



Government shows commitment to tackling drugs' misuse

The Department of Health is holding a one-day conference to present the findings of a ground breaking project conducted by the University of Central Lancashire. The project investigated ways of tackling drugs misuse within Black and minority ethnic communities within the UK.

The Department commissioned the University's Centre for Ethnicity and Health to manage this large-scale Community Engagement project which consisted of assessing substance misuse needs around drug education, prevention and treatment within the communities. Over 12,000 people, representing 30 ethnic and national groups participated in the project through interviews, focus groups, workshops and seminars. The needs assessments were conducted by 47 difference community groups who produced a total of 51 individual reports, all of which will provide a valuable contribution to the evidence base for drug treatment, education and prevention needs of Black and minority ethnic communities.

“Community Engagement: Identifying issues, creating solutions – together” will bring together speakers from Government, community groups and from the various agencies involved in combating substance misuse. The conference will explain the model of Community Engagement that has developed as a result of the project and how, by working together, communities and agencies have been able to dismantle barriers to services. Much of the discussion will also focus on the process of conducting the needs assessment, as well as the end result. Involvement in the process has left a legacy of trained, local community people who can provide support, advice and information to members of their own communities and to local agencies.

Public Health Minister Hazel Blears, said: “This innovative research has shown the real impact we can make on drug service provision through engaging more with local people. However, in spite of the tremendous success of this initiative there is still more work to be done which is why I am pleased to announce that we will fund the continuing Community Engagement programme. Through this funding, we will set up a further 120 projects and train up to 800 more people as well as exploring in more detail many of the important issues raised through the first round of projects.”

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Professor Kamlesh Patel OBE, Head of the Centre for Ethnicity and Health at the University of Central Lancashire said: "By engaging effectively with communities at a grass roots level we can work with communities to tackle drugs misuse head on. Community engagement is all about participation and representation at a community level and ensuring that drug treatment, education and prevention services are appropriately tailored for vulnerable and marginalised groups. The new programme will engage any group that is disadvantaged in terms of drug service provision, not just Black and minority ethnic communities."

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Notes to Editors:

1. "Community Engagement: Identifying issues, creating solutions – together" will be held from 10.30 am – 4.00 pm, on Tuesday 20 May at The New Connaught Rooms, Covent Garden Exhibition Centre, 61-65 Great Queen Street, Covent Garden, London WC2B 5DA. **For media enquiries contact Vince Vas at the Department of Health's Media Centre on 0207 201 5238 or vince.vas@doh.gsi.gov.uk.**
2. The report, 'Community Engagement' is available from The Centre Administrator, Centre for Ethnicity & Health, University of Central Lancashire, Preston PR1 2HE, tel: 01772 892779. **For further information about the Centre for Ethnicity and Health contact Professor Kamlesh Patel, OBE 07802 563136. For media enquiries at the University of Central Lancashire contact Pamela Culley on 01772 894425 or pculley@uclan.ac.uk**
3. The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse will be distributing copies of their new publication 'Black and minority ethnic communities in England: a review of the literature on drug use and related service provision' at the conference.