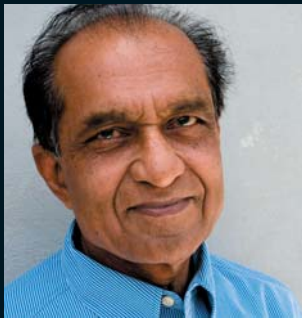




# Experience Matters

A practical resource for Black and minority ethnic older people who want to get more involved in policy and decision making.



A product of the Minority Ethnic Elders Policy Network

**ME<sup>2</sup>PN**

March 2010



*What the elders see  
while sitting the young ones  
on their toes won't see.*

*Nigerian Proverb*

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We would like to thank all those Black and minority ethnic older people who participated in the ME<sup>2</sup>PN seminars, bringing their views and opinions to the workshops and forums hence providing a valuable framework for this toolkit.

## Foreword

By Professor Naina Patel OBE, founder and Executive Director of PRIAE

This toolkit is a direct result of five seminars that were held in the year 2008-9 involving several hundred black and minority ethnic (BME) elders and staff from BME age organisations. Their participation indicated that being 'policy active' is not the preserve of the few. Nor are they 'hard to reach' if information, opportunity and direction are forthcoming. Some ninety eight elders volunteered to be 'policy active' as a result of the seminars held by our colleagues from International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion at the University of Central Lancashire. This is a tremendous result in a context where too often mainstream organisations portray BME elders as being 'needy' but without anything else (for example see EHRC's report on Age 2010, December 2009). Such a portrayal denies significant work that PRIAE has done over its life of 12 years and of the countless number of BME age organisations across the country.

The authors have responded well to the call from the elders by giving them clear information to begin the process of being 'policy active'. Some BME elders are well experienced in this field; many not. Authors also outline the limitations of such a toolkit. But as they say 'we have to start somewhere'. Beginning from the historical moment where BME elders participated in the 'national policy' which led to their recommendations in the PRIAE report for the Royal Commission on Long Term Care for the Elderly (1998, [www.priae.org](http://www.priae.org)), this toolkit is an important contribution to the field in encouraging individual effort to respond to policy influence, policy implementation and policy changes. We hope that you will find this toolkit useful.

We thank the Big Lottery Fund for supporting PRIAE in its work on increasing policy capacity among BME elders. Such work needs to continue where this product, the toolkit, can be used as an important arch to the full participation of elders in policy as a translation of public authorities' desire for 'user involvement'. Without such a resource and financial support to generate opportunities, BME elders will remain 'hard to reach'!



**Professor Naina Patel OBE**

Founder and Executive Director of PRIAE Policy  
Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity.

## Section 1: Introduction

### 1a. Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is primarily designed to be a practical guide for Black and minority ethnic older people who would like to become more 'policy active' – or in other words, would like to get involved in the design, development and delivery of services or policy initiatives, whether locally, regionally or nationally.

It will also be of use to professionals who are involved in developing policy in that it provides some ideas of areas and processes that they might involve and engage Black and minority ethnic older people in.

There are a number of reasons why Black and minority ethnic older people may be interested in becoming policy active:

- some will have amassed huge amounts of experience throughout their lives and will want to give something back;
- some will want to feel that they are contributing and making a difference;
- some will have a desire to remain active and productive – there is plenty of evidence that being active in later life can increase wellbeing and improve the immune system;
- some will have issues that they feel strongly about and that they want to support or campaign around;
- some will want to meet new people; and
- some will want to learn new skills.

For many however, the idea of becoming policy active will be a new area that they are unsure about. Many will have specific needs that need to be addressed to ensure their involvement is positive, meaningful and effective.

This toolkit intends to address the issues that emerged from working with a group of Black and minority ethnic older people through the Minority Ethnic Elders Policy Network (ME<sup>2</sup>PN). This highlighted some specific issues including the fact that Black and minority ethnic older people:

- had a wide span of health and social care experiences;
- often experienced their engagement in policy development as ad-hoc;
- faced various barriers that prevented them from being included; and
- often received very little information, guidance, support and feedback.

The ME<sup>2</sup>PN also highlighted that Black and minority ethnic older people:

- felt very positive about linking up with other Black and minority ethnic older people and Black and minority ethnic older people's groups; and
- saw opportunities for getting involved in policy-making structures.

### 1b. How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is intended to give Black and minority ethnic older people ideas and guidance about how they can become more effectively involved in local, regional and national policy making structures. It gives ideas and examples of some key policy making structures as well as the activities and approaches that they use.

It also provides professionals with some ideas and suggestions that they can use to promote the involvement, engagement and retention of Black and minority ethnic older people when planning or making decisions about the delivery of services.

A toolkit such as this cannot be all things to all people. It cannot answer all the questions that Black and minority ethnic older people may have about becoming policy active and neither can it address all the issues or concerns of professionals. It does however aim to be a starting point and to answer some of the most important questions as well as indicating where further information is available.

