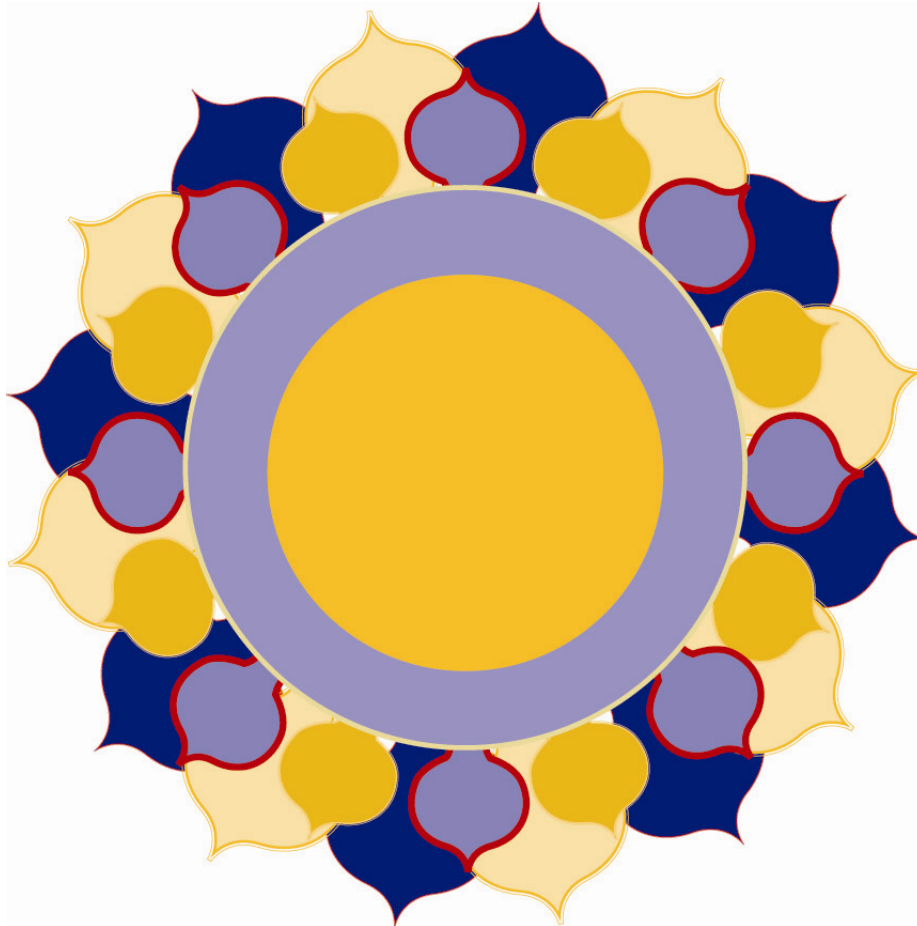


Recovery and people from Black and Minority
Ethnic communities in Edinburgh

**Report from the Minority Ethnic Mental
Health Project, March 2008**

Summary for staff in mental health services



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About this project

This report has come from a project looking at the experiences of people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in Edinburgh. The project was initiated by the National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health (NRCEMH) and Scottish Recovery Network (SRN), both of whom are developing awareness about recovery for people from BME communities. The project was funded by the National Programme for the Improvement of Mental Health and Wellbeing through NRCEMH. The project is now being taken on by the Mental Health and Ethnicity Programme within the Equalities and Planning Directorate of NHS Health Scotland.

The project brings together 3 smaller projects, based at the NHS Lothian Minority Ethnic Mental Health Project, Men in Mind and Saheliya, which is a women's project. This summary report describes the points raised by people who are in touch with the Minority Mental Health Project and have used mental health services. There are reports covering the other parts of the project.

The findings from this project will be used in many different ways.

- NHS Health Scotland and SRN will be able to draw on the experiences and ideas here when developing work across Scotland in the future.
- NHS Lothian and in the City of Edinburgh Council can draw on the experiences of people from BME communities in Edinburgh as part of their on-going work and development of future programmes.
- The Minority Ethnic Mental Health Project and the other partner projects can draw on the points raised here as part of planning how they will continue to support people from BME communities who experience mental health problems.
- Mental health services working with people from all parts of the community can get ideas about how they can develop their services to provide good on-going support and care to people from BME communities.

