverpool City Region.

Digital exclusion and digital poverty were cited as a significant challenge for communities by all interviewees. This has an obvious effect on people's ability to book a vaccine or Covid-19 test, record a test result and also to access information on restrictions and other guidelines. Communities with a significant older population (Yemini, Chinese, Irish) tended not to access information online due to a lack of hardware, internet connections and digital skills and they were also likely to experience psychological, literacy and financial barriers to getting online. For Travellers, Irish Travellers, Gypsy Travellers and the Roma community limited access to electricity was mentioned in the context of digital poverty.

Most interviewees mentioned **WhatsApp (and WeChat for the Chinese community)** as an important way to get messages to service users and beyond, however with limitations amongst older populations and people with low or no literacy skills. Common social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram were also mentioned, with Instagram more popular with younger people.

Myths and misinformation are circulating within communities and the media across the world both about the risks of the virus and the efficacy and safety of some vaccines. Some of the information circulating makes wild and unlikely claims such as the vaccine makes you magnetic, or you can't touch water after you have had it. Others are more specific and widespread, for example other international Governments' concerns about the safety of the AstraZeneca vaccine reported across international media sites. People from different backgrounds who don't speak English are vulnerable to this, particularly if they are accessing news and media from their state of origin.

Word of mouth, ideally communicated by someone representative of the communities (such as peer to peer), was cited by all interviewees as the most effective way of getting messages to people. Representation of ethnic minority communities on posters and in other literature is more likely to attract the attention of communities for example, an image of a Vardo (horse drawn wagon) with a group of Gypsy Travellers.

The importance of people coming together for creative, religious, sporting and social events were mentioned as an important feature in all communities, providing an opportunity to celebrate their heritage, beliefs and cultures (see detailed findings for community specific events).

Despite Liverpool's status as a City of Sanctuary, Asylum Seekers and Refugees experience widespread and endemic institutionalised racism based within the UK government practices and the 'hostile environment'. Other settled communities and people with documentation also experience this; European and the Roma communities are specifically affected by the Brexit process. The Chinese community saw a specific rise in hate crime explicitly related to perceptions around the origins of Covid-19. The UK Government's recent introduction of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021 will make a criminal offence of 'residing in a vehicle on land without permission'³ has gone largely unreported and is a direct and racist attack by the British Government on the Roma, Gypsy Traveller, Irish Traveller and wider Traveller communities' way of life.

Mistrust of services, and particularly health services, runs deep in communities who have experienced the front line of both the pandemic and racism, and are affected by inequalities such as not being able to work from home, or benefit from being furloughed, and are working in jobs where they are more at risk of catching Covid-19. This is particularly true of people in the Irish and Caribbean communities who experience historic colonialism as embodied in recent history, such as the British colonial relationship with Ireland (as brought to the fore again by Brexit), Grenfell and Windrush. This can also manifest as a

³ <https://minorityrights.org/2021/04/15/policing-bill/>

distrust of Western science in general and the process by which the vaccines have been produced (especially because some communities have historically been subject to unethical medical experiments and scientific racism).

Many communities, particularly those who speak little English, **do not realise hate crimes can be reported**, or even that in the UK it is at least officially a crime. Polish people for example, have no experience of a state that protects people from these crimes. These communities tend not to turn to the state for help of any kind.

Some communities do not report their ethnicity for fear of discrimination – for example, Irish Travellers may tick 'British' when asked for fear of being given a second-class service. Younger people may identify as being from a given community (for example, Gypsy Traveller) when their parents do not, leading to confusion.

Impacts and attitudes to Covid-19 within ethnic minority communities is in some ways no different to those that have already been well documented, and that are being felt across the world. **Covid-19 has exacerbated inequalities:** affected skills and education for young people; increased loneliness and the prevalence of mental ill health; increased poverty and reduced employment, with more people struggling to afford basic supplies. The data also shows many people from ethnic minority communities in Liverpool are likely to be on low incomes; have jobs where working from home is not possible; live in insecure or overcrowded housing; be in insecure employment; have a lack of understanding of public services; have a mistrust of public services (often for historical reasons of racism and discrimination) meaning these impacts are more widely and deeply felt.

Mental ill health was mentioned by all interviewees as a problem affecting all communities and in particular older people, young people and Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

What is working is the location of vaccination and testing centres within the areas and locations of Liverpool where ethnic minority people and communities live, work, practice religion or access other services facilities. Vaccine centres in Mosques for example enabled the NHS to work in partnership with local religious leaders to translate information and allay any fears amongst the local community. None of the interviewees mentioned the location of vaccine sites in any other religious spaces such as Churches or Temples and this is something that could be explored.

Some interviewees, in particular those representing the Chinese community and the Irish community, **registered surprise at the perceived low vaccine take up within their communities**, as their general impression was that the response to the vaccine had been positive and they had been doing a lot of work to provide vaccines in accessible ways. The outlier for this observation is the Roma community.

Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who may want to have children in the future were mentioned by most interviewees as being more hesitant to get vaccinated in particular in communities and cultures where the family units and connections are an important feature.

Most interviewees were asked what 'one thing' would help with the vaccine take up, and all described more than one thing which are listed below with full details in the detailed findings section.

- Specific messaging around 'ease of travel' for vaccinated people.
- Clear data on the impact of the vaccine on women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who may want to become mothers in the future.
- Research and information on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine presented and explained (spoken not written) in understandable terms by representative community leaders in other languages.
- Presentations on health services and other public services (such as registering with a GP) presented and explained (spoken not written) in understandable terms by representative community leaders in other languages.
- Increased access points for (vaccines, testing, access to digital) in places and spaces people from ethnic minority communities convene.

It's important to note that the data is limited and does *in no way* provide deep insights into the community mentioned, in particular data on the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British communities and the Traveller community is limited. Some communities have yet to be included in the project or weren't available during the research period including the

- Jewish Community
- Latin American community
- D/deaf and disability communities
- Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi community

Polish and Other European Communities

Polish and other European Communities

In Summer 2021 the team of researchers from LUMA and Collective Encounters met with representatives from three organisations: Merseyside Polonia, Irish Community Care, Granby Toxteth Development Trust; and three individuals: Colin Ado (Albanians in Merseyside), Jitka Broome (Adult Social Care Assessor, Liverpool City Council) and actor Antonio de la Torre to gain cultural, health and wellbeing insights into the Polish community in Merseyside and people deriving from other European countries. These countries include Albania, The Czech Republic, Ireland, the Roma community, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. During the interviews it was recommended further insights could be gained through conversations with Merseyside Polonia Community Forum, Polish Language Schools, and Wisla Krakow (children's Polish football team).

Polish Community in Liverpool

Merseyside Polonia's mission is to support the development of the Polish community in Merseyside by raising awareness of the traditions and culture of Poland, and building cohesion and better understanding between communities from different cultural backgrounds.

Merseyside has a historic Polish community and the number of Polish people living in the North West region and the rest of the UK increased significantly in the years following Poland's entry into the European Union. The 2011 census estimated there were 654,000 Polish people living in the UK equivalent to 8% of the non-UK born population.⁴

Data captured in 2016 for the UK Government as part of a Parliamentary briefing estimated there were 7,096 Polish born people in the North West but this figure excludes children in the UK born to Polish parents.⁵ There is no official data on the number of Polish people living in Merseyside, however local estimates put the figure around 30, 000.

Another important observation is the age of the Polish population of the UK with research data estimating 69% of the Polish born population of the UK is of working age - between 25–49 years old.⁶

⁴<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/keystatisticsandquickstatisticsforlocalauthoritiesintheunitedkingdom/2013-10-11>

⁵ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7660/CBP-7660.pdf>

⁶ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7660/CBP-7660.pdf>

In 2007 there was a high concentration of Polish people living around the Kensington area of Liverpool, however people have now dispersed to other areas such as Wavertree, Picton, Croxteth, Norris Green, Speke, Garston. A useful indicator of the size and location of the Polish population in Liverpool is the prevalence of Polish food stores in any given area. There are between approximately 20 Polish food stores in Liverpool mainly situated in these areas cited above.

Many Polish people continue to speak Polish in the UK. In Liverpool there are language schools teaching Polish to children and young people to ensure links with the culture is maintained. During interviews observations were made that many in the older generation still don't speak English proficiently, and public services such as housing, sometimes struggled to attain accurate translations into Polish for literature. Older generation Polish people in the UK who don't speak English are more likely to access Polish news and media.

"The Housing Association published a leaflet on 'floating support' but the way it had been translated is like 'swimming support'...It is kind of crazy".

Networks, Events & Cultural Observations

Many people in the Polish community are active Facebook users, and like the rest of the UK, Instagram is more popular with the younger generation. Notice boards and leaflets in Polish shops are an effective way of getting messages into the Polish community, as well as making contact with Polish language schools and Polish football teams.

Like many minority communities Polish people come together with their own community however the challenge of these is, *"if there is a problem that the community cannot help with, they get stuck"*.⁷ To combat this, Merseyside Polonia hosts a forum of people representing different Polish organisations in Liverpool and local service providers. The aim of the forum is to share and disseminate information between the Polish community and the services.

The Polish community in Liverpool have an increasing presence in the cultural life of the city. The UK-Poland military alliance is marked by the inclusion of the Polish community in the official Remembrance Day procession in Liverpool and elsewhere in the UK. The Polish community are also represented at the Lord Mayor's Service both were observed *"as an important statement, we are part of the local community"*.⁸ Polish food stalls and cultural contributions are

⁷ Community Leader Interview

⁸ Community Leader Interview

also welcomed and visible at local events such as the Newsham Park Film and Food Fest and other local events and festivals. Poland's National Independence Day is celebrated on 11th November each year.

The negative portrayal of Polish people in the British media was cited as a challenge for the Polish community, with narratives around Polish people 'stealing British jobs' and using 'scarce public resources'⁹ unhelpful. The increase in migration of Polish people to the UK started to happen around the same time of the 2008 financial crisis, and the UK Government's 'austerity' drive also played into this narrative at a local level.

Polish people's experiences of discrimination and 'hate crimes' often went unrecognised and unreported by their victims. This is due to the difference in expected standards between UK people and the Polish born population. These attitudes and a lack of understanding also translates to the other areas of available help and state support Polish people have a right to access such as housing and health.

Conventions within everyday Polish and English language were also cited as a challenge, that can have a negative impact on relations between Polish people and the UK born population, *"I remember one of my friends complaining that English people are just so rude to her, and I asked her to describe it. And I said, "They are joking, this is the way for people to say you are part of us." But the Polish person was like they were just constantly insulting her"*.

There is also a looming crisis for Polish people who did not meet the deadline for applying for UK settled status required because of Brexit. There are concerns that this will trigger loss of employment and housing for those who didn't apply or whose application was rejected triggering an increase in the homeless population in Liverpool and beyond.

"In some ways, with the Polish community, you need to do a few steps back. You need to actually first work with people and say, "What is the baseline?" If people came here and were discriminated against, insulted and shouted at, for them, that's the standard. So, you have to explain to them what is acceptable, what is not. And not ask them to report hate crime, because they won't even know what that is".

⁹ <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/prejudice-against-roles-blamed-on-media/>

Covid-19 Impacts and Attitudes

Many Polish people in the UK are of working age meaning their susceptibility to serious illness or death from Covid-19 was perceived to be low. The general perception was, *"It is kind of not existing because nobody around me had it"*.¹⁰

The Polish population in Liverpool are not immune to myths and misinformation circulating on social media platforms about Covid-19, and community engagement work could be done to encourage people to access news and public services information from more reputable sources.

This local experience however could be overshadowed by the impact of Covid-19 on family and friends in Poland where excess deaths have been the highest across the whole of the European Union.

With older Polish people in Liverpool still accessing Polish media and news, attitudes to vaccines in Poland is likely to have a strong influence on many, and also an influence on the younger generation through family connections.

European media reports vaccination rates in Poland are extremely low and by August 2021 just 47.3% of the Polish population had received at least one dose. Analysis of this has linked low vaccination areas of Poland with high levels of support for the conservative and majority ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS)¹¹ who also have strong support from the Catholic Church in Poland. The Polish state and the Catholic Church in Poland are perceived to be intertwined with many people viewing the Catholic Church as having too much power and control over the Government. This is demonstrated well by the shift in attitudes within the Catholic Church to the Government's vaccination drive during summer 2021.

¹⁰ Community Leader Interview

¹¹ <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-vaccine-skeptic-vax-hesitancy-political-trouble-polish-coronavirus-covid-19/>

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Polish community?

"I think one issue that may force people, in a way, is I know that lots of employers will be expecting you to have a vaccine to be able to work. If that is a condition, that will make a difference.

If the airlines in the country say, "You cannot come unless you are vaccinated," again- I think lots of Polish people go, minimum once a year, to Poland. If they have to have a vaccine to go, they would have it. I'm not sure. I would say work, flights, and anything that people can get, to be vaccinated. Yes, I just think sometimes you would like to know the stories of the people who were against the vaccine and got Covid, and what they told after. But I'm not sure we will hear many of them, because I'm not sure they will be willing to admit".

