



**cheshire halton & warrington**  
**RACE & EQUALITY CENTRE**

**An Assessment of  
Stakeholder Support**

**for the**

**Development of a  
Multi-Cultural Centre**

**on behalf of**

**Chester Asian Council**



**Summer 2009**

## **An Overview of the Survey**

As part of its strategic development plan for expansion and sustainability Chester Asian Council conducted a postal/email questionnaire survey. The survey focussed on testing CAC's view that a Multi-Cultural Centre should be a priority. The survey was designed by Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre to assess local stakeholders views about the need and desirability of a Centre and what such a facility should provide. The current work and role of CAC was also evaluated.

The survey was analysed by Chester University Centre for Public Health Research Dept, the results were collated by a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student Emma Conway.

Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race and Equality (CHAWREC) Centre provided a Development worker and financial support from Capacity Builders Improving Reach programme to assist CAC to carryout this survey

A broad sweep approach of potential stakeholders was adopted using CHAWREC's BME consultation panel membership; which is made up from wide range of BME individuals and groups living or working in Cheshire West and Chester, CAC's internal database and targeted contacts and via Chester University's staff and students who are involved in multi-cultural activities.

Postal Questionnaire sent out was (approx 950) CHAWREC consultation panel (250) CAC Database (400) Chester University (300) Actual valid returns totalled 147 with 62 respondents from CHAWREC's consultation panel, 79 from CAC's contact lists and 6 from Chester University the overall Response Rate – 16%

## The Stakeholder Respondents

### Gender

A total of 147 replies were received from the survey of whom 86 (60%) were female and 58 (40%) were male.

### Age

26% of respondents were aged 20-35 years old, 38% were 36-55 year olds and 35% were over 55 with only 1% being under 20 yrs.

### Ethnicity

A broad range of ethnic backgrounds were represented in the stakeholder returns. As Table 1 illustrates although 48% of returns were from White British (often local government agency stakeholders with a CAC connection) half the returns were from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds with the desirable diverse Asian heritage (e.g. Indian and Bangladeshi) but also people of White and Afro-Caribbean heritage.

**Table 1: Respondent's Ethnicity**

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
White British	70	48
White Irish	1	1
White Eastern European	2	1
White Other	4	3
Black African	5	3
Black Caribbean	5	3
Black Other	2	1
Pakistani	3	2
Bangladeshi	17	12
Indian	20	14
Asian Other	5	3
White and Black African	1	1
White and Black Caribbean	2	1
White and Asian	1	1
Chinese	6	4
Any Other	2	1
Total	146	100
Missing	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	

Hindu (n=7), Sikh (n=4), Buddhist (n=2) with one Quaker, Humanist, Jew and Pagan also self-defining.

### Disability

Respondents were asked if they considered themselves disabled. 94% did not and 6% defined themselves as having a disability.

### Local Voices

Respondents declared their work and home post-codes. The analysis confirmed strong local representativeness with three quarters (75%) of stakeholders living in Chester and a further 13% residing in neighbouring Cheshire districts.

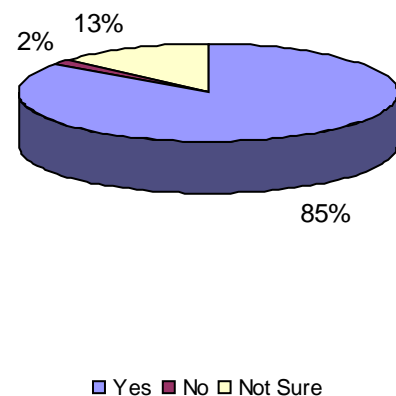
Similarly three quarters of respondents (76%) worked in Chester/Cheshire West and a further 11% in neighbouring parts of Cheshire.

## Overwhelming Support for a Cultural Centre

### 1. Endorsement

Of the 147 stakeholder responses 123 (85%) supported CAC's proposal to seek funding and develop a Cultural Centre. Only 3 individuals rejected the proposal with 19 (13%) still not sure.

85% (118) of stakeholders felt a cultural centre would add value to Chester and Cheshire West in terms of promoting racial diversity and providing enhanced services and facilities for BME groups.



## 2. Facilities

Table 2 describes the most popular nominations.