As authors we also acknowledge that in its current format, this toolkit will not be accessible and available to all. It is only available as a printed resource and only available in English. For a toolkit that aims to be available to Black and minority ethnic older people this is a serious short-coming. We have to start somewhere however, and this is our first stab. We hope to make the toolkit available in other languages and other formats in the future, once the usefulness of this one has been established.

## Section 2: **Background**

### 2a. **The policy context**

Over the last century, life expectancy in the UK has been growing steadily. More of us are living longer than ever before.

Life expectancy at birth is increasing but so too is the increase in life expectancy for people currently aged over 60. A man who turned 60 in 1981 could expect to live another 16 years and a woman almost 21 years. By 2003 this had increased to 20 years for men and 23 for women; and according to official UK projections, by 2026, this will rise to almost 24 years for men and almost 27 for women.

Coinciding with this is a demographic increase in the number of older people from Black and minority ethnic groups (2001 census). Over the last three decades the number of Black and minority ethnic people aged over 65 has increased by 8.2%. There are currently more than 500,000 Black and minority ethnic people aged 65 or above.

These dramatic changes will fundamentally impact upon our society, reshaping it and bringing with it huge challenges for the Government, families and local communities.

New policy initiatives – such as The Empowerment White Paper: *Communities in control: real people, real power* – have emphasised the importance of involving local communities in decision making processes and have placed duties on public sector organisations to do this.

In so doing however, it is important that opportunities for engagement and involvement are extended to all communities. Black and minority ethnic older people often have different needs or face particular barriers that need to be overcome to prevent exclusion and enable engagement.

### 2b. **About PRIAE**

Founded in 1998, PRIAE aims to improve quality of life for all Black and minority ethnic older people by:

- producing clear information;
- conducting focused studies with targeted policy and service developments; and
- engaging minority elders and organisations.

As the only organisation specialising in helping Black and minority ethnic older people, PRIAE occupies a

unique position and plays an essential role in policy, research, information and practice. PRIAE has developed specific work programmes around:

- employment and income;
- health, social care and housing;
- pensions; and
- quality of life.

Since its inception in 1998, PRIAE has helped to establish Black and minority ethnic age as a national (and European) priority.

You can find out more about PRIAE by visiting <http://www.priae.org/>

### 2c. **ME<sup>2</sup>PN: The Minority Ethnic Elders Policy Network**

Set within the above policy context, PRIAE established the Minority Ethnic Elders Policy Network (ME<sup>2</sup>PN) with the support of lottery funding. The purpose of this was to create a policy forum to bridge the gap between Black and minority ethnic older people, service providers and policy makers in order to ensure that the views of Black and minority ethnic older people can be included in policy discussions at all levels and to drive improvements in service delivery and practice.

The network aimed to support the recruitment of Black and minority ethnic older people as volunteers, or project champions, who could, with appropriate support and assistance become policy active, becoming involved in local policy initiatives with a view to influencing future strategies and action plans to ensure that these were inclusive and responsive to the views and needs of Black and minority ethnic older people.

In order to recruit Black and minority ethnic older people and test out some ideas around involvement and engagement, five ME<sup>2</sup>PN regional seminars were organised in partnership with the International School for Communities Rights and Inclusion (ISCRI) based at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). These took place throughout the summer and autumn of 2009 and were built around the following policy areas:

- personalisation;
- mental health and well-being;
- age equality in health and social care;
- safeguarding vulnerable adults; and
- empowering and engaging Black and minority ethnic older people.

The underlying objectives for each event were to:

- raise awareness about the demographic changes and trends;
- encourage discussion about the likely impact of the above changes;
- assess the desire and willingness of Black and minority ethnic older people to become more policy active;
- assess the levels of skills, experience and knowledge that Black and minority ethnic older people had that could be tapped in to;
- identify strengths and opportunities that could be built on;
- identify barriers that might prevent participation;
- identify a strategy to support the engagement of Black and minority ethnic older people in policy work; and
- recruit a pool of Black and minority ethnic older people who could be developed as Project Champions.

## **2d. Outcomes of the ME<sup>2</sup>PN policy seminars**

The seminars were well attended and facilitated comprehensive discussion in the 5 key policy areas. 98 delegates signed up to become project champions, saying that they would like to become more policy active. These individuals are based all over the country and have the capacity to be brought together in to a network.

A number of specific needs were identified, including the need for greater information about how Black and minority ethnic older people could become more involved and the kinds of roles that Black and minority ethnic older people could play. Many participants said that were not aware of the opportunities that already existed or of how they could get involved.

It was agreed that a key function of ME<sup>2</sup>PN should therefore be to develop a toolkit that could be used to inform and train ME<sup>2</sup>PN Project Champions as well as Black and minority ethnic older people more widely.

This toolkit is the direct product of these events.



## Section 3: **Getting involved in policy initiatives**

The remaining sections of this toolkit are written for and directed at Black and minority older people.

### 3a. **Why you should get involved if you are a Black and minority ethnic older person**

Your personal experiences as a Black and minority ethnic older person are very important. By getting involved in policy forums and initiatives you can help to:

- raise awareness of the needs of Black and minority ethnic older people;
- identify and challenge discrimination and ageism; and
- ensure professionals plan and develop services that are accessible, appropriate and accountable to Black and minority ethnic older people.