Initially the Catholic Church expressed serious moral objections to the AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines on the basis of the means by which they were developed (using cell strains taken from a foetus aborted in the 1970's)¹². In July 2021 two of Poland's senior Bishops did a U-turn on this policy calling vaccinations a 'gift from God'¹³. This is likely to have a positive impact on the vaccine take up amongst the Polish population in the UK.

Other Health Issues

In Poland, there is much public debate around other vaccinations, similarly to lots of countries in the West, but with a very specific context. Mandatory vaccinations are required by law for babies residing in Poland for longer than 3 months and the country has a history of mandatory vaccinations that goes back 200 years¹⁴. The effect of this history and debate, particularly on those who oppose the actions of the Polish state in general, should be considered and understood by health providers in the UK when rolling out vaccination programmes with and to the Polish community.

Diabetes was cited as increasingly prevalent in the Polish community, as it is across most of the UK. In general, the Polish diet is healthy, with most people cooking from scratch, however the availability of processed food and the higher wages Polish people received in the UK as compared to Poland meant many were eating more processed food and treats. This could raise potential health issues for the Polish community in the future.

Awareness raising work (beyond the distribution of posters and literature) also needs to take place to enable the Polish community to understand they can access services such as cancer screening, registering with a GP and other health prevention services like smoking cessation. There is also a lack of awareness within the community of services for women, or domestic violence, *"domestic violence. I think that is quite a big issue. Because again, in Poland, we don't have good support systems"*¹⁵.

"From March this year, we started a health link role, as a support for people who were in crisis. And we were really amazed the complex, difficult cases we get, that sometimes you don't even know where to start. Often with debts, people who will just be kicked out on the street pretty soon, don't have a job, have health issues. It is just so complex. And I really think, on some ways, the Covid situation brought it more to the surface. So, definitely I think, for us, looking again across all the services, what support there is...also there is an issue of unjust treatment in work so the trade unions could help out there".

¹² <https://fullfact.org/online/foetal-cells-covid-vaccine/>

¹³ https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/07/08/vaccines_are_gift_from_god/

¹⁴ <https://szczepienia.pzh.gov.pl/en/stories/mandatory-vaccinations-in-poland/>

¹⁵ Community Leader Interview

Roma Community in Liverpool

The Roma Community is an umbrella term to describe ethnicities with similar cultural characteristics. In the EU, Roma people make up around 85% of those included in the Roma group which also included subgroups such as Sinti, Travellers, Ashkali, Manush, Jenische, Kaldaresh and Kale.¹⁶ It's also important that *"If you speak to Roma communities you absolutely do not use the word 'Gypsy' for the community"*¹⁷ which has negative and derogatory connotations for the majority of the Roma community, although not all (see below).

The Roma community is the biggest ethnic minority group in Europe, however in the UK it was only 2021 that Roma was provided as an ethnicity identifier. In 2019 it was estimated that the total Roma population of the UK was 197, 705. The North West has the highest concentration of Roma people compared with other UK regions. The number of Roma people in the North West were estimated in 2019 as 38, 976 which represents 20% of the total Roma population in the UK ¹⁸. Official data on the number of Roma people in Liverpool or the Liverpool City Region could not be sourced but local estimates the size of the population *"at least 5,000... probably 10,000"*¹⁹.

As well as ethnic subgroups, the Roma people derive from many different European states including the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Local community leaders in Liverpool believe Romania and Czech Romanian make up the majority of the Roma population of Liverpool.²⁰

In Liverpool there is a large Roma community in the Picton, Wavertree, Kensington and Fairfield areas with two schools mentioned - Smithdown Primary and Lawrence Community Primary School – as *"having the most children from other backgrounds"*²¹, and that many Roma families live in (seven streets) towards the North intersection of Lodge Lane and Smithdown Road (L7), *"they just to stay in their community because they feel safer"*²². It was also mentioned Harthill Youth Centre (L15) is used by young Roma community members.

It is important to recognise dual nationalities (e.g. Czech Roma or those of subgroups) when working with the Roma community because as well as informing cultural traditions it also has a bearing on language. Many Roma people in Liverpool will speak Romanes (although this may not be the case for

¹⁶ <https://www.enar-eu.org/Frequently-asked-questions-1167>

¹⁷ Community Leader Interviews

¹⁸ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html>

¹⁹ Community Leader Interviews

²⁰ Community Leader Interviews

²¹ Community Leader Interviews

²² Community Leader Interviews

those deriving from a Roma subgroup) and some will also speak the language of the country from which they predominately or originally resided, *"they have the Roma language, but as well they have the language of the country where they lived the longest"*.²³

Also, some Roma people in Liverpool don't read or write in English, or in Romanes or any other languages. Community leaders report that there is a lack of Romanes interpreters available for people wanting to access public services and health services, *"when you try to explain this to the health people, like doctors or to the emergency, when you go there and they will say that, 'Oh, we'll find an interpreter', unfortunately they will not find it one"*.²⁴

The history of the Roma people is of prejudice, persecution and discrimination. The migration of the Roma population to the UK from mainland Europe in the early 21st Century has often been to escape persecution, *"If they come here, they don't come like new citizens. They come like asylum seekers"*.²⁵

Mistrust of other people and other communities, stemming from continued discrimination, is a challenge within the Roma community in Liverpool, *"also the park, they go in the park, a lot of people start to harass them to bully them or these kinds of things to discriminate them. And they don't feel safe to go around public"*.²⁶

"They had very negative experiences in the home countries. I know of the experience of the Roma community in the Eastern European bloc, so whether it was Poland or Czech Republic or Romania, often it was negative. I think it was negative because of stereotypes, of the Roma community - I mean, often, there were people who didn't settle in the area for long. They were, kind of, moving, travelling".

The language and identity of the Roma community is complex, however important to get right if health and other services are going to successfully engage the people they are designed for, *"And we were calling them 'Roma community', and they were saying, 'No, we're Gypsies, don't call us Roma. We are not Roma. I think that kind of political correctness regarding particular minorities sometimes actually goes against the cooperation with them, because they are not the names they identify with"*.²⁷ There are also divisions between the different Roma groups with Czech, Slovak and Romanian Roma standing separately.

²³ Community Leader Interview

²⁴ Community Leader Interview

²⁵ Community Leader Interview

²⁶ Community Leader Interview

²⁷ Community Leader Interview

Many Roma in Liverpool follow a Christian denomination, often Pentecostal, and it was described that there are two or three organised places of worship a, *“one is in Anfield, Kensington around there, and the another one is in Lodge Lane”*²⁸ and the community also uses their own houses are places of worship.

Applying for UK settled status now required because of Brexit was raising widespread concerns within the Roma community. Limited access to digital platforms and issues around literacy meant there were problems accessing and completing the correct forms.

Networks, Events and Cultural Observations

Disseminating messages through the Roma community is most effective through word of mouth, and the Granby Toxteth Development Trust also run a Facebook page where public information in Romanes is posted by the community development team.

Often messages can be quickly disseminated by knocking on the doors of a few Roma families in the Picton area. Translated letters will also reach parents who are able to read when sent via bookbags from the relevant primary schools and letters home via young people attending the Harthill Youth Centre.

International Roma Day takes place in April each year and local community leaders organise a party with traditional food and music. Family fun days have previously been organised at Cullen Street for the Roma community and for residents of the surrounding area.

Other events of note include Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month which takes place in June each year, and Hate Crime Month which falls in October.

Covid-19 Impacts and Attitudes

In general reports are that the take up of the vaccine within the Roma community has been slow. Reasons for this include misinformation or ‘fake news’ circulating on social media sometimes originating from countries or origin and religion with some believe *“the vaccine can be from like the negative side of that religion, like the Satan or this kind of thing”*²⁹. Historic mistrust, persecution and discrimination experienced by the Roma people by Governments feeds into this, often fuelled by the fervent nature and speed at which the vaccine has been rolled out, *“you receive one time, two times, three times the message you need, you need, you need, you need. They feel like it’s a mandatory thing. But I explain that this is not mandatory in the end. You need to choose if you do or not”*.³⁰

²⁸ Community Leader Interview

²⁹ Community Leader Interview

³⁰ Community Leader Interview

The lack of published research on the impact of the vaccination on unborn children and pregnancy has fuelled rumours and misinformation deterring many women of child bearing age from being vaccinated, *"A lot of people don't want to have it done, even when I speak with friends, young girls who are like 18, 19, they don't want to have it done because they are worried about fertility because there is not enough research in their opinion".*³¹

Other Health Issues

Numerous health and social issues particularly affecting the Roma community were cited by community leaders. Conditions such as asthma, COPD and osteoporosis were mentioned as particularly affecting people over 40. Lack of access to proper food and nutrition also affected those out of education and free school meals were mentioned as a life saver for many. The affordability of housing, housing conditions and overcrowding were the issues, *"we are mainly dealing with on a daily basis".*³²

It was reported that the lack of specific information collected by the NHS and public services on the Roma community was having a deep and serious impact on the ability of those services to respond to the needs of Roma people *"regarding hate crimes, the same, really, with public health and NHS; if you don't collect specific information, you don't know who you need to reach. If you call people 'white other', who are they? It's a big bag of people, without really understanding of what language to use, where you can find it, whatever... I think with the Roma community, I think it's even more challenging".*³³

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Roma community?

"I wanted to add that if there will not do right now the vaccine, in the end they will do the vaccine because of the restriction, traveling restriction. In the Roma community they like to go in their own countries, two times or three times per year. And because they will know that if you have this, you'll not stay in isolation in their countries in quarantine. Self-isolated for 14 days. And a lot of the Roma, they do this... Depends of the individuals, but the majority, if they accepted this, they will accept because of the travel restrictions".

³¹ Community Leader Interview

³² Community Leader Interview

³³ Community Leader Interview

Irish Community in Liverpool

The Irish community is one of the largest and longest established ethnic minority communities in Liverpool. It is a diverse community including people who have emigrated from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and people of Irish and dual heritage, first second and subsequent generations, and increasingly, including people who become Irish citizens after coming as refugees through the asylum system to Ireland. There are strong historic and current connections between Ireland and Liverpool. Liverpool, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have a strong and deep connection that goes back centuries.

In the 2011 census a total of 16,545 people in Merseyside declared their ethnicity as Irish, with 31% of this total recorded in Liverpool³⁴. However, many estimate this figure to be much higher noting, *"It's how they qualify that genetic stuff. There's a huge genetic legacy. In 1845 [during the Irish famine] it was estimated that 1.5 million Irish people moved to Liverpool"*.³⁵

Irish (Gaelic) and English are the national languages of Ireland. Whilst nearly all Irish speak English between 1.5% – 3% of people in the Republic of Ireland speak Irish on a daily basis outside of educational settings.³⁶ The consequences of this are that communities utilise English from a bilingual perspective, even when English is the only language they engage in conversationally.

Networks, Events and Cultural Observations

Irish Community Care exists to ensure well informed, empowered & vibrant Irish, Irish Traveller & Gypsy Traveller communities (including people of Irish & Traveller heritage) in the North West; through service provision, community development, partnership, collaboration & strategic representation. A leading participant in the provision of support, information & guidance for all Irish communities; ICC ensures that people stay safe, well and connected through improved access to services and opportunities. www.irishcc.net

Liverpool Irish Centre's Sláinte Le Chéile Programme engages people in health and wellbeing activities to get healthy and stay healthy. As well as providing health and wellbeing services and community links, Liverpool Irish Centre hosts a regular programme of sports, music and other cultural events. www.liverpoolirishcentre.org

Liverpool Irish Festival: bringing Liverpool and Ireland together through arts and culture. It takes a representational voice for the Irish in Britain and sharing Irish culture as widely as possible; the Festival is a celebration of Irish creativity, influence and connectivity. www.liverpoolirishfestival.com

³⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/keystatisticsandquickstatisticsforlocalauthoritiesintheunitedkingdom/2013-10-11>

³⁵ Community Leader Interview

³⁶ https://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/european_languages/countries/ireland.shtml

All three organisations combined have extensive networks across culture, heritage, sport, communities, faith, health, welfare and social care. During the pandemic this was evidenced in the CARA Programme, a new initiative set up and led by ICC to ensure vulnerable people stayed safe, well and connected throughout the lockdowns. Nine Irish community groups across the North West got involved with CARA; people gave their time so generously to shop, pick up prescriptions, befriend and support people who were shielding or isolated during the pandemic. These included older people; people in poor health, people who struggled to connect digitally, Irish students unable to get back home, people in prison. The reach was extensive and CARA made a real difference to people's lives. *"Our networks are huge. They're into the Churches, they're into community centres, they're into our friends and our family. So, it can be a friend of a friend of a friend of a friend, of an auntie, of an uncle, of a cousin's best friend and that's how we get there. They're not direct in any way, shape or form, the pathways that we use. They are incredibly varied".*

All three organisations deliver and/or host a range of activities to improve health and wellbeing and connect people to their culture and heritage. These include lunch clubs, walking groups, cultural programmes, *"If you want to come to an event and reach 100 older Irish people, let us know soon enough because those things are full to bursting".*³⁷

Young people from Ireland and particularly Northern Ireland are a significant cohort of the student population attending Liverpool John Moores, University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University. Liverpool Hope University is particularly attractive to Irish students interested in its Centre for Christian Education and Pastoral Theology.

