Report on the Caribbean and African Cultural Wellbeing Hub Launch.

From Knowing to Action

Providing wrap-around Perinatal Infant Mental Health Support for Black Women across Greater Manchester

Friday 7th June 2024

Supported by HOME START Manchester NHS Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust Funded by Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership CAHN Caribbean & African Health Network

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Executive Summary

Introduction

On the 7th of June 2024, the Caribbean and African Health Network (CAHN) proudly launched the Caribbean and African Cultural Wellbeing Hub at the Gorton Hub. This significant event followed the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (PIMH) launch in February, which laid the groundwork for this initiative. Dr. Faye Ruddock DL, Chair of CAHN, opened the event with an inspiring speech, introducing the theme of the day, "From Knowing to Action." This theme was motivated by the revealing findings of the Black Women - Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Care Services in Greater Manchester report, which highlighted the stark disparities and poor experiences faced by Black people during childbirth in Greater Manchester. In response to these findings, the event facilitated collective conversations from across the community and multi-agency stakeholders, fostering a collaborative approach to address these issues. Generously, many stakeholders have expressed their willingness to partner with us, further strengthening our efforts to bring about meaningful change.

The CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub is designed to be a sanctuary for Caribbean and African families, offering a comprehensive suite of services aimed at improving health-seeking behaviour and promoting better health outcomes. The hub aims to foster a sense of community among pregnant women and new mothers through peer support and shared experiences, which are crucial for mental and emotional well-being.

Impact on the Community

The CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub plays a vital role in breaking barriers of loneliness, isolation, and social stigma often experienced by Caribbean and African families. By providing a supportive and inclusive environment, the hub empowers individuals and families to lead healthier, more connected lives. The focus on education and knowledge sharing not only builds community resilience but also enhances confidence and self-efficacy among its members.

Promoting Healthy Behaviours (One-Stop-Shop)

The hub's programs are designed to encourage healthy behaviours across various aspects of life. From promoting mental health through counselling and peer support to advocating for physical health through dance and cooking classes, the hub offers a holistic approach to well-being. These initiatives are crucial in addressing the social determinants of health that disproportionately affect Caribbean and African communities.

One of the cornerstone principles of the CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub is to build a strong, supportive community. By facilitating interactions and relationships among community members, the hub helps to create a network of support that extends beyond its walls. This sense of belonging is essential for mental health and overall well-being, helping to reduce the feelings of isolation and loneliness that many individuals may experience.

The launch of the Caribbean and African Cultural Wellbeing Hub marks a significant step forward in addressing the health disparities faced by Black people in Greater Manchester. Through its comprehensive range of services and community-focused initiatives, the hub aims to transform the health and well-being of Caribbean and African families. By moving "From Knowing to Action," CAHN is not only raising awareness but also implementing tangible solutions to create a healthier, more equitable future for all.

Dr. Faye Ruddock expressed her heartfelt appreciation to everyone for attending and participating in this important event. She wished everyone a fun and engaging time at the hub, reinforcing the sense of unity and shared purpose that the CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub represents.

Services and Activities

The CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub offers a wide array of engaging services and activities designed to uplift and support Caribbean and African families. These include:

- Counselling Services: Individual and group sessions providing tailored emotional support and mental health resources, along with crisis intervention for those in immediate need.
- Antenatal Sessions: Educational workshops offering invaluable information on pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal care, coupled with regular health checkups for mothers and babies.

- Coffee Mornings for Peer Support: Informal gatherings where new and expectant mothers can share experiences and advice, fostering strong support networks.
- Infant Bonding Classes: Encouraging paternal involvement in early child development through interactive activities that strengthen the parent-child bond.
- Health Hour: Expert talks and Q&A sessions with healthcare professionals on various health topics, empowering community members with knowledge.
- Parenting Classes: Sessions focusing on effective parenting strategies and understanding child development, providing insights into managing behavioural issues.
- Father's Club: A dedicated space for fathers to discuss their experiences and challenges, fostering stronger father-child relationships through engagement activities.
- Dance Club: Promoting fitness and cultural expression through traditional and contemporary dance, offering a joyful way to stay active and connected to one's roots.
- Cooking Classes: Teaching nutritious recipes and the importance of a balanced diet, exploring traditional Caribbean and African dishes to promote healthy eating habits.