Participation will help you to engage in a practical way with professionals with whom you will be able to share your experiences and help improve services for your community.

You may also get benefits on a personal level, such as:

- the opportunity to give something back;
- the opportunity to feel that you are contributing and making a difference;
- the opportunity to remain active and productive;
- the opportunity to meet new friends; and
- the opportunity to use the skills that you have and perhaps to learn new ones.

## Section 4: **Thing to consider before getting involved**

### 4a. **Roles and responsibilities**

There are many different policy making structures and they vary enormously. This means that there is no one specific role. The key is that you choose a structure that meets your own needs and matches your skills and abilities. This tool-kit (especially section 5 below) will help you to do this.

Whatever structure or role you chose, the most important thing that you can offer is your enthusiasm and experience.

You should try to ensure that issues of concern for Black and minority ethnic older people are always considered in planning and decision-making forums and that Black and minority ethnic older people are fully involved at every stage of decision making including:

- assessment of needs;
- planning of services;
- commissioning and purchase of services;
- delivery of services; and
- monitoring of services.

This should be the case across all areas of life such as health, social care, transport, leisure, education, housing, employment, regeneration, crime and disorder schemes etc.

This means trying to make sure that you don't just put your own views and ideas forward (important as these may be) but that you also try to ensure that you take on board and represent the views of other Black and minority ethnic older people too.

You can play an effective role if you:

- are well informed about local services and the opinions of Black and minority ethnic older people who use them;
- recognise and acknowledge the achievements as well as the shortcomings of local services for Black and minority ethnic older people;
- are able to offer constructive criticism, ideas and suggestions for change;
- are able to become involved in planning and delivering of services and strategies; and
- are able to become involved in helping to train professionals working with Black and minority ethnic older people.

### 4b. **Time commitment**

The amount of time you need to give will vary and will depend very much on your own personal circumstances. Some people are able to give more time than others.

Your involvement will depend on how much time you can or want to commit and at what level you are involved; for example, at a Board level you will be required to prepare for Board meetings and your time commitment maybe greater, whereas, if you joined a social club as an ordinary member this would be less. How much time you are able and willing to give will also depend on your support requirements, caring responsibilities and personal satisfaction.

Some roles will require a regular commitment of a certain amount of time (for example a few hours a week), whereas others may require a less regular commitment, but a more intense one on an occasional basis (for example, three or four days over the space of a couple of weeks, but only once a year).

The key is that you decide how much time you want to give and then find a role that matches this.

### 4c. **Expenses**

Although there is not usually any formal pay for becoming involved in policy making as a Black and minority ethnic older person this does not mean that you should be out of pocket. Many policy forums do have procedures in place for you to claim back expenses and you should check this before you become involved. If you are going to incur travel expenses for example, it is important that you know whether there are local arrangements in place to reimburse these, particularly where you may be asked to attend a meeting or event.

You must not assume that expenses will be met unless there are local arrangements in place, or a specific agreement has been made for a particular expenditure. You should clarify what expenses can be paid locally, to whom, by whom and for what purposes by the person leading the activity.

## Section 5: **How might you get involved**

### 5a. **Introduction**

This part of the toolkit provides information about a range of organisations and policy making structures that you might like to consider getting involved in. Some are local, some are regional and some are national. They are deliberately not set out in any particular order as we did not want to imply that any are of greater importance or significance than any other.

Each section sets out some background, detailing what the initiative, activity or structure is and goes on to explain why it is important that ordinary people like you get involved. It gives information about the kinds of roles that you might be able to fulfil and then tells you what you need to do if you are interested in exploring this option further.

Clearly it is not possible in this guide to cover every opportunity that might exist in your area but in most areas there will be well established groups of older people. Some meet for social and recreational purposes; some meet around cultural or faith based issues; whilst others are involved in campaigning, advocacy or support.

Most areas will have their own directories of local organisations. These are often held by local Councils and can be viewed on their web-sites. Many areas also have a Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) where you maybe able to get hold of a directory of local organisations, many of whom will be looking for volunteers.

### Guides to local services

Most Local Authorities will have guides or directories to local services for older people. For example, Westminster Council has produced an A - Z of Older People Services:

**<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/healthandsocialcare/adultservices/older/atoz/>**.

Contact your local Council to see if they have a similar guide or directory.

Your local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) will have information about local groups and activities that you can take part in. Details of your local CVS can be obtained from: The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL.

Tel: **020 7713 6161**

Email: **[ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk](mailto:ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk)**

Website: **<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk>**

Information is also available from the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NAVCA) - the national voice of local third sector infrastructure organisations in England which works with over 160,000 local groups and organisations. Address: The Tower, 2 Furnival Square, Sheffield, S1 4QL.

Tel: **0114 278 6636**

Email: **[navca@navca.org.uk](mailto:navca@navca.org.uk)**

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

Directgov is a website where you can get information about public services all in one place as well as contact details and links to public sector organisations.

