

Reaching Out to Black and Minority Ethnic Families



How to include Black and Minority Ethnic Families in local and national support groups

Contact a Family understands the enormous benefit of local and national support groups for parents and carers of disabled children. They give parents in similar situations an invaluable opportunity to talk to each other and share experiences and knowledge. However, we often hear from parents, carers and professionals who are unaware that this support is available or do not know how to access it. This may be because a family does not speak English as their first language, because they live in a rural or isolated area, because they work or because they need support to access your group.

The barriers faced by parents may be cultural, economic or a result of people's attitudes. Striving to overcome all barriers and ensuring everyone can attend and participate in a meeting or event is very important. With this in mind, we have put together this guide to help support groups reach out to parents from Black and Minority Ethnic (or BME) communities.

This guide is intended for use by any local or national support group, regardless of their size, scope or the services they provide. Some suggestions will only be feasible for established groups with a large membership and income. However, we are very aware that many groups have limited resources. Consequently, we have included a broad range of tips and ideas which groups can take away and adapt, according to their size and the resources they have available. Throughout this guide you will find the details of key resources in boxes and useful contacts are listed on the final page.

The UK has a multicultural diverse population and nobody can deny that there are

contact a family

for families with disabled children

209-211 City Road, London EC1V 1JN

Tel 020 7608 8700 Fax 020 7608 8701

Web www.cafamily.org.uk e-mail info@cafamily.org.uk

Freephone Helpline 0808 808 3555

(Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm, Mon 5.30pm-7.30pm)

Textphone 0808 808 3556

incorporating

The Lady Hoare Trust

challenges in creating a group environment which is truly inclusive. However, being aware of the issues involved, and being committed to including all parents, is an important step in making it a reality.



Contact a Family's Group Action Pack

This guide is part of Contact a Family's Group Action Pack. It is also one of a set of three guides to help local and national groups work with all parents to provide a fully inclusive service. Other guides in this set are '**Reaching Out to Fathers**' and '**Reaching Out to Disabled Parents**'.

Our Group Action Pack guides explore a range of issues associated with starting and developing a parent support group and provide further information on topics which are of relevance to this guide, including fundraising, running meetings and producing newsletters, leaflets and websites.

All the Group Action Pack guides can be downloaded free of charge from the Contact a Family website at: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/GAP.html> .

You can also request copies by telephoning our freephone Helpline on 0808 808 3555.

Ensuring your group promotes equality in everything it does

It is good practice for all groups to have an equal opportunities policy. An equal opportunities policy outlines how you will make sure your group is open to everybody. It shows your group has a commitment to ensuring all people are treated fairly and have the same opportunity to access high quality services. If your group applies for funding, there is a chance the funder will ask whether you have an equal opportunities policy and they may also want to see a copy.

An equal opportunities policy does not have to be very long; the most important thing is to make sure it is useful to your group and is used. Writing the policy is also a helpful way of seeing what your group can practically do to include all parents.

A good starting point is to write a statement which outlines why your group has an equal opportunities policy – you could also print this statement on your group publicity. An example might be:

“Our group believes in the importance of equal opportunities and we are working towards being fully inclusive. We aim to ensure that no family is excluded from our support group meetings, events and activities on the grounds of age, gender, health, sexuality, class, family status, means, ability, colour, ethnic origin, culture, religion or belief.”

Looking at other groups' policies might give you some ideas about how to set out and word your policy. If you would like to see Contact a Family's equal opportunities policy, please

contact us and we will send you a copy. However, it is important that your group's policy is about what **your** group wants to achieve and the practical things your group can do.

Useful Resource

Brighton Resource Centre produces a guide for groups on how to write an equal opportunities policy. Copies can be downloaded from their website at:
<http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk>

Alternatively, you can contact Brighton Resource Centre at:

Address: Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 0GY
Telephone: 01273 606160
Email: info@resourcecentre.org.uk

Learn about the community in your area

Groups who support a small geographical area will be well aware of who lives in their local community. It is more difficult for groups covering larger towns or cities to identify who their local community is in order to develop an inclusive approach. However, you can find out about the different communities in your area by visiting the Neighbourhood Statistics website at: <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk> .

