

Luton Borough Council - Housing & Social Services Department

*¹ A profile of: Ethnic Minority Older People in Luton

1. Information about older people from Black and Asian communities is not very accurate at present. Management information within Housing & Social Services is improving, but they are still at the early stages of combining management information with information about services to older people provided by other agencies such as Health and Housing. This is not just the case in Luton but nationally it has not been possible to get an accurate picture.
2. The last full survey reported was the 1991 census, and it is recognised that this significantly underrepresented numbers of people from ethnic minority communities. Luton Borough Council's publication "Ethnicity in Luton" in 1998 projected the age structure of Luton's ethnic minority groups based on 1991 census data, but not taking into account deaths or net migration. Because of the history of migration from the 'New Commonwealth' to Britain in the 50s, 60s and early 70s, the age profile of most ethnic minority groups in the Borough is much younger than the national average. Therefore the numbers of older people from ethnic minority groups are significantly smaller than one would expect in the general population. However there are significant numbers of people in their 50s and 60s from Luton's Asian and African Caribbean communities who will require services which meet their specific cultural needs within the next 15 years. The following table based on information from 'Ethnicity in Luton' represents an estimate of the population from minority ethnic groups in Luton aged 65 and over.

	65+	85+
Black African Caribbean	474	14
Indian	1462	31
Pakistani/Kashmiri	294	11
Bangladeshi	146	6
*There are also about 1,900 Irish born older people in Luton.		

3. There are therefore about 1,500 people aged 65 and over from African Caribbean and South Asian communities in Luton. These numbers are fairly small at present, representing 7.1% of the total older population and 2.9% of the over 85 population, although these figures will grow much more than the white population over the next 10 years. As with many 'younger' older white people, the majority of people from minority ethnic communities in their 60s and early 70s do not require social care services. However there is evidence nationally that minority ethnic communities age more rapidly for a variety of reasons including the experience of migration, of racism, differences in diet and lifestyle and climate, and have a shorter life expectancy than the national average. There is a higher prevalence of diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases for example; hence on average people from minority ethnic communities may require services at an

¹ This is an extract from a Report by Social Services in Luton

earlier stage than those from the white communities. The numbers of ethnic minority very older people (aged 85 and over) are small. It is this group in the general population who are most likely to require intensive home care, or long term residential or nursing home care.

4. In 2001/02 work was carried out in the Housing & Social Services Department looking at the needs of older people in the Asian communities. The broad conclusions of these surveys were that there is a reluctance among older people from these communities to accept long term institutional care such as a residential home, and that most needs, as predicted from the population information above, are for relatively low level services that allow isolated older people to meet each other and to gather socially. There is also a need for culturally appropriate services in terms of location, food, language, and entertainment. The population figures and the two surveys suggest that the focus, in relation to the needs of ethnic minority older people in Luton, should be on developing and expanding community based services such as day services, lunch clubs, meals, and respite services to support carers, and on linking these services to cultural institutions within these communities.

5. Services for Older People from Minority Ethnic Communities

6. Over 7% of older people are from minority ethnic communities, and this percentage will rise considerably over the next few years as people in their late middle age who emigrated to England in the 50's and 60's become older. At present only a small number of people from minority ethnic communities have required residential care services, but a larger number receive home care and meals services, and many more take advantage of day services and lunch clubs. It is recognised that there is a greater instance of some diseases within minority ethnic communities and on average life expectancy is lower than for the white population. These factors indicate that people from minority ethnic communities are likely to need social care services on average at an earlier point in their lives than for the white older person population. We recognise, therefore, that it is essential to develop services, which provide culturally appropriate language, food and environment for the specific communities of Luton.

Service Development Priorities for Ethnic Minority Communities are as follows:

7. Improved public information in appropriate languages for the communities of Luton particularly to inform them of the range of health and social care services available.
8. Continue the development of a wider range and greater availability of appropriate meals.
9. Carers support/respite services for the carers of Black and Asian older people.

10. Carers & Culturally Appropriate

APPENDIX A

The Department aims to develop a whole range of supportive services that enable people to feel more confident and better informed and better supported to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. This range includes appropriate information, advice and practical support for carers, the development of preventative services so that older people are in touch with service providers before their needs become serious or reach a crisis point, and culturally appropriate services which are accessible and easily understood by all communities within Luton and are tailored to meet the needs of each.