

Services Provided by LVSB to Black and Asian People Resident within Liverpool

Introduction

This service was provided by LVSB following an approach by RNIB to ascertain whether specialist services were available for black and minority groups within Liverpool. This approach came 8 years ago during 1997 and it was discovered that the register of blind and partially sighted people only approximately 50 people were recorded and these people were known by name only which is not a reliable way of identifying potential service users. It was also recognised that the number of people recorded on the database did not replicate the number of people from BME communities within Liverpool, approximately 8% of Liverpool's population are from BME communities.

LVSB was successful in applying for a lottery grant during 1997 for a 3-year programme to encourage the take up from BME communities. The final year of this programme was focused upon training the worker employed under the grant to undertake a Rehabilitation Officers Course. A further 4 years was funded by Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA) for a specialist service for Black and Asian people and over the last 18 months this service has now been adopted within Liverpool City Council's (LCC) services for blind and partially sighted people.

The current number of people on the blind register from BME communities is 149, which is an increase on the number that we started with.

All those entering the service user pathway, whom are identified as being members of the BME community are allocated to the specialist worker. The specialist worker also liaises with the BME community centres, training staff within those centres to identify people with sight problems. Many members of the BME community with significant sight loss do not wish to register as being blind or partially sighted and LVSB takes this wish into consideration when providing a service. LVSB provides a whole range of information on its services in 7 languages and interpreters, used to overcome any language barriers, employed by LCC have been trained to understand the assessment process. The specialist worker works closely with family members to ensure a full understanding of the registration process and the specialist service provided and to encourage the take up of independence training. This service has been expanded by a contribution from Merseytravel who provide a specialist guide to encourage the take up of public transport services for those whom are visually impaired from a BME community.