We acknowledge that national groups covering the whole of the UK may have difficulty establishing which communities to reach. Consequently, national groups may like to consider having parent representatives. These parents can work within their local communities to raise awareness of your support group and act as contact points for other parents in the area. This way of working may be particularly helpful when developing links with isolated families.

Case study

In 1997, Contact a Family developed a scheme to reach out to the wider community and complement the organisation's work. We recruited a team of Volunteer Representatives who were all parents of a disabled child and lived across the UK. They became the local face of Contact a Family, working directly with families in their community and raising awareness of the support Contact a Family can provide. By doing this, we were able to reach families who may have been unable to access our service in the past. The scheme has been very successful and the Volunteer Parent Representatives continue to bring a wealth of skills (including languages), experience and knowledge. We now have a team of thirty-two, including two fathers and four South Asian Reps who specifically support their own local communities.

Getting advice locally

- Local Infrastructure Organisations (like Councils for Voluntary Action or Councils for Voluntary Service) can offer information and advice on how to make your group accessible to all members of your local community.
- Most local councils now have a 'Children with Disabilities Team'. They will be able to advise you if they are working with parents from BME communities in your area, who may benefit from your support. They can also signpost parents to your group.
- Other useful sources of support in your community are religious leaders, local community groups and GP surgeries (particularly practice nurses and community nurses who come into contact with many families). Make sure they are aware of your group and encourage them to refer parents to you.

Useful resource

To find your nearest local infrastructure organisation contact NAVCA (the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action):

Telephone: 0114 278 6636

Email: navca@navca.org.uk

Website: <http://www.navca.org.uk>

Address: The Tower, 2 Furnival Square, Sheffield, S1 4QL

The website also provides a wide range of useful contacts for minority community outreach support.

Information produced by groups

Most support groups produce information of some kind for families and/or professionals. Generally, this information takes one or more of the following forms:

- Newsletters
- Leaflets
- Medical information
- Posters
- Website
- Publicity material for family events, AGMs and conferences

After identifying the parents you want to reach and considering the form your information will take, it is important to consider how to make it accessible to the widest group of people. Things that you might take into account are:

- The format of your information
- Translation

Format

Information can take many different formats, for example, it can be produced on paper, displayed electronically on a computer or recorded onto audio tapes, CDs or DVDs. Consider the current format your group's information takes. You may have to adapt this (or add a brand new format) in order to make your information accessible to parents from BME communities. However, this does not necessarily have to be expensive or time consuming.

- Some parents can understand spoken languages but cannot necessarily read them; consequently you might want to consider producing your literature on an audio tape (in English and/or other languages spoken in your community) for those who are unable to read. Producing an audio tape is something your group can do easily and relatively cheaply, as long as you have some time and a tape recorder. If members of your group speak another language, they may be willing to help with this. Be aware that it may be necessary to edit some of the text for audio use.
- Some computers have the technology to record onto CD which often produces a clearer recording. Ask whether any of your members own such a computer, or have access to one.
- If you wish to record long publications or you have a lot of material (such as a range of factsheets), you might have to use an outside organisation to make the recordings. This may be costly and you should bear in mind how frequently the information will need updating.
- If you are producing leaflets in hard copy, consider how soon the information will go out of date before going ahead with a big print run. You may also want to think about where you are going to store them.
- By having information available on your group's website, you can decrease the amount of printed material you produce and reduce the need for storage. If you are supporting a family who does not have internet access, it is cheaper to print off the information they need directly from your website, compared to having leaflets and factsheets produced externally. Information on a website can also be updated easily and quickly, but it is important to do this regularly.
- If you are using pictures in your literature or on your website, choose those that reflect the wider community, for example, different ethnic groups. Think carefully about the pictures you use on leaflets and posters in order to ensure they are representative of the local community and the parents you would like to reach. If you are using photographs of group members please remember to get their signed

consent to allow you to do this. If you would like a copy of Contact a Family's consent form, please telephone us on 0808 808 3555.