Website:

**<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm>**

Age Concern London has produced a guide with information and advice for Black and minority ethnic older people and their informal elder carers. Contact: Wai Ha Lam on:

**[Walam@aclondon.org.uk](mailto:Walam@aclondon.org.uk)**

Your local library is another resource full of information and staff with expertise to help you.

Organisations responsible for planning and delivering local services should be looking at ways to engage Black and minority ethnic older people. For example, within Local Authorities an elected council member (Councillor) may be designated as a lead person for older people. In this role they will ensure that older people are involved in developing services and will work with colleagues across the Council to support the implementation of older people's programmes. You can find out whether your council has a designated older persons lead and if so who this person is by contacting your local Council.

Similarly, local primary care trusts, hospital trusts, and mental health trusts will all have designated staff with responsibilities for involving older people in decision making processes and in particular with helping them identify local needs and plan and monitor services. You can find out who this person is by contacting your local primary care trust, hospital trust or mental health trust.

## 5b. Examples of the kinds of things that you might like to get involved in

### 1. Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)



#### What are LINKs?

Local Involvement Networks were introduced across England in 2008 as part of a wider process to help the community have a stronger local voice. LINKs are made up of a mixture of individuals and community groups, including faith groups and residents' associations, working together to improve Government run health and social care services.

LINKs aim to give citizens a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered. Health and social care services include all aspects of the National Health Service plus most social care services, such as, for example, help provided by council run social services for older people in their homes.

#### What does a LINK do?

The role of LINKs is to find out what people want, monitor local services and to use their powers to hold them to account where problems are uncovered.

More specifically, a LINK can:

- ask local people what they think about local healthcare services and provide a channel to suggest ideas to help improve services;
- investigate specific issues of concern to the community;
- use its powers to hold services to account where things need to be improved;
- ask for information from a particular service and get an answer in a specified amount of time;
- carry out spot-checks to see if services are working well (carried out under particular safeguards and conditions);
- make reports and recommendations and receive a response; and
- refer issues to the local 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee', which has a statutory role to ensure that a council carries out its responsibilities properly.

#### How to get involved

Getting involved in LINKs is easy. Any group or individual that wants to see health and social care services reflect the needs and wishes of local people can get involved. Every area of England has a LINK. If you have internet access, you can use a search engine, such as Google, to find your local LINK (see the section below on where to find more information). If you can't access the internet you can contact the social services department of your local council to find out what's happening in your area.

Anyone can join a LINK. Everyone is welcome, and everyone's opinions matter.

LINKs are also open to groups, including charities, faith groups, residents' associations, user-led organisations, youth councils, Black and minority ethnic organisations and business federations.

## Ways to get involved

It's up to you how and when you interact with your LINK. There are different ways to communicate your thoughts about the issues that matter to you. For example, you could:

- take a few minutes to answer a survey;
- attend an occasional meeting on an issue that interests you;
- get involved in an online group; or
- become an authorised representative who visits services to see how they are run.

Any of these activities will allow you to:

- suggest ideas for improving services, such as extending opening hours at a health centre during the week to suit people who work;
- monitor local service providers; or
- look into specific issues of concern.

Your LINK will be able to provide information about how to get involved in any of its activities, and may provide some training.

However you participate with your LINK, your opinions and ideas will be listened to and taken seriously.

## Why being involved is important

LINKs make it easier for people who commission and manage health and social care services to find out what the people they care for want.

Health and social care providers have limited resources. It can be hard for them to prioritise improving people's experience. LINKs ensure that the experience of people who use services is prioritised by helping them to express their views about their health and social care. For this to work, as many people as possible need to join LINKs.

It's important that people's opinions are communicated because:

- care gets better when professionals find out and respond to people's needs;
- LINKs provide a single organisation for health and social care services to use to involve communities;
- LINKs help health and social care providers to understand people's views, so that they can consider public opinion when planning and developing services. This helps to ensure that services are as good as they can be; and
- LINKs help those working in health and social care, such as councils and care providers, to access a range of views.

## Where to find more information

You can read more about LINKs on the Department of Health website and at the following internet pages:

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/PatientAndPublicinvolvement/dh\\_076366](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/PatientAndPublicinvolvement/dh_076366)

<http://www.lx.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/links/Pages/links-make-it-happen.aspx>

Or you can contact your local Social Services department at your council offices.

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## 2. Older Peoples Assemblies

### What is an Older People's Assembly?



Essentially an Older People's Assembly is somewhere where older people and organisations who work with older people can come together to discuss ideas that are of concern to them. By coming together as an assembly they can help to identify the needs of older people and help to ensure that the voices of older people are heard.

How the assemblies work in different areas of the country varies. For example, in London, the Older People's Strategies Group has an annual meeting, which is referred to as an Older People's Assembly, where annually over 200 older people come together to discuss issues that are relevant to them, such as safety and transport. In 2009 the Assembly was opened by the Mayor of London, and issues raised during the day were fed back to key policy makers.



