Southend's Faith and African Communities

By
John Barber

Version: 1

Published: May 2011

"*Knowledge is power*" - Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Contents

Glossary[1]

Africa	the second largest continent; located to the south of Europe and bordered to the west by the South Atlantic and to the east by the Indian Ocean - comprises 54 independent nations (see map in Appendix 6).
Asylum Seeker	a person who, perceiving a threat to personal safety in his or her country of residence, seeks protection by moving to, and with the view to obtaining the right to reside in, another country.
Balmoral Group	a group comprising a number of men of North African and other BME origin, often experiencing mental health issues and other forms of social disadvantage.
Bullwood Hall	an international, medium security, prison, situated just outside of Southend.
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic (i.e. non white British, sometimes referred to as BAME - Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic).
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
Charismatic	term applied to faith groups that stress divine inspiration and spiritual gifts.
Community Cohesion	working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and the wider community.
Compact	a framework for partnership working between the voluntary and statutory sector.
EAWA	Essex Asian Women Association
Equality and Diversity	a term used in the United Kingdom to define and champion equality, diversity and human rights as defining values of society. It promotes equality of opportunity for all, giving every individual the chance to achieve their potential, free from prejudice and discrimination.
EREC	Essex Racial Equality Council
EU	European Union
Faith Community	a term to describe any religious organisation or congregation of adherents of a particular religion or sect, including those that bring together a number of groups and interests. Many, but not all, have their own building to base their activities.

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[1] the definitions that follow all relate to terms and acronyms used in this report and as understood by the author

HARP	Homeless Action Resource Project
Homophobia	fear of and hatred toward those who are attracted to members of their own sex.
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership (in Southend this is branded as "Southend Together")
Missing Community	a member of one of the newer ethnic minority groupings or a group in the wider community that suffers some form of social disadvantage. These are the very communities our services are often meant (or need) to benefit but often don't because these are often unaware or too disempowered to take up those services.
Multiculturalism	appreciation, acceptance and promotion of multiple cultures in society.
NHS	National Health Service
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds (term applied to asylum seekers without benefits).
ONS	Office of National Statistics e.g. holds census data; latest is the 2001 census. We currently await the results of the 2011 Census that was held in March.
PCT	Primary Care Trust - currently commissions most NHS services.
Racism	prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races - discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards such members.
SACC	Southend Adult Community College
SAVS	Southend Association of Voluntary Services
SBC	Southend Borough Council
SCHP	Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership
Secularism	a view that religious considerations should be excluded from public affairs.
SEH	South Essex Homes
SEMF	Southend Ethnic Minority Forum
Social Enterprise	a social mission driven organization which applies market-based strategies to achieve a social purpose, often engaging in revenue raising activities to do so
Southend Together	the LSP for Southend - a multi-agency partnership that is responsible for overseeing the delivering of the intended outcomes of the LAA.
SHAN	Southend Homeless Action Network
SREN	Southend Racial Equality Network
SZN	Southend Zimbabwean Network
The Big Society	idea initiated by the present government, whereby communities feel empowered to solve problems in their neighbourhood, having the freedom to influence decisions and act locally, in partnership with residents and voluntary and statutory organisations to achieve desired outcomes that benefit the community.
Turning Tides	an organisation within SAVS which works to improve the communities and lives of individuals who live in the more deprived areas of Southend.
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector

Acknowledgements

The author recognises the contribution of the trustees and members of SCHP - for commissioning him to undertake a significant piece of the research that has formed the basis of this report and for their encouragement, practical help and feedback. Many individuals have provided valuable information, sometimes unwittingly in one of those chance conversations that just happens to take place from time to time, but often in more formal settings: (one to one and group) meetings, telephone conversations, email exchanges and by way of material on the Internet; especially partners, various Faith and Africa representatives, and others who happen to have an interest or perspective. It is this input that has enabled this report to be produced. The author gratefully accepts these "all and sundry" contributions. In order to protect the identity of those contributing, sometimes quite personal details, most names have been omitted. Mention should also be made of "Faiths in Action", who provided some of the funding to carry out some of the earlier work, without which this report would not have been produced. Finally, during the course of this research, the author has encountered many who are unostentatiously "doing the work" (serving the most needy and vulnerable in our community) and dedicates his work to them.

Disclaimer

The author of this report is a member of one faith community, referred to in it (Christian Brethren), and is involved in activities that involve/affect our African community. He wanted to present an accurate, comprehensive and balanced report, invoking statistical data when available, not offering "his opinion" unless necessary, and saying so when he does. Due to limited resources (time, budget), a systematic (same) questioning of a broad cross section of the wide ranging interests represented was not possible and some fruitful areas may have been omitted. But this more informal approach did allow many to offer their input and as a result many clear findings have emerged, including many "human" stories that otherwise could so easily be missed. It is recognised there are other valid perspectives not included and not every perspective is shared by everyone. A key motivation for doing this work is that it might act as a catalyst for community action (and as a consequence some statements are less circumspect than might otherwise be the case). The author hopes this report will help bring about beneficial change. Finally, as well as not presenting the full picture, that picture is continually changing, and it is important the report is not allowed "to gather dust". Many of its key findings, though, will likely remain applicable for some time to come. He hopes others will fill in where there are gaps but, more importantly, be informed on the relevant issues and take necessary action. This report is freely and widely offered with this in mind.

References

Missing Communities Final Report: published by SCHP, June 2009 (downloadable from its website: www.southend-community-in-harmony.org.uk) detailing the findings of and recommendations from the initial Missing Communities research that took place between March 2008 and April 2009.

