

Tackling the problem of addiction in BAME communities

EXPERTS HAVE been learning how to tackle the problem of addiction in BAME communities with the help of a specialised support service.

BAC-IN, a culturally sensitive and peer-led drug and alcohol recovery organisation, held a learning event in Nottingham recently to explore how professionals can better serve BAME communities.

The event, part of Project Ahryzen, featured activities including recovery rap, drama, spoken word, cultural dance and inspirational testimonies highlighting issues affecting BAME communities and the success of BAC-IN recovery model.

Nationwide stakeholders attended, including commissioners, managers, service users and service providers.



CHALLENGING STIGMA: During the Nottingham event the drama focused on the issues faced by BAME people recovering from drug and alcohol misuse

In 2017 BAC-IN was awarded a two-year grant to deliver ground-breaking Project Ahryzen in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University.

The project explored the authentic voices of BAC-IN peers, recorded the hidden experiences of disadvantage and examined the development of a successful model for supporting BAME communities facing multiple disadvantages in life.

SHAME

BAC-IN peers were trained to conduct repeated in-depth interviews with service users/ peers every six weeks to track their personal journeys over a six-month period using principles of co-production.

The aim was to test how well BAC-IN's peer-led recovery model works in meeting service user needs and to amplify the voices of BAME people with addiction.

Key learning highlighted cultural explanations for addiction, such as shame; stigma, racism and lack of trust and a lack of diversity and cultural knowledge in mainstream services. Attendees to the event commented on how effective service users thought BAC-IN's model was.

One said: "Coming to BAC-IN has helped my family understand what addiction is. It has opened their eyes a lot more to what I'm going through."

Another said: "I know that the best help you can get is from another addict, someone who's been there."

And a third user commented: "The people who I was speaking to through the NHS, they're just people who have studied it, they haven't really gone through it, and I think that slight disconnect between the two has made this place [BAC-IN] more appealing... BAC-IN offers more. It's done in a sincere way."

The findings of Project Ahryzen will be used to improve and influence system change for BAME communities.

Julian Corner, CEO of the Lankelly Chase charitable foundation, said: "BAC-IN holds vital insights into what a transformed system might look like for everybody."

SECURITY

Kate Davies OBE, director of health and justice for the NHS, was a guest speaker at the event.

She said: "Organisations like BAC-IN don't stay here because of love, energy and passion, they also need funding, security and need to be a part of a bigger governance structure and part of different clinical commissioning groups."

Professor David Best, of Sheffield Hallam University, gave a presentation on recovery for communities and life in recovery, which highlighted that peer models are successful because they provide the personal direction, encouragement and role modelling necessary to initiate engagement and then to support ongoing participation.

"Projects like this must be allowed to flourish, to identify ways that are culturally sensitive and local needs are addressed," he said.

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