

NCLF Ten-Point Plan for Churches coming out of restricted movement post the Covid-19 Lockdown

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well" 3 John v2 (NIV)

Intro and Context:

National Church Leader Forum (NCLF) is an interdenominational group of Christian ministers, pastors, academics, theologians and lay leaders working together to mobilise Britain's BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) Christian community around issues affecting black communities across the UK. We seek to build partnerships with community-based, governmental, and private sector institutions that are committed to a vision of dignity and human flourishing for all, so as to develop a sense of hope and future for all British BAME communities.

Churches have a great influence on society, having tangible and intangible assets, practices and structures, spaces, and church leadership to assist with the responsible disseminating of relevant and truthful data and information regarding COVID-19, however in this time of crisis, churches become channels of support and hope. Leaders organise and gather for prayer and spiritual fellowship in online and digitals spaces for their membership, and it is crucial this remains ongoing since for many it is a lifeline for prayer and solidarity.

The two dimensions that we want to bring to the attention of policy makers and observers are: the importance of religious beliefs and communities to people the world over and the extensive reach and presence of the communities and institutions involved; and secondly, the deeply embedded traditions of care for the vulnerable that are central to religious teachings and example. Beyond this, the significant presence of religiously owned and run care and support facilities and the links between social support and trauma healing, are vitally important now and will become more so in the future.

Evidence based research compiled as of 7th May 2020 tell us that BAME people are a staggering 90% more likely to die as a result of the Coronavirus. Data captured between 2nd March -10th April (ONS research) advised that black men are 4.2 times more likely to die from a coronavirus-related death, and black women 4.3 times more likely than white men and women. This is of concern to us as BME churches, and while we are working to better understand about what is causing this disproportional impact, we as Churches need to prepare ourselves and congregations to come out of lockdown.

Our outreach efforts have included consultation and dialogue with our constituency, and we have listened to testimonies, personal accounts and unpacked data samples.

Commented [LO1]: I'm not sure about the use of the word 'however' here – does it mean 'however, in this time of crisis, churches have also become channels of support and hope'

Combined, these experiences and advice have shaped and informed the action points listed in the plan.

For further information please contact NCLF Co-Chairs by email: info.nclf@gmail.com. References NCLF Manifesto

The NCLF Ten-Point Plan

- Develop local emergency hotlines and contact details for congregations to access psychosocial support and counselling services, particularly for frontline carers, women and children in vulnerable families. It is critical that such emergency hotlines are robust for sign posting and referrals as appropriate.
- BAME church leaders need to be present and visible at political decision-making tables on issues and decisions affecting the lives of BAME constituencies, since our demographics evidence significant numbers are working across all elements of health and social care.
- 3. Advising and advocating to local and national government that churches and pastoral teams are by their congregations considered as the fourth emergency service. Church leadership need to be resourced and funded as part of wider crisis intervention services implemented at community levels, as they respond to the impact of trauma as a physical and emotional reality of the deaths experienced by BAME families and wider communities.
- 4. Churches working with vulnerable families by providing food bank, nursery provision, supplementary education and seniors lunch service need to be added to the category of 'essential services' by all levels of public and civic service leadership.
- Provide and work with public advisory services such as Pentecostal Credit Union (https://www.pcuuk.com/) to provide practical financial advice, support and signposting for BME communities affected by unemployment and other economic shocks as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 6. The reality of the far-reaching effects of Covid-19 are largely social, economic and political. Most affected by this are older people, women and youth and they need to be protected. Specifically additional safeguarding training should be made available for churches working with vulnerable adults and children and those with mental health needs.
- 7. Establish accountable, community-based projects that invest in regeneration initiatives which build the skills and capacity of local communities, working with organisations such as Cinnamon Network from which churches can select and adapt various projects. https://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/projects/

- 8 Provide ongoing training for individual churches on leadership development, in order to create, maintain, and sustain BME community mobilisation on the health and wellbeing agenda.
- 9 Develop, as churches, a black history curriculum with an emphasis on the struggles and opportunities of people of colour to help young people understand that the God of history has been and remains active in all our lives. Identify current key workers in essential services who are part of our churches, support them and use them as role models.
- 10 Nurture and support young people, particularly those in high risk groups. There are many specialist ministries such as <u>Bringing Hope</u> offering guidance and direction.