The continuation of the Missing Communities project provides the background to and context for this "Southend's Faith and African Communities" report, based upon an earlier Faiths and Africa report submitted to SCHP January 2011, which is available to SCHP members, as is another report relating to Bullwood Hall International Prison, case studies from which are also included in Appendix 8.

SBC Schools Census data and **SEH resident profiles** available from those respective organisations, extracts of which were referred to in order to inform this research.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp is the website that publishes ONS data.

A number of other websites are referred to in this report as places to go for further information.

Preface

The problem with writing something based to a significant extent on a personal perspective, using links and information (often qualitative) already known to or accessible by the author and, at the same time, strive for meaning and avoid banality, is that one can be accused of subjectivity and some will dismiss what is written. The author realises this might happen with this report. However, he has done all (in his view that is reasonably possible) that he can to ensure the material presented is contextually and factually accurate and that there is a fair balance in the perspectives presented. When in earlier drafts, people did challenge what he wrote or new information (or angles) had come to light (which continues to be the case), the author usually went back and reviewed what he had written and in several instances this did result in changes. It is also his contention that pure objectivity rarely exists among authors and all writers write based on their own particular worldview and presuppositions and prejudices and often their selection of material betray an emphasis that other "objective" authors may not necessarily share.

This author, like most writers, writes because he believes what he has to say matters and that people would likely benefit from reading what he has written. Faiths and Africa, as they relate to Southend, are two such topics, where often there is widespread ignorance. For many, this may not necessarily matter much but, it is the author's contention, when people understand the issues and realise the possibilities, it could lead to beneficial outcomes. For this reason he wants the findings in this report to be heeded and disseminated. As for faith, the various nuances are undoubtedly complex - it is a great motivator for some and a barrier to others. The amount of altruistic work done by people of faith, because of their faith, is enormous, and still more could be done. As we enter into a paradigm with state driven welfare programs reducing due to, if nothing else, less money being around, what faith communities do or could do, and some of the issues around this, is something important to consider. Like all humanity, people of faith have failings and foibles and often do not "sing from the same hymn sheet", even when part of the same religious set-up. This is just one of the many things that should be taken into account.

The emergence of an African community in Southend is a recent phenomenon (likely having happened over the past 10-15 years). The author recalls, at his secondary school in Southend, there being one black boy (who fitted in very well as it happens), and the rest were all white. Even after leaving school, and for some time after that, invariably if he met a black person, and here we exclude Asians, who began to emerge at that time, that person would usually be from the Caribbean rather than from Africa. The opposite is now more likely to be the case. But how much does the majority non-black population know about these new Africans and does it matter? Without wanting to espouse the merits or otherwise of multiculturalism, or any other ideology come to that, the author contends that, by understanding our community better (including our African residents), we increase the chances of doing things that help those around us, and it is important to do so. This report tries to avoid stereotyping. After all, Africa as a continent is enormously rich and diverse and so are the residents of Southend who are of African descent. By understanding their issues and taking action, we can together build a better community.

"Community Cohesion", "The Big Society" and "Equality and Diversity" might be seen as "flavour of the month" notions, with new priorities expected soon to replace them. "Faith" and "Africa" relate to two of the generally accepted key equality strands: comprising faith, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, but also social exclusion and carers. Understanding better and coming to terms with the issues affecting Faith and African communities might substantially contribute to developing all or any of these ideas, yet without necessarily having to abandon ones views or subscribe to whatever the current popular fad happens to be. The author is keen to tackle issues around faith and is drawn to Africa. As a community activist, he is committed to helping make his community a better place and championing the cause of the poor and destitute; in this case presenting (what he sees as) the pertinent facts and making the connections needed so others can act appropriately and benefit accordingly.

Introduction

The initial SCHP Missing Communities[2] project ran from March 2008 to April 2009, and was aimed at identifying our "missing communities", relating to them, establishing what their issues are and starting to address some of the needs found. The project culminated in a report that has been widely received. That report highlighted major gaps and unmet needs in the way our missing communities were dealt with, as well as gaps in our knowledge. As a result of additional funding, in particular that provided by "Faiths in Action", SCHP was able to support continuation work, including producing a report. After this, a further (this) report was produced by the author, including further information, aimed at a wider audience, which is less restrained. This work is ongoing and this further report is one of the outcomes. As with its predecessor, this report covers two main areas where continuation work has taken place:

1. Research into the profile, activities and issues of "faith communities" based in Southend and their involvement with and contribution toward helping Southend's missing communities.
2. Research into the profile of Africans, especially non-Zimbabwean, based in Southend, specifically to identify who they are; what are their issues, needs, views, hopes and aspirations?

The research gathering for both areas began in earnest in April 2010 and is ongoing, although a lot of data had already been identified prior to that. Due to the enormity of the task and the number of members of faith and African communities (as well as sub-groupings in those communities - often having different views on the issues at hand), this is very much work in progress. There remains scope for more time to be spent speaking with more people in greater depth. Given that this research questioned 50 (say) (from no more than a third of faith groups represented) and 50 (say) from an around 2500 African population, its value and completeness is understandably limited. Even so, every attempt has been made to present important information that is relevant, accurate and balanced.