In other areas, such as Southend, the Older People's Assembly is a constituted independent organisation with an elected Chair and other posts that meets regularly throughout the year. Again, issues of concern are raised and fed back to relevant agencies.

Older People's Assemblies are sometimes linked in with other strategy groups or run by agencies working for older people, such as Help the Aged or Age Concern<sup>1</sup>.

### **What does an Older People's Assembly do?**

This varies region by region. Most however are concerned with raising awareness of issues relevant to older people. Following an assembly meeting, issues may be highlighted to key policy makers, reported in the local press and newsletters written and distributed.

All assemblies offer older people the chance to join together and have their voices and concerns heard.

### **How to get involved**

The best way to find out about what is available in your area is via an internet search engine, such as Google. Type in the words 'older people's assembly' and the name of the area (either a town, borough or county) where you live to see if an assembly exists near you.

Alternatively your local council or an older people's organisation such as Age Concern or Help the Aged will know what is happening locally.

### **Ways to get involved**

This will depend on the type of Assembly in your area. It may be that you take part in a discussion group; you might join a consultative committee; or you might become a member of the executive committee that takes responsibility for running the assembly and making decisions. But all will offer opportunities to meet other people, and get involved in raising awareness of issues of concern.

### **Where to find more information**

York Older People's Assembly  
<http://www.yorkassembly.org.uk/aboutyopa.html>

Southend on Sea Older Peoples' Assembly  
<http://www.southend.gov.uk/content.asp?content=11389>

Photos from [http://www.lopsg.org.uk/older\\_peoples\\_assembly.htm](http://www.lopsg.org.uk/older_peoples_assembly.htm) - London Older People's Strategies Group

The websites in the previous column are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## **3. Experts by Experience**

### **What are Experts by Experience?**

As the name suggests, experts by experience are people who have acquired knowledge and expertise around a particular subject area or issue through their own experience. In health and social care, this experience is usually acquired through having been a service user, a patient, or a carer.

Experts by experience come from many different backgrounds. They bring with them unique knowledge, skills and qualities that can help professionals focus on the things that matter most to service users.

The Care Quality Commission have a specific programme of work to recruit, train and support people who are experts by experience to become involved in various activities.

### **What do Experts by Experience do?**



Experts by experience are able to share their experiences with health and social care professionals. They help raise awareness of issues affecting service users and help make health, mental health, disability and social care services better for everyone.

They may become involved in various ways including:

- going on inspections to a residential, nursing home or sheltered housing scheme;
- becoming part of a focus or discussion group;
- talking to people on the telephone about services; and
- mystery shopping.

Experts by experience are linked to specific activities according to their background, experience, skills and knowledge. They are fully trained and supported in

their role and remunerated for the work they carry out on behalf of CQC.

### Why being involved is important

The knowledge that experts by experience have of using services enables them to talk openly and ask questions that perhaps otherwise would not get asked. Service users feel they are being listened to and valued. Service providers get an honest perspective which helps them to improve their services.

Experts by experience can really make a difference.

### How to get involved

In your local area you maybe able to find third sector community organisations who are involved in recruiting, training and supporting people who wish to become experts by experience. Two such organisations are: Experts by Experience based in West Sussex and Skills for Care which is run by Barking & Dagenham Centre for Independent, Integrated, Inclusive Living Consortium.

You can use an internet search engine such as Google by simply entering 'experts by experience'.

### Where to find more information

More information about the CQC's experts by experience scheme can be found on CQC website [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk). Type 'experts by experience' in the search box on their home page.

Or you can call the CQC customer services line on: Tel: **03000 616161**. Email: [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk). Address: Care Quality Commission, National Correspondence, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4WH.

For Experts by Experience – a window in our lives project – based in West Sussex contact: Lorna Cherry Email: [expertsbyexperience@mail.org](mailto:expertsbyexperience@mail.org) Tel: **01403 783533**.

For Skills for Care - Barking & Dagenham Centre for Independent, Integrated, Inclusive Living Consortium: <http://www.ciil.org.uk/> Tel: **020 8215 9680** Fax: **020 8215 9700** Email: [admin@ciil.org.uk](mailto:admin@ciil.org.uk)

You can also contact your local authority for more information.

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## 4. Tenants and Residents Associations

### What are tenants and residents associations?

Tenants and residents associations are usually made up of local people acting in a voluntary capacity to promote and defend the interests of tenants and/or residents in their area.

There are a lot of reasons for tenants and/or residents to join together to form an association. Tenants and residents associations can fulfil a variety of functions including:

- campaigning for improvements to the local area e.g. for better play facilities, better street lighting, improved refuse collection, or better housing conditions etc;
- making known the views of local people about issues such as housing transfers, regeneration of neighbourhoods, repairs or housing services etc;
- enabling tenants to communicate with their landlord to influence decision-making that affects their homes;
- giving accurate advice and information to other tenants and residents;
- increasing the sense of belonging to a community; and
- campaigning on specific issues.