Through these comprehensive services, the CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub is not only raising awareness but also providing tangible solutions that create a healthier, more equitable future for all members of the community.

Highlights of speakers

Welcome Address by Dr. Faye Ruddock

This landmark event followed the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Report (PIMH) launch in February, which set the foundation for this initiative. Dr. Faye Ruddock DL, Chair of CAHN, commenced the event with an inspiring speech, introducing the theme of the day, "From Knowing to Action."

This theme was driven by the insightful findings of the Black Women - Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Care Services in Greater Manchester report. The report highlighted the significant disparities and poor experiences faced by Black people during childbirth in Greater Manchester. In response to these findings, the event facilitated collective conversations among community members and multi-agency stakeholders, fostering a collaborative approach to address these critical issues. Generously, many stakeholders expressed their willingness to partner with CAHN, further strengthening efforts to bring about meaningful change.

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families. By providing a supportive and inclusive environment, the hub empowers individuals and families to lead healthier, more connected lives. The focus on education and knowledge sharing not only builds community resilience but also enhances confidence and self-efficacy among its members.

The hub's programs are designed to encourage healthy behaviours across various aspects of life. From promoting mental health through counselling and peer support to advocating for physical health through dance and cooking classes, the hub offers a holistic approach to well-being. These initiatives are crucial in addressing the social determinants of health that disproportionately affect Caribbean and African communities.

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Dr. Faye Ruddock concluded her address by expressing her heartfelt appreciation to everyone for attending and participating in this important event. She wished everyone a fun and engaging time at the hub, reinforcing the sense of unity and shared purpose that the CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub represents.

Overview of the Culturally Appropriate Hub and Services

Sakinat Baiyewu (Head of Health and Wellbeing, CAHN)

Dr. Sakinat Baiyewu presented a comprehensive overview of the Culturally Appropriate Hub, highlighting its purpose, goals, and the range of services designed to meet the diverse needs of the community. The hub aims to provide a supportive and inclusive environment for families and individuals, promoting overall well-being and fostering a sense of community.

The services and initiatives to be offered at the hub include the following:

1. **Counselling Services**:

- Professional and culturally sensitive counselling services to address mental health and emotional well-being.
- Tailored support to ensure individuals from diverse backgrounds feel heard and supported in a safe environment.

2. **Antenatal Support**:

- Comprehensive antenatal care for expectant mothers, including education on pregnancy, birth, and postnatal care.
- Special emphasis on culturally informed practices to ensure comfort and understanding for all participants.

3. **Coffee Mornings (Peer-to-Peer Support)**:

- Regular informal gatherings to encourage peer-to-peer support and networking among parents and carers.
- An opportunity to share experiences, build connections, and strengthen the community fabric.

4. **Infant Bonding Classes (Including Fathers)**:

- Sessions designed to enhance parent-infant bonding through interactive and engaging activities.

- Fathers are actively encouraged to participate, fostering stronger familial relationships and shared responsibilities.

5. **Health Hour**:

- A dedicated hour focusing on health education and awareness.
- Topics include nutrition, physical activity, preventive care, and managing common health concerns.

6. **Parenting Classes**:

- Practical and culturally appropriate parenting classes to equip parents with effective skills and techniques.
- Includes modules on managing challenging behaviours, communication, and fostering positive development.

7. **Fathers Club**:

- A safe and welcoming space for fathers to discuss their roles, share experiences, and build support networks.
- Activities designed to empower fathers and encourage active involvement in family life.