The approach adopted has been to first find out what was already known, e.g. published in the public domain or held by various partners. The data sets obtainable from the public domain, or with the help of SBC and SEH partners, include ONS data, principally from the 2001 Census (see Appendix 4), current School Census data (see Appendix 5), and the resident profiles of those living in social housing. (To be discussed) all data sets have a restricted value, but there is little else around that is useful, that this author could refer to. Additionally, in order to build on what is known, we were able to glean from the available anecdotal evidence and to speak to those who could provide information, particularly those who are members of the communities we are researching. While questionnaires were produced for this purpose (Appendices 1 and 2), these were used mainly by way of guidelines. While many more were e-mailed questionnaires, less than 20 responded. It was therefore thought necessary to seek out and speak with individuals, usually in an informal and ad hoc setting and sometimes through chance meetings, including telephone and email exchanges, occasionally after setting aside time for interview.

Members of faith and African communities have all played a significant part in the development of SCHP and this provided a good starting point. Their contributions to the Big Event, held around June for the past 7 years, have been one of its distinctive features. While the two communities are addressed in separate chapters, there is a significant overlap. For many Africans, faith is an important factor and many belong to faith communities, sometimes starting new ones, typically Pentecostal-like Christian, although some are associated with local mosques. Some Asians, who came to the UK from Africa, typically of Indian sub-continent ancestry, in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of being expelled etc., represent the various religions of the Indian sub-continent, principally Hindu and to a lesser extent Islam. For some faith communities, helping African newcomers is an important service they can and do provide but, too often, many are unaware of or insufficiently exercised by these all too pressing needs.

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[2] "Missing communities" (as defined in the glossary) have been the focus of much of the related investigation of this report

Faith Communities

Introduction

Our consideration of faith communities is concentrated on: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, of which by far the biggest is Christianity and the fastest growing is Islam. These are, given the number of their adherents, the major faiths that exist in Southend. Members of all these faiths have participated at the SCHP Big Event, this author organises, and while it was possible to draw on links that have been established, it was also important to try to engage with the wider spectrum of faith representation. There are other religions not covered but, other than Buddhism, only include a few adherents in each case. In earlier drafts, Buddhism was omitted but, after being challenged, the author has added a new section. 75 years ago (say), Christianity (and to a lesser extent Judaism) was virtually the only religion identifiable in Southend. Until recently, its teaching has held significant sway over public affairs and profoundly affected the British character and way of life. That influence has declined significantly due to: dwindling numbers attending churches, immigration (from "non-Christian" lands, thus bringing in new faiths), religious indifference and a trend toward secularism and multiculturalism.

Religion still plays an important part in the lives of a significant portion of the Southend community, more than is often realised, including providing the motivation to serve our missing communities, for many, either by faith communities as bodies or as a result of individual contributions, including being a good citizen. Although most Southenders are not active in religious observance, most would admit to some extent following a religion[3]. Adherents from all of the faiths identified take a full part in the social, economic (professional, business, etc.) civic and cultural life of the town (often ahead of initiatives by the faith communities) and these are arguably legitimate activities in serving our missing communities. While faith adherents do much to help address social and community needs, it has also to be recognised that there are many who are similarly motivated that do not adhere to any religion. The practice of each religion represented is a major factor in the activities and pre-occupations of the different faith communities. Many of these activities are aimed at those who are adherents to the faith concerned. Particularly in the case of Christianity, non-religious programs do exist that focus on the needs of "outsiders", although individuals do serve the community at large in often outstanding ways, often on an individual basis, among all the religions, and there are many examples of compassionate activism e.g. providing help in case of disaster, e.g. Pakistan floods, Gujarat earthquake, and pursuing good causes. Interfaith dialogue does take place, albeit in limited ways, e.g. the work of the Southend Faith Forum. Some events e.g. remembrance, and services (and initiatives like SCHP) involve more than one faith. Statutory organisations, e.g. (locally) involved in Southend Together, often prefer to engage with faith communities as a single entity, not always aware of the wide disparities. "Compacts", that several organisations sign up to, define codes of practices and relationships between statutory and voluntary organisations, taking into account the particular needs and perspectives of faith communities.

This report treats individual faiths separately. They are fundamentally different in several aspects of belief and practice, and sometimes diametrically opposed, despite holding to common themes, e.g. the value of faith and spirituality and the importance of doing good deeds. While members do share common concerns and seem to get on with each other, notably at leadership level, there are major areas of disagreement and differing emphases and vision, even within groups sharing a common faith. Pertinently, while there is joint activity among those from different faiths, this is usually limited in scope and, most of the activities this research has identified are undertaken by those sharing a common faith or, as is normally the case, a sub-grouping in a particular faith community. Yet the potential of members from disparate faith groups working together to address communal needs is a significant one.

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[3] According to the 2001 Census, 68% of the Southend population declared they were Christian at the time (see Appendix 4)

Profiling the Faiths

Christianity

There are over 80 churches (or similar, e.g. chapels, mission halls) in Southend, plus a number of organisations whose ethos is distinctly "Christian". Most meet in their own building (although some hire premises to meet) for regular services and activities. While the tendency in recent years is for church going numbers to decline, ending up with some churches shutting down altogether (and occasionally amalgamating), there are a number whose average regular Sunday congregation is over 100, although most are numerically much less. While some traditional mainstream churches have closed in recent years, a number of, especially those with charismatic leanings and from the newer denominations, new churches have formed, including among the expanding black African population. Sunday morning worship tends to be the central activity; with decreasing numbers holding an evening service too. There is a wide range of activities during the week and this varies from church to church.