**Table 2: Most nominated facilities to be available**

Facilities	No. Nominations
Rental Space for community groups	74
Café/Coffee shop	66
Training Rooms	62
Entertainment space	59
Conference rooms	58
International food/deli market	53
Visual arts exhibition space	48
Space for Sports (indoors)	47
Nursery for tots	47
Community cinema	46
Ethnic clothes/household items	62
Small business units	53
Space for sports (outdoors)	50

### **'It's About Time.**

There is a talented, eclectic and disparate BME community that need a cohesive focus point to be proud off'

**'ABSOLUTELY** this will help to bring communities together and allow different faiths to meet under one roof'

## *Comments*

'It's a very much needed **RESOURCE** that will reflect the **DIVERSITY** in Chester'

'**PROVIDES** a central point for BME groups to gather'

'**HELP** further integrate different communities and enhance understanding amongst them'

These responses demonstrate a high degree of collective agreement about what CAC’s cultural centre should prioritise. Three quarters of stakeholders (74%) wanted **rental space for community groups**. Two thirds (66%) wanted a **Café/Coffee Shop** and **Training Rooms** (62%) and six in ten (59-53%) felt **Entertainment Space, Conference Rooms, an International Food Deli/Market** and **Visual Arts – Exhibition Space** were important. Nearly half (48-46%) prioritised a **Creche/Nursery** a **Community Cinema, Ethnic Clothes Outlet, Small Business Units** and **Outdoor Space for Sports**.

### 3. Services

A similar broad consensus was produced in relation to the type and range of services which CAC’s proposed Cultural Centre should offer. Over three quarters of respondents prioritised **English Language Courses (ESOL)** (78%) and **Specialist BME Women’s Advice and Support** (76%). Two thirds highlighted **Form Filling and Benefits Advice** (65%) and **Health Education** (63%) with around six in ten (62-58%) nominating **IT and E Learning, Translation Services, Signposting and Advice, Volunteering Projects** and **Education**. There was also strong support for **Small Business Training**.

**Table 3: Priority**

<b>Services and resources</b>	<b>Popularity</b>
English Language courses (ESOL)	114
Specialist BME Women's advice and support	111
Form filling and benefits advice	95
Health Education	93
BME women's projects	91
IT & E learning	90
Translation service	89
Sign posting information and advice	85
Volunteering projects	85
Education	77
Small Business training courses	73
After school club	61
Specialist issue based projects	56
Other language courses	51

#### **4. What would you/your organisation use the centre for most?**

Stakeholders felt they would most use any new Cultural Centre for Meetings (n=100), Community Events (n=92), Conferences (n=73), Education (n=67), Leisure (n=56), Accessing Shopping (n=35) and Weddings (n=25).

The Centre would require long opening hours – availability given it was felt the facilities would be used on weekdays, evenings and especially weekends.

Over half of respondents linked themselves to an organisation or group and 72% suggested their organisation would be likely to use the cultural centre. Many felt they could provide practical support to CAC offering teaching and translation services, advice-mentoring, classes and linking unworthy students into voluntary projects.

#### **5. Location and Accessibility**

Overall two thirds of respondents felt location was important with strong support for a Chester City location. This is probably linked to a desire for the centre to be readily accessible via public transport and the tendency for key user groups to be largely based in and around Chester. Several potential sites were nominated based on local knowledge.

Physical accessibility, for people with disabilities, was mentioned by several respondents, who noted CAC itself was currently inaccessible for people with certain disabilities. Dedicated parking, given Chester's vehicle congestion problem, was a high priority.

## Views and Experiences of Chester Asian Council Services

As part of the survey potential respondents were asked about the knowledge, perceptions and 'rating' of CAC.