Translation

Translating materials is a particularly difficult area which many voluntary organisations find challenging. Some feel translation has little value, considering that there are some people who can speak another language but are not able to read it. On the other hand, others believe translation is an essential tool in reaching out to people from BME communities. Below are some points to consider if you are thinking of translating your information.

- Translation can be costly and consideration should be given to which languages would be most useful. There are many translation organisations (both local and national) and it is worth shopping around. Have a look on the web or check in your yellow pages or local phone directory.
- If you are thinking of translating information into a specific language, it may be worth contacting organisations that offer support to that community. They might be able to advise on how, or what, information should be translated and may offer to help you. Linking with an organisation like this may also ensure that any information you do translate reaches the relevant people.
- Look at the resources you already have. Does a parent or professional worker already involved with your group speak another language? Would they be willing to translate information for you? If you are translating complicated medical information, a lay person may find this a challenge so using a professional translation service might be better.
- Be aware that some languages have different dialects and the style of language used is important. If you are providing translated materials, ensure the language used is a version that can be easily understood by a wide range of people. Some languages may not have an equivalent word for an English word, for example, the word computer does not have an equivalent in some languages. Be sensitive with the wording you choose, to avoid causing distress or marginalising anyone.
- There are a number of on-line translation services available. Some sites will translate small amounts of text and could be used if you wished to ask a question or give a short answer. Some sites translate a whole website into another language. The languages offered may be limited and it is important to be aware that the translations provided are done by a computer and therefore nuances, emotions and jargon may not be accurately translated. The translation also tends to be literal, which can lead to the sentence structure in the translated document being inaccurate. In addition, some words in English have more than one meaning and the computer programme will not be able to decide which translation is accurate. However, amazingly, most sites provide this service free!

- Many national support groups provide most of their support by telephone because they cover large geographical areas. This can be difficult if a caller does not speak English. There are organisations who provide an interpretation service over the telephone, where a translator enters the conversation as a third party and interprets what is being said on both sides. However, this type of service can be expensive so it is worth shopping around. Again, perhaps a group member would be prepared to assist with this.
- It is also worth speaking to other local groups and organisations who have translated information to find out how they decided what languages to use. Contact a Family can check its database to locate groups and organisations we are in touch with in your area.

Case studies

The Osteopetrosis Support Trust (a national support group) are currently translating materials using the skills of a member who speaks a number of Asian languages. They are considering having this information available on their website to reduce costs.

Website: <http://www.osteopetrosis.co.uk>

The Stiff Man Syndrome Support Group (a national support group) installed a translation facility on their website. The programme they used was free to install and is free to use. They feel that by having this facility on their website they are allowing more people to become aware of the condition that they support.

Website: <http://www.smssupportgroup.co.uk/>

Useful resources

Adept Transcription Ltd

Adept is a disability equality consultancy that produces and distributes information in braille, large-print, audio (CD or cassette), audio description (voice over descriptions for videos or DVDs) and other alternative formats.

Address: 6 Leck House, Lake Street, Leighton Buzzard LU7 1TQ

Telephone: 01525 373964

Website: <http://www.adept-uk.org>

Email: transcription@adept-uk.org

Language Line

This is a telephone interpreting service, specialising in 150 languages.

Address: 25th floor, 40 Bank Street, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5NR

Telephone: 0800 169 2879

Website: <http://www.languageline.co.uk>

Email: enquiries@languageline.co.uk

Useful resources

Language is Everything

Interpreting and translation service

Address: EITI House, Bridgegate, Howden DN14 7AE

Telephone: 0800 731 7878

Website: <http://www.languageiseverything.com/>

Email: hello@languageiseverything.com

On-line translation services

Search the internet for “online translation” – there are many options to consider, choose one that suits your needs best, for example, while writing this guide, we looked at

<http://world.altavista.com>

Support group meetings and events

The number of times parent groups meet during the year depends on whether they offer support locally or nationally. Local groups meet more frequently (anything from once a week to once a quarter) than national groups, who usually meet once or twice a year at their AGM or annual Family Day. This means that the meeting venues used by groups vary a lot, as does their purpose. Some groups will be able to do more than others to make sure their venue is accessible. However, it is still important to look at what your group currently offers and ask your members whether anything can be done to improve access to your meetings and events.

