

# Making ASD services accessible for minority ethnic communities

Prithvi Perepa  
Regional Officer - South East

# Project's aims and objectives



- To identify the barriers preventing service take-up
- To raise awareness of ASD and the services available amongst minority ethnic communities

- To highlight the issue amongst education, health and social services across London
- To suggest adaptations to the National Autistic Society's service delivery

# Why a special project?

- All services are an outcome of that culture
- Around 8% of UK population describe themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic community
- 45% of UK's minority communities live in London
- Lack of service take up from these groups

# Ethnicity



- Ethnicity is about how people see themselves on the basis of common descent
- It also includes how others perceive them
- People from the same ethnic background could be different from each other on the basis of various factors, e.g. religion, gender, social class

# Issues for accessing services



- Understanding about ASD could be different
- Different perceptions on the basis of social behaviour norms
- Perception about cause impacts need for intervention and support
- Could be unaware or misinformed about services

- Socio-economic factors- poverty, family composition
- Impact of professional attitudes and perceptions about various communities
- Lack of culturally appropriate services

# Good practice guidance says..



- Using community based organisations
- Organising groups for specific communities in their languages
- Using community media and events to raise awareness
- Providing information in appropriate format
- Training staff



# Difficulties in relation to ASD



- Many languages do not have a word for ASD
- In some communities, stigma is attached to the condition
- Community organisations are not aware of families
- There are no prevalence rates on the basis of ethnicity

- Media's interest in 'stories'
- There is lack of involvement at senior levels in statutory services
- Treading on no man's land!

# Changing strategies



- Using guesstimates -18,800 individuals
- Using statutory services to reach the families
- Creating awareness through information stalls-  
de-stigmatising the condition
- Organising events to generate media interest

# Creating awareness



- Organised conferences about autism and ethnicity in England and Wales
- Produced a report about educational experiences of children from minority ethnic communities
- Published a booklet about different families experiences

# Towards accessible services



- Producing information in community languages
- Advertising about NAS community language facilities
- NAS parent programmes trying to be more adaptive
- Getting diversity on agenda at NAS via policies and service plans

- Delivering training to professionals about autism and culturally appropriate services
- Providing consultancy services to other organisations
- Sharing experiences through a BME disability organisations network

# What worked for us



- Being creative and flexible
- Taking risks which led to new avenues
- Being visible
- Persistence

# Things to consider



- Is your service accessed by all members of the community?
- Does your organisation have specific diversity goals?
- Who is going to achieve them?
- What is your strategy to reach these goals?



# Final thoughts



- Ethnic identity could differ amongst members of the same community
- Don't assume a service is appropriate for all
- Engage your local community
- There is no single right way!