

# Executive Summary

## What we found

- A deep mistrust in government and healthcare bodies, resulting in less involvement or engagement from Black and Asian communities on issues relating to healthcare.
- Feelings of being undervalued or concern about not being treated equally or fairly by healthcare professionals and local government.
- A feeling that Black and Asian communities are only engaged with when it suits the needs of the NHS or local government. Community leaders instead wanted more meaningful engagement, that demonstrates a longer-term commitment to listening and building trust.
- Experiences of areas with lower Black and Asian populations being ignored.
- That one size does not fit all. Community leaders stressed the damage of homogenising lots of different groups, cultures and communities into the term 'BAME'.
- That quick simple solutions for complex issues don't work. Community leaders stressed the importance of designing interventions from a place of understanding.
- Representation matters – leaders discussed the lack of representation of Black and Asian communities, especially in leadership positions. This means that individuals sometimes have nowhere to take their concerns and are unsure their concerns will be heard if they do.
- Linked to the point above, leaders also talked about the complexity of representation. They highlighted that the use of Black and Asian celebrities encouraging vaccine uptake lacked credibility for a lot of people that didn't share the same lived experience as a celebrity. This resulted in the counterproductive effect of people feeling that the vaccine was being forced upon them.

## How it made a difference

- We submitted evidence collected from this work to local councillors at the Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) Health Inequalities, Health Scrutiny Topic Group. We focused on the lack of cultural competence within local healthcare services and the need for a system-wide approach for tackling ethnic health inequalities. Recommendations were made to healthcare providers by Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, and we continue to work with them to ensure these recommendations are taken forward.
- Our work with the Ethnic Minorities Inequalities Group, made up of NHS, Council and Voluntary sector groups is ongoing. The group was initially established to address vaccine confidence within communities, but now has a broader role of addressing health inequalities through community interventions where possible. Here, we have been sharing our knowledge and evidence on how best to engage with different communities and the importance of using a tailored approach.
- Our findings have fed into the Hertfordshire and West Essex (ICS) Health Inequalities Workstream to support with the development of a good practice engagement model to ensure the community voice is heard.

# A message from our Chief Executive



Engagement with Black and Asian communities plays a crucial role in tackling ethnic health inequalities. Over the past year, we have built strong relationships with community leaders, who have highlighted how, to be effective, engagement needs to be continuous, meaningful and culturally sensitive and recognise the diversity both between and within communities.

We continue to build on our partnerships with community leaders informing our upcoming research: "Making Local Healthcare Equal for All" which explores Black and Asian Hertfordshire residents' views towards, and experiences of, local healthcare services.

We are pleased to share this learning with our NHS and VCFSE partners so they can better engage with Black and Asian communities, and help to improve services and tackle ethnic health inequalities.

We wish to particularly thank the community leaders who participated in this research. We look forward to continue working together as we strive to make healthcare equal and more inclusive.

**Geoff Brown, Chief Executive**

## A message from our partners

"Healthwatch Hertfordshire's communication, interaction and work has been to the highest standard and should form the template for working with the Black community in the future for other organisations. It's clear that they were informed on some issues on our community specifically, before first contact, practically inputting what they learn from Black Voice Letchworth, other groups and their own investigation, then putting it into practice. This approach built a sustainable relationship of trust between us, making it a joy to be part of our partnership."

**Micaelia Clarke, Chairperson, Black Voice Letchworth**



"It is a great privilege to work with Healthwatch Hertfordshire. You come at the right time, and address the right people, especially with the work with ethnic minorities who were greatly impacted both during and following COVID. Health inequalities are very important going forward, as immigration to the UK is increasing and we have a responsibility to make people feel at home. That's what equality is all about. As the Chief Executive of One Vision, I've been working very closely with Healthwatch Hertfordshire as there is a lot of work to be done. I want to add that the team, including Geoff, have great experience and a great interest in addressing health inequality. We are going in the right direction together."

**Enoch Kanagaraj, Chief Executive, One Vision**

