

## CONCEPT NOTE

### Introduction

The Autism in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community symposium organised by Autism Voice United Kingdom in partnership with the Participatory Autism Research Collectives (PARC) and London Southbank University will be held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 to mark Autism Awareness month.

The symposium will consist of opening and closing sessions, group discussions and presentations, video screening session as well as question and answer session.

### Background

There are few studies on autism in the BAME community. Yet findings suggest a substantial need for large-scale training, research and awareness-raising programmes to improve the lives of people who live with autism in the BAME community in the United Kingdom (Slade, 2014). The UN Secretary-General has urged the international community to focus on autism globally, to address stigma, lack of awareness and inadequate support structures and services.

Globally many autistic children and adults are living difficult lives, denied education, support and acceptance, and often prevented from participating in family and community life. In settings with low level of autism education and awareness, cultural and religious beliefs, accompanied by the profound and isolating stigma that can accompany disability, can put individuals and families in intolerable and often dangerous situations.

The setting up of Autism Voice UK in 2013 was of vital importance to communal and national development collaboration in the provision of support and services to people and families affected by autism especially in the BAME community.

## Themes

The two themes that will provide a focus of the symposium are: ***Diverse approaches to Autism: culture, religion and ethnicity and Paving the future for Autism in BAME.***

In the preparatory stage of the symposium, in-depth discussion of the themes and objectives of the symposium have taken place.

## Rationale and Objective

The symposium will be an effective means of raising awareness about autism and inclusion of people with special needs within the BAME community.

The symposium will also present an excellent opportunity for members of the business, academic, local, special needs community to share knowledge, responsibilities and take vital action.

The purpose of the symposium is to also have frank and open discussions on the objective and themes with a view to formulating a concrete action plan.

On the first theme, the discussion will focus on creating a better understanding of the cultural, religious and ethnic influence on the way autism is approached, perceived and embraced by the BAME community and how to link it with the gaps and challenges in establishing and strengthening an effective communication strategy to the community.

On the second theme, the discussion will focus on the identification and development of a sustainable plan towards the acceptance and recognition of people with Autism and other related disorders and their families within the community especially in religious settings.

The main objective of these discussions will focus on how the Autism community will reinforce support for people and families affected by autism in BAME and to contribute to an acceleration of progress on meeting commitments and addressing new and emerging challenges.

The symposium offers a timely opportunity for key stakeholders in the services of autism to renew commitment for raising awareness about autism, assess progress, identify gaps, address new and emerging autism challenges particularly so in the BAME community.

### **Format**

The symposium will commence with an opening session, followed by a key note address by Dr Chris Papadopoulos, this will be followed by speeches from different guest speakers.

Then there will be a group session wherein participants will be divided into groups and each group will be asked to discuss one of the themes. The group session will be moderated by two moderators; one from Autism Voice and another will be an invitee. The goal of the discussion is to enable participants to assess the themes from a practical and operational perspective and to discuss action plans to help expand autism awareness through various medium in the BAME community. The group session will also involve group presentation and a question and answer session.

The group session will be followed by a video screening of Autism in the BAME. This session will then be followed by an action plan session during which participants will be asked to

commit to take an action or more to address the emerging challenges in the community.

This will then be followed by the closing session and vote of thanks.

## **Participation**

Invitees will involve local authorities in Lambeth and Southwark, colleges, secondary schools, primary schools and heads of nurseries in Lambeth and Southwark, religious and communal heads, other organisations and groups working with people with autism and or special needs. Interested participants will also have the chance of registering to attend the symposium through Eventbrite.

## **Documentation for the symposium**

A short issue paper on the themes and objectives will be prepared and distributed to participants in advance for the symposium. In addition, relevant studies and reports on the topic will be compiled as background documentation for the symposium and distributed to participants.

## **Expected Outcomes**

A summary highlighting specific recommendations on the two themes and objectives of the symposium, a reflection of the views of participants as well as their commitments will be issued and sent to relevant authorities after the symposium. The outcome will be transmitted to the board of trustees and will serve as an input to the preparation of Autism Voice 2018 report. Documentations and statements will be posted on the Autism Voice UK website on [www.autismvoice.org.uk](http://www.autismvoice.org.uk).