

# SACMHA Health & Social Care Submission to Sheffield Race Equality Commission

## Introduction

SACMHA is a charitable organisation established in 1988 in response to the health and social care needs of people of African and Caribbean descent.

Providing culturally responsive support to people from those communities in need of assistance because of their age, youth, disability, caring responsibilities, financial hardship or social disadvantage. SACMHA will be responsive to the changing social care needs of the people and communities we serve.

***SACMHA had its genesis in the African Caribbean community and still has a specialism with that community, however, since 2011, SACMHA Health & Social Care has been offering quality health and social care solutions to all the communities in Sheffield***

In delivering our services we provide a range of social and health care facilities, research, information, advice and education, on all aspects of mental and physical health amongst our beneficiaries. Through the provision of the following services:

- Community Outreach and Social Inclusion Service
- Carers Support Service
- Acute Advocacy
- EPIC Hospital Visiting/Befriending Service (Nether Edge & The Longley Centre)
- Self-Directed Support (SDS) Services

The organization started in response to the concerns of two African Caribbean women whose relatives were receiving less than satisfactory treatment in statutory mental health settings and at a time when the issue of Black mental health was high on the agenda in most cities in the UK with a significant African Caribbean presence and the key issues of concern were:

- Culturally 'blind' and incompetent diagnosis
- Culturally incompetent assessments
- Poor treatment with no focus on the person's ethnicity and culture
- Over-reliance on the 'heavy end' treatments – the 'chemical cosh'
- Over-representation of African Caribbean people, particularly men in the mental health services
- An over-reliance on compulsory routes (sections) into services

The 2019 report by the Race Equality Foundation found that:

- The evidence on prevalence suggests that black and minority ethnic communities are at comparatively higher risk of mental ill health, and disproportionately impacted by social detriments associated with mental illness. For example, people from African Caribbean communities are three times more likely to be diagnosed and admitted to hospital for schizophrenia than any other group.
- The evidence shows black and minority ethnic communities are less likely to access mental health support in primary care (i.e. through their GP) and more likely to end up in crisis care.  
Black and minority ethnic people are 40 percent more likely to access mental health services via the criminal justice system than white people.
- Once in the mental health system, black and minority ethnic people experience further inequalities and discrimination. Poor health conditions of BME patients is likely to lead doctors to focus on physical conditions despite the fact that some diseases such as cardiovascular, are complicated by depression and other mental health conditions.
- After being assessed, inequalities persist into treatment. This can further compound the discrimination and inequality already experienced by black and minority ethnic people and affect their recovery. It has been proven that black and minority ethnic people are less likely to be referred to talking therapies and more likely to be medicated for ill mental health. It is absolutely pivotal that black and minority ethnic patients also want the impact of racism and wider inequalities on their mental health to be addressed in treatment for their mental illness.
- Traumatic, inappropriate and discriminatory experiences of services can have a detrimental impact on chances for recovery, particularly if the same risk factors of bereavement, family breakdown, incarceration, poverty and exposure to racism continue to be present. There has also been criticism of a Eurocentric approach to recovery for black and minority ethnic people, as the definition does not take a race equality perspective and look at the external factors that impact on the individual.

The question we are asking is what has changed in the over 30 years with regard to the African Caribbean communities' experience?

## The Sheffield Context

When SACMHA started and after a period of development, the Services we offered to the community were:

- Advocacy Services – both community and hospital based
- Supported Living – 13 purpose built flats with Housing Support Staff focused on mental ill-health recovery
- Community Mental Health Support Workers

- A Carers Coordinator
- A Volunteer Coordinator
- Lunch Club

## The Difference We Made

SACMHA made and continues to make a significant contribution to the mental health menu of support services in the City

African Caribbean service users and their families were confident that they could access a robust and responsive service delivered by African Caribbean professionals who were well-trained and experienced in their particular specialism

SACMHA offered social work placements to students from the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and Nottingham Trent University

SACMHA provided training and refresher training for what were then known as Approved Social Workers (ASW's) under the Mental Health Act and now known as Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMPH's)

The service user group at SACMHA – *Maat Probe* led the training around the RESPECT agenda in terms of restraint of patients on hospital wards and won accolades from a range of places including *The Guardian* for the work they did in raising the issue and having the new policy implemented across the Health & Social Care Trust

SACMHA held 3 national conferences focused on the African Caribbean experience in the mental health arena

We provided and still provides a culturally competent service to the in-patients at Rampton Secure Hospital

SACMHA brought investment to the city and provided employment particularly in respect of the supported living schemes we had funded by the then Housing Corporation

This list is not exhaustive but paints a picture of the difference this organization made prior to austerity and in the face of some statutory service officers who held and still hold the view that Black-led organisations are profligate with resources and therefore cannot be trusted or significantly invested in

## Partners We Worked With

SACMHA is not never nor ever has been a separatist organization.

We are also not nor ever have been an organization that dismisses wholesale the use of medication – our stance has been and still is that medication ***must*** be administered based on clinical need and ***not*** on assumptions in respect of service users, their ethnicity and myths about how they behave

To that end, SACMHA worked extremely successfully with Dr Andrew McNeil and Prof Alec Jenner who at the time had overall responsibility for NHS mental health services in Sheffield

Charity Projects; the organization that disseminated funds raised by Comic Relief funded the first 3 Mental Health Support Workers SACMHA appointed with the agreement with Sheffield City Council that they would assume funding for these posts after the initial 3 year Comic Relief funding ended

The Foundation Trust invested and still invests to a much smaller degree in funding the Advocacy service

## Race & Racism

Even with our track record, even with the clear evidence of the work we were doing and the difference we were making, we were not able to avoid impact of austerity and the views of some SCC and Health Officers

