

The Second Round of Black and Minority Ethnic Group Consultations



Derby City Council Housing Strategy Unit

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Executive Summary

- The demographics of the new and emerging BME populations vary, with different gender proportions and size of populations. The largest group is the Kurdish/Iraqi group, predominantly consisting of males aged 17-30. The other largest new BME groups are the Afghani, Somali, Congolese and Zimbabwean populations. The A8 country populations (Polish, Czech, Slovenian etc) are largely unknown but estimates run into the thousands.
- Due to the variations in the demographics of the new and emerging BME groups, it is important that statutory services do not treat them as a homogenous group, because each group has its own individual needs (the Kurdish and Afghani groups are predominantly made up of single makes, whereas the Somali and Iranian feature a large proportion of families).
- The most popular type of tenancy in all of the groups was private rented accommodation.
- Almost all of the participants spoken to lived in the already highly condensed areas of Normanton and Peartree. This was usually because the accommodation was cheaper, close proximity to local amenities and established social networks.
- Opinions regarding the Normanton/Peartree area differed depending on personal experiences. Some individuals (young and old) felt was safer in these areas because they were surrounded by people from their own ethnic background, as well as other visible BME groups, so there was minimal fear of racism. Others felt that the Normanton/Peartree area was unsafe and rundown with high levels of crime.
- The Kurdish group were aware that there were issues about them living in Normanton/Peartree (due to the sheer size of the group) and desired to be dispersed throughout the city in order to aid integration.
- All of the participants had lived in Derby for at least one year and had experience of trying to access statutory services. Many have been living in Derby for 3-5 years and have managed to secure some form of tenancy.
- Those groups who were predominantly made up of families (e.g. Somali) expressed a desire to stay in Derby for as long as possible because their children had begun their education and they wanted to build a future. Some of the Kurdish participants were unsure about their futures because they were either still awaiting decisions about their status, or it was soon to be reviewed.
- The most common type of arrangement was to live in a shared household with a number of other individuals. Some of these were official tenants, while many mentioned living with people who were sleeping on their floors and sofas, as these individuals were homeless.

- Most of the participants and community representatives knew of people who were destitute. The Kurdish group mentioned not wanting to see people from their own community sleeping rough so they would often take them into their own homes (which contributed to the overcrowding issue).
- Overcrowding was a common theme in many of the groups spoken to, especially within the Kurdish community. The cost of rent and bills was shared with all of those living in the same house, and those who did not have a job contributed to the rent from the benefits (usually jobseekers). The Polish participants mentioned cases of severe overcrowding which occurs in their community, in order to keep housing costs down.
- Overcrowding inevitably leads to other problems such as general cleanliness, privacy issues and arguments due to noise levels and sleep problems (many of the male members of the groups worked shift patterns).
- Opinions regarding private landlords were generally poor. The most common complaint was the time it took for them to sort out essential maintenance. There were some issues about the cost of rent, and if it equated to the quality of the housing provided.
- Energy saving features are fitted in some of the private rented properties, but a large proportion of participants mentioned having either broken or no central heating, which was a problem in the winter. Double-glazing featured in some of their homes.
- Some of the older members of the groups expressed a desire not to move to areas associated high levels of racism (Chaddesden), and were aware of incidences which had occurred to people from their communities living there.
- When leaving NASS accommodation (if given refugee status), the only realistic option of securing housing is via the private rented market. The 28 days evacuation period is not always the full 4 weeks, which leads to individuals making pressured decisions about their future accommodation.
- The loss of NASS accommodation was a common cause of anxiety in many of the people spoken to. Those who had a family were not able to sleep on friend's floors or sofas as they had dependants to think about.
- Not one single person in all of the groups spoken to had received any kind of housing advice whilst living in NASS accommodation, resulting in them being unprepared to enter mainstream society, and access the statutory services accordingly.
- Almost all of the participants had visited the Housing Options Centre at some point. Opinions regarding the service provided there was generally very poor.
- There was a general confusion about how the system worked, as they felt that the point system did not equate to chances of acquiring a home.

- The most common problem, and arguably the root of many issues was the language barrier. A number of people complained about not fully understanding how to use HomeFinder (applying for houses which they would not be eligible for), as well as confusion about the likelihood of acquiring a house.
- There were incidences of individuals being told false information about their likelihood of acquiring a house, but this may be a result of the translation problems.
- Many had become disenchanted with the service provided at Housing Options and as a result, had visited it less frequently.
- There were a number of mentions about the lack of translated reading material at Housing Options, and how this would have helped when accessing the services for the first time.
- There was no major issue of problems with other ethnic communities mentioned by any of the new and emerging BME groups.
- In terms of aspirations, no group mentioned wanting anything in particular, apart from a place of their own where they can try to lead a normal life and build a future. There was a desire to obtain social housing as it was generally in good condition, as well as being good value for money. Many felt that acquiring social housing was the beginning of creating a stable life.
- To culture-specific housing needs were mentioned by anyone.