

# NIACE Research and Development



## Key Findings



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### Pathways to Learning and Skills

Promoting access to learning and skills for people from black and minority ethnic communities who experience mental health difficulties.

#### Abstract

This project involved two further education (FE) colleges and one Local Education Authority in London. The learning providers were supported to:

- ❖ Develop closer partnership working between education and local community and mental health user groups;
- ❖ Consult with user groups to identify existing barriers to learning;
- ❖ To put in place culturally appropriate and inclusive learning opportunities and support.

The education providers worked with an established Turkish population in Lewisham, asylum seekers and refugees in Haringey and Black Afro-Caribbean men in Lambeth.

#### Research methodology:

The education practitioners, a representative from NIACE and The National Institute for Mental Health for England (NIMHE), and a researcher had regular project team meetings throughout the year. A work plan was developed with each partner. Each partner already had services to promote access to learning for adults with mental health difficulties and used the project to work with a black and minority ethnic community group that they felt were under represented at their service.

Each practitioner kept a record of their progress and personal reflections of their project. Some of the learners kept logs and photos to evidence their progress. The researcher also collected data and an extensive literature review was carried out. Health and well being outcomes were explored.

#### Key Findings

##### The project's achievements:

- ❖ Engaging with black and minority ethnic groups of learners who traditionally have been very difficult to reach.

- ❖ Establishing good working links with local community organisations.
- ❖ Raising awareness of mental health issues, particularly for black and minority ethnic learners, among college staff and community groups.
- ❖ Ensuring a range of other service providers are informed of and linked to the project in order to offer students additional/follow on services.
- ❖ Putting a face to a name in people's minds so that they know who to access in the college for mental health support.

**The project experienced the following difficulties and challenges:**

- ❖ Cultural perceptions and language around mental health proved difficult, particularly when producing publicity material.
- ❖ Building relationships with everyone involved took longer to develop than expected and required more meetings than originally thought.
- ❖ Overcoming suspicion and engaging with community members and those people who we were trying to target.

## Recommendations

- ❖ Each education provider will continue to develop their project.
- ❖ We would encourage more development of learning opportunities for black and minority ethnic groups with mental health difficulties.
- ❖ More research and development is needed into the barriers that black and minority ethnic adults experience in participating in learning, particularly for people who experience mental health difficulties.

## Output

- ❖ Briefing paper: *Creating Inclusive Learning Opportunities - Promoting access to learning and skills for people from black and minority ethnic communities who experience mental health difficulties.*  
Report available April 2007

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