St Patrick's Day (17 March annually) is a huge and well-known day in the Irish national calendar. Less well known is the Feast of Brigid (also called Imbolc or St Brigid's Day) marking the first day of spring which in the Irish traditional calendar is 1st February and *"recognises the contribution of women".*³⁸

Sport is a great connector within the Irish community particularly GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) Gaelic football, hurling and camogie. There are several Gaelic teams across the city and county and national games are often shown at the Liverpool Irish Centre. The Derry Social Club (L5) is also popular. It is recommended that further research engages community leader at the Derry Social Club.

³⁷ Community Leader Interview

³⁸ Community Leader Interview

A lack of trust in institutions in general (outside of health services) was cited as being very prevalent within the Irish community because of, *“the stereotyping and the organisational institutionalised racism that many of us have experienced”*.³⁹

Digital exclusion and digital poverty were of particular concern when Covid-19 first hit, *‘A lot of those older guys only had a radio. They didn’t have a TV, they didn’t have a telephone, a mobile phone, they’d have a phone on the wall, for example’*.⁴⁰ Many were isolated without local support networks to connect with, and on low incomes (such as pension credit) so paying for wi-fi connections and hardware was not affordable. The CARA network helped combat some of this isolation by calling people to have a chat, and sorting shopping and prescriptions when needed.

The CARA network played a pivotal role in combatting some this isolation by calling people to have a chat through development of a volunteer befriending programme, sorting shopping and prescriptions when needed. Volunteers also provided 1:1 digital support to help people get on line. For further detail on the challenges and barriers within the Irish community in relation to digital access and communication, see [Research | Irish Community Care \(irishcc.net\)](https://irishcc.net)

Covid-19 Impacts and Attitudes

Irish people looked to the reaction of the Irish Government to Covid-19 comparing their response to that of the UK Government. Covid-19 was taken very seriously by the Irish Government who acted quickly with lockdowns and were more hesitant to open up than the UK Government; none of the interviewees mentioned reluctance amongst the community to comply with social distancing measures. One of the challenges of the UK Government’s response to Covid-19 is the changes to guidelines and approach which caused information overload and made it difficult to disseminate across the community. *“If we could get one consistent piece of information rather than everything being fired at us, then we have to sift through, pick up the salient bits and get them out”*.⁴¹

A key issue for community was the travel restrictions during the pandemic and the barriers presented for travelling back home; particular for major life events e.g. bereavement and funeral. This impacted greatly on mental health and wellbeing.

³⁹ Community Leader Interview

⁴⁰ Community Leader Interview

⁴¹ Community Leader Interview

The availability of vaccination centres at locations frequently by Irish people was cited as an issue. Efforts were initially made for the Irish Centre to host the vaccination bus but logistically (due to the size of the car park) it was decided it wouldn't work. The Irish Centre has also offered to host a 'grab a jab' day but at the time of interview (August 2021) this had not happened. All partners promoted the Grab a Jab campaign widely and used every contact with community members to have a conversation about Covid-19 and the vaccination.

Responses to attitudes to the Covid-19 vaccine were mixed. Concerns were raised about the speed of the vaccine development and roll out, and similarly with the older Chinese community, bubbles had been created around communities and people and it was felt there that the risk of catching Covid-19 is lesser than the unknown risks of the vaccine.

The lack of published data on the impact of the vaccination on women of child bearing age was also creating hesitancy *"A few people also, in terms of, like, maybe are trying for a baby or are planning for a baby in the future are refusing to get the vaccine because, again, they believe that they don't know the implications"*.⁴²

Other Health Issues

Mental health was cited as a significant concern for many Irish people both prior to, during and as a legacy of the pandemic, *"there was a massive decline in their social skills, a massive decline in people's mental health. As the weeks have progressed, they've come back to themselves, but in those first couple of weeks, it was absolutely awful. You could see that people had lost a lot of weight; people were frightened"*⁴³. For those not engaged in services it is not known whether the mental health challenges of Covid-19 have subsided.

⁴² Community Leader Interview

⁴³ Community Leader Interview

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Irish community?

"Possibly someone to give a talk to explain the safety of the vaccine, like maybe use some statistics of how safe it is. I think, obviously, as well, there were some scenarios with blood clots and things like that linked to the AstraZeneca jab. You know, provide people with information. Say, "Look, here's our statistics. You're less likely to have A, B, C. Even if you do catch Covid, your symptoms will be a lot less severe than if you didn't have the vaccine."

"Provide some information maybe on it doesn't affect pregnancy later or you can even get it when you're pregnant, can't you, the vaccine. I think just basic, simple numbers, like stats so that people think, "Oh, well... right." Just, sort of, dazzle people with stats and good figures".

A rise in agoraphobia was also mentioned as a reason for people not returning to services. The trauma for those that have had Covid-19, or are living with long Covid-19 is also having an impact on people's mental and physical health.

Spanish People in Liverpool

In 2011 census England and Wales 0.2% of people reported their first language as Spanish. However, as Spanish is also the official language of many countries in Latin America this figure is not representative of the number of Spanish-born people living in the UK.

Whilst Spanish people in Liverpool are dispersed across many different areas they tend to, *"connect with other Spanish because of the way we are. The Spanish friends that we made in Liverpool, they become almost like family".*⁴⁴ They also have openness to connecting with other communities, *"we create like a good communication channel with Polish people, with people from South America, with other European...we make new connections to try new food, to go on and find out how to play cricket with some Bangladesh guys".*⁴⁵

The concerns of Spanish people in the UK since February 2020 have been focussed on the Covid-19 response of the Spanish Government more than the UK Government. In 2020 the Spanish government imposed stricter lockdowns restrictions than the UK (it was only in April 2020 that under 14-year-olds were able go outside for exercise), *"In Spain there were three months that people couldn't go at all to the street, just to buy food or essential things. And when we compare both situations, we felt very lucky of being in UK during this pandemic".*⁴⁶

Attitudes to getting vaccinated amongst the Spanish community have been driven by the desire and ease of travel, *"And the other thing is we always thought from the beginning that with the vaccine, it will be easier for us to go abroad and come back to the UK, to avoid quarantines ... We don't know if this vaccine will be the most effective ever, but it's what we have, and it's what will help us to move forward. So, we've been very easy community in terms of vaccination".*⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Community Member Interview

⁴⁵ Community Member Interview

⁴⁶ Community Member Interview

⁴⁷ Community Member Interview

Albanian People in Liverpool

Limited information was found on the number of Albanian people living in the Liverpool or the wider North West, although Albanian people arriving as asylum seekers and refugees was cited by one asylum seeker and refugee support group in the context of languages being spoken *"I would say that the biggest groups by far are Albanian and Farsi speaking women".*⁴⁸ There appears to be no organisations exclusively promoting Albanian culture or advocating on behalf of the Albanian community. A lack of an organised Albanian community was also referenced, *"It is difficult to say these people live in Liverpool because every time that we heard somebody talking on the street, for example, if you approach them, it's very difficult to form a friendship thing with them. Because they will just say where they are from in Albania and then they will stop the conversation there and say bye. It's very difficult".*⁴⁹

A few years ago a Facebook group 'Albanians in Merseyside' was set up, however it was reported that *"I've got many people join. Some of them, they're also not living in Liverpool, they're from London and trying to move in Liverpool".*⁵⁰

Positive comments were made about the Albanian Government's roll out of a Covid-19 vaccine, *"the Albanian government did quite well after the vaccine for everyone and it was quite a large available the vaccine. The government got vaccine, not only from the two big one, AstraZeneca and Pfizer, they got also from China, from other counties, vaccine, and was quite quick in approval of the vaccine and let people get vaccinated".*⁵¹

A lack of understanding amongst Albanians about the services they are able to access in the UK was cited as a barrier to engagement, and shared housing arrangements when Albanian arrive as asylum seekers, *"I think when people come here first, they live in shared accommodations, so with other people from different countries that come here as asylum seekers. And then I think they try to get into separate houses, not anymore with shared bathroom or shared kitchen. And it becomes quite difficult when they want to do that. Mainly it's because of the language problems, so it's very difficult for them to communicate. But mainly, because there are not enough available houses to put everyone in".*⁵²

"I've been doing a project regarding Albanians and health services. I've been asking people about, do they know that they can get the emergency... if they need something for emergency, I don't know, emergency department, they need to go there. Then they can go there without paying anything, and they didn't know that. They didn't know that they can access a GP without being registered as legal people in the country. So, they don't know most of the things, from what I did".

⁴⁸ Community Leader Interview

⁴⁹ Community Member Interview

⁵⁰ Community Member Interview

⁵¹ Community Member Interview

⁵² Community Member Interview

Chinese Community

Chinese Community

The information below is based on two interviews with Liverpool voluntary sector workers from Pagoda Arts and Chinese Wellbeing, and some desk-based research to verify or expand on information.

For the purposes of this report the Chinese community is an umbrella term for people from the People's Republic of China including Hong Kong and Taiwan, or other parts of Southeast Asia who access services provided by the community organisations outlined below.

Pagoda Arts' mission is to introduce Chinese culture to a diverse community, with a particular emphasis on Youth Orchestra. Pagoda Arts also manage the Pagoda Community Centre (on a voluntary basis since funding cuts in 2011) delivering social welfare, health, Councillor surgeries and NHS services to the Chinese community in Liverpool and the wider Liverpool City Region.

Chinese Wellbeing was founded over 30 years ago following research undertaken by the Kings Fund on the needs of the Chinese community in the UK. Operating in Liverpool and some areas of the Liverpool City Region, the charity provides domiciliary care to predominately older Chinese people in the community. In addition, it provides health & wellbeing activities, dementia support services, support to access welfare benefits and supports families and older people to navigate the complexities of the social care system. The aims of the Charity are to reduce isolation and loneliness and to keep people in independent living for as long as possible. Chinese Wellbeing is rated outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. Chinese Wellbeing has over 200 regular service users and 34 staff members, 33 of which identify as Chinese.

"Initially people who got shielding letters often they just put them in a draw. The letters were quite lengthy and they didn't understand them. Our staff spent a lot of time working through them with people. Now it's different information is coming out in different languages".

Liverpool was one of the first cities in Europe to establish a Chinese community due to shipping trade links between Shanghai and Liverpool which started in the early 17th Century⁵³. For many years, the Chinese community was concentrated around China Town (L1) but the 1970's saw a slow dispersal of Chinese people to other areas of Liverpool such as (L4, L9, L7, L8) and the Liverpool City Region (Sefton, Wirral).

⁵³ <http://lcba.net/about-the-community.html>

Official statistics estimate approximately 10, 000 people Chinese people live in Liverpool, however local sources put this estimate at much higher, *“the overseas students in Liverpool are at least 8,000. So, I’m sure there now will be at least 20, 000 to 25,000 Chinese people in Liverpool”*.⁵⁴

The official language of China is Mandarin and Min, Wu, Huananese and Cantonese are just some of the other major dialects spoken. Whilst most Chinese students and younger people are able to communicate in English, language barriers are frequently experienced by older Chinese people living in Liverpool. Over the last few years language services in health services have been improved but historically information in accessible format have been poor, with many people not getting the full information at the point of diagnosis.

Networks, Events & Cultural Observations

Over the last 18 months Pagoda Arts have played an important role in translating information such as changes to Covid-19 regulations, testing regimes and vaccinations for the Chinese community on behalf of the NHS, Public Health Liverpool and Liverpool City Council. *“The regulations changed every day and people cannot catch up with all the regulations. So, I ended up translating all the regulations every day. What was announced and all that”*.⁵⁵

Many of the mainstream social media sites (such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) cannot be used in China due to the Chinese government’s internet censorship project which is often referred to as the ‘Great Firewall’ of China. Platforms such as *WeChat* (comparable to Facebook), *Sina Weibo* (comparable to Twitter), *Tencent QQ* (instant messaging) and *Tencent Video* (comparable to YouTube) are commonly used by Chinese people living in the UK with WeChat being the most popular.

“A great many Chinese people in Liverpool use WeChat as it allows them to communicate with friends and family in China”.

In general, the Chinese community is well networked with a number of associations supporting different social, community and business interests, and the cultural practices of specific provinces in China such as the See Yip (Si Yi) Association (for people from the Guongdong Province in China) and the Hoi Yin Chinese Association (for people from the Guangdong Province in China). <https://www.liverpoolchinatown.co.uk/associations.php>. These are useful networks for disseminating public messaging and information.