The Christian faith profile is continually changing, as new groups emerge and older groups decline. As for how to group the churches, this could be according to where churches align according to historical Christianity e.g. Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Free Church (of a variety of flavours - Methodist, United Reformed, Baptist, Brethren, Elim Pentecostal, Salvation Army, Evangelical, Independent etc. plus the emerging Charismatic and Black African churches) and other (e.g. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, whose views on Christian doctrine, e.g. regarding "the Trinity", put them outside of the mainstream). Often several churches exist in many denominations, often quite different in outlook. Considerable activity is found among most churches, both in religious and social matters. While a more culturally adept approach tends to be adopted these days, evangelism still is important for many. Some churches emphasise activities away from its main meeting place e.g. house groups and community outreach. While there is, as one might expect, significant synergy in beliefs and practices among the various churches, there is significant divergence also - from minor aspects of doctrine and views on church and spirituality to emphases ranging from liberal to fundamentalist, traditional to progressive.

One historic grouping, which has in recent years sprung up in Southend, is the Greek Orthodox, worshipping in the church of St. Barbara, St. Phanourios and St.Pauls (previously St. Pauls Anglican church) in Westcliff. This reflects the changing profile of Southend, particularly Greek immigrants but also Orthodox believers from Eastern Europe. While it is unlikely that regular, main service attendees exceed much more than 50, this does act as a focus for the (around) 200 people in Southend who associate with the Orthodox tradition. Another Orthodox (Russian) group has recently begun, meeting at All Saints Anglican church. Services and social gatherings for some of the newer BME communities: Filipino, Malayalee and Polish, are held in Catholic churches, with interest expressed among some of the African language groups. Several Black churches are to be found in Southend. These mostly subscribe to traditional doctrinal understandings and yet bring their own distinctive styles of worship and practice. Sometimes, Black integration with existing white churches is hampered due to issues such as fearing loss of cultural identity and mutual lack of understanding. Of the Charismatic style churches that have appeared in recent years, some have experienced significant recent growth, e.g. Kings Church, Southend Christian Fellowship and Southend Vineyard, and can often be found at the forefront of social activism within the town. Another example fitting this profile is New Harvest Church, which also has a large black contingent. An example of a church not particularly bound to traditional church structures and is also active in the community, especially among the poor, is "Church from Scratch".

While churches tend "to do their own thing", in the main, relationships between the churches are cordial and there are many instances of active coming together, e.g. joint ventures by the Chalkwell group of Churches. Organisations such as "Churches Together" do try to provide a platform for inter-church dialogue. One useful service it does provide is a directory of contacts for the various churches,

although this is incomplete. Another organisation bringing together several local churches is South East Essex Local Evangelical Fellowship (SEELEF). Neither SEELEF nor Churches Together appear to be particularly active these days. A further inter-church initiative (begun 2004) is "Love Southend". Its website, www.lovesouthend.org, which is regularly maintained, gives many examples of inter-church activities, many of which impact on our missing communities. One example is Street Pastors, where small groups of people, representing a variety of churches, patrol the streets around the town centre, on Friday and Saturday nights, practically helping those they encounter, from street homeless people to night club revellers worse off for alcohol. Earlier, it had been active facilitating a number of "urban regeneration" projects and remains keen to engage with statutory and other non-Christian groups to serve the community and to be practically involved in what is going on in the town. The issue of how Christians should interact with and serve the wider community is, for those involved, an important one. Inter-church meetings and other initiatives regularly take place under the Love Southend banner.

Projects such as "Healing Rooms" - healing, "Options" - pregnancy advice, "Bar'n'bus" - engaging youth and "Route One" - teaching in schools, bring together people from many different churches. But there are wide variations in attitudes, among churches, to ecumenical activity. Some view this positively and others see this as a threat to their own identity or as a way to dilute core values. Christian influence can be seen in many a voluntary organisation in Southend. Several, quite influential and prolific, organisations began as initiatives by Christians to address a particular need, e.g. HARP - homelessness, Fair Havens - end of life care, Trust Links - mental health, Southend YMCA - vulnerable young people. To varying extents, the Christian ethos and influence on these has steadily decreased (some feel to the detriment of those organisations) over the years, partly in order to attract support from non-Christians, but all still attract widespread support from among the churches.

Judaism

There has long been a Jewish presence in Southend, likely beginning from when there was significant immigration from Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, some via other places, e.g. London. Many Jews living in Southend are second or later generation immigrants, as well as a few who have converted to Judaism or through marriage. The average age profile veers toward elderly. Many / most are well established / settled in Southend and there are 2500-3000 residents, whose ethnicity and/or religion is Jewish. Unlike most other faiths, you can be Jewish and not believe or practice that faith. A small minority regularly attend one of the two synagogues that serve Southend. The synagogue is an important social and cultural centre, even among those who are not religious. Some belong to synagogues outside Southend, e.g. London, having moved to Southend, but remaining with their original synagogue to preserve burial rights etc. Of the two local synagogues (both in the Westcliff area), one is Orthodox and one is Reform, representing respectively, conservative and liberal wings of Judaism, of which the Orthodox is significantly larger. While there has been, in the past, moderate antipathy between these two groups, relationships are nowadays generally cordial, although there are clear differences as to how to practice Judaism, yet with some coming together e.g. for the purpose of caring. Jewish Care is an example of a charity that serves Jewish people, including running its own (high standard) residential care home and day centre. It works closely with both synagogues.