### What do tenants and residents association do?

Tenants and residents associations can:

- provide a collective voice for tenants in an area, act as a focus for consultation and an organisation to lobby for changes;
- develop extra services through self help schemes e.g. pensioners lunch clubs; and
- offer advice to local people and represent individual tenants when dealing with authorities.

Most tenants and residents associations hold regular meetings open to all tenants in the area, but they often conduct much of their business through smaller working groups or sub-committees.

### Why should you get involved?

The strength of any tenants or residents association lies in the involvement of local people in the activities of the group. Committees are simply ways for bringing people together to consider problems and make decisions. If there isn't a tenants and residents association in your area, you could consider setting one up yourself.

## Where to find more information

Your local council should have a list of all registered tenants and residents associations. You can find your local council using the Directgov web-site

<http://www.local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Start.do?mode=1>

Contact your local tenant participation or community officer to find out more.

TAROE (Tenants and Residents' Association of England) is the national representative body for tenants and residents associations. You can contact them via their web-site <http://www.taroe.org/> or you can write to them or phone them as below:

TAROE, Jackson House, 2nd Avenue, Runcorn, WA7 2PD.  
Tel: **01928 701001** Fax: **01928 790281**.

The Tenants Information Service is a national voluntary organisation providing independent advice, information and support to tenants and tenants organisations across Scotland. Visit [www.tis.org.uk](http://www.tis.org.uk)

The Pledge Bank also offer help and support to people who want to set up a residents' association in their area. <http://www.pledgebank.com/howto/residents>

Your local library or community centre may also have information about local residents or tenants associations that you can join.

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.



## 5. Local Strategic Partnership Boards

### What are Local Strategic Partnership Boards?

Local strategic partnerships (LSPs) exist in nearly all local authority areas in England. They bring together representatives from the local statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to address local problems, allocate funding, and discuss strategies and initiatives. They aim to encourage joint working and community involvement, and prevent 'silo working' (i.e., different agencies that share aims working in isolation) with the general aim of ensuring resources are better allocated at a local level.

### How do they work?

The structure of an LSP is flexible to a large degree, and is decided at the local level. This has resulted in a diverse collection of partnerships across the country, both in terms of who is represented and how they work. Differences in structure and process influence the effectiveness of each partnership. Equally important is local political history and the relationships between the different organisations and sectors involved.

Each locality will decide on the key areas to focus on, but they may typically address issues such as the environment, employment, education, crime, health and housing, and older people.

### How can I get involved?

Membership of LSPs is usually made up of a mix of representatives from statutory organisations (such as the local authority, the police and the primary care trust) and the voluntary sector. Many are also keen to have representatives from service users and carers too. LSPs often work through sub-groups, such as the Older People's Partnership board, which focus on specific issues.

The starting point is to contact your local council and to ask about what is happening in your locality.

### Ways to get involved

Typically you would be required to attend meetings, take part in discussions and to contribute to the process by which decisions are made.



## Where to find more information

You can read more about local strategic partnerships at the following internet pages:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/localstrategicpartnerships/>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongsafe prosperous>

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.



## 6. Citizens' Panels

### What are Citizens' Panels?

The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 placed a duty upon local authorities to set up Citizens' Panels to consult local people on local matters.

Citizens' panels aim to be representative consultative bodies made up of local residents and are typically used by statutory agencies, particularly local authorities and their partners, to identify local priorities and to consult service users and non-users on specific issues.

In reality, potential participants are generally recruited through random sampling of the electoral roll or postcode address file and for this reason Citizens' Panels often have difficulties ensuring that they are demographically representative of the public or that

their members represent a cross-section of political or social attitudes. It is crucial therefore that seldom heard groups such as Black and minority ethnic older people get their voices heard.

### What does a Citizens' Panel do?

A Citizens' Panel offers opinions and experiences on topics that are current and important to help local authorities in planning and making decisions that affect everyone. Feedback is given by the panel using a variety of methods, depending on the topic being explored. It may be via questionnaires or attending focus group discussions.

The results from Citizens' Panels are regularly fed into decision-making processes, and the panels' activities may also be featured in the local and national media.

### How to get involved

Local Authorities decide the exact way in which citizens are chosen to sit on a Citizens' panel. You can contact your local council to find out how your local authority does this. If you are keen to be a representative on one of the citizen's panels, contact your council telling them so and ask other people to nominate you.

Postal recruitment tends to be a popular recruitment approach, so keep an eye out for a letter inviting you to participate. However, a number of people are recruited by other means, particularly people from ethnic minority and other important groups.

People generally stay on a Citizens' Panel for 2-3 years.

### Ways to get involved

Once people agree to participate in a panel, they will be invited to participate in a rolling programme of research and consultation.

This typically involves regular surveys, sometimes around three per year, and, where appropriate, further in-depth research such as focus groups and workshops.

Not all members will be invited to take part in all panel activities.

## Where to find more information

You can read more about Citizens' Panels at the following internet pages:

<http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Citizens'+Panels>

<http://www.suscomms.org.uk/8.html>

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## 7. Regional Older People's Forums

### What is a Regional Older People's Forum?

England is split into 9 geographical regions: the North East; the North West; Yorkshire and Humber; the East Midlands; the West Midlands; London; the East of England; the South West and the South East.