About the Minority Mental Health Project

The Minority Ethnic Mental Health Project is part of the mental health service delivered by NHS Lothian in Edinburgh. It is based in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and provides a range of supports to people from BME communities who are in touch with NHS mental health services as patients or carers. It also provides advice and training to staff in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and in the community teams, to enable them to give better support to their BME clients.

Methods used

Information about the project was circulated through a range of routes, including

- the Ethnic Minorities Project Co-ordinator
- the day hospitals and Community Mental Health Teams, especially those working in the 2 areas where there are higher numbers of people from BME communities
- the other partner BME mental health projects.

10 people asked to take part. Most of the interviews were just with the person who used services. Two people wanted to have a joint meeting with their main carer – for one person this was his wife and for the other person it was his mother.

The people who took part included men and women and they covered a wide age range. They came from different ethnic communities. Some had lived in Scotland since childhood, while others had moved here as adults. Most had been in touch with mental health services for many years.

People had the choice of having the discussion in English, in another language with a translator, or having the discussion with the Ethnic Minorities Project Co-ordinator or someone else in their first language. Most of the interviews were carried out entirely or mostly in English.

The meetings took place at locations which were comfortable for the people involved. Some took place in people's homes and others took place in a worker's office or at a service.

The next stage is to hold an event at which more people from the 3 services can feed in their experiences. We will also be feeding back to staff in the mental health services.

Access to the reports

The interim reports were launched at the Changing Minds conference which was held by NRCEMH in March 2008.

The full reports are available on the Outside the Box website: www.otbds.org

A summary was given to each person who took part, with translations into other languages where needed.

Experiences of the people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities

What helps you keep well?

There were recurrent themes in people's experiences around what being well meant for them and what kept them well. Many of the points raised around what keeps people well are similar to those raised by other people living in Scotland. They also reflect the underlying principles and good practice set out in the Scottish Government paper 'Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland'.

People also raised points that reflected their experience around their culture and around their experience of being a member of a minority community.

Most people mentioned the same things as keeping them well:

- their family and friends
- work or education
- having a structure to their day or week
- keeping well physically – and with it having good food
- having a nice place to live
- looking after themselves
- having options and choices
- enough money, and help with money problems if this was an issue
- supportive GP and other support from mental health services
- their faith and contact with other people through places of worship
- ways to manage symptoms, including medication, relaxing and meditation
- exercise, fresh air
- opportunity to look towards the future
- having a balance between different aspects of life
- getting away from an anti-racist environment.

“The roles that I have in my life – mother, wife, sister, daughter, colleague, friend – are part of being well and keep me well. But they also bring their own pressures. Sometimes those pressures get too much. But in our culture, you can't say that.”

What does recovery mean to you?

People talked about what recovery meant to them. Often this was in contrast to how they felt when their illness was overwhelming them. Many of the points they raised were very similar to the ways other people have described recovery and the factor that help them recover – for example, the people who took part in the SRN Narrative Research project.

Some people raised their experience of racism and of facing hostility.

“Feeling able to cope – with my health and with the attitudes of other people when they are not welcoming.”

“For me, it is about balance – spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical.”

How do your friends and family help you in your recovery, or to keep well?

People described how their family and friends helped them. Giving people opportunities to talk was the support that was mentioned most often. People also described practical ways in which family and friends help their recovery.

Some people talked about the ways in which it was difficult for family and friends to support them or offer more support.

What would help your friends or family, or other people you know, keep well?

People talked about what would help their family or other people in their community look after their own mental health and wellbeing.

They also talked about things that would help people understand more about mental ill-health. They saw benefits in people from BME communities knowing more about mental health and wellbeing in terms of their own mental health and to help them understand when a relative or friend became unwell.

Some of the ideas they suggested were also aimed at improving understanding among everyone, including the majority community.

“Families need information about illness and treatment in a way that they can understand, the way Rashpal explained it to me.”

“Information for children. There doesn’t seem to even be any information in English for white children.”

Other supports

We asked people if there was anything else they think would help people in BME communities living in this area in their recovery from mental health problems

People suggested a range of approaches that would be helpful. They also talked about the messages they would want to give to people in different roles and situations, including people living with mental health problems, friends and families, and for the wider BME communities.

Summary report for staff in mental health services

These are some of the messages for mental health services which provide support:

“Work out if people feel conscious of their race, is this a barrier for them? If so, what can you do to welcome them and help them feel more comfortable?”

“It would make a big difference if there were people who take an interest in all of my life.”

“This illness can come to anybody. The NHS needs to tell people about illness so they can understand. That will help recovery”

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