

**BMECS's Response to consultation on the
future of day services and activities in
West Sussex**

October 2010

BME Community Services (BMECS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the future of day services and activities in West Sussex.

BME Community Services (BMECS) is a registered charitable company, established in 2006 to address the gaps and needs in services for individuals, families and groups from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, including refugees and asylum seekers in West Sussex.

Our mission is to be a "Support service for BAME groups, individuals and families; encouraging integration, community cohesion, reducing social exclusion and tackling inequalities in West Sussex and beyond."

Amongst our main aims include:

- Promote equality of opportunity and celebrate the value of the diverse communities in our area.
- Promote fair access to opportunities and services that responds to BAME communities needs in West Sussex.

BMECS is committed to equality and diversity which is in the heart of its values, work etc. BMECS will continue to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations between persons of different racial groups, eliminate unlawful discrimination and to provide culturally sensitive services that meet the needs of the diverse communities of West Sussex. BMECS will continue to represent the issues of the West Sussex BAME Communities with the following in mind.

- **Promoting accessibility**

BMECS will continue to increase BAME communities' ability to access support services and ensure through second tier organisations that services are culturally accessible.

- **Valuing cultural diversity**

BMECS will continue to raise awareness of BAME culture amongst the public and voluntary and community sector partners. It will support community representatives to advocate on behalf of their community so that policy development and decision making takes account of the distinctive needs of this community.

- **Promoting participation**

BMECS will continue to encourage participation and engagement of BAME communities in local decision-making.

- **Promoting equality of opportunity**

BMECS will continue to promote equality for all and advocate for BAME communities to be treated fairly with dignity and respect and be given equal opportunity to improve the quality of their lives.

- **Promoting inclusive communities**

BMECS will continue to increase awareness of BAME cultures, building understanding between BAME and mainstream communities.

- **Reducing disadvantage and exclusion**

BMECS will continue to develop and deliver programmes and models as tools to enable local partners to identify and tackle exclusion.

- **Promoting better community cohesion and integration**

BMECS will continue to work with communities and partners to ensure BAME communities are active and well integrated into mainstream society.

- **Promoting good practice**

BMECS will continue to encourage public and voluntary sector partners to show commitment to equality and diversity by adopting and implementing models of good practices that are implemented successfully.

- **Promoting better partnership working**

BMECS will continue to encourage and support partnerships initiatives that have positive impact on the wellbeing of BAME communities

BMECS would like the West Sussex County Council to take note of the following points that it is making on the County Council proposals of a new model of day services.

We are mindful that this consultation is about day services for:

- Older people (over 65 years);
- People with hearing or sight problems;
- People with physical disabilities; and
- People with an acquired brain injury.

We understand that in order to provide a range of local activities for people and be responsive to people's needs, the County Council proposes

- A model based on three levels of need (high, medium and low);
- To move away from having 'multi-purpose' day centres, to focus on specialist services that meet higher and more complex needs;
- That people with low to medium needs will be supported through local community services by voluntary and independent organisations supplying a wider range of community based day activities;
- That people will be supported to participate in community recreational and leisure activities available to all;
- To give people more choice and control about what they want to do during the day and how they are supported through day services;
- To spend less on day services but still provide good quality services;

We also understand that the way social care is delivered is changing nationally. It is anticipated that people will have more choice and control about the way their social care support is provided; know how much money is available to meet their needs; and decide how they would like to spend their personal budget to meet their social care needs.

BMECS welcomes the proposals put forward by West Sussex County Council. However, we believe it is important, as these changes are

shaping up, not lose the purpose of a day service, which is to enable and support people:

- To learn new skills
- To become more active
- To live healthier
- To socialise
- To be more independent
- To access the treatment they need in hospital
- To reduce isolation
- To provide friendships
- To build confidence
- To improve or maintain physical and mental well-being.

We feel that in order for the consultation to be more effective and provides the information the County Council needs, more support needs to be available to help the target group make sound decision on the kind of support they need to meet their social care needs. The consultation should not rely only on professionals and organisations to make decisions for the target group.

The consultation document highlights that an *"independent and voluntary organisations would be supported to help people in the community by providing activities"*. BMECS feels that West Sussex County Council needs to have a robust discussion with the voluntary and community sector to better understand what support the sector needs to be able to help people in the community meet their "community activities" needs. This needs to be done in conjunction with the consultation to ensure that:

- There is enough capacity within local voluntary and community sector service provision to take in service users of the Grange Centre in Midhurst, Harwood House in Horsham and The Brooks in Pulborough, as these centres are proposed to be closed.

- The voluntary and community sector have the resources, particularly financial, they need to cater for the required needs, bearing in mind that resources might be scarce as a result of the Government spending review which is likely to see a substantial amount of funding cut from local authorities.

We are mindful that West Sussex County Council:

- *"Needs to save money over £1 million on day services now".*
- *"Will use a quarter of the money saved to provide new ways of supporting people during the day".*

This sounds like a pledge or a promise to provide the necessary financial support to the relevant voluntary organisations which, in our view, is not enough considering the financial savings that the County Council is expecting to do which does not guarantee a continuation of the services. Let us not forget also that the increasing older population of West Sussex needs social care support that is sustainable.

Additionally, we believe that the "plan for the future", as highlighted in the consultation document, does not seem to be clear. There do not seem to be clear plans on how future preventative and early intervention day services are going to be delivered for older people over 65 years, for people with hearing or sight problems, for people with physical disabilities and for people with an acquired brain injury.

BMECS finds that the proposal set out in the *Your Day, Your Say* information booklet is a good idea. We believe that, as change is inevitable, the County Council needs to re-arrange the way the day services are provided. However, it is difficult to consider which the highest priority for the County Council to achieve its aims. All of the following are highest priorities depending of the individual:

- To give people more choice and control

- To meet people's social care support needs
- To make better use of money spent on services
- To meet changing demand
- To make sure that day services and activities remain affordable

We believe that in some cases these priorities will need to be combined to meet the needs of a person. It is very important to note that, the proposed model sounds plausible; it needs to take into consideration the needs of the individual rather than the community. Therefore, at this stage of the consultation, the West Sussex County Council needs to think about the practicality of the model and how efficient it will be.

BMECS advises the County Council to conduct an equality impact assessment as soon as possible to ensure that these proposals do not have a diverse impact on parts of the communities, particularly the groups this consultation is for. This will inform a better understanding of current and future impacts, and a sensible, fair and just decision. We believe that, it is during situations like the one we are in at the moment, the commitment to equality is tested.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the consultation on the future of day services and activities in West Sussex. BMECS will continue to play a major role in ensuring that all communities in West Sussex are given equal opportunity to access the relevant services and improve the their quality of life regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

Ali Abdoul Wahidi Abdoul

Head of Policy and Programmes Development
BME Community Services
First Floor, Gordon House
34 Railway Approach
Worthing
BN11 1UR