At the time austerity hit there were 9 Black-led (predominantly African Caribbean) organisations in the City:

- The Bow Centre – A youth service
- The Hub – A youth and family service/community center in the Sharrow Area
- Broomspring Center – a Youth and Family service/community center in the Broomhall area
- The Everyone Centre – a Youth, seniors and family service/community center in the Abbeydale area
- SADACCA – a citywide holistic service/community center
- SYAC – A purpose built business center
- The Sickle Cell Trust – a service raising awareness about sickle cell and offering direct support to users and carers
- SACMHA – a specialist African Caribbean mental health service
- Black Palm – a youth service focused on Black children’s attainment in school
- Walter Rodney Housing Association – a Black-led housing association that worked with other housing associations to provide good quality homes, mainly in the north of the City

As of 2020, 3 of those organisations are still functioning:

SACMHA

- SADACCA
- SYAC

None of these organisations receives core funding of any kind from Sheffield City Council

Our organization, SACMHA provides self-directed support services as a recognized provider in the city and generates some income via that route

SACMHA also has 2 small contracts with the Health & Social Care Trust for advocacy and befriending services

I draw the Commissions attention to this issues because though SACMHA cannot point to a policy that specifically targeted our organisations for exclusion and disinvestment, it simply cannot be that ALL these organisations with their varied areas of benefit and governance structures were failing organisations that could not be trusted, could not be invested in, and could not be supported even in challenging financial times

The only conclusion that we can come to is that there was and still is an inherent bias and mistrust of Black-led organisations, despite evidence to the contrary

## Survival

SACMHA survived and continues to survive in spite of the statutory sector in Sheffield

SACMHA survived and survives because of historic good stewardship or our resources and the heavy reliance on a committed group of Trustees' one of whom undertook the Service Director role for 4 years on a voluntary basis until an external Trust invested in the Post and in a Support Worker post

SACMHA survived and survives as a result of the high regard we are held in by our community; indeed, the Black Majority Churches have donated, have hosted concerts on SACMHA's behalf to raise funds and have continued to access the services we provide with zero investment from the council even though we as an African Caribbean community 'pay our dues to the city'

SACMHA survived and survives because we seek to be a learning organisation who will flex with the times; therefore in 2011 SACMHA extended its focus on mental health to include all of Adult Social Care services and removed the focus of working solely with the African Caribbean community to offering services to all communities but celebrating the specialism in the African Caribbean community that we have built up over 32 years

## The SACMHA Story

We share our story not as a means of 'bleating' nor do we share our story simply as a means to 'beat up' the host community in this city

We share the matters raised above as a means of indicating just how wrong things can go when there is an in-built inequality and where there is, as the only conclusion we can come to in light of the evidence, an in-built and institutionally negative view of Black-led organisations

One of SACMHA's key relationships is with the Black Majority churches

The rationale for this is that between the 6 largest and longest-established churches there is a membership of around 1000+ African Caribbean people in the city with access via familial and community links the churches have to around 3 times that number.

Given that there are around 9000 African Caribbean people resident in Sheffield (depending on whose stats one accepts) this is a significant reach

This also evidence that these organisations, the Black Majority Churches have been managing resources, financial, human and voluntary since the 1960's in this city without reproach or scandal Many of the same people who are part of these organisations worked with and in the Black-led organisations that were allowed to fail – it is hard to arrive at any other conclusion than that this happened as a result of conscious and/or unconscious bias by those in a position to act differently

## Covid-19 and the Murder of George Floyd

I would draw the Commissions' attention to the work that SACMHA has done and is doing for the citizens of Sheffield since Covid-19 pandemic hit with its undoubted more damaging impact on BAME communities and the tangible attempts locally, nationally and internationally to address injustice in the light of the murder of George Floyd

- SACMHA has continued to provide services to the account holders via the Money Management Service in Adult Social Care within the Council
- Had to support just 1 client who furloughed staff
- Led the work of Sheffield Community Kitchen which to date has provided over 700 meals to vulnerable people as a result of government requirements
- SACMHA is an active member of VCF Hubs group led by Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) focussed on the voluntary sector response to Covid-19 – SACMHA is a Targeted Hub for the African Caribbean Community coordinating the voluntary sector response to Covid-19
- SACMHA is an active member of BAME/Public health Covid-19 strategy group, partnering with the council and health to plan the new shape of services for the city post George Floyd and Covid-19
- SACMHA was invited to partner in the work of The Sheffield Psychology Board re: bereavement support post-Covid-19
- SACMHA has formed partnerships with Weston Park Cancer Charity; Manor & Castle Development Trust and Disability Sheffield to better ensure access to services
- SACMHA is coordinating the Covid-19 and George Floyd response from African Caribbean Faith Leaders in the city
- SACMHA is working with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in their attempts to reshape the Mental Health Crisis Service so that equitable access by all of Sheffield's communities is achieved

All the work listed above is in **addition** to the core business SACMHA undertakes in the arena of adult social care and the City Council's offer via the personalisation agenda

All of the activity detailed above has been achieved with NO CORE funding from SCC

The only additional funds we have received in this period from local funders has been £9.5k of grant funding from Public Health Sheffield to focus on responding to the needs of the African Caribbean community in these unprecedented times

## Conclusion

As an organisation, SACMHA is committed to this city – I believe we have demonstrated our commitment over the last 32 years in face of real challenges

SACMHA is a 'can do' organisation that recognises the need for allies and is astute in the way we deal with obstacles

Our hope is that this Commission will have a tangible operational and resource re-distribution outcome based on strategies that include ALL citizens of this city and are based on true equality

We are clear that 'different to' does not equate to 'less than'

**David Bussue**  
**Service Director**  
**SACMHA Health & Social Care**

19<sup>th</sup> August 2020