Chinese Wellbeing have a predominately locally based Chinese staff team of 33, and this can be an effective way to filter messages to Liverpool’s Chinese community.

⁵⁴ Community Leader Interview

⁵⁵ Community Leader Interview

Other centres and networks who deliver services for the Chinese community in the Liverpool City Region are Multi-Cultural Centre (Wirral), Wah Sing Chinese Community Centre Liverpool Chinese Students and Scholars Association, Liverpool Chinese Culture and Recreation Association, Chung Hok House and the Social Inclusion team at Mersey Care NHS Foundation.

Five major annual cultural events were reported as good opportunities to reach many Chinese people. Although some celebrations had been put on hold over the last 18 months due to Covid-19 restrictions both Pagoda Arts and Chinese Wellbeing were reaching older or vulnerable Chinese people through door step activities and food parcels to mark the occasions. Events cited were

- Chinese New Year which falls within January and February each year.
- Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival, Mooncake Festival) takes place on 21st September.
- Chinese National Day takes place on 1st October.
- International Women's Day takes place on 8th March.
- Dragon Boat Race which falls between May and July annually.

Both interviewees mentioned the importance and status of parents and elders in Chinese culture, and that many young people were keen to take up the vaccine to protect older family members and other older people around them, *"there are generation gaps but within the Chinese culture there is a respect for parents and respect for the elderly"* and *"young people do what the parent tells them to do"*.⁵⁶

Some older people in the Chinese community struggled to get online and access information online, or use digital platforms such as Covid-19 testing and booking vaccination appointments. *"We had to give up with the mobile one as it became too difficult. We just used the paper version because it is much easier"*.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Community Leader Interview

⁵⁷ Community Leader Interview

Covid-19 Impacts & Attitudes

Chinese Wellbeing were ahead of the curve in January 2020 in recognising the dangers of Covid-19-19 to vulnerable people and older people. Their Covid-19 response was also wide-ranging, and continues to date: they were working as a Community Champion organisation for Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services (LCVS) prior to this Public Health Liverpool/Liverpool City Council initiative being established. Successful fundraising meant they were able to provide additional resources and activities such as:

- Identifying those who were shielding and helped to translate their shielding letters to ensure understanding of the restrictions and the mainstream support available.
- Providing essential updates to all members throughout lockdown on Covid-19 Government Guidance and checked individual understanding often on a daily basis.
- Establishing online platforms to continue group activities including Pom-Pom dancing, chair-based exercise, healthy eating sessions, singing, arts and craft sessions, health awareness and infection control.
- Upskilling members to improve digital access including education on internet safety protocols and emerging Covid-19 scams.
- Introducing a Mandarin/Cantonese Covid-19 Support helpline which includes support for victims of hate crime
- Delivering health talks online such as dementia care, healthy eating and diabetes.
- Maintaining weekly welfare telephone calls and shopping for the most vulnerable.
- Delivering activity packs to encourage mental stimulation for those unable to access online activities
- Accompanying the elderly to testing sites and for vaccinations.
- Producing posters in *Traditional* and *Simplified* Chinese explaining the testing process in easy visuals to help overcome language barriers.
- Producing voice overs for the posters in Mandarin and Cantonese which have been posted on YouTube and circulated widely via LCC.

In January [2020], before the first lockdown, people were returning from China after Chinese New Year, we had a lot of students returning ... and we had members of staff returning. We put them into self-isolation before anybody decided there was such a thing as isolation of staff. And, we asked them to stay at home for 14 days on full pay. I wrote to commissioners to say, "What should we be doing, as a very large Chinese community in Liverpool, with an extremely large Chinese student population who are returning from China, what special measures should we be taking?" And, we had already purchased 800 masks because A/our service users were asking for them, B/they expected our staff to turn up with them and wouldn't let them in without a mask. This was in January, before any Government guidelines. And, we did get told not to use the masks. But, culturally, no, not a problem. People expected us to wear masks. We stayed safe. We kept our staff safe ".

- Delivering Christmas meals to the most vulnerable working in collaboration with The Florrie.
- Part funding Chinese food parcels to the most vulnerable elderly service users in collaboration with The Florrie.
- Part funding Chinese food parcels to the most vulnerable elderly service users in collaboration with The Consul General of the People's Republic of China.
- Establishing a tablet loan scheme with connectivity for those expressing an interest in accessing online activities, this requires upskilling the elderly which has been challenging.

Chinese Wellbeing did not work in isolation: they received Covid-19 guidance from Public Health England, Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Clinical Commission Group, Care Workforce, Care Quality Commission and Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services (LCVS). In addition to the above they also provided a commission service on behalf of Liverpool City Council and as such attended weekly online meetings throughout the pandemic to discuss the ongoing crises and receive information updates which were disseminated to our staff and service users as appropriate. During April 2020 and March 2021 Chinese Wellbeing delivered 149 online sessions, with 3076 attendances and 9730 Covid-19 specific interventions which included weekly welfare telephone calls, texts, essential shopping, prescription collections, doorstep visits, vaccination registrations, support to attend testing sites, support with applications for vitamin D.

For Chinese Wellbeing, around 50% of the Evergreen Club members have moved to online engagement over the last 18 months, the remainder have remained engaged through door step visits and phone calls. They also reported a general reluctance to meet face to face as *"many still don't feel it is safe to go out even for a walk"* despite previously being a social community *"when there is a party everyone will come"*.⁵⁸ The drivers behind this reluctance are twofold: vaccine hesitancy and experiences and reports of hate crimes against Chinese people in Liverpool. Reports of Sinophobia (sentiments expressing hatred, paranoia or fear of China its people, its government, its diaspora) have increased across the UK often perpetuated by inappropriate remarks made in the media, and by those in central Government.⁵⁹

Neither interviewee referred to the prevalence of conspiracy theories surrounding Covid-19, and both mentioned the willingness of Chinese people in Liverpool to follow guidelines such as social distancing and mask wearing, *"mask wearing is not an issue in Chinese culture"* and *"mask wearing will continue. You will see very few Chinese students without a mask"*.

⁵⁸ Community Leader Interview

⁵⁹ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-10-13/debates/858E78B5-1049-4480-A1A7-5362FC12F47E/ChineseAndEastAsianCommunitiesRacismDuringCovid-19>

UK and China lockdowns mostly put a stop to unnecessary travel, and some people from China were trapped in England when lockdowns were announced without the relevant papers to access the vaccine. The response of Pagoda Arts was to set up new services in partnership with Liverpool City Council, Public Health Liverpool and the NHS. They have been translating information on Covid-19 regulations, testing and vaccinations, hosting testing centres and vaccination days and supporting Chinese people to register with NHS and local GP's to ensure they can access the vaccine. Tens of thousands of Chinese people have accessed these services over the last year. News of Pagoda Arts' services stretched beyond the Liverpool City Region, and people from Scotland, Birmingham, London, Southampton, Portsmouth travelled to Liverpool to get support from Pagoda Arts to access vaccines and register with the NHS.

It is also worth noting both interviewees expressed surprise when official statistics revealed the take up of the vaccine amongst the Chinese population of Liverpool was low with one commenting, *"we were inundated with people wanting the vaccine"*.⁶⁰

Vaccine hesitancy had been observed amongst all age groups within the Chinese and it was also observed hesitancy was maybe more prevalent amongst people in their 40's and 50's, however it is recommended this observation is corroborated by official data.

Reasons for vaccine hesitancy amongst older people included the speed at which the vaccine had been created and rolled out *"too early, too quickly"*, and that continuing to stay home and not socialise was safer, *"we don't go out so we don't need a vaccine"*, *"elderly people are still not coming out"* and *"they are very aware of staying safe"*.⁶¹

The loosening of Covid-19 restrictions, such as the removal of the requirement to wear masks on public transport, was also compounding fears felt by older people.

Other misinformation circulating amongst young people and students mentioned were, *"if you have it you can't touch water"*, *"you won't be able to get drunk anymore"* and *"you won't be able to fly home as you will test positive for the flight"*.⁶²

"There are fears about hate crime at the moment towards the Chinese and South East Asian communities. And, we've had a very, very kind offer from one of the community police officers to accompany us around the park, and they were really appreciative of that. But we've just not managed to get that up and running at the moment".

⁶⁰ Community Leader Interview

⁶¹ Community Leader Interview

⁶² Community Leader Interview

There were comments that the Pfizer vaccine was preferred to the AstraZeneca vaccine, *"no one wanted the AZ so they changed the one they gave to the Chinese community"*.⁶³ People may have been influenced by information on the efficacy and safety AstraZeneca reported on by non-UK based news sites.

Other Health Issues

COPD and diabetes were referenced as health concerns with the Chinese community.

⁶³ Community Leader Interview

Irish Travellers, Travellers and Gypsy Traveller Communities

Irish Travellers, Travellers and Gypsy Traveller Communities

The information below is based on interviews with Irish Community Care, Liverpool Irish Festival and Sláinte Le Chéile who are based at Liverpool Irish Centre. (see section on the Irish community in Liverpool for details of their services). Interviews were sought but not secured within the research timeframe with Traveller Adult Health Inclusion Team (Mersey Care). Researchers were directed by Liverpool City Council to their 'Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer' who is no longer in post.

It also based on information, advice and guidance from the following organisations identified through desk-based research:

- The Irish Traveller Movement <https://itmtrav.ie> is an Ireland based networking organisation for groups and individuals working within the Traveller community.
- The Traveller Movement <https://travellermovement.org.uk/covid-19> is a UK lobbying, advocacy and training organisations advocating for Travellers' rights across Europe.
- Travellers' Times <https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk>: is a website and magazine for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in the UK.

"The word 'Traveller' is also assigned. It's not the word that people use for themselves. Irish Travellers would describe themselves as Pavee".

Traveller identity is complex and diverse. This section of the report explores the experience of engaging with Irish Travellers, Romani Travellers and Gypsy Travellers (with origins in other parts of Europe) but not the Roma community (which is explored under Polish and other European communities). For the purposes of this report Irish Travellers, Romani Travellers and Gypsy Travellers will all be referred to as the Traveller community. Irish Travellers are a nomadic group, identified as a separate group to Irish since the 8th century in the UK and who may self-define as Pavees or Mincéirí. Gypsy Travellers, have had a presence in the British Isles since the early 16th Century being first recorded in 1505 in Scotland and 1513/14 in England.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ <https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/romani-gypsies-in-16th-century-britain>

Estimates for the number of people who identify as from the Traveller community living in the UK differ widely. In the 2011 census there was a separate category for Gypsy Traveller and Irish Traveller for the first time.

The #StandUpAndBeCounted campaign encouraged the community to declare their identity on the census so that services could be tailored to their needs. 58, 000 people in England and Wales defined themselves as Gypsy and Traveller according to the 2011 census, however in 2019 the Government recognised this was likely to be an undercount and 100, 000 – 300, 000 are more likely to be living in the UK.

“People will give the terminology that they feel will provide them... they will give the line of least resistance. The one that will facilitate to engender the best response”.

Demographics within Traveller communities are very different to the settled population: Data from ONS Census 2011 clearly identifies Traveller communities are younger with a tail off significantly from 50 years of age. The average life expectancy of an Irish Traveller male is 52 and female is 56. This is the lowest life expectancy of all ethnic minority communities in the UK.⁶⁵ There are also significant differences in the years people are affected by life limiting, long term health conditions.

For Merseyside, a report by Irish Traveller Movement in Britain 2013 estimated from Census and other local /regional government collected data that there was a Traveller population in the North West of 12, 782, with 385 Traveller people in Liverpool City Region. There is one Local Authority-owned site in Liverpool, with 14 pitches. There is also one unauthorised development, and a number of people who pass through on the way to other places, including Ireland and Europe. Traveller communities in Merseyside have familial connections with people in Wirral, Cheshire, Wrexham and beyond.⁶⁸

Irish Travellers in Liverpool originate from all across the Island of Ireland, including Northern Ireland. This also impacts upon culture and discrimination issues, as there is intersectionality of Irishness and Traveller culture, with both Irish communities and British. People are abused for their Irishness, and their Traveller culture, both separately or at the same time

Many of the Irish Traveller community are bilingual, speaking Cant, Gammon or Shelta as well as English with English spoken in most situations. Many Gypsy and Roma Travellers are bilingual too, speaking Romanes, as well as English. This means traditional translation services – from one language to another – are not required, as all communities speak English; however, there are often different uses or meanings to common words, so that

⁶⁵ https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.43714!/file/GT-final-report-for-web.pdf

communication can become less than clear if this is not taken into consideration. Face-to-face communication is preferred by Traveller communities as this is culturally how people communicate best.

