

**BMER Advice
Network – London
Partners Contact
Information:**

AdviceUK

0300 777 0107

Advice & Learning Bureau

RM8 - 020 8507 2444

Asian Women's Resource Centre

NW10 - 020 8961 6549

Afro – Asian Advisory Service

SE5 - 020 7701 0141

Asylum Aid

N1 - 020 7354 9631

Asylum Support Appeals Service

E2 - 020 7729 3056

Barnet Refugee Service

NW9 - 020 89059002

Bosnia Herzegovina Community Advice Centre

NW10 - 020 8459 4201

Carila Latin American Welfare Group

N7 - 020 7561 1931

Centre for Armenian Information & Advice

W3 - 8020 8992 4621

Chinese Community Centre

W1 - 020 7439 3822

Corecog

E13 - 020 8548 4073

Day-Mer Turkish & Kurdish Community Centre

N16 - 020 7275 8440

East European Advice Centre (EEAC)

W6 - 020 8741 1288

East London Somali Youth and Welfare Centre

E1 - 020 7247 8488

Ethiopian Community Centre

N17 - 020 8801 9224

Haringey Somali Community & Cultural Association

N17 - 020 8885 1307



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West London BAN – a new initiative

The Centre for Armenian Information and Advice, a BAN member, has taken the lead in setting up a West London BMER Advice Network covering 6 West London Boroughs (Brent, Ealing, Hammer-smith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow). The Network has taken the BAN model and established a more local sub-regional network in response to a drastic cut in funding available to voluntary groups who have traditionally provided advice, support and guidance to their diverse communities.

AdviceUK assisted with the drawing up and development of a constitution and membership application form based around those used by the main BAN network. A core group of six agencies worked together along with AdviceUK and Migrants Rights Network to organise the official launch, advertise it and write a press release. Invitations were sent out to organisations in all 6 boroughs, grants officers, local councillors, CVSs and funders. Members of the core group provided a range of foods from different cultures. The launch was held on 27 June 2013 with Wesley Harcourt from AdviceUK providing the keynote speech, 32 delegates attended from across all 6 boroughs and included frontline organisations, CVSs, Local Councillors, the Big Lottery Fund, council officers and others.

The Network has continued to meet on a regular basis under the leadership of CAIA and has developed a training programme for members in the six boroughs. In May 2014 it arranged a meeting in conjunction with Migrants Rights Network to discuss how the ASTF projects are developing locally, how the projects are engaging with BME and migrant client needs, how the projects are impacting on BMER advice services and to discuss potential ways of working closer with the ASTF projects. The Network is ideally placed to provide training and support to members and to influence funders and decision makers at a local level across west London.

For more information: westlondonbmeradvicenetwork@caia.org.uk



Launch of the BAN Evaluation Report

Friday 13th June saw the official launch of the BAN Evaluation Report carried out by Middlesex University Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC). Over 20 delegates came to the launch to hear Preeti Kathrecha, Researcher at SPRC, present her findings. The research explored the impact of the BAN partnership on BMER communities in London and provided recommendations on how a future service would be best placed to operate, in particular how sustainability, efficiency and best value could be improved. The findings will help to improve activities and adapt the BAN partnership delivery model such that it is best placed to continue to deliver advice services to BMER communities in London.

Many of the recommendations were discussed at the recent BAN Away day and progress is already being made to put them into practice.

The full report can be found at:

<http://sprc.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/BAN-Report-June-2013-FINAL.pdf>

IKWRO

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IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group

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Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network

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Limehouse

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Migrants Resource Centre

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Newham Monitoring Project

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Notre Dame Refugee Centre

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Island Advice Centre

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Refugee Action Kingston

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Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London

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Refugee Network Sutton

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Roma Support Group

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Sangam Association of Asian Women

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Sangat Advice Centre

HA3 - 020 8427 0659

Tallo Information Centre

W3 - 020 8993 3187

Tamil Welfare Association Newham

E12 - 020 8478 05 77

Tamil Relief Centre

N9 - 020 8345 6301

Welwetchia Legal Advice Centre

N17 - 020 8808 1255



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BAN Awayday

16 BAN members came to BAN's first Awayday held at the Mayday Rooms just off Fleet Street. The Mayday Rooms are an education charity set up in 2011 to preserve the past and stop the destruction of social history; they also house a feminist and a migrant archive. A major part of the day was spent discussing BAN's structure as it evolves into the future. Members agreed that BAN should be established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and tasked AdviceUK to take this forward as part of a project, funded by City Bridge Trust to assist and facilitate BAN's transition. Members were particularly keen that mistakes of the past should not be repeated and so to avoid any possibility of a two tier BAN a sub group was set up to oversee any governance issues that may arise. The members then split into three groups to look at policy, training and BAN's Network meetings.

The policy group prioritised raising BAN's profile, developing links with funders, ensuring that BAN responds to consultations and developing its own position on major issues such as immigration, legal aid, welfare benefits and female genital mutilation.

The training group saw a need for governance training for the new CIO board, technical training for BAN frontline advisers and the possibility of BAN developing its own programme of training that it could sell to raise funds.

Network meetings should be structured to allow for one speaker but in more depth and leave time for more operational matters. Meetings should continue to be quarterly and a directory of BAN members and the services they provide should be developed. Fundraising was the final topic for the day with all members acknowledging the importance of fundraising to support frontline services but at the same time recognising the near impossibility BAN faced in trying to raise sufficient funds to provide each member with even a part time worker. Members understood the need for innovative approaches and methods of service delivery and so established a fundraising group to come up with ideas that could be developed into a fundraising bid.