Islam

Until relatively recently, there was only a tiny Muslims presence in Southend, and no mosque where people could collectively practice according to the tenets of Islam. Nowadays there are three mosques; all well used and attracting a significant number of Muslims, particularly men. Various activities take place at the mosque, particularly the regular prayer times, and especially that of Friday prayers. These are at: West Road (mainly Pakistani) (the oldest), Chelmsford Avenue (mainly Bangladeshi) and Milton Road (the newest) - all the mosques being quite close to each other and are situated in Westcliff,

likely reflecting where the Muslim population tends to be concentrated. While Islam attracts British born converts or those born in Britain to Muslim families, most Muslims are from countries with a Muslim population, from all over the world (particularly Africa and Asia), including the main countries that supply Southend: Pakistan and Bangladesh. The West Road and Chelmsford Avenue mosques have taken over, respectively, Methodist and United Reformed church buildings, adapting the buildings for their purposes while retaining original features. While Islam would appear to be a cohesive religion, some have said the different groupings in Southend are partly due to "politics". The taking over of church buildings by Islamic groups (although some have been taken over by non-religious groups), whose congregations have dwindled, no doubt reflects the changing religious demographic of Southend. While we do not possess figures of the Muslim population in Southend, it is the fastest growing of all the religions, in line with UK trends. The ONS data from the 2001 Census showed almost 2000 Muslims living in Southend; that number has since, likely, considerably risen. Finally, during the research, we came across an "Islam" based group, functioning outside the mosques. There have been several instances of mosques opening to non-Muslims e.g. meetings, events, school visits.

Hinduism

Around 600-900 Hindus live in Southend, and a number of separate groups exist. Most originate from the Indian sub-continent, with some coming via East Africa. The largest of these grouping is the Southend Hindu Association, set up for religious and social purposes, and this is quite active in arranging programs and participating in outside events. Except for a very small temple, there is no place of worship for Hindus in Southend, and those wishing to partake in corporate worship visit temples outside Southend, typically toward London. A number of Hindu festivals are celebrated, often with considerable verve, in and outside Southend and these have both religious and social elements and seek to and do attract outsiders. The Ganesh Hindu festival, held at Southend sea front in September, attracts several thousand. Regarding the different groupings, these appear more down to personal preferences, and to a smaller extent ethnic / language groupings, rather than differences in beliefs.

Sikhism

It is reckoned there are nearly 100 Sikhs living in Southend and most will know and relate to one another. While there is no Sikh centre or place of worship, there is an active Sikh association that seeks to address some of the religious and social needs of that community. They meet regularly and have a full program of activities, often attracting a number from outside the Sikh community.

Examples of "Missing Communities" Activity

Christianity

If one were to look at the program of activities for each of the 80+ churches in Southend, these will typically include a number of activities to do with religious worship and other activities to do with Christianity, particularly on Sundays and sometimes also during the week, and some social activities. There will also be a number of activities that serve the wider community, besides that aimed specifically to benefit the churchgoers or with a "religious" agenda. It is beyond the scope of this report to detail every activity of every church and, for those interested, many churches these days have their own websites detailing what they do, and these can be referred to (a Google search on "churches in Southend" results in several hits and these are quite informative). Besides traditional activities e.g. Parents and Toddler groups, Children and Youth Clubs, programs for the elderly, women etc., there is a wide variety of activities taking place that impact on our missing communities, as well as individual Christians being involved in the civic life of the town, working in the wider community and as good neighbours and in the work place. By way of example, a case study detailing what various churches are

doing that goes toward addressing one of the issues (homelessness), that have been identified as affecting our missing communities, is given below, and there are others. While most of this activity tends to be run solely or mainly by the church involved, and as part of its mission to serve the wider community, sometimes including a "religious" element but often not, there are many examples of partnering with outside agencies and making resources, e.g. use of buildings, available to the wider community, and where religion is not normally involved. While sometimes "hiring out halls" is a revenue raising exercise, often the fees are very reasonable and many a voluntary organisation would not have been able to function without this availability. Examples of a proactive, partnership approach include, in the St. Luke's ward: an after schools club and garden project involving St. Luke's (Anglican) and a community café and health initiatives involving Ferndale (Baptist). While there are some areas of community life where Christian involvement is restrictive or non-existent, many areas are covered and Christians would like to be involved with most of those that remain.

Judaism

Besides social programs that are open to the wider community, there is little in the way of programs specifically aimed toward benefiting those outside of the Jewish community. However, it is noted that a number within that community quietly go about "loving their (non Jewish as well as Jewish) neighbour as themselves". Both synagogues lay on educational programs, open to those wanting to know more about Judaism, including school parties. Several who are active in the synagogue are also involved outside the Jewish community, in voluntary service, civic life and businesses that contribute to the life and prosperity of the town. The work done by Jewish Care is considerable, e.g. old people's residential homes, day centres and sheltered accommodation, and is of an outstanding quality. Until recently, the Reform synagogue has hosted an inter-faith resource detailing the varying beliefs and practices.

Islam

The Muslim community tend not to undertake programs specifically designed to reach out to the wider community besides that of showing hospitality and some educational initiatives. For example, the Open days put on by the West Road mosque and their involvement in community events have been very successful. Some of their programs, e.g. around education, including providing extra tuition for school children and health education, have attracted outsiders. The Chelmsford Avenue mosque has facilitated school visits and been involved in community consultations. A number of members of those mosques have been prominent and played a significant part in a variety of activities arranged by statutory and voluntary organisations in the wider community and have distinguished themselves in their civic involvement. One of the Pillars of Islam is to give a portion of one's income and show compassion toward the poor. While this tends to be on an individual basis and supporting outside existing programs e.g. to bring relief to disaster area, it is evident that this teaching is followed by many faithful Muslims.