Networks, Events and Cultural Observations

There is significant evidence of low literacy levels in the Traveller community. Due to poor experiences and prejudice within educational settings. Literature such as poster and leaflets, are more likely to be noticed and read if they are representative,

*"Travellers don't tend to look at the posters on our walls, whether they have a lot of words or a few words. What will catch their eye is if there is a trailer, a vardo or somebody who they can identify as looking like a Gypsy or a Traveller on there. Then they will go over to find out more".*⁶⁶

The Mac Sisters identify as Irish Travellers and are hugely influential Instagram and Tik Tok stars amongst young Traveller people.

Whilst social media platforms and messaging platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp are used by the Traveller community, word of mouth (face to face and phone calls) is most effective for accessing informal community networks *"So there's huge amounts of work happening within communities to support people. But it's very, very rarely talked about outside of the community".*⁶⁷

The historical reputation of trusted organisations, and representatives from these organisations is a key factor in influencing whether and how the Traveller community receive messages and access services, *"Irish Traveller communities, especially are quite wary of going to the doctors or working with other organisations who aren't Irish."*⁶⁸ Irish Community Care has many service users from the Irish Traveller and Gypsy Traveller communities. *"They have a fear and possibly mistrust, and possibly because of... the abuse scandals within the church and schools, and a lot of the people that we work with have mistrust of people in authority and we don't blame them. So, we would actually act as the go-between or try and encourage people to use services".*

Many Irish Travellers in Liverpool using the Irish Centre originate from County Mayo *"Mayo is one of the main places that a lot of the Travellers originate from"*, and will visit Liverpool Irish Centre to watch Gaelic football (GAA) matches particular when Mayo is competing or when the singer called Mayo Man is playing, *"that's their traditions and that's what they like and enjoy".*⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Community Leader Interview

⁶⁷ Community Leader Interview

⁶⁸ Community Leader Interview

⁶⁹ Community Leader Interview

Other important events include International Holocaust Remembrance Day 27th January; St Brigid's Day in February; St Patrick's Day in March; International Romani Day 8th April, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month in June, and Hate Crime Awareness Month which falls in October. Appleby Horse Fair, with a Royal Charter beginning in 1685, which takes place over June, each year in Cumbria, is one of Europe's largest gatherings of the Traveller community.

The Channel 4 documentary 'The Big Fat Gypsy Wedding' was a significant moment for the Traveller community. National research into the impact of the programme on the Traveller community makes disturbing reading, proving a direct link between broadcast and an increase in hate crime towards the Traveller community, and discrimination when accessing public services including schools and health services.⁷⁰ The effect was to make the Traveller community even more reluctant to self-identify as Traveller when accessing services, *"you can have three kids in school [identifying as Traveller] but not their parents, which is one of our experiences in Merseyside... we really are on the edges of everything"*.⁷¹ Irish Community Care's (ICC) own research in 2011 into this found that 100% of respondents would not identify within local services as Gypsy or Traveller, with 49% having experienced direct discrimination within services and 51% fearful of this. A more recent 2020 report identifies that of 125 respondents; 71 would tick Gypsy or Traveller ethnicity, always, 50 would never identify and for 2 it depended on the context or who was asking.

Family relationships and significant family events, such as deaths, have an enormous impact on the Traveller community *"be aware that if you're working with Gypsies and Travellers and there is a death in the family, you will have absolutely nobody attend"*.⁷² Children are particularly important within the family unit and providing activities for children to get involved in can be an effective way of engaging the wider Traveller community.

Connections between families within the Traveller community are also strong and interviewees told anecdotes of people supporting those struggling financially and through Covid-19. Faith healers play a role for many in the Irish Traveller community, who are predominately Irish Catholic.

Many within the Gypsy community, and a small number of Irish Travellers also identify as members of the Light and Life movement. This movement (aligned to the Biblical teachings of traditional Pentecostal Christians) originated in France and is Gypsy led; there is a

"Right, okay, we've got a number of people here who are really struggling, and they still can't get baby milk." "Well, there's baby milk in Wrexham, so I'll get baby milk from Wrexham, and I'll bring that over and we'll be socially distanced and share all this stuff and divvy it up".

⁷⁰ <https://gateherts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Rain-Report-201211.pdf>

⁷¹ Community Leader Interview

⁷² Community Leader Interview

significant Life and Light community in the North West, *"We had a piece of work, a piece of research about 20 years ago, from one of our Liverpool Irish Travellers, who's still alive and said, "God bourns you; God dies you, and there's nothing in the middle that you are in control of. The Lord has it all."* This kind of fatalistic attitude is very much evidenced within all Traveller communities".⁷³

The recurring theme of digital exclusion is very prevalent amongst the Traveller community due to a combination of barriers, including both written and digital literacy issues; financial constraints and the cultural traditions of face-to-face communication as a preferred mode. For nomadic members of the community the lack of stable electricity and WiFi access through safe, free connections via routers also means young people have limited access to the digital realm even if they are more likely to have developed the skills and capacity to do so, *"most of them only have pay-as-you-go. So, as soon as their money runs out, they can't access any 4G or any internet, unless they go to a Wi-Fi venue"*,⁷⁹ which wasn't possible during local and national lockdowns.

Covid-19 Impacts & Attitudes

The fatalistic attitudes within the community and of Pastors and other religious and community leaders such as Faith Healers, at the beginning of the pandemic led to transmission within Traveller communities where their teachings were followed as corroborated by two different sources, *"Religious services did not stop, necessarily. There were lines of transmission which led to deaths in the community"* and *"I mean the other thing was in the Gypsy Traveller groups, we've had a lot of deaths related to Covid transmission through faith groups"*.

Similarly to other communities, at first many in the Traveller community did not consider Covid-19 to be a threat, with reports of people saying *"we've survived worse than the flu"*. As the pandemic progressed compliance with social distancing guidelines was generally with one interviewee commenting, *"We've had a couple of our communities in the North West, who have said, "Oh no, aunties and grannies haven't seen their children apart from through a trailer window for – or a house window, for a very long time."* Although perceptions of public services within the Traveller community may have influenced the likelihood of whether people sought tests *"Oh we think that we had it. Nobody got tested. We think that we had it over Christmas"*.⁷⁴

Irish Community Care and CARA partners have played a key role in communicating information to the Traveller community during this time. In summer 2020 there was a Covid-19 outbreak at Tara Park which led to the deaths of a key members of the Traveller community which has been a huge loss.

⁷³ Community Leader Interview

⁷⁴ Community Leader Interview

Covid-19 has limited the Traveller community's ability to travel to Ireland and other places in Europe, and for some, visiting family back 'home' has been a driver to get vaccinated, *"I actually think that lots of people are talking about that and the importance of vaccination around that."*⁷⁵

The lack of published research on the impact of the vaccination on unborn children and pregnancy has fuelled rumours and misinformation deterring many women of child bearing age from being vaccinated. This is reported as being particularly prevalent within the Traveller community as children are cherished, and family networks play a key role in the infrastructure of the community. One interviewee reported as hearing, *"Well I trust my auntie and she said don't have the vaccine because I'm a woman who wants to get pregnant. And actually, auntie's saying, 'I really don't want you to have this, because you may be risking my future nieces and nephews'."*⁷⁶

Interviewees also mentioned the lack of guidance on how to manage Covid-19 risks for those whose immune system will not respond to the virus or are on cancer medication, *"They're really scared now because they're saying, 'Well even if I get the vaccine, it's not going to work, because I have no immune system for it to respond to.' And they feel completely abandoned, unloved and unwanted, because hey, you know, freedom Monday, and it's like, 'Well I'm going to sit in now, and I'm back to square one, where I can't go outside of my house'."*⁷⁷

"We've got some very high-profile [on social media] Gypsy Traveller young women who posted "Well I've just had my vaccine, what's everyone else doing?" The biggest fear that came back was, "I don't want to not be able to have children later on".

⁷⁵ Community Leader Interview

⁷⁶ Community Leader Interview

⁷⁷ Community Leader Interview

Other Health Issues

In the last ten years a long-awaited body of research has been undertaken into health outcomes for the Traveller community. In 2018 NHS research concluded Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities have significantly lower life expectancies; high maternal and infant mortality; higher rates of child accidental injury or infections; lower child vaccination rates and poor dental health of unmet dental needs⁷⁸. Traveller communities have the highest rates of suicide and self-harm of all communities, being 6-7 times more likely to die by suicide. The Friends Families & Travellers group⁷⁹ highlighted that only 5 out of 79 English local suicide prevention plans mention Gypsy and Traveller communities, and just 2 identify any positive actions to address inequalities.

Locally, Irish Community Care and Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Racial Equality Centre facilitated a community research report *We're Still Here 2020* in which the Cheshire Traveller community identified suicide, drug abuse and alcohol abuse as pressing concerns.⁸⁰ Interviewees reported *"[health outcomes] are quite poor really when compared to other BME groups even, or the rest of the population in the UK. Mental health issues, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, overweight, obesity. Diet is sometimes shocking, but again, it's education and lack of information and knowledge"*.⁸¹

The impact of Covid-19 on mental health was cited in direct relation to Irish Travellers, *"mental health and resilience and robustness, we've lost a lot of that in our communities...when we have done research, for example around mental health, the two most synonymous communities were Black, British and Irish communities, including Irish Travellers, who had almost exactly the same experiences of healthcare or health non-care in some cases and judgement and stereotyping prejudices"*.⁸²

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Traveller community?

"Clear messages. Having a cohesive approach and I think that goes, particularly for Traveller communities, and for our Irish community.

Looking at having maybe a regional approach to those messages. Timing them, ensuring that it's the same information that's going out in a very similar, you know, not necessarily in the same way, because obviously people have to target things specifically. But just in a way that's not, it's either not too much information, because what we've got is a lot of people switching off."

"We can't work with the community without some really supported and structured funded that enables us to do a really good job over a long period of time."

⁷⁸ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ltphimenu/improving-access/improving-uptake-and-delivery-of-health-services-to-reduce-health-inequalities-experienced-by-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-people/>

⁷⁹ <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/health/fft-report-reveals-government-failure-to-address-suicide-inequalities-in-gypsy-and-traveller-communities/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.irishcc.net/research>

⁸¹ Community Leader Interview

⁸² Community Leader Interview

Black, African and Middle Eastern Communities

Black, African and Middle Eastern Communities

The information below is based on interviews with 4Wings, Liverpool Arabic Centre, Liverpool Catalyst, Liverpool Commonwealth Association, LUMA, Merseyside Refugee Support Network, Moulana Community Association, Refugee Women Connect, the Royal Court Theatre and Somali Community Association conducted during August 2021.

- 4Wings reaches out to all women and deliver activities which enable them to enhance their own role in the own lives, in their local communities, in business and in the wider world.
- Liverpool Arabic Centre is a charitable organisation developed by local people to advocate the social and economic wellbeing, improve health and advance the education of the Arabic community whilst strengthening awareness of the community through the celebration and promotion of all aspects of Arabic language, cultural heritage and identity.
- Liverpool Catalyst is a Christian network working with the whole community, and in particular vulnerable adults and young people from a range of ethnicities.
- Liverpool Commonwealth Association works with a diverse community ranging across the 54 countries, which make up the Commonwealth of Nations. The Liverpool Commonwealth represents those diaspora communities in Liverpool and their interests across various areas such as business, education and culture.
- Luma Creations aka OLC Productions is an Arts & Cultural Organisation promoting Latin American and Diversity Arts and Artists. The organisation produces an annual programme of events, performances, festivals and projects and is ever present in a range of national festivals and carnivals.
- Merseyside Refugee Support Network provides information sharing and networking opportunities across the Merseyside/Liverpool City Region refugee and asylum seeker sector.
- Moulana Community Association was originally set up to provide support to the Iranian Asylum Seeker community, and now extends services to the whole of the refugee community providing an extensive learning programme for aspiring entrepreneurs within the refugee community and a support programme which includes a food bank, art music, culture and other related services.
- Refugee Women Connect is a woman only charity set up to support women asylum seekers, refugee and survivors of trafficking.
- The Royal Court's Music Access All Areas project is a partnership with Positive Impact, Catalyst Performing Arts, Capoeira for All, funded by Youth Music. It offers a wide range of classes in dance, musical theatre, music production, singing, and musical instrument tuition.
- Somali Community Association aims to relieve needs and to advance education amongst the Somali community.

Somali Community in Liverpool

Like many ethnic community's official statistics on Somali population in the UK are unclear. The 2011 census estimated 85,918 people, with the Office for National Statistics updating this figure in 2018 to 109,000. It is agreed by statisticians that the UK has the largest Somali population in Europe. Anecdotal evidence estimates that the Somali community is *"probably the second largest BME community in Liverpool"*.⁸³

The history of the Somali community in Liverpool is long. The first wave of Somali people settling in Liverpool took place in the 19th Century following service with the British Navy from what was then British Somaliland⁸⁴. The second wave came in the *"1980s when the civil war broke out in Somalia, and many of the seamen or salesmen who lived here in Liverpool, they actually brought their families and extended families here to UK to live with them and get them to safety"*. In the last ten years refugees have come from Somalia and local estimates are the community is made up of around 9000 Somali people in Liverpool, mainly concentrated around the Granby Triangle (L8) and mainly made up of young people (under 40's).