Each region has its own **Regional Older People's Forum**. This is a forum where older people can bring forward issues which concern and affect them and get involved in helping to shape policy in their region. The forums are co-ordinated by Regional Government Offices.

Each region has its own Government Office which co-ordinates the Regional Older People's forum. To find the Government Office for the region you live in go to:

<http://www.gos.gov.uk/national/>

Or you can call **0303 44 41539**

These Regional Older People's Forums feed directly into the **UK Advisory Forum on Ageing** which is chaired jointly by the Minister of State for Pensions and the Ageing Society and the Minister of State for Care Services.

### How to get involved

Find out who the **Later Life Lead** for your region is. They will be based in the Government Office for your region. They will be able to tell you how The Regional Older People's Forum is working in your area and how you can get involved.

Later Life Leads are keen for Black and minority ethnic older people to be involved in the work of the regional forums.

## Where to find more information

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/ageing-society/engagement-with-older-people/>

Or contact the later life lead in your Regional Government Office.

<http://www.gos.gov.uk/national/>

Or you can call: **0303 44 41539**

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## 8. Your Local Council

### What is your local council?

Your local council is a democratic organisation. It comprises of elected members or councillors who are responsible for agreeing policies about the provision of services and how the Council's money is spent. The Council employs officers who are responsible for its day to day management.

### What do councillors do?

Councillors decide which policies the Council should pursue, ensure that they are carried out and monitor services provided to ensure that they are delivered in the most efficient and effective way.

The local Councillor is there to represent the views and opinions of individuals. It is also his or her responsibility to help those with difficulties which the Council could help solve. Councillors decide how the Council should carry out its many important functions.

Local Councillors are elected by the community to decide how the Council should carry out its various activities. They represent public interest as well as individuals living within the ward in which he or she has been elected to serve a term of office.

To do this they have regular contact with the general public through either Council meetings, telephone calls or surgeries. Surgeries provide an opportunity for any ward resident to go and talk their councillor face to face and these take place on a regular basis.

Your Councillor will discuss any concerns or problems relating to Council services and listen to your views on issues that you feel are important.

### **How do I get involved?**

If you want to raise an issue or concern with your Councillor you can do so in a number of ways:

- you can write to them outlining what you are concerned about;
- you may be able to email them; and
- you can go and see them in person at one of their surgeries – you may need to make an appointment to do this, but this is not always the case.

In order to find out who your local Councillor is you can either ring the switchboard of your local council office (for example the town hall) and ask them, or you could look on your council's web-site.

If you type the name of your town and the words 'borough council' in to Google or any other search engine this should take you to the home page of your local borough council. From here you should be able to find out the names of all the councillors, either by name, ward, or political party.

Your council web-site will also usually have a section telling you about different ways that you can get involved. It may tell you about:

- consultations that are taking place;
- key decisions that are being taken that could affect you; and
- how to complain or raise an issue of concern.

### **Where can I get further information?**

Another way of finding out where your local council is and what consultations are currently going on in your area is via the DirectGov web-site:

**<http://local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/index.jsp?LGSL=867&LGIL=8>**

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## **9. Local Voluntary Sector and Community Groups**

Local voluntary sector organisations and community groups (sometimes called VCOs) include charities and small organisations which can provide support, advice and action on a large variety of issues concerning people in the community.

For Black and minority ethnic older people, a number of national and local organisations exist to provide support. Black and minority ethnic older can get involved in many of these organisations and many are seeking to establish better links with Black and minority ethnic older people in order to help shape policy and campaigns.

### **National organisations**

**Age Concern/Help the Aged<sup>2</sup>** has branches in most localities and many of these branches organise and run forums specifically for Black and minority ethnic older people. These forums are an effective way of dealing with issues that specifically concern older people from Black and minority ethnic communities. You can find your local age concern via this web-link:

**<http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/>**

**The Citizen's Advice Bureaux** is a useful first point of contact for general advice about a whole range of welfare issues. They may well have lists of groups and organisations based in your area. Walk in to a local branch to ask about groups or forums for older people in your area.

Or alternatively you can locate your local Citizen's Advice Bureau on their website at:

**[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)**

Your local library will also have information about local community groups, including information about what kinds of groups exist, where they meet, what they do and how you can contact them. Ask someone at the information desk to help you.

Another organisation who might be able to help point you in the right direction is your local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS). Type the name of your town and the word 'CVS' in to Google or any other search engine to locate your nearest CVS. More information about CVS can be found in your toolkit.

<sup>2</sup> Help the Aged and Age Concern merged together to form one organisation in 2009.

There are literally thousands of local charities and community groups. It is impossible for us to list them all. A list of organisations who try to compile local lists of what is going on in their area can be found at:

<http://www.volresource.org.uk/info/local.htm#local>

If there is no local group to meet the needs of Black and minority ethnic older people in your area, you might like to consider starting one up!