Hinduism

Besides putting on lively, colourful cultural events that reach out to the wider community, engaging in social programs that include outsiders (e.g. some sporting activities arranged by the Southend Hindu Association), and partaking in other community events, and (individually) taking part in voluntary activities that serve the community, there appears little evidence of other activities undertaken by the Hindu community that are designed specifically to impact and serve the missing communities.

Sikhism

While Sikh adherents take seriously their duties of acting as good neighbours and involve themselves positively in outside events, the Sikh community, while putting on programs that attract and benefit outsiders, do little, it seems, by way of arranging programs aimed at serving our missing communities.

Issues and Concerns

Christianity

There is much potential for Christians (and those of other religions) to do things that benefit those in need and to fulfil their "God given" mandate to serve the poor and socially excluded. Some church leaders (and members) recognise unmet needs and want to act, but have limited resources or there is a lack of support. Some try to work with statutory services in order to better serve those in need (and do so successfully). Some recognise stronger links need to be made. Some see "religion" as a powerful driving force for doing good, yet can also be an obstacle. Sometimes a tension exists between wanting to maintain a "Christian ethos" and falling in line with an "equal opportunities agenda" and one to do with meeting some government agenda. Concern has been raised that churches do not have enough involvement with strategic organisations, like Southend Together and are they are insufficiently represented by organisations like SAVS, given their volunteer input, although the disparate nature of churches do not make this easy. Given the current austere economic climate and the Coalition Government's ideal of a "Big Society", it makes sense for Christians (and other faiths too) to play their part in helping bring about such a society, given both Southend Together and churches purport to wanting to better serve the community. From a Christian perspective, the decline in church going and the numbers of those who are actively participating in church life over the last several years is an area of concern, culminating in several churches closing and the buildings being sold on, sometimes to other churches but often for secular use. Yet at the same time many of the newly emerging churches do not have their own building and would like to. The changing profile of churches is significant as is the question of reconciling the "timeless truths of Christianity" and the new challenges it faces, and that of focusing on "spiritual" activities such as teaching, fellowship, sacraments and prayer, while serving the poor. For many, growth and the potential for growth and community involvement has meant embarking on major works to improve their buildings. Currently, Westleigh Baptist and Cornerstone United Reformed churches are building new churches and community centres with a view to providing facilities that can be offered for use by the wider community, underlining that church involvement in the community is a significant one. Several churches, e.g. Southend Christian Fellowship with its "Plaza Centre", provide excellent facilities for outside events. Encouraging the wider community to use church buildings can and does provide significant mutual benefits although, for some outsiders, a lack of neutrality and, in some cases, a restriction on the activities that may be allowed, can act as a barrier.

Judaism

No issues have been particularly identified in recent discussions. It seems that the Jewish community are happy to get on with quietly practising their religion, without resorting too much to having outside involvement, although there is evidence of wanting to be involved in the wider community in a positive way, for example taking part in the SCHP Big Event and other community activities. The Council of Christians and Jews is active, helping to bring together members of the two religions in a spirit of friendship and understanding. It has, in recent years, successfully attracted high profile speakers to talk on topical issues; and such sessions have been well attended and received. While the issue of "anti-Semitism" does not seem to be much raised these days, given the history of anti-semitism in the UK, recent evidence of a rise in Jewish hate crime, and the current tensions in the Middle East, the prospect of this arising in the future cannot be discounted altogether. The attention given to security, e.g. at the Orthodox Synagogue, demonstrates such concerns cannot be dismissed, and neither are these ignored.

Islam

No new issues have been especially raised during recent discussions, although recent attacks on local mosques have been noted and, in the main, these have been dealt with. While friendly and positive

discussions have taken place between leaders of local mosques and outside bodies: SBC, Essex Police and local voluntary groups, there is scope for strengthening ties between the mosques and the local community. The open days held at the West Road mosque have been instrumental in achieving this. The rise of militant Islam and global terrorism, where a link has been established, and the fear some have of the increasing growth and influence of Islam in the UK, especially perceived negative aspects, is reason why positive dialogue is desirable. This could reinforce the past good bridge-building work.

Hinduism

The need felt by many local Hindus to establish a temple / community centre in Southend is significant. So far, attempts to identify a suitable site / premises have drawn a blank. It has been expressed that more outside help would be appreciated, particularly from Southend Borough Council, to realise this goal. There is also a desire to extend some of its programs, e.g. sporting ones among the young people.

Sikhism

None identified.

Faiths in Action - a Case Study

The issue of homelessness is one that affects Southend as much, if not more, than similar sized towns. It is a seaside town, "at the end of the line" and, with its other attractions, means it attracts more than its fair share of homeless people. While semi-official counts of rough sleepers have not been undertaken recently, rough sleepers do exist. Yet it is the "hidden homeless" count, e.g. those sleeping on a "friend's" sofa, which makes this number significant. "Rogue landlords", e.g. identified in recent local newspaper reports and anecdotal reporting by those who are affected, accentuates the problem. Often homelessness is linked with mental health and substance misuse (alcohol, but also drugs) issues, and these are often both present (which can be a problem when referring to services), but other factors do come into it, particularly breakdown of relationships and people losing their homes. The plight of the homeless has long concerned members of faith communities. Several initiatives and programs have been set up by Christians to deal with the issue. The major organisation in Southend that seeks to help the homeless, HARP, was began by local Christians and still draws material and volunteer support from several local churches. One outstanding "homeless" initiative is the "Storehouse" project, overseen by Southend Vineyard. Large numbers of homeless people, and those with issues around poverty, visit its regular open sessions, held at the Community Centre situated on the Queensway Estate. Around 2000 people are on its books and 500 visit it each week. Activities include providing a friendly face and listening ear, giving material support e.g. clothing, food and working with other agencies to address some of the issues of those who come to the Storehouse. The work is continually expanding as numbers coming for help increase and the range of services provided expands. While there are some paid workers, most helpers are volunteers from a variety of backgrounds. The pressure on resources is considerable, indicating the very real need that exists. Extending activities and forging new partnerships is happening as the work is increasingly being recognised. The early support provided by outside organisations, especially Turning Tides, in helping to get the project going, was crucial. Support within the wider community and recent news of substantial grants bodes well for its future.

