

MEETING WITH GOLDEN AGERS CLUB (GAC)
Tudor Road, 30th JANUARY 2007

Attendance

Guy Reid-Bailey	Signpost, and Chair of meeting
Ephrain Willaims	Treasurer, GAC
Gloria Morris	Acting Chair, GAC
Aston White	Member, GAC
Eva Taylor	Secretary, GAC
Princess Campbell	Member, GAC
Millicent Thompson	Assistant Secretary, GAC
Ayannah Griffiths	Black Development Agency
Ruth Pitter	Voscur

Introductions were given.

Guy gave a brief background and emphasised the strengths that could be drawn from a number of Black Elders Groups coming together, e.g. premises, services etc. Felt Elders issues a matter of principal, they have contributed so much to this country and getting nothing back, Signpost are committed to working with BDA and the CoBG (Consortium of Black Groups) to address this.

Ruth: BME Elders not benefiting from the policies and initiatives taking place in Bristol, the VCS need to be doing more to help address this and manipulate policy to ensure resources were forthcoming.

Ayannah: As the only Black-led CVS in the country, the BDA should be leading on the process to see groups building capacity, and leading agendas. Voscur and Care Forum have been having meetings to discuss BME Elders issues and not involving BDA in the process. BME communities should be producers not receivers. BDA regarded African and African Caribbean Elders needs as a crucial starting point, the lack of capacity for this community was of a far greater degree than work being delivered with other BME Elder communities. Opportunity must be exercised given Government agendas were targeting more people to enable them to have their say. The GAC is a prime group to lead in this given their networks

and contacts. Example: Bristol Social Services have recently spent resources to consult with elders when they could be funding groups like the GAC to do the consultation with their members and enabling the elders to use their wider community links to engage people.

There was a lack of understanding from public services about the history of the African and African Caribbean community in Bristol. Example: the success of the St Paul's Carnival was due to its foundations being established by the West Indian Friends Association, yet the report from the consultant (hired from outside of the city Bristol) stated that the committee did not have a diverse range of BME representation. This opinion disregarded the history of the roots of Carnival and conflicted with Bristol events led by other BME specific groups in which committee representation was not questioned.

Mrs Campbell reported Carol Watson had recently visited the club, and a representation of Elders went on a fact-finding visit to a LinkAge Centre in Tower Hamlets. The Elders were disappointed at the willingness of Adult and Social Care to pay for a trip to observe a good practice model whilst ignoring the work being achieved at the GAC in their own city which was achieving in a similar way. Mrs Campbell said since then she approached Guy Robertson and Annie Hudson to insist they visit the club to witness this for themselves; the meeting has been arranged for Tuesday 6th Feb. Mrs Campbell gave examples of opportunities the club is providing including IT skills, health and safety, sewing classes, flower arranging, keep fit, and food hygiene and some of these activities awarded certificates to members on successful completion. Annie Hudson, from the reports she has received, has acknowledged that the GAC is an example of good practice and commended them on the work they have achieved, yet, Mrs Campbell stated, African and African Caribbean Elders were not getting the support they deserved and needed to empower them.

Through discussion the meeting it was felt that African and African Caribbean Elders groups (there are about 5 in the city) needed to join together to form a collective, challenge the lack of resources, and urge Social Services and other agencies to invest in the groups in the same way they have in others. Example: some groups are commissioned to provide meals on wheels services which they are

then able to deliver to members of their BME community and those who are hospitalised, yet the crucial befriending service the GAC is providing is not being acknowledged or funded; likewise they could also be expanding the catering services they already provide if commissioning was open to them.

Members highlighted a number of achievements of the GAC – with very little support given by statutory bodies over the years. As pensioners support from the club has generally come from their own pockets, or relying on their own fundraising activities, whilst at the same time the church at which they are based has significantly increased their rent.

A Centre for African and African Caribbean Elders:

Such a centre could serve as a base for a number of groups and provide space for extended activities and resources which are currently being squeezed.

Example 1: Impact of the funding reduction: City of Bristol College have made a reduction in their funding therefore resulting in tutored (Tim Knowles) computer classes condensed from two sessions per week to one session. Those who attend on a Thursday afternoon are no longer able to do IT, and because others have switched to Thursday mornings it means there is a longer queue of Elders waiting to use the equipment.

Example 2: Impact of lack of resources: because the GAC did not own their own sewing machines, they relied on the tutor to bring machines with her, so whenever the sewing tutor was unable to attend members were unable to do sewing activities. The group managed to acquire £500 from Quartet and from this they purchased 3 second hand machines and a trip out for members – such funding is piecemeal and needs to be more substantial and sustainable.

Example 3: Impact of lack of space. The situation at the moment is that sewing is stopped for 'gentle exercise' sessions, yet the men continue to play dominos in the same room and at the same time as when the exercise class take place – it is often difficult for those taking part in the exercise to hear directions from the instructor due to the noise generated from the domino group.

A centre would give space and could house equipment for use by all BME Elders groups. A suggestion was that there could possibly be a

dedicated minibus so Elders could have safe, reliable and necessary transport to get to and from the centre and other events – this could be arranged in partnership with BCT (Bristol Community Transport). The centre could offer complimentary therapies to Elders, as well as free treatments. i.e. chiropodist, diabetes support. Ayannah offered to arrange for the PCT manager to visit the group and explain how the PCT could be working with them to ensure services were being made available, accessible and utilised.

The general sentiment was that the Elders have been in the city for a long while and now in their twilight years felt they needed ownership; ownership is a legacy, and the feeling was that they had none.

BDA offered funding advice to help the club seek sources of funding and completing applications – sessions take place Mon, Weds and Fri at the BDA and the group should contact Folami on 0117 939 6645 to arrange this. There was a requirement for strategic networking and work through BDA.

To move this agenda forward it was suggested that the GAC discuss their needs among the members and put them to the 6th Feb meeting. That they should bring along any certificates, photos, examples of activities, events and good practice evidence to demonstrate the quality and depth of service the club offers. It was agreed that Ayannah, Guy and Ruth would try and arrive early to support the club in their preparation for the meeting.

Next meeting - Tuesday 6th February 12 noon – 1.30pm

Ruth Pitter
January 2007