For many of the Somali community (in particularly the older generation) in Liverpool, English is their second language and interpretation is required to access health and other public services. The official language of the Somalis is Somali, and Arabic is the second language. Reports of interpreting services in health settings was generally good for Somalis, although the appointment systems of all GP practices were cited as being a barrier, as interpreter services are often not available at 8am in the morning which is the only time appointments can be made. This means people who don't speak English are unable to access a GP appointment. The effect of this is minor health issues and early health interventions do not happen, meaning health can deteriorate and severe illnesses are not caught early enough. This also has implications for people with mental ill health, where conditions and symptom can also deteriorate unnecessarily.

"A have a list of families who have not been referred due to the lack of access to GP appointments.

I know people who have mental health issues that have gone undiagnosed. This has led to more severe and long-term diagnosis such as schizophrenia. There are people with breast cancer, high prostate cancer, bowel cancer, autism, ADHD who are not being assessed. Women also struggle to access smear tests because of these barriers. People with high blood pressure, diabetes conditions that can all be controlled are struggling to get appointments as well".

⁸³ Community Leader Interview

⁸⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20091216182416/http://faea.es/english/oralidad.php>

A simple solution that would enable better access to primary health interventions would be an alternative daily time when people who have English as a second language could make GP appointments. This could be delivered in partnership with community groups and organisations.

Networks, Events and Cultural Observations

The Somali community is a close-knit community and messages are best disseminated through word of mouth., although Somali support groups do also use newsletters, posters, email, text, messages, WhatsApp Groups and social media. With money secured from local Covid-19 response funding programmes the Somali Community Association in Liverpool managed to set up a food aid programme for local people, preparing and distributing meals and food items to local older people, those with health conditions and anyone else in the local community who was struggling.

Kaalmo Youth Development Limited works with the young Somali community in Liverpool delivering activities that address mental ill health, provide after school study sessions, crime prevention activities, FGM and drug awareness sessions and support young people who want to go to University with UCAS applications and student finance. Weekly sessions are held and people with expertise are invited to talk to the young people. Sessions are tailored to the young people's needs.

In addition to the work of Kaalmo Youth Development Limited, the 'Be Inspired' project invites university alumni who originate from the Somali community in Liverpool to speak to young people and present as positive role models, alongside other activities that are delivered by Merseyside Somali Community Association.

The majority of the Somali community are Muslims and celebrate the main religious events in the Muslim calendar such as Eid, which follows Ramadan and the second sacrifice Eid which falls two or three months after the first event. *"This year, we had a big mass prayer in Sefton Park".*⁸⁵ As well as religious events there are big celebrations for the different National Days of Independence from colonisation and other histories which include 18th May and 26th June are celebrated by Somaliland (North of Somali), 27th June is celebrated by Jabuti (freedom from France) and 1st July celebrated as the Independence Day of south of Somali from Italy.

⁸⁵ Community Leader Interview

There are 7 Mosques in Liverpool which can be found online. All are used by the Somali community in Liverpool for religious purposes.

The most difficult to reach of the Somali community are the older people who are single (unmarried or widowed), and isolated in their own homes or sheltered accommodations.

Distrust amongst the Somali community in public services and authority is decades old, and interviewees emphasised the need for peer-led education of the community in relation to the vaccine. Another effective way to reach out to the community is through public health workshops that are delivered in the language of the community.

Muscular health problems were reported as being a major health issue for older people in the Somali community, along with osteolysis in women. The mental health challenge of Covid-19 was cited as a major problem in the community, in particular for young people.

Another key factor in communicating the management (e.g. medication) and implications of health conditions is the limited literacy of older people within the Somali community. The written language of Somali was created in 1972 meaning most older people have limited literacy skills in the Somali language, and literacy skills in English or Arabic are also limited. It was commented that the treatment of long-term health conditions was poor with many older Somali people likely to stop taking long-term medication when symptoms had reduced or disappeared altogether, *"The treatment, it doesn't take the illness away, but they control it and they minimize it. Many of them...particularly, the elderly generation, they do not have that understanding"*.⁸⁶

Barriers the Somali community experience when accessing health services are wide and complex. In 2017 research was undertaken by Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group (LCCG) that highlighted these challenges. However, interviewees reported the community was yet to experience any positive changes or effects from this LCCG report. The complexity of obstacles faced by the Somali community means partnership working with community organisations that hold the social capital is the most effective way to improve access to health care for Somalis in Liverpool.

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Somali community?

"There's no point going into a Somali community as a white man in a suit saying, you must take a vaccination because you know, that distrust is years old, generations old. And whereas you get a 30-year-old Somali man going into those communities and saying, well, I've had the vaccine and this is why I've had this, and this is why you need to have it. And these are the pros and these are the cons. Being honest with people and giving them the facts".

⁸⁶ Community Leader Interview

Middle Eastern Communities in Liverpool

The Middle Eastern communities in Liverpool is made up a broad diaspora of people from the Arabic world including the Yemen, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Somalia and other Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Syrian, Afghanistan, Kurdistan and Turkey. The Yemen community is the oldest and largest Arabic community in the UK, and the largest Arab community in Liverpool. Local anecdotes estimate the whole Arabic population of Liverpool to be between 11,000 ⁸⁷ and 20,000 people and the combined Iranian, Syrian, Afghanistan, Kurdistan and Turkish population around 5,000 people.

The breadth of countries defined as Middle Eastern (22) understandably means many different languages are spoken. People deriving from Arabic countries are likely to speak Arabic and those deriving from other Middle Eastern countries are likely to speak Farsi, Kurdish and Turkish. Language and literacy skills were cited a barrier for many new arrivals and some settled in the UK, and health leaflets distributed in Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish and Turkish had been very useful.

Liverpool Arabic Centre, who advocate on behalf of the Arabic communities, spoke of how they have evolved the organisations to adapt to the changing needs of the local community. Before being called the Liverpool Arabic Centre they used to be called the Yemini Arabic Club but found that non-Yemini Arabic people and other people fleeing wars in the Middle East (such as Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Sudan) needed their services felt excluded, *“I think we became very famous, we became accessible for many people from the different communities”*. ⁸⁸

Moulana described their service users as mainly being *“Iranians or any Farsi-speaking nations like Afghanistan and so on. We serve Turkish, Kurdish, some Arabs, but majority of work is with Iranian asylum seekers and refugees”*. ⁸⁹

Networks, Events and Cultural Observations

WhatsApp was described as the main platform for getting messages to the Arabic community in Liverpool. The Liverpool Arabic School run Arabic classes for both children and their parents. Learners are communicated with via WhatsApp Groups and Liverpool Arabic Centre mentioned this was a very effective

⁸⁷ <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/en-stories-of-change/young-filmmakers-document-experiences-of-yemeni-diaspora-in-liverpool>

⁸⁸ Community Leader Interview

⁸⁹ Community Leader Interview

way of getting messages out to the local Arabic community. The 'L8 A Better Place' project based at the Kuumba Imani Millennium Centre was another network mentioned as reaching the Arabic community.

Leafletting in three different languages (Farsi, Kurdish and Turkish) in Halal stores, supermarkets, private houses and hostels where refugee and asylum seekers live was also being done by voluntary sector organisations to communicate health and community messages.

Three hostels in Liverpool were cited as hosting asylum seekers these were Seoint House (L8), Birley Court (L7) and Greenbank Court (L17). The Sabalan Supermarket (L8), Village Supermarket (L7) and the Anar Restaurant (L7) were locations where the outreach activities were taken place and literature distributed.

Moulana Community appear to be digitally savvy and describe themselves as '*having a very active media department*' through which food bank locations, vaccination timetables and other community information is disseminated "*with positive results*".⁹⁰

There are broad range of cultural, religious and community events that take place throughout the year. The main Muslim religious festivals of, Al-Hijra and Eid are important events within the Middle Eastern calendar. Moulana Community also organise a Persian music event for Iranian New Year which falls on 21st March each year and activities such as "*Persian art, carpet making, metal work, jewellery design for ladies*".⁹¹ The Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival (established by the Liverpool Arabic Centre) usually takes place in July hosting a broad range of cultural events from music, performance, film, talks and storytelling. The 1 World Festival and Africa Oya were also cited as events which reached the Middle Eastern Community. Liverpool Arabic Centre deliver events in schools (prior to Covid-19) to promote Arabic and Yemini art and music. They have also mounted event for Liverpool's Light Night festival each year.

Moulana Community are in the process of building a Coffee shop to enable them to expand their range of community and cultural activities including positive activities for people's mental health and music sessions. They also run sports sessions such as an Iranian football team and are looking to expand this, "*So we are going to get eight different teams from different nationalities. We've done one friendly game between Chinese team and Iranian team. It was very successful*".⁹²

⁹⁰ Community Leader Interview

⁹¹ Community Leader Interview

⁹² Community Leader Interview

Comments were made about the size of Arabic families, and that it was difficult to find suitable houses and therefore overcrowding was a common occurrence which became very difficult during Covid-19, *"The houses they're living in, dumpy and in very poor conditions. Basically, some of them in need of four bedrooms where they cannot find their property, but doesn't have four bedrooms, basically. Like I said, lack of housing, that's contributing heavily into their health".*⁹³

The broad range of social and health issues that were being dealt with by voluntary sector organisations on behalf of the Middle Eastern community should also be noted, often these organisations are the first people of contact for people who might not firstly be aware of the other services provided by the local authority, agencies and the NHS or fear the language barriers or discrimination they might experience.

Covid-19 Impact and Attitudes

As was the experience of many voluntary sector organisations Covid-19 resources has stretched very limited resources for organisation that over the last eleven years have seen reductions in funding "We had a small amount of money from the Council but without that we would have closed". The Chair of the Liverpool Arabic Centre passed away due to Covid-19 which as well as being a huge loss for the organisation and the community also stretched capacity further.

Community workers described working in partnership with organisations in Liverpool to dispel myths about the vaccine that were particular to the cultural practices of the

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Arabic community?

"I think within community centres, because one of the thing is that the vaccine centres, when the community weren't consulted, although they've organized some vaccinations centres in most certain areas, but it wasn't consistent... If, they are to do vaccinations, they have to do in a centre close to the community. Probably, if there is vaccination centre within the community, rather than moving them from one side to the other, and the community get lost and sometimes they don't know where to go and transport issues. Especially, during Covid people were affected financially

⁹³ Community Leader Interview

Muslim communities such as *"It contains human eggs. Oh, it contains alcoholic or pig products"*.⁹⁴

The speed of the vaccine development and roll out, and the lack of clear data in the public domain of the impact of the vaccine on women who would like to get pregnant was, again, cited as a concern for some. *"I'm reluctant. How come they've done it so quickly within a year? They produced the jab in less than a year, where they couldn't produce a jab or cure for the cancer or other illnesses." We try to tell them that, a huge amount invested in research is for the flu shot because it affected everybody, more people are dying due to Covid. And some of them get convinced. Some of them are still reluctant and we do our best anyway*".⁹⁵

Other Health Concerns

Liverpool Arabic Centre spoke of delivering health prevention work with local people, in particular around diabetes with the Yemini community when research had shown they were most likely to be overweight, heavy smokers and at greater risk of coronary heart disease. They also spoke of research and consultation undertaken with the local community and that the results of this was a huge lack of awareness amongst the Arabic community of mental health services that were available.

Black, African, Caribbean and Black British Communities

Liverpool is home to Europe's oldest Black community and the community itself incredibly diverse. In the 2011 census 1.86 million people in the UK identified as Black, African, Caribbean and Black British, and a further 514, 000 as White and Black African; White and Black Caribbean or Other Mixed⁹⁶.

This gives an overall figure of 3.31% of the population of England and Wales identifying as Black, African, Caribbean, Black British and 0.92% of the population of England and Wales identifying as White and Black African; White and Black Caribbean or Other Mixed. In March 2020 Liverpool City Council estimated 2.6% of the population (equal to c. 13, 013 people) in Liverpool identify as Black, African, Caribbean and Black British.⁹⁷ Liverpool's Black, African, Caribbean and Black British have historically been concentrated around the L8 area of Liverpool.

⁹⁴ Community Leader Interview

⁹⁵ Community Leader Interview

⁹⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18>

⁹⁷ <https://liverpool.gov.uk/council/key-statistics-and-data/headline-indicators/demographics/>

Networks, Events and Cultural Observations

It was commented that the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British community in Liverpool have a strong infrastructure *“I don’t believe that they’re hard to reach because they’re very, very established networks around them”*.⁹⁸

Liverpool Commonwealth Association have a whole suite of events throughout the calendar year such as multi-faith church service around Commonwealth Day in March, International Women’s Day events, a Winter Ball and International Cultural Day.