Some churches provide meals and drop-in facilities for the homeless, including Southend Christian Fellowship and Southend Salvation Army. A recent inter-church initiative is a weekly soup run that serves those homeless and impoverished. Some churches provide other related help, e.g. supported housing (the Ark Project, Southend Christian Fellowship - Isaiah project), and at least two Christian "social" landlords, with property portfolios comprising several units, let these to the homeless, with altruistic rather than profit making motives. Other related activities, run by Christian groups, include shops / stores providing free / cheap second hand furniture and openings for employment. Over the

Christmas period, a number of churches opened their doors to the homeless e.g. providing meals. Some triggers that give rise to homelessness, e.g. mental health, substance misuse, debt, unemployment and relationship breakdown, are also addressed by a number of churches in their programs. One church commented on the closing of some mental health services, which until recently were provided by Rethink, and as a consequence they are now supporting some of the clients affected. Some churches are particularly sensitive to the needs of vulnerable people and adapt their programs accordingly. An area under consideration, in a number of quarters, is that of developing social enterprises designed to help people back into work and fund social action and provide community support. The "Shared Space" project run by Church from Scratch is one example. A concern reported by several working among the homeless is, despite all the interventions, how do we deal with the aftermath of destructive lifestyles of many who are being served and reconciling this with Christian message of hope and transformation.

Another initiative involving Christians is the formation of Southend Homeless Action Network (SHAN) (see Appendix 7 for terms of reference), which meets bi-monthly and shares information among members. This brings together Christians working with homeless people and other organisations that have an interest e.g. HARP and CAB, plus "Supporting People" and SBC housing and benefits services. SHAN is an informal network but has been effective in sharing information and effective networking. One pertinent issue touched on by SHAN concerns the housing needs of asylum seekers, including taking the initiative by hosting an "asylum seeker" conference (see Appendix 3 for a background to why this is happening). SHAN provides a valuable platform for sharing information, ideas etc., resulting in some partnership working. A perception exists among many SHAN members that, while progress has been made, there remain many needs and opportunities still to be addressed.

Buddhism and China

According to the 2001 Census, there were 418 "Buddhists" living in Southend (Appendix 4). While our research did not engage much with those belonging to the Buddhist religion, other than one Western adherent who runs a meditation class locally aimed at westerners, that number is a significant one (there are four times as many Buddhists as Sikhs and half as many Buddhists as Hindus). There are a number of groups that meet regularly, including two described as "Tibetan". These meet in people's homes or hired halls, there being no dedicated centre. The nature of the religion differs from the others insofar the emphasis is on meditation rather than worship. There are Buddhist centres in and around London and some choose to attend these. There is a significant East Asian population in Southend (1000-1500), mainly of Chinese origin. Until recently, most were not from mainland China prior to coming to the UK, although that is changing. Mainland China has 1.3 billion inhabitants and is officially atheist. Religious practice does take place, often covertly. Buddhism and several minority "eastern" religions are followed together with Islam. There are also, notably, 50-100 million Christians. A religious profile of Southend's Chinese community is not available although Buddhism may be the main religion when religion is practised. There is a number of Christians of Chinese origin and some belong to the Chinese Church that meets in Central Southend (Clarence Road Baptist), where both English and Chinese is spoken. While Buddhism is practiced the world over, most Buddhists are from East Asia. How many practice their religion, after arrival in the UK, is not known. It was suggested that some Chinese people, in their attempt to adapt to life in the UK and make money, abandon religious practice when in the UK. During the research, we spoke with a doctor and his wife, who both originated from Sri Lanka - they are Buddhists. Both are community minded and were particularly helpful in advising how to help Sri Lankans with specific needs and are active in a charity providing help for destitute children in Sri Lanka - on a non partisan basis. While the author is unaware of any particular "missing community" activity among the groups that do meet (although mention was made of a group outside Southend that serves the homeless), it was pointed out that Buddhists beliefs require followers to respect their environment, do good to those around them and to be peace loving.

African Communities

Profiling Southend's Africans

There is a perception, which may be true, that most if not all of the 54 of the African nations are represented in Southend. To his knowledge, the author has spoken to representatives of at least 23 (likely more) of these nations: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Sometimes, it was one person from a particular country with a brief conversation taking place; sometimes, it was several persons and the exchanges were much longer. As for gender, it is likely that the portion of men to women spoken with was roughly equal. The age profile was mostly in the 20 to 50 years range; very few young people were spoken with. This is a notable omission as often children can provide quite different perspectives to that of their parents.

When the missing communities work was begun, many needs of its large Southend Zimbabwean population (possible approaching 2000 persons) were identified. A significant amount of work was done to establish links to that community and to research their needs, a report of which is included in the "Missing Communities Final Report". Subsequent to that, significant work was undertaken, led by Turning Tides but involving several community partners, to build on those links. This culminated in the establishing of the Southend Zimbabwean Network (early 2010). While a lot more is now known about Southend's Zimbabwean population, little work had been undertaken among the other African groupings. This report tries to identify what is known and to add to this knowledge through its findings.