8. **Dance Club**:

- A creative and engaging way to promote physical activity and well-being through dance.
- Open to individuals and families, creating an opportunity for fun, fitness, and bonding.

9. **The Hub (General Services)**:

- A centralised space offering access to all these initiatives, along with additional resources and information.
- Designed to be a vibrant and inclusive community centre that responds to the unique needs of its users.

Dr. Baiyewu emphasised that the culturally appropriate hub aims to address gaps in existing services by fostering inclusivity, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity in all its offerings. These initiatives reflect the commitment to supporting families and individuals holistically, ensuring they thrive in a nurturing and community-oriented environment.

A Speech by Clea Harmer, Founder of SANDS

Clea began by articulating the core vision of SANDS, an organisation dedicated to creating a world where fewer babies die. She highlighted that when a baby does die, Sands ensures that anyone affected receives the best possible care and support for as long as it is needed. This vision underpins all of Sands' work, driving their mission to provide comprehensive support and advocacy for bereaved families.

Clea outlined the core aims of SANDS, emphasising the importance of listening to, hearing, and effectively communicating with those affected by the death of a baby. Sands strives to ensure that everyone is informed about the safety and risks associated with prenatal death. This includes working closely with doctors, midwives, and hospitals across the UK to provide consistent, high-quality care to bereaved families.

- Counselling Services: SANDS offers both individual and group sessions to provide emotional support tailored to the unique experiences of each family. Crisis intervention services are also available for those in acute need.
- Antenatal Sessions: These include educational workshops on pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal care, along with regular health checkups to monitor the well-being of mothers and infants.
- Peer Support Programs: Informal gatherings such as coffee mornings allow new and expectant mothers to share their experiences, fostering a sense of community and mutual support.

Clea spoke about SANDS' commitment to training and supporting healthcare professionals. By providing resources and education, SANDS ensures that doctors, midwives, and nurses are equipped to offer compassionate and effective care to grieving families. This support extends to online support meetings and bespoke training sessions designed to enhance the skills of healthcare providers in dealing with bereavement.

Targeted Support Programs:

- Support for Black Communities: Sands offers targeted support to address the specific needs of Black families affected by baby loss, ensuring they receive compassionate and culturally appropriate care.
- Support for South Asian Communities: Similarly, Sands provides tailored support for South Asian families, recognising and respecting cultural differences to offer relevant resources and assistance.

Clea detailed the comprehensive support network that Sands provides to reduce isolation and offer multiple avenues for assistance:

Clea concluded her speech with a reflection on the importance of collaboration and community in achieving Sands' mission. She posed key questions to the audience, encouraging everyone to think about how they can contribute to this vital work:

Clea's heartfelt words resonated deeply with the audience, reinforcing the shared commitment to saving babies' lives and supporting grieving families. Her speech emphasised the importance of Sands' work and the need for continued collaboration and advocacy.

Holistic Needs of Black Birthing People and their Infants – A life course Approach

Dr Cordelle Ofori (FFPH)

Dr. Cordelle, the Director of Public Health, Manchester City Council delivered an exceptionally moving talk titled "Holistic Needs of Black Birthing People and their Infants – A Life Course Approach." The event, held at the Gorton Hub, gathered a diverse audience including community members, NHS staff, community organisations, and health commissioners. Dr. Cordelle's address captivated the audience, illustrating a profound vision for transforming healthcare experiences for Black birthing people and their infants.

The Life Course Approach

Dr. Cordelle emphasised the importance of a life course approach in addressing the holistic needs of Black birthing people and their infants. This approach recognises that health outcomes are the result of a complex interplay of biological, behavioural, and social factors that evolve throughout an individual's life. By considering these factors, healthcare providers can offer more personalised and effective care that addresses the unique needs of Black families.