Always ask!

If you are a local group, you probably already know whether any of your parents have particular needs. It is always worth checking every now and then though and don't forget to ask new members. If you are a national group getting together at an AGM or Family Day, you should always ask whether people have access requirements on the booking form. This also applies to local groups organising events which may attract new families.

Questions you might ask are:

1. Do you have any special dietary requirements?
2. Do you require a separate area in which to worship? At what times of the day would you need a break in order to worship?
3. Do you need a translator or interpreter?
4. Would you like to receive information at the meeting in a language other than English? If so, which language?

The earlier you have this information, the easier it will be to meet any requirements.

Timing

The time of day you are holding support group meetings, AGMs and family events may affect who can attend. Some parents may not be able to access group activities during the day due to work commitments or caring for their children. Others may prefer day events when their children are attending school or childcare facilities are available.

If you are holding an AGM or Family Day, have you considered holidays (including school and religious holidays), days of worship and festivals, which may prevent some members attending, for example, Muslims fasting during Ramadan or the Jewish Sabbath?

Useful resources

Further information about religious festivals and holidays and calendars of religious festivals can be found at:

<http://www.interfaithcalendar.org>

and

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/>

Venue

- Where you hold your meeting may affect who attends. Choose a venue that is non-threatening and as culturally neutral as possible, this way all group members and members of the community will feel comfortable attending.
- If you are running an all day event, be aware that some religions require members to worship at different times throughout the day. A separate room or area may be needed for this. In addition, some religions call for men and women to worship in separate areas.
- There may also be other preparations required. Check the details with the people who have requested the facility or with an organisation who can provide information about that faith (see the list of useful contacts at the end of this guide).
- It is helpful to visit the venue in person before holding your event, to ensure that the people attending will be able to find the exact location of your meeting room. Consider whether you need to provide signs in languages other than English, to assist people in locating you.

Speakers and facilitators

- Ensure speakers are fully informed about the support that will be given to group members during their presentations, for example, let them know if an interpreter is going to be present.
- Ask for copies of presentations, speeches and hand-outs well in advance of any presentation. This will also allow you time to have the presentation translated if necessary.

Translators and interpreters

- If you require a translator for your meeting or event, would any of your group members who speak languages other than English, be willing to act as interpreter?
- Many local councils have an interpreting service and may be able to recommend somebody suitable.
- Alternatively, you could look in the yellow pages and on the internet, or contact a local language school.
- If an interpreter or translator is required, remember you will need to budget for this and you should book as far in advance as you can.

Refreshments

If you are providing refreshments at meetings or family events, remember:

- Some people have special dietary requirements due to health, religious belief or personal choice and you should offer refreshments that reflect this. It is a good idea to ask whether people have any dietary requirements on event booking forms.
- Make sure that your venue can cater for any special dietary requirements needed.
- If you are catering for special requirements, ensure that the food is clearly labelled. This will avoid confusion and prevent any embarrassment.
- Some religions have strict rules for the storage and serving of food. If you are unsure, check with the relevant faith group listed at the end of this guide.
- Be aware that alcohol is prohibited by some religions.

Useful resources

Further information on cultural dietary requirements can be found by visiting:

<http://www.faithandfood.com>

Click on the tab labelled religions.