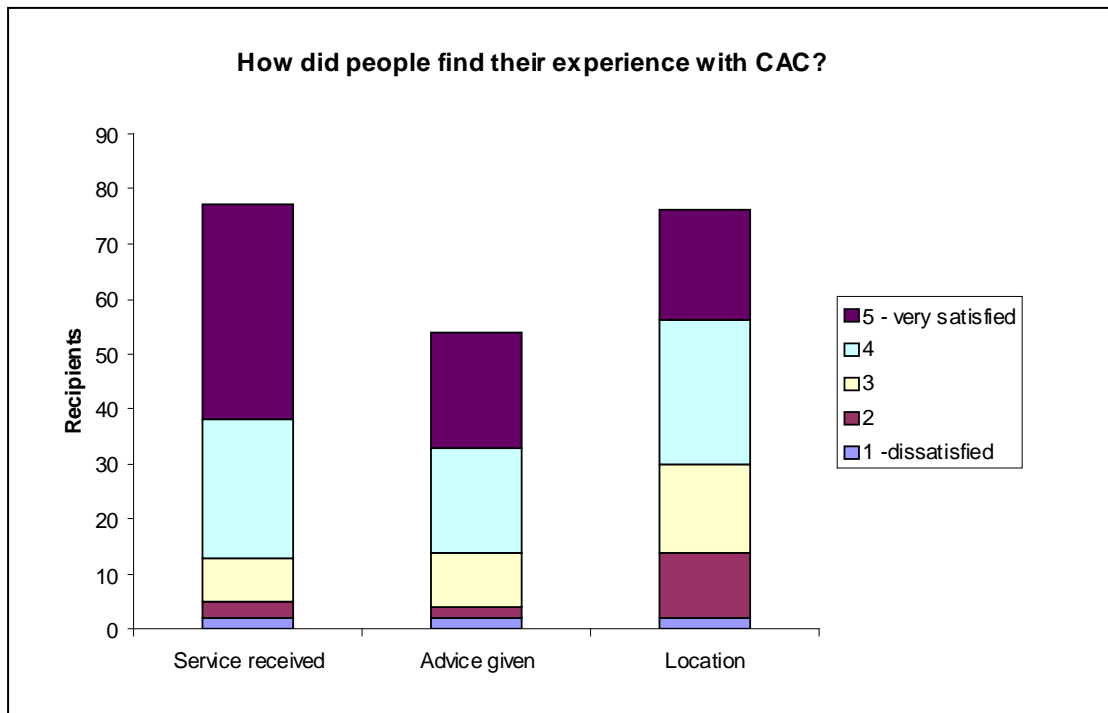
### 1. Awareness of CAC

80% (n=114) of returns had heard of CAC. **Events** provided the main source of awareness at 48%, followed by receiving **Helpful Advice** (13%) participating in **Classes and Courses** (13%) and being a current or former member (11%).

### 2. Satisfactory Rating

A brief rating based on **services received, advice giving** and **location** was utilised (see Figure 1). In general satisfaction levels were high with most recipients of CAC provision being very satisfied or satisfied. The current location of CAC generated a degree of dissatisfaction.

Figure 1 – Satisfaction Rating



## 1. **Concerns about Cultural Centre Exclusivity**

Based on individual comments made in the questionnaire returns the single biggest reservation about a cultural centre, including from strong supporters of the proposal, was the 'risk' that it would attract particular sections of the BME community, specifically that would be dominated by or be seen to be dominated by Asian-Muslims as opposed to multi-cultural groups.

*"There are minorities in Chester who may not be well served by such a Centre"*

*"I wouldn't support an Asian only centre but would promote something that encouraged a meeting place for all cultures"*

*"There are various minority groups who see such a Centre as positive but others may regard this initiative as purely Asian, rather than genuinely multi-cultural"*

## 2. **Inclusion of Young People**

The absence of returns from young people (despite 54% of respondents living in multi-generational households) may have been a product of the questionnaire's distribution. However in terms of inclusivity and sustainability several respondents recommended CAC recognise the need to develop a Centre which involves younger people from the outset. The engagement of young people, perhaps via focus groups during development, should help shape intended facilities and services. In terms of sustainability it is also important to engage children and young people and create a 'family focus'.

3. Several respondents hoped CAC would make more effort than in the past to empower women from different cultural groups. Their wish list included overcoming language barriers, having facilities and classes for women only and an end to perceived male dominance as 'community leaders'.

## **Conclusions**

There is very strong support within the active stakeholders' population in Cheshire for CAC to develop a Multi-Cultural Centre

There is a consensus as to where the Centre should be located, what the actual premises should offer and what Facilities and Services should be prioritised

Nearly all the priority facilities and services have significant income generating potential. This should allow a social enterprise model to be developed to ensure sustainability and incremental economic independence

Although limited CAC's current services are rated positively

As part of the developmental process external stakeholders recommend CAC ensures that its proposed Multi-Cultural Centre is exactly that – a centre for all cultures and which empowers women and engages younger people

There is strong goodwill for a new Centre and indications from stakeholders that they can actively contribute to its success

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Approach the GONW for support for finance to develop the Multi Cultural Centre
- Approach West Cheshire and Chester Local Authority
- Hold focus group with young BAME people to ascertain their views
- Hold focus groups with the individuals who have said they would like to support any type of development for the Asian community
- Lobby your MP and Councillor

- Arrange to go to London and meet with the minister for communities
- Contact the national Media and put the spotlight on Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority drawing attention to the massive in-balance for funding to BAME groups and the lack of services to support BAME community living Chester i.e. there are no specialist services for Asian BAME groups in Cheshire West and Chester.

### **Acknowledgements**

Chester Asian Council would like to thank: Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC), Chester University. and everyone who completed the questionnaire Many Thanks.