In her talk, Dr. Cordelle used a powerful metaphor to illustrate the importance of diversity and tailored care. She described the beauty of a single pink rose standing out among many red roses. This imagery, inspired by a TEDx talk she had seen, perfectly encapsulated the essence of her message. Just as the pink rose's unique beauty is enhanced by its difference from the red roses, so too are the needs and experiences of Black birthing people unique and deserving of special attention and care.

Dr. Cordelle did not shy away from discussing the systemic barriers that Black birthing people face, including racial bias in healthcare, socioeconomic disparities, and lack of access to quality care. She called for systemic changes to address these issues, including:

- Training for Healthcare Providers: Implementing comprehensive training programs to help healthcare providers recognise and address their biases.
- Community-Based Interventions: Investing in community-based health programs that provide support and resources tailored to Black families.

- Policy Advocacy: Advocating for policies that ensure equitable access to healthcare services and address the social determinants of health.

She lauded the establishment of the CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub, describing it as a beacon of hope and a model for community-driven health improvement. The hub's comprehensive services, from counselling and antenatal sessions to parenting classes and support groups, embody the holistic approach she championed. By fostering a sense of community and providing tailored support, the hub plays a vital role in addressing the unique needs of Black birthing people and their infants.

Dr. Cordelle concluded her talk with a heartfelt appreciation for all attendees and stakeholders who are committed to making a difference. She reiterated the beauty of diversity and the importance of recognising and addressing the unique needs of Black birthing people through a holistic, life course approach. Her vision, much like the pink rose among the red, stood out as a beacon of hope and inspiration for a future where all birthing experiences are celebrated and supported.

Breakout Sessions of the Cultural Wellbeing Hub Launch Event

The breakout sessions during the launch event of the Cultural Wellbeing Hub were designed to foster collaboration, identify contributions, and gather suggestions for enhancing the Hub's impact. The discussions were structured around three key questions, resulting in valuable insights and actionable ideas.

Key Questions and Highlights

1. How Can We Work Together?

Participants emphasised the importance of networking and collaboration to enhance service delivery. Key points included:

- Networking is helpful: Building connections among different service providers to create a robust support network.
- Inform each other's services: Sharing information about available services to ensure comprehensive care.
- Co-delivery: Working together to deliver services, which can enhance efficiency and reach.
- Integration with maternity services: Ensuring that services are aligned with existing maternity care frameworks.
- Awareness and signposting: Developing a buddy system to ensure everyone knows what services are available and how to direct people to them.
- Access to training: Providing and accessing training to improve service quality.
- Engagement with voluntary and faith groups: Collaborating with these groups to leverage their expertise and reach.
- Funding and respect: Securing funding for the voluntary sector and valuing the expertise of volunteers.
- Brainstorming sessions: Regularly coming together to brainstorm and develop new ideas.
- Collaboration with other agencies: Working with various agencies to provide holistic care.
- Adaptability to demographic changes: Ensuring services are responsive to changing community demographics.

2. What Can You Contribute?

Participants outlined various ways they could support the Hub, including:

- Training (CAHN): Offering training sessions to improve skills and knowledge.

- Dissemination of training and resources: Sharing training materials and integrating this knowledge into existing resources.
- Infant feeding support (Padlet): Providing training and support for infant feeding volunteers.
- Culturally appropriate bereavement support: Developing support services that respect cultural practices and sensitivities.
- Time and kindness: Emphasising the importance of giving time and showing kindness in service delivery.
- Service provision at CAHN hubs: Offering services directly within the CAHN hubs to enhance accessibility.
- Investment in communities: Investing in community resources to break down language barriers and improve service delivery.

3. What Else Do You Suggest?

Additional suggestions to enhance the Hub included:

- Creating a directory: Developing a directory to link services and resources.
- Joining up with maternal mental health hubs: Collaborating with maternal mental health hubs to provide comprehensive support.
- Embedding in student training: Integrating the Hub's model and practices into student training programs from the start.
- Using the Hub as a model: Leveraging the Hub as a model for other groups and communities.
- Valuing recruitment: Emphasising the importance of recruitment and valuing the contribution of all team members.