The Vegetarian Society

Website: <http://www.vegsoc.org>

Tel no: 0161 925 2000

Email: info@vegsoc.org

The Vegan Society

Website: <http://www.vegansociety.com>

Tel no: 0121 523 1730

Email: info@vegansociety.com

Promoting your group

By making your group's information and meetings more accessible, you are sending a positive message to all members of the community. Having taken the time to be inclusive, remember to reflect this in your literature and when you promote your group:

- If you have the funds, local press and radio stations can be a useful medium to advertise your group. For example, BBC Three Counties radio airs a weekend programme for the Traveller community, which can be accessed via the internet throughout the UK. Visit <http://www.bbc.co.uk> and search for Rokker radio.
- If you are a local group, make links with organisations who support specific communities in your area.
- Contact local and/or national refugee and asylum seeker organisations and send them publicity about your group and a newsletter if you produce one.
- Contact your local community hall, cultural centre or Local Infrastructure Organisation, to find out if there are any community groups meeting in your area.
- Let statutory services know about your group, for example, social services (including social workers and health visitors), schools, GPs, doctors and hospitals (particularly if you are a specific condition support group).
- Look out for local or national events which you could attend to promote your group.

- If you are a rare condition support group, it might be helpful to send information about your group to genetics centres.
- Use Contact a Family – we can add your group’s details to our database which will assist our Helpline in referring parents to your group. Let us know how your group is including parents from BME communities, so we can reflect this on our database. We can also help promote your group through the Local Parent Support Group Network and email newsletters.
- Let children’s centres and community centres know who you are and what you do.
- Place articles about group in magazines or publications that your target audience may read.
- Temples, mosques or other places of worship may have a noticeboard where you can place a poster or leaflet.

Case study

The MPS Society (The Mucopolysaccharide Diseases Society) offers support for parents with children affected by MPS and Mucopolipidoses.

“The Society works closely with individuals and families from the travelling communities across the UK. It is important that we maintain these links, to ensure that people are accessing the right information and medical management for their condition and that they are aware of any changes particularly to do with the treatment options for some of the diseases. So how do we do this?

We have developed good working relationships with specialist doctors around the UK working in partnership to support individuals affected by an MPS and related disease, and their families. One of the key areas that this has worked well in is organising and attending clinics. We have also built up good relationships with other professionals such as health visitors and social workers who work closely with this group of people. Many of our correspondences with individuals and families is done through a professional locally, for example, their specialist consultant, health visitor etc. This is in recognition that for some it is easier to communicate through one person, particularly when travelling is a part of life.

We also understand the importance of working together and have held a number of conferences and information days, particularly in areas where there is a high population of the travelling community to ensure that individuals and professionals know that we are there as a support. Many of our members, after diagnosis, have settled due to the ongoing medical management that is needed. “

Telephone: 0845 389 9901

Website: <http://www.mpssociety.co.uk>

Useful contacts

Catholic Enquiry Office

Telephone: 020 8458 3316

Website: <http://www.life4seekers.co.uk>

The Council of Christians and Jews

Telephone: 020 7820 0090

Email: cjrelations@ccj.org.uk

Website: <http://www.ccj.org.uk>

Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations

Telephone: 020 8432 0000

Website: <http://www.cemvo.org.uk>

Church of England

Telephone: 020 7898 1000

Website: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org>

Friends, families and Travellers

Telephone: 01273 234 777

Email: fft@gypsy-traveller.org

Website: <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org>

Hindu Council UK

Telephone: 020 8432 0400

Email: info@hinducounciluk.org

Website: <http://www.hinducounciluk.org>

Muslim Council of Great Britain

Telephone: 0845 2626 786

Email: admin@mcb.org.uk

Website: <http://www.mcb.org.uk>

Network of Buddhist Organisations

Telephone: 0845 345 8978

Email: secretary@nbo.org.uk

Website: <http://www.nbo.org.uk>

Network of Sikh Organisations

Telephone: 020 8544 8037

Email: sikhmessenger@aol.com

Website: <http://www.nsouk.co.uk>

Useful contacts

Refugee Council

Telephone: 020 7346 6700

Website: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

Traveller education service

Contact your local council for details.

This guide is part of the Contact a Family Group Action Pack. For more information please visit www.cafamily.org.uk or telephone 020 7608 8700.

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