

# **Healthier Together Report – Maximising Vaccine Uptake and addressing racial inequalities through COVID-19**

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## **Background**

In April 2020 Deputy Mayor Cllr Asher Craig and the Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees asked Public Health to commission a rapid review to assess why the risk of death from Covid-19 is higher among black, Asian and minority ethnic than the white population in Bristol. This was undertaken by ARC West to under their Covid-19 Rapid review programme. The report, led by Dr Loubaba Mamluk and Dr Tim Jones, explores why this is the case and offers a summary of policy recommendations that could help reduce these health inequalities.

The researchers found a complex mixture of factors, including being poorer, where people live, overcrowded housing, types of job, other illnesses and access to health services, all influenced black, Asian and minority ethnic communities' outcomes. No one factor alone could explain all the disparities found.

As an immediate response a dedicated Race Equality Covid-19 Steering Group was established, chaired by Cllr Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor and Dr Jo Brooks, consultant paediatrician Sirona Healthcare.

## **Bristol Race Equality Covid-19 Steering Group (BREC19SG)**

The purpose of the group is to provide leadership at a city-wide level to ensure Bristol delivers in effectively tackling the issues and challenges of race inequality relating to Covid-19 and take action to implement the recommendations of the rapid review. The group includes a wide range of around 20 health and Black, Asian and minority ethnic organisations or those working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Bristol. A full list of members can be found here: [Bristol Race Equality Covid-19 Steering Group - bristol.gov.uk](https://bristol.gov.uk/race-equality-covid-19-steering-group/)

## **Key outputs**

- Webinars on the Covid-19 Vaccine: Dispelling the Myths and Misinformation, Children, Covid & Health Inequalities, Race in the City 2
- In-person information event in response to concerns in Easton
- Partnership working to establish community vaccination clinics for flu and COVID-19 including for GRT community and mobile pop up clinics.
- Culturally appropriate communication about COVID-19 and the Vaccine, translated resources and videos.
- Ensured Race Equality priorities during COVID-19 have been shared across the city
- Guest speakers invited to share their work or research relevant to Race Equality and COVID-19

- Communicate with over 100 people across the city to progress Race Equality through COVID-19 monthly and provide public health updates
- Featured in the international Covid 19 Communications handbook as best practice addressing needs of minoritized people during Covid 19

### Approaches to working

- **City Owned** – The REC19SG were drawn together by Councillor Craig and co-chaired by Dr. Brooks. The actions for the group have been held by a number of different organisations.
- **Collaborative** - Formation was open and the membership was open creating the opportunity for anyone interested in or with the power to make a difference to join the group. This has invited lots of people from diverse backgrounds and professions to come together and some really fruitful partnerships and collaborations have been born. Examples of this have been pop up mobile clinics, webinars, translated resources.
- **Responsive** - At the beginning of the formation of the group, an action plan that has made up the focus of work for the last 18 months. Alongside this, the Steering Group was responsive to the changes in the ongoing COVID-19 situation, providing support with messaging, information sharing and vaccine clinics.
- **Culturally competent** – Given the diverse representation among the Steering Group, all activities undertaken have had cultural understanding at the heart of them.
- BREC19SG are currently undertaking an evaluation which is being led by University of Bristol to look at the impact of the group. This will be completed by January.

### Mass Vaccination Increasing Uptake group

As part of Bristol's response to Covid, BNSSG lead a Mass Vaccination Increasing Uptake group who have worked to look at the local up take data and build engagement plans around this. The work of the group has been written up and a report is shared as an appendix.

- Community leads designed focus groups and informal conversations led by trusted healthcare colleagues, to encourage healthcare colleagues, to encourage uptake.
- Co--designed with Community Champions (local leaders and influencers) several designed with Community Champions (local leaders and influencers) several COVID-19 vaccine "mobile" clinics in community centres, local mosques and gurdwaras with the capacity to vaccinate up to 500 people per session.
- Enabled Community Champions to manage clinics, for example by creating a simple booking system.<sup>4</sup>

The Mass vaccination working group set Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees as one of 5 priority groups and worked with leaders and influencers in those communities. Engagement work significantly increased the vaccine uptake, along with drop in clinic options. There have been more than 20,000 vaccinations delivered via community clinics since May 2021.

## **Covid Marshalls**

The marshals have been an important tool in Bristol's efforts to combat Coronavirus. In just over 9 months the marshals have provided an extremely responsive service:

- Completed over 17,000 Covid related inspections whilst patrolling across the whole city, including the 47 shopping areas and the city's parks and green spaces, and helped to rectify problems in over 2,800 instances
- They have provided support to GP Vaccination Centres at over 100 vaccination clinic days helping tens of thousands of residents to be vaccinated safely starting with the first clinic held in the city on 16 December 2020 at the Greenway Centre
- Marshals have put up advisory posters in every ward of the city, and in times of high infection rates. This work also includes
- They have distributed 86,000 face masks to members of the public and businesses as well as thousands of lateral flow tests

## **Community Champions**

Bristol City Council invested in an engagement plan including recruiting specific people to lead on Black, Asian and minority ethnic and disabled people's engagement in relation the outbreak management plan. This is led by our Communities team. Community Champions were specifically chosen for their links with local communities, representing the Somali, Polish, Romanian, Afro Caribbean, Sudanese, Arabic, Pakistani communities. The Champions offered fast translations and direct messaging to communities.

## **Outstanding issues**

In October, we requested an update of recommendations given any new evidence that had appeared between the second and third wave. Researchers at University of Bristol provided this. There are number of outstanding actions from this paper and the previous actions plan.

- Create a guide as a resource that describes how health inequities should be considered in public health interventions, from design to evaluation. – this will be built into a Health Inequalities Strategy
- Independent Advisory Group – We have proposed an independent advisory group to work with the new ICS to address health inequalities in racialised groups. This is supported by the chair of the Healthier Together Board and will be tabled in January.
- Develop evidence-based inter-sectoral policies and strategies designed to improve the overall health and social conditions of migrants and respect the rights of migrants to basic human security in host countries. (Hayward, Deal et al. 2021) - to be picked up within the migrant inclusion strategy.