The breakout sessions at the Cultural Wellbeing Hub launch event provided a platform for participants to share their ideas, experiences, and suggestions. The discussions highlighted the importance of collaboration, training, and cultural sensitivity in service delivery. By implementing these insights, the Hub can enhance its impact and better serve the community.

Keynote Presentation: Wendy Olayiwola

From Knowing to Action: Bridging the Gap in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health for Black Women – A National Perspective

Wendy Olayiwola, Maternity Lead for Equality and a distinguished figure in maternal health and a celebrated advocate for equitable healthcare, delivered an inspiring keynote address titled "From Knowing to Action: Bridging the Gap in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health for Black Women – A National Perspective."

The event gathered a diverse and engaged audience, including community members, NHS staff, community organisations, and health commissioners. Wendy's address resonated deeply with attendees, capturing the essence of the theme, "From Knowing to Action," and setting the stage for transformative dialogue and action.

Wendy began by emphasising the critical findings of the Black Women - Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Care Services in Greater Manchester report. She highlighted the significant disparities and poor experiences faced by Black women during childbirth, urging the need for systemic change. These findings, she noted, are not merely statistics but represent real lives impacted by inequities in healthcare. Wendy called on the audience to take collective responsibility in addressing these issues to create a more equitable and supportive environment for Black birthing people.

Wendy advocated for a life course approach to address the holistic needs of Black birthing people and their infants. This approach, she explained, recognises that health outcomes are influenced by various factors throughout an individual's life, including biological, behavioural, and social determinants. By considering these factors, healthcare providers can offer more personalised and effective care tailored to the unique needs of Black families.

Wendy outlined several key components of holistic care:

1. Preconception and Prenatal Care:

- Health Education: Emphasising the need for culturally sensitive and accessible health education, including comprehensive information on nutrition, exercise, and managing chronic conditions.
- Mental Health Support: Advocating for the integration of mental health services into prenatal care to address stress and mental health issues that can impact pregnancy outcomes.

2. Labor and Delivery:

- Personalised Birth Plans: Developing personalised birth plans that respect cultural preferences and individual needs.
- Supportive Environment: Ensuring a supportive and non-judgmental environment in the delivery room to foster positive birthing experiences.

3. Postnatal Care:

- Breastfeeding Support: Offering tailored breastfeeding support programs that consider cultural factors.
- Infant Care Education: Educating new parents on infant care, recognising signs of illness, and understanding developmental milestones.

Wendy did not shy away from discussing the systemic barriers that Black birthing people face, including racial bias in healthcare, socioeconomic disparities, and lack of access to quality care. She called for:

- Training Healthcare Providers: Implementing comprehensive training programs to help healthcare providers recognise and address their biases.
- Investing in Community-Based Interventions: Developing community-based health programs that provide tailored support and resources.
- Advocating for Policy Changes: Working with policymakers to ensure equitable access to healthcare services and address the social determinants of health.

Wendy lauded the establishment of the CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub as a beacon of hope and a model for community-driven health improvement. She highlighted the hub's comprehensive services; from counselling and antenatal sessions to parenting classes and support groups as embodying the holistic approach she advocates for. By fostering a sense of community and providing tailored support, the hub addresses the unique needs of Black birthing people and their infants.

Wendy concluded her keynote address by expressing her heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in this initiative. She emphasised that the dedication and commitment of all stakeholders are the driving forces behind this transformative work. Wendy called on everyone to continue working together to move "From Knowing to Action" and create a healthier, more equitable future for all.

Her eloquent delivery and compelling message left an indelible mark on the audience, reinforcing the sense of unity and shared purpose that the CAHN Cultural & Wellbeing Hub represents.