The websites on the previous page are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## 10. Faith-Based Groups and Organisations

If you have a particular faith, there is likely to be a group of people who share your faith and who meet somewhere in your area. Often people will meet around a particular place of worship such as a church (Christian), mosque (Muslim), synagogue (Jewish), gurdwara (Sikh), or temple (Hindu or Buddhist) that are usually fairly easy to locate. Organisations associated with less widely practiced beliefs can usually be located by doing a search on the internet, or asking at your local library.

Faith-based groups play an increasingly important part in community engagement and community development, especially for Black and minority ethnic communities, many of whom maintain high levels of practicing worship.

In addition to being a focal point for religious belief, many faith-based groups are also active in the community, running a range of activities for young and older people, campaigning around specific issues (especially to do with poverty and disaster relief).

### Further information

The Church of England can be contacted through your local church or at: [www.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.cofe.anglican.org)

The Muslim Council of Britain can be contacted through the local Mosque or through the website: [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk)

The Hindu Forum of Britain can be contacted through your local temple or at: [www.hinduforum.org](http://www.hinduforum.org)

The Network of Sikh Organisations UK can be contacted through your local Gurdwara or at: [www.nsouk.co.uk](http://www.nsouk.co.uk)

The Network of Buddhist Organisations can be contacted through a local Buddhist organisation or at: [www.nbo.org.uk](http://www.nbo.org.uk)

The National Secular Society have a website which is at: [www.secularism.org.uk](http://www.secularism.org.uk)

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## 11. Neighbourhood Watch



### What is Neighbourhood Watch?

Neighbourhood Watch is one of the countries largest voluntary crime prevention initiatives. It is sometimes also known as Home Watch.

It is a partnership between members of the community and the police. The aim of the partnership is essentially to work to reduce crime and create safer communities. Specifically Neighbourhood Watch Schemes aim to:

- cut crime and the opportunities for crime;
- reassure those who live in the area;
- encourage neighbourliness and closer communities; and
- create better places in which to live, work and play.

Neighbourhood Watch is not just about reducing burglary figures – it is also about creating communities who care. Neighbourhood Watch brings local people together so that they can make a real contribution to improving their lives and their environment. The activity of Neighbourhood Watch members could help foster a new community spirit and a belief in the community's ability to tackle problems and learn more about crime prevention.

### How do Neighbourhood Watch Schemes work?

Local neighbourhood watch committees are formed and these decide upon local priorities and develop action plans in partnership with the police.

## **How to get involved**

Your local police station will have information on schemes in your neighbourhood, or you can search on the internet via a search engine such as Google.

If there is no Neighbourhood Watch in your area and you are interested in setting a group up, information on how to do this can be found on the following website:

**<http://www.mynhw.co.uk/training-kits.php>**

### **Ways to get involved**

Members can get involved in lots of different ways, depending on how much time and energy they want to put in. Each scheme has a coordinator and a committee, so there are chances to be involved in running the organisation.

Activities vary between localities, but are likely to include attending meetings, making plans and identifying priorities, conducting surveys, and perhaps taking practical actions, such as fitting more secure locks on the doors and windows of vulnerable homes, or negotiating with the local council to improve lighting in a particular area.

### **Where to find more information**

You can read more about **Neighbourhood Watch** at the following internet pages:

**<http://www.mynhw.co.uk>**

**<http://www.cnhw.co.uk/What%20is%20Neighbourhood%20Watch.cfm>**

The above websites are acknowledged for the information used in this section.

## Section 6: **Appendices**

### 6a. **Letter Template**

The following letter template is offered as a starting point for you to use to send to an organisation you are interested in joining. You can add to or change any of the wordings to suit you. It can also be cut and pasted into an email.

Your Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Date:

Dear *[insert name of board, panel, group or organisation]*

I am a Black and minority ethnic older person and I am interested in finding out more about how you work and what you do and what opportunities you might have for to become involved in supporting your work.

I have heard about a number of potential opportunities that may exist within *[insert name of Board, panel, group or organisation]* via the Minority Ethnic Elders Policy Network (ME<sup>2</sup>PN), a Big Lottery funded project co-ordinated and managed by the Policy Research Institute for Ageing and Ethnicity (PRIAE) and the University of Central Lancashire.

I would be grateful if you would let me know of any opportunities that may be open to me as a Black and minority ethnic elder and of the ways in which I might be able to become involved. I am particularly interested in *[list any areas of work that may be of particular interest to you, if applicable]*.

Yours faithfully

*[Your name and signature]*

## 6b. Resources

The **Community Power Pack** was created to help local groups to organise and facilitate discussions on the topic of empowerment. The pack contains suggestions for the format of a meeting, advice for facilitators and organisers as well as detailed information about key empowerment issues. Although the pack was produced with a specific consultation in mind (the Government Empowerment White Paper) it does contain lots of useful information and advice that might give you some ideas about how you might run and organise an event around any topic in your own community if you wanted to. It contains lots of practical advice about how to organise an event as well as ideas for how you might encourage people to get involved and to voice their ideas and concerns. You can download the pack from:

**<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/powerpack>**

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