The Awayday confirmed the commitment members have to ensuring BAN's continued existence and that it has the structures, policies and resources in place to provide much needed advice services to London's BAMER communities. BAN has taken on board many of the recommendations made in the Evaluation Report (by Middlesex University) and has already begun to put them in place.

**Would you like to Become
a member of BAN?
Please go to Page 4!!!**

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Immigration Act 2014

Healthcare Impacts of the Immigration Bill

The Immigration Bill received royal assent on 14 May and became an Act of Parliament with its implementation due to commence in the near future. *The Act's restrictive provisions and its exclusionary tone and repercussions have been the subject of some reactions.* The Act and its purpose is summarised as "To make provision about immigration law; to limit, or otherwise make provision about, access to services, facilities and employment by reference to immigration status; to make provision about marriage and civil partnership involving certain foreign nationals; and for connected purposes."* The key provisions of the Act, which the government says is intended to create a 'hostile environment' for 'illegal immigrants' include:

- Requiring banks, healthcare services, private landlords and driving license authorities to carry out immigration status checks for access to services and to introduce new powers to administer this
- Changing the current fees legislation and criteria by which the Home Office charges fees for immigration services
- Making it easier for the Home Office to recover unpaid civil penalties
- Changing the regulation of the immigration advice sector to protect migrants from exploitation and to prevent spurious applications which waste public funds

The Act is also due to have significant negative repercussions for the access of refugee and migrants to health services as it contains elements of a migrant levy to contribute to the cost of NHS services and a redefinition of 'ordinary residence.' The Act's restrictive provisions and its evident exclusionary political tone and repercussions have been the subject of some reaction. A broad range of migrant and VCS organisations have criticised this approach as one which implicitly targets BME communities based on the ambiguities of being recent, settled or undocumented migrants. Especially the racial profiling which seems to be an implication of the new requirements to prove eligibility to access services has been the focus of some of the significant criticisms.

In relation particularly to access to healthcare services the Act is of substantial concern for BME communities as well as VCS organisations providing services in line with the needs and issues of the members of these communities. Members of the BME communities face a range of issues relating to language barriers and a lack of awareness both about services around them and how to access them. The restrictive provisions of the Act have the potential only to deepen these issues and create further barriers for BME communities with possible arbitrary evaluations of their immigration status, which will only waste public funds. The impact of the Act as one which implies reinforcement of the culture of hostility towards migrant and BME communities is also of great and long-term concern. As a briefing by the Race Equality Foundation, Equanomics-UK and NAT published in January 2014 emphasises, the Act is likely to have a substantial negative impact for women, people with long term health issues, people with poor literacy and vulnerable people. The organisations working with these communities which include, in the main VCS organisations, are probably going to be left to pick up the pieces in a period when funding for frontline services as well as service delivery has shrunk. For detailed information on the Immigration Bill, these sites provide useful information and resources:

<http://www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/news/immigration-bill-and-associated-healthcare-proposals-and-equality-impacts>

<http://www.jcwi.org.uk/policy/documents>

<http://equanomics.org/category/policy-articles-and-research>

* <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/immigration.html>

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Introducing BAN Members

Barnet Refugee Service



Barnet Refugee Service (BRS) is an independent registered charity registered in 2005. BRS works in partnership with individuals to achieve the following objectives for refugees, asylum seekers and their dependents living, studying or working within Barnet and surrounding boroughs:

- To provide information, advice and support services to asylum seekers and refugees and help promote equality of access to health care, social care, housing, legal representation, education and training for this client group
- To provide and enhance educational and employment opportunities available for asylum seekers and refugees and to increase awareness of the needs, rights and entitlements of this group in relation to health, social care, housing, training, education and employment and act as an information resource for statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and the wider community.
- To ensure that service providers deliver culturally sensitive and appropriate services to the clients and assist destitute and/or homeless refugees and asylum seekers to access emergency food and support.
- To help refugees and asylum seekers overcome isolation and regain their confidence and self esteem through social activities and structured projects thus enabling them to integrate into society and provide volunteering opportunities for them (including young people) to develop their skills and help them to access higher education and employment.
- To significantly influence local and national strategies and policies with regard to refugees and asylum seekers.
- To provide emotional and social activities to young refugees and asylum seekers to develop their confidence and skills.

BRS supports over 1,000 refugees and asylum seekers each year. Its main activity is providing advocacy advice on housing, immigration, health or welfare benefits and education. Other activities include volunteering program, women's group, men's group, ESOL classes, mothers and toddlers group, job club, youth Activities including a girls group, social club, volleyball club, football club and emotional support through psycho-social activities. BRS also provide training courses for professionals and support newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers through mental health sessions, health promotion workshops, youth mental health group, and a group that supports basic needs such as food parcels and clothes.

Although we have been lucky to secure some funding for different activities but changes in welfare and housing systems have been putting a substantial strain on our organisation with more people requiring urgent information on changes to benefits and support to tackle changes in their individual circumstances.

Would you like to become a member of BAN?

For details of how to join the network please contact

Wesley Harcourt at AdviceUK:

Tel: 0300 777 0107 Email: wesley.harcourt@adviceuk.org.uk

To find out more about BAN, its members, where they are located and the services they provide, please visit our website:

<http://www.bmeadvicenetwork.org.uk/index.aspx>.