1 World Festival, Black History Month, Blackfest, Jamaica Street Carnival, Brazilica’s Samba Carnival, Africa Oyé and music events at the Baltic were cited as significant events for the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British in Liverpool alongside Christian and Muslim festivals and celebrations, *“And I know for example, within the Muslim community that there was a lot of apathy. And engagement had to be had with the Imam and the leaders of the mosque”*.⁹⁹

The story of Black History Month goes back to early 20th Century America and it is a tradition that has carried on for over 100 years in different countries in the world. For Liverpool it is about *“raising awareness amongst the wider community, in fact all communities about the role that Black people have played in developing Liverpool as a city. And not just the issues to do with the Transatlantic slavery, but some more modern and up-to-date involvement in terms of the rich history and contribution to education, contribution to industry.”*¹⁰⁰

The Catalyst, and many other sports and cultural organisations, in Liverpool deliver activities for the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British and the wider community including *“break dancing, b-boying, to rapping, to beatboxing, to creative writing, to art workshops, graffiti art workshops, to singing, to song writing, to just me even lending instruments. Like we have members in Catalyst that teach musical instruments, simple things like coming and doing sessions where they’re just bettering their skill in whatever it is they choose”*.¹⁰¹ Most of the community organisations we spoke to run local activities and events such as play schemes, community days and also undertake outreach work, *“Hard to reach is a frame of mind, it is where you are willing to put yourself”*.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Community Leader Interview

⁹⁹ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰⁰ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰¹ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰² Community Leader Interview

LUMA Creations was set up as a Latin American organization *"But we also work with the refugee communities. And we work with the local community. So, we work a lot with the Black communities of Liverpool, and African and Caribbean. But also, across the board. So, we've done work with a range of different diverse communities"*.¹⁰³

Traditional medicine plays a role in some Black, African, Caribbean and Black British communities, *"Within the African communities ...a lot of individuals wanted to engage with their own traditional medicine rather than anything else"*¹⁰⁴. Reliance on traditional medicine is not just about adhering to cultural traditional but also about the broader experiences of Black, African, Caribbean and Black British communities when accessing health care in hospital and GP practices, *"What we've also realized from data is that they're not necessarily going to the mainstream hospitals. They tend more to rely on traditional medicine and traditional heritage as to what they need to do in certain situations. There's more apathy if you like towards things like vaccines and [mis] trust in the health system in terms of what they put in their bodies"*.¹⁰⁵

Community leaders cited frustrations at the amount of research undertaken into the experiences of Black, African, Caribbean and Black British communities which didn't lead to action, *"They have been researched and researched to infinity. And still yet questions are being asked that should have been answered by now. So yeah, it depends on who is approaching these communities. And once you approach them, how you engage with them and what you show at the end of the engagement. So, the next time you engage with them, they don't think this is a waste of time"*.¹⁰⁶ There were also frustrations with the lack of representation of Black people within Liverpool City Council, business and Liverpool City Region administrations, *"The people that are hard to reach are the Councillors, the upper echelons of the business community in Liverpool"*.

Covid-19 Impacts and Attitudes

Like most communities there are people within the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British communities who are *"rebellious people who conspiracy theories and people not believing and people refusing to wear masks, people refusing to take jobs, refusing to get tested. There's that element. And that's right across the board in every community. Like a mistrust towards the government and stuff like that"*.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰⁴ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰⁵ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰⁶ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰⁷ Community Leader Interview

It was described that during the pandemic there was a shift in attitudes to the risk the virus posed to the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British community. At first it was perceived that it was something biological or genetic about the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British community but slowly the narrative changed, *"It's nothing to do with the fact that black people are more likely to contract the virus. It's not anything genetic. It was the fact that they were the ones on the front line. They're the ones who were less likely to be able to work from home. Predominantly work on the front line or work within the economy, which meant that they couldn't necessarily be furloughed or work from home, et cetera, et cetera"*.¹⁰⁸

Interviews stressed there were very little difference between attitudes to social distancing and mask wearing within Black, African, Caribbean and Black British and the wider community. Those in overcrowded housing struggled with social distancing and isolation on a very practical level. Responses to other measures such as mask-wearing were mixed *"And it's just a matter of managing that properly with education and with information. And information that is available in the language of the communities for them to fully understand what the public health situation is"*. Although it was also noted that *"for them the idea that the people that they're sharing the accommodations with that they could be pose a danger to their health it's just, absolutely, it's very difficult for them to accept that"*.¹⁰⁹

There were observations that vaccine hesitancy is prevalent in the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British due to a general mistrust around medical practices and in particular because of the speed at which the vaccine has been developed. *"Obviously there's a lot of vaccine misinformation around and that's particularly targeting certain communities so we see some hesitancy in some communities like black African communities in particular and whether it's historic mistrust of health services"*.¹¹⁰

There is also a prevalence of conspiracy theories which not only relate to how it has been developed, and whether it contains microchips but also how it has been financed and how is economically benefiting from the vaccine, *"many people believe in that thing. I think that if the people know and realize this is*

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Black, African, Caribbean and Black British community?

"You can't force people to take stuff. You can't bribe people to take stuff. You've got to let them want to take it for their own health. You've got to let them want to take it. And there's got to be different ways of approaching people with the information because if you don't, it's just communication if it's not clear and people aren't supported, they're just going to... A lot of people rebel on things like that".

¹⁰⁸ Community Leader Interview

¹⁰⁹ Community Leader Interview

¹¹⁰ Community Leader Interview

*important for their protection and their own interest, not only themselves, but also the people around them, I think that will help the uptake of the vaccine".*¹¹¹

Other Health Issues

Mental ill health across all generations was again cited as significantly on the increase in general and exacerbated by Covid-19, *"The more art activities, the more activities like there's a football tournament going on where people are getting out, even though they're following procedures and they put masks on and abiding by the rules. I think there still needs to be stuff going on for people to engage in from young and old., Younger people not being in the house, not being able to go to school to see the friends, that has an impact on them. Older people who might be lonely, there's that as well. So basically, there's a variety of people who can be affected by this Covid situation".*¹¹²

Different approaches to healthcare provision had been tested during Covid-19 and it was commented that some of these had worked well and should continue post-pandemic, *"We've seen that working quite well during Covid in terms of testing centres being located in the communities themselves, within the mosque and things like that. And that has worked quite well in breaking down some of the barriers and also making access more important. So yeah, for me, it's bringing the expertise to communities and having the communities trust in the engagement".*¹¹³

Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities

The North West Strategic Migration Partnership estimates in March 2021 there were 8365 asylum seekers placed in dispersed accommodation in the, and that the North West share of the total asylum population of the UK is 21.4%.

The Home Offices' initial accommodation hostels are in central Liverpool and once initial assessments have taken place people are dispersed across the North West. These 'asylum dispersal centres' have been in Liverpool for 15 years but it was only last 5 years that people have been accommodated across the Liverpool City Region following initial assessment. Prior to this the main areas for accommodating asylum seekers and refugees have been in Fairfield, Pickton, Wavertree, Toxteth, Dingle, Prince's Park and it was commented that this was before *"Airbnb's popped up here, there and everywhere, or luxury apartments".*¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Community Leader Interview

¹¹² Community Leader Interview

¹¹³ Community Leader Interview

¹¹⁴ Community Leader Interview

In Liverpool the make-up of the asylum seeker community in Liverpool is diverse *“anytime we look at the data on this, we always have a list of at least 25 languages and more cultural backgrounds”*, but that the *“biggest groups are by far are Albanian and Farsi speaking women”*. In addition to people from Iran and Albania, refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea, Syria, and Sudan were also specifically mentioned by interviewees and that some nationalities more than others found learning English challenging, *“Iranians or Afghanis or Turkish people...they have a lot of language problems. They’ve been here only six months, three months, a year, and they can hardly speak. So, I would say the language problem is a big problem for them”*.¹¹⁵

The telephone systems of health care providers and other public services were cited as a barrier for most Asylum Seekers and Refugees *“If English isn’t your first language, and in order to even get a telephone appointment you’ve got to understand a 10-minute answering machine message, your chance of actually understanding it and getting through to make an appointment is pretty minimal”*.¹¹⁶

Merseyside Refugee Support Network (MRSN) also reported that *“pre-Covid times, shall we say, on any one day there might be 200 or 300 people in the building. And you might have had 80 to 100 nationalities or dialects”* and *“The profile of asylum seekers and refugees is probably sort of 65 -70% male and 30, - 35% female and families”*

Networks, Events and Cultural Observations

Merseyside Refugee Support Network has a networking function connecting different groups and organizations working with and for refugees and asylum seekers across Merseyside. MRSN also work in partnership with Asylum Link and are housed in the same building.

Granby Somali Women’s Group also publish a directory of support groups and networks for women accessing their services:
<http://www.granbysomaliwomensgroup.org/directory.html>.

Refugee Women Connect run outreach events in different Liverpool City Region areas which recently have included Litherland, Longhorn, Wallasey and different parts of Liverpool.

¹¹⁵ Community Leader Interview

¹¹⁶ Community Leader Interview

WhatsApp and WhatsApp Groups are important networks for disseminating support information and communicating with asylum seekers and is also for connecting asylum seekers with each other, *"We have WhatsApp groups that we have different kinds, we have some that are participatory groups where the women can message each other, and they are particularly helpful in areas where there's a fairly small number of asylum-seeking women and they don't live that close to each other, so places like St. Helens where the numbers are relatively low".*¹¹⁷

People can get in touch with Refugee Women Connect through their website, when they visit initial assessment centres and the telephone. Interpretation is always provided, *"There's a set message that they send us with their name and their language, and we bring them back with an interpreter".*¹¹⁸

The Liverpool City of Sanctuary Group <https://liverpool.cityofsanctuary.org> was set up in 2012 to unite those working to support Asylum Seekers and Refugees, and there is also a Liverpool Schools of Sanctuary Charter <https://www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/Products-SoS>. Liverpool Schools of Sanctuary work with the voluntary sector to organise multi-cultural celebrations and events, *"we used to go to the Eritrean communities to run an annual national day event [24 May annually] and the Syrians do love a picnic and a barbecue".*¹¹⁹

Changes from being part of an Asylum Seeker and Refugee community to part of a settled diaspora were observed *"Once they've got their lives sorted, they can focus on their diaspora communities. They might need help at the beginning of those. They might want to involve you, and then they just go off and get on with it"* and that this was a positive transition, *"It's really important that the hand-holding stops when people don't need it anymore".*¹²⁰

Sport, in particular football, was cited as a great way of communities integrating and engaging.

MRSN report they had *"particular connections with Sudanese community and the Eritrean community in particular. We've got a long history of working with the Iranian community"* and that many within these communities organically connect with each other quite quickly. Many of their volunteers come from the Iranian community.

¹¹⁷ Community Leader Interview

¹¹⁸ Community Leader Interview

¹¹⁹ Community Leader Interview

¹²⁰ Community Leader Interview

Covid-19 Attitudes and Impacts

The digitisation of the Covid-19 testing system, and the lack of support around this, was cited as a barrier to many in the Asylum Seeker and Refugee community both in terms of digital poverty and language, *"NHS expect everybody to report both positive and the negative tests, and that's just a pain in the backside to be quite honest. English is my first language and I know what I'm doing, but it still takes 10 minutes every time to report the test"*.¹²¹

There were reports of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee community not being particularly resistant to rules and restrictions but access to information in different languages was crucial, *"It's been a case of making sure that they get information about what those are in a language and a format they can access"*.¹²² As was a heavy reliance on the voluntary sector to get the messages out to communities. Literacy was also cited as a challenge *"firstly not everybody's literate, even if you translate it into Arabic, it doesn't mean that people can read it. But in some of the groups, women that we work with, especially Kurdish women very often have quite a low level of education so they might not be literate in their own language, so translated information doesn't do a lot of good to them"*. Attempts had been made by some organisations to overcome literacy and education barriers by generating video content with limited success *"but that uses a lot of data for people, if they even have a smartphone, not everybody has a phone"*.¹²³

"An awful lot of people who are seeking asylum have suffered physical hardship, possibly in the country of origin, quite likely on their journey here, and very often have had no healthcare over a sustained period of time. So their general physical health probably is poor than that of many people in the wider population, which would make them more susceptible to suffering, well, to catching Covid, but certainly to suffering serious consequences. There are lots of reasons why these communities are particularly vulnerable. But some agencies, some statutory services are historically not great at engaging with those communities"

In general mask wearing and social distancing restrictions were taken seriously with the Asylum Seeker and Refugee community but the original location of testing sites [and vaccine centres] was difficult to many who did not have access to a car. Some people within the Asylum Seeker and refugee community though have been scared to even go out *"One lady I know, and her family, and where she's originally from, they almost sealed themselves in because it reminded them of gas attacks back in their home country. Whereas other communities are less concerned because they just think, here's another big terrible thing, but it's no more terrible than what I've already been through"*.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Community Leader Interview

¹²² Community Leader Interview

¹²³ Community Leader Interview

¹²⁴ Community Leader Interview

Further to this, is the ethical debate on the role voluntary sector organisations are being asked to play in promoting and encourage people to take up the vaccine, *"You can't say to somebody, 'Why haven't you done it?' Because our service isn't predicated on them being vaccinated. So there's sort of an ethical balance about building the trust, helping somebody with whatever they've come in for help with because if their priority is getting money for food on the table, that's their priority. But once that crisis has been addressed or the intervention process started, at that point you can then say, 'Have you had your vaccine? Are you going to get your vaccine, if you haven't had it, are you going to get it?' Or, 'Don't forget to get your second vaccine.'"*¹²⁵

Negative social media content on the vaccine generated in other countries and viewed by the Asylum Seekers and Refugees community in the UK has some impact on vaccine take up, *"they are very reluctant. I've seen videos showing that people who take the vaccine, they get a magnetic body, and these cutlery sticks to their body. So, imagine that being circulated in the society and they don't want to know. So, we work hard to say they're not true. There are millions of people doing it. So sometimes I've even taken people in person, giving them a lift to the vaccine bus, get vaccinated of course, but they really know it's not by force. So that I tell them I've been done twice. I show them my double vaccination card, and then they ease off a bit. And the records not bad, they're actually doing it."*¹²⁶ The speed at which the vaccine had been developed was also mentioned as a concern.