Janet Dexter: Local Opportunities and Partnership with CAHN

Janet Dexter, the Early Years Locality Lead and Directorate for Children's Services; prominent figure in the local healthcare community, took to the stage to discuss locality opportunities and the partnership with CAHN. She began by expressing her heartfelt appreciation to all attendees for their participation and dedication to improving community health. Janet acknowledged the collaborative efforts that made the launch of the Caribbean and African Cultural Wellbeing Hub possible, emphasising the significance of such partnerships in driving positive change.

She highlighted the various opportunities for local organisations to work together with CAHN to address the unique health needs of Caribbean and African families. Janet outlined the potential for joint initiatives, including community health programs, educational workshops, and outreach activities that can enhance health outcomes and foster a supportive environment for all.

In her closing remarks, Janet promised continued and increased support from her organisation, reinforcing the commitment to a long-term partnership with CAHN. She expressed optimism for the future, confident that through sustained collaboration, they could achieve their shared goals of better health and well-being for the community.

Closing Remarks and Appreciation by Charles Kwaku-Odoi, CEO of CAHN

As the launch event for the Caribbean and African Cultural Wellbeing Hub drew to a close, Charles Kwaku-Odoi, CEO of CAHN, delivered heartfelt closing remarks and expressions of gratitude.

Charles began by thanking everyone for their attendance and participation, acknowledging the diverse group of stakeholders, including community members, NHS staff, community organisations, health commissioners, and volunteers. He emphasised the importance of their presence, which demonstrated a shared commitment to improving the health and well-being of Caribbean and African families in Greater Manchester.

He highlighted the day's theme, "From Knowing to Action," as a call to continue the collaborative efforts initiated at the event. Charles stressed that the launch of the hub was just the beginning of a journey towards addressing the disparities identified in the Black Women - Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Care Services report. He encouraged all attendees to take the insights and connections made during the event back to their respective organisations and communities, ensuring that the momentum gained here would translate into concrete actions and improved outcomes.

Charles expressed profound gratitude to Wendy Olayiwola for her impactful keynote presentation, and to Janet Dexter for highlighting the importance of locality opportunities and partnerships. He also acknowledged the dedication and hard work of the CAHN team, whose efforts were instrumental in making the event a success.

In his final words, Charles reiterated CAHN's commitment to fostering a supportive, inclusive, and proactive community that prioritises the health and well-being of its members. He invited everyone to stay engaged, continue the dialogue, and collaborate on future initiatives.

With a heartfelt thank you, he expressed his optimism for the future and the positive changes that collective action can bring.

The Tubha Dancers Special Performance:

During the event, the Thuba Dancers, originating from South Africa, presented a captivating dance role play that emphasised the role of a mother in a child's life from pregnancy to delivery. This performance beautifully illustrated the journey of motherhood and the profound impact mothers have on their children.

PERFORMANCE - CULTURAL DANCE
Tubah Dancers

Volunteers Performance

The volunteers of the PIMH (Perinatal and Infant Mental Health) project brought the event to life with an engaging role play that vividly depicted a typical African antenatal clinic. The performance was crafted to showcase the vibrant and supportive atmosphere of such clinics, highlighting the cultural nuances and community spirit that define them.

As the volunteers enacted the various stages of antenatal care, from initial consultations to group education sessions, the entire atmosphere became electric with excitement. The role play emphasised the importance of peer support, shared experiences, and the strong bonds formed between expectant mothers and healthcare providers.

1.How can we work together?
2.What can you contribute?
3.What more do you suggest?

The authenticity of the role play resonated deeply with the audience, who were not mere spectators but active participants in the unfolding drama. The infectious energy of the performance culminated in a spontaneous celebration, with all participants joining in a lively dance. The room was filled with laughter, music, and a palpable sense of unity, reflecting the joyous and communal spirit of African antenatal clinics.

A Cross Section of the Stalls

Health Screening stall at the event

For more details about this event and this report, please contact Sakinat Baiyewu. Head of Health and Wellbeing, (CAHN) Healthandwellbeing@cahn.org.uk