There are also concerns within the Asylum Seeker and Refugee community of the effect of the vaccine on child bearing women, and those who are breast feeding young children. Mixed and unclear messaging around this has led to vaccine hesitancy amongst some women which is particularly concerning because, *"the*

¹²⁵ Community Leader Interview

¹²⁶ Community Leader Interview

What one thing do you think would help with vaccine take up with the Asylum Seeker and Refugee community?

"Clear information in PLAIN English relayed by people from their communities...The Government and NHS should work collaboratively with community organisations, especially grassroots orgs that work close to the ground with 'hard to reach' groups and sceptical audiences. This should NOT be expected to be carried out on VOLUNTARY basis, non-profit/grassroots organisations should be contracted, same as consultants and other companies contracted to carry out work with the public. The public sector should put more value on the extensive work community organisations do delivering services that essentially are the responsibility of the Local/Central Government with its agents....The message now should be you can have your second vaccine from eight weeks, I think they should push that quickly

It was also mentioned that some surgeries [Dr] have been using mobile phone to contact people about the vaccine but often Asylum Seekers and Refugees change SIM cards and numbers "so that is not working".

way in which they are accommodated, sharing facilities with other families, puts them at far higher risk [of catching Covid-19] than the average population unfortunately”.

Other Health Issues

Social distancing and digital poverty have compounded and exacerbated the trauma already experienced by Asylum Seekers and Refugees, being at home with limited face to face contact has led to *“their overall wellbeing worsening. We also have a number of members that are isolated and disengaged because they do not have access to digital resources/data to engage online”*.¹²⁷ Increased isolation of a community already isolated has also prevent those needing services from accessing them.

“It’s mental health, majority of them, because what they’ve been through, the journey that it’s taken to get here. So they have a mental health issues”.

Relations with the health service in general were described as “poor”, with language cited as significant barrier and also the need for Asylum Seekers and Refugees to meet providers face to face as opposed to through digital or telephone consultation that had become more common during Covid-19 because of the need to socially distance. This was particularly for those needing support for trauma and mental ill health.

Gynaecological issues were also mentioned, and a lack of understanding of rights around accessing health care were frequently mentioned with education, cultural norms within their countries of origin and literacy having an impact on this.

¹²⁷ Community Leader Interview

Addendum to Report (APRIL 2022)

In Winter 2021/2022 additional research was carried out with three members of the Indian, Bangladeshi or Pakistani communities in Liverpool. This addendum summarises these findings.

Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani Communities in Liverpool

The information below is based on three interviews supplemented by desk research. Two interviews were with community leaders of Liverpool based voluntary sector organisations working with the Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities and who describe their heritage as either Indian Bengali or Indian. The remaining interview was with a primary health care worker with forty years' experience and who describes their own heritage as British Indian. None of the interviewees described their heritage as Pakistani although all three reported they have been working directly with Pakistani people in Liverpool for some years.

Many of the mass migration events from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan to the UK have their roots in the partition of India which stemmed from India's independence from colonial Britain.

Pakistan is a country created in 1947, as part of the independence arrangement. The bloody Partition War that followed led to one of the largest mass migration events in history and one that saw Pakistani migrants play an important role in rebuilding Britain after the Second World War, and staffing the NHS¹²⁸.

Bangladesh is also a relatively new country; it was created in 1971. Bangladesh was formerly known as East Pakistan, and prior to that Bengali, and in 2022 around 98% of people in Bangladesh still identify their ethnicity as Bengali. Bangladeshi migration to the UK started in the 19th Century, and the largest migration event was in the 1970's with people fleeing the civil unrest that led to the creation of Bangladesh as an independent state¹²⁹.

¹²⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/03/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair-british-identity.html>

¹²⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/creativitydiversity/nuance-in-bame/bangladeshi>

The Indian population of the UK is estimated at 1.5 million.¹³⁰ In 2009 it was estimated that Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and *other Asian* people made up approximately 3% of the population of Liverpool.¹³¹ If this trend has been maintained, the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and *other Asian* population of Liverpool in 2022 is estimated at c.15, 000 people. *Other Asian* is likely to include people from Sri Lanka (e.g. Tamil), Nepal, Bhutan and also the west region of Pakistan that links with Afghanistan. The main body of this report documented significant disparities between official population estimates and those of people working directly with ethnic minority communities, meaning the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and *other Asian* population of Liverpool is likely to be much higher than this estimate.

Liverpool's population of Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people is small when compared to other UK population centres. A 2002 academic study into urban ghettos/enclaves reported the Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani population of Liverpool to be significantly smaller than that of the South East, Midlands and South West.¹³² This research showed that unlike major cities, such as London, Glasgow or Birmingham, Liverpool does not have one or more areas or wards with a higher-than-average density of Indian, Bangladeshi or Pakistani people. One interviewee told us their impression is that, the Indian population in Liverpool (city centre) is predominately made up of younger people (often students) with many older Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people living in the more affluent areas on the outskirts of the city and the wider Liverpool City Region. However, another interviewee reported there were higher than average populations of Asian people in the Kensington and Smithdown Road areas (L7).

It is important to note the lived experience of Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people and communities in the UK are very different from each other. Data from the 2021 National Census shows children in Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are most likely to live in low-income households, compared with White British households. In contrast, Indian and White British children were the least likely to live in low-income households.¹³³

Racism is experienced on a day-to-day basis by people from the Pakistani, Indian and Bangladesh communities in Britain, despite the significant contribution migrants from these countries make to British life. The British Pakistani community is the largest Muslim community in Britain,¹³⁴ and since Sept 2011, they have experienced an increasing number of Islamophobic incidents. In June 2021 a group of British MP's, including Liverpool MP's Kim Johnson, Ian Byrne and

¹³⁰ <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3132871/india-uk-migration-pact-may-be-hard-enforce-visa-deal-boon-young>

¹³¹ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/liverpool-population>

¹³² <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43196878>

¹³³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccounts/compendium/economicreview/february2020/childpovertyandeducationoutcomesbyethnicity>

¹³⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/03/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair-british-identity.html>

Paula Barker, tabled a motion to Parliament condemning the daily racism experienced by British Indians (often Hinduphobia) and paying tribute to the thousands of Indians who work in the NHS and risked their lives during the pandemic.

Networks, Events & Cultural Observations

Networks, event and cultural observations mentioned were linked to key festivals in the Islamic, Hindu and Sikh calendars.

There are two Hindu Mandirs in Liverpool, Liverpool Sri Muthumari Amman Temple and Shree Radha Krishna Temple¹³⁵, and a third temple, the Liverpool Ganesh Temple, in Kirkby. The Liverpool Sri Muthumari Amman Temple is based at the Tamil Community Centre (L6) and was established by Merseyside Tamil School. In 1997 Liverpool's population of Tamil people started to grow, and between 2007 and 2008 over £300, 000 was raised to build a Tamil Temple in Liverpool¹³⁶. The Shree Radha Krishna Temple (L7) was established by a local charity, the Hindu Cultural Organisation, in 1957.

The Bengali Association of Merseyside and the North of England was formed in 1977 to bring people in Merseyside together who are from Indian/Bengali (sometime Bangladesh) heritage. The Bengali Association of Merseyside and the North of England organises a programme of Liverpool Durga Puja religious events streamed online via the [Liverpool Durga Puja](#) website and social media channels.

There is just one Sikh Gurudwara - Guru Nanak Darbar Liverpool. The Guru Nanak Darbar Liverpool (L15) is connected to the United Sikh Association.

Islamic people from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh are likely to attend the Liverpool mosques identified in the main body of this report. The Al-Ghazali Multicultural Centre is based in L7 and provides a range of health, sports, education and cultural activities for people of all ages and all backgrounds including those Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis who follow Islam.

Despite these local provisions and centres, one interviewee commented that practicing Hindus would not necessarily attend the temple geographically closest to them, with many travelling to temples in Warrington, Kirkby, Manchester and Birmingham, "It's

"Most of my family is in Manchester, so that's where I would go. And so, for me to access those services, that's probably where I pick up that information".¹

¹³⁵ <http://www.nrisworld.com/uk/england/liverpool-hindu-temples.html>

¹³⁶ <http://www.liverpoolamman.com/history-of-the-temple>

important. The mix with the wider communities there. Again, a lot of people attending the temples in Liverpool are actually from further afield from Warrington, Manchester. They also come here". This highlighted the importance of working across local authority boundaries if public health messages were to be effectively disseminated.

Online networks and groups mentioned often in the context of the student population included:

- [Liverpool Sikh Society](#)
- [Pakistani Community of Liverpool](#)
- [Indians in Liverpool](#) page & [WhatsApp](#) group:
- Liverpool Bangladesh Badminton Club

Covid-19: Impacts & Attitudes

Interviewees suggested that, in general, the Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi communities in Liverpool had mixed attitudes towards social distancing restrictions and vaccinations. Concerns over a lack of information regarding the impacts of the vaccine on women's reproductive systems, mixed attitudes to mask wearing and mis-information regarding the vaccine were all cited as barriers.

One interviewee mentioned the publication of research at the beginning of the pandemic that indicated people from BAME community were *"actually more susceptible to the virus, more likely to catch it, to unfortunately die from it. So, there was a massive amount of fear within the community of actually going out, and there still is, in them wanting to go out and get back into normal life"*¹³⁷.

"The people who have double dosed, still catching Corona virus, they're obviously... Death is still happening. ... So again, they're very reluctant to go out. And within the whole family system, people tend to live in large families, sons, and daughters live with their parents, they live in extended families. So again, if there's somebody out, leaving that family, you find the whole family tend to isolate".

Cautious attitudes towards the easing of restriction amongst the older Asian population in Liverpool chimed with other older generations, with many looking at the data and not the guidelines to make their own judgement on levels of risk. Collective responsibility is part of the value system of Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi communities; levels of risk are often assessed against the impacts of actions on other members of the community.

¹³⁷ Community Leader Interview 1

Appropriate and consistent public messaging was seen as key component to increasing the vaccine take up. Also, public messaging that spoke to the communities' sense of collective responsibility, *"Repeated persuasion in regards to the benefits and positives of taking the vaccine, not only for yourself, but for family and friends – for example, this may take place via posters, videos, lectures etc"*.

Other Health Issues

Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities' reluctance to access mental health services (because of social stigma or a lack of awareness about them) is particularly concerning in the context of mental health issues accelerated by Covid-19.

One interviewee spoke of the social pressures experienced by the Indian community when it came to accessing mental health services, as well as not knowing that the service existed in the first place. *"You tend to find that people don't access a lot of the services... a) they didn't know about the services, but b) it's this fear of actually going and kind of being seen in that area of speaking to somebody where information might go to somebody else where it might affect them. So, I think that's one of the biggest reasons why there's not a lot of people accessing their services from the Indian communities"*.

Wider research revealed lower levels of effectiveness of Western based mental health therapies amongst the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and wider Asian communities. Internationally, health care systems had started to introduce new approaches and adopt mental health therapies that take into account the different values and beliefs of people from non-Western cultures.

Alongside depression and mental ill health, diabetes, hypertension and angina were also mentioned as conditions particularly prominent amongst these ethnic minority communities, which had often escalated due to a lack of understanding and presentation of them.

ENDS

There is an emerging body of primary research questioning the effectiveness of some Western models of mental health talking therapies (such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy often commissioned by the NHS) for individuals whose heritage and cultural roots are elsewhere.

Canada is leading the way by commissioning culturally-adaptive mental health services that acknowledges the values and beliefs of more 'collectivist' cultures for example, cultures that value community cohesion, as opposed to the individualist ideals and values purported by the West ¹.



Collective Encounters

Published: 2022

MPAC, 1 – 27 Bridport Street, Liverpool, L3 5QF

www.collective-encounters.org.uk