Going back 25 years ago (say), if one were to meet a black person in Southend, more likely than not he/she would have come from the Caribbean. This is no longer the case; more likely than not he/she would have come from Africa and would be a first generation immigrant from that continent. When examining some of the ONS data, derived from the 2001 National Census, just 0.7% from the around 94% of the 160257 Southend population where data was gathered, were identified as being Black. The results indicated that around 0.5% of the Southend population were black African (a very small minority of Africans, typically from South Africa and Zimbabwe, were white) and there were just over 0.1% of mixed heritage. Indications are that the profile of African residents has drastically changed in just a few years. We await the result of the recent 2011 Census to find out what the current profile is, while recognising that the Census does not attempt to gather every statistic of interest (being driven by other agendas). Moreover, if the census were to again undercount and omit members of our Southend community, those from "missing communities" (including Africans) will be those likely to be missed.

While researching into what is already known about our African residents, it became apparent that there was not much known or available in the public domain. What is of significance is the Schools Census data, produced by Southend Borough Council, where every year profiles of some 27000 pupils attending Southend schools are gathered (questions being determined nationally), and the Resident Profile data produced by South Essex Homes of (around 90%) of those living in just over 6000 social housing dwellings. Another piece of work undertaken by SEH is to capture the stories of a number of BME residents, including several Africans, and these were included in the Southenders Exhibition held in early 2010. SEH have also sought to engage with Africans concerning their services e.g. via SZN.

Of interest from the Schools Census data (see also Appendix 5) was that:
- Country of origin was only included in some cases, so it was not possible to tell which African countries were represented.

- While the school population remained fairly constant over 3 years: 2008, 2009, 2010, the African schools population steadily rose 572 (in 2008), 617 (in 2009), 664 (in 2010).
- Extrapolating these figures, it would suggest the African population of Southend is approaching 2.5%. (suggesting a 400-500% increase since 2001, going by the National Census data).
- It does note the first language spoken in the homes of the children, including from several African languages, but further analysis would be required to interpret this data.
- When looking at population by ward, it does seem that Africans tend to live in the wards that are seen to be as most deprived (Kursaal, Milton, Victoria Westborough, West Shoebury).

Of interest from the SEH Resident profile data was that:
- While proportionally, African residents living in socially housing is less when compared with the population as a whole, that number is increasing.
- Of the 80 resident profiles seen, it is evident that most are Christian (a few are Muslim, did not specify or no religion), most speak English as a main language, but several African languages are also included, and some speak non-African languages e.g. French, Portuguese and Arabic.

Interestingly, the SEH surveys that gave rise to this data enquired of a person's sexuality but did not identify any African who admitted to being homosexual, bisexual or transgender, although a few preferred not to say. Issues around sexuality were not addressed in this research, although it could have been, given that Africa is often perceived to be less "gay friendly" and more homophobic than the UK.

The approach adopted in this piece of work was to speak with Africans from all sorts of backgrounds and those who work with Africans, especially those who have the wider perspective e.g. "community leaders". It became evident very early on that the task was potentially enormous and without conducting our own survey among a substantial representative survey (not possible due to time and resource constraints) that the findings would then be limited. A number of other Africans have been identified as worth speaking to, but time did not allow (some having been approached have still not replied). However, the information gathered is not inconsequential and it is hoped, along with the Africa interviews at Bullwood Hall (see Appendix 8), that this will go some way to further informing our understanding of our African neighbours and their needs, concerns and perspectives.

Africa is a Diverse Continent

When contrasting the different "Africans" that are part of Southend's community, the first thing to say is that the contrast is enormous and there are wide variations. This should always be borne in mind when considering the findings. The very recent upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya illustrate the volatility existing in many African countries. Significantly, the majority of Africans living in Southend are first generation immigrants with the average age profile being young veering toward middle age.

Racially: there are those of very dark skins and those of much fairer skins, i.e. huge ethnic variation. Some Africans, e.g. from Zimbabwe and South Africa, are of white European or mixed origin.

Tribally: many tribes are represented in Southend, sometimes several in the case of certain countries, a number of which where traditionally an antipathy exists between one another (although there is little evidence that this has significantly spilled over in Southend). Often tribes cross national boundaries. Often associated with the each tribe is a tribal language and this is spoken out of preference by the older generation, although this is frequently not the case among the younger people.

Linguistically: there are those who speak/write excellent English (understandable when English, as it often is, is an official language as well as being the main language spoken) and there are those who

speak good and (frequently) write poor English (understandable when English is not an official and/or main language). Some Africans speak English all the time; some speak it only when they have to; some speak their own tribal (or other European) language at home and English at other times. But like any immigrant group not having English as their first language, there are consequences of not doing so.

Religion: many religions are represented with many sects within those religions, especially Christianity and to a lesser extent Islam. The Christianity practiced is often of the more conservative variety and is exuberant and linked to African culture. There is often a heightened awareness of the spiritual dimension and this can give rise to conflict. Many Africans are very religious although some are not at all religious. In some parts of Africa, religion is a contributing factor to conflict; in others religion is not a factor at all. Because of the importance of religion to many, this is a factor (which is sometimes neglected) for the host community to consider when dealing with newly arrived Africans.

Culturally: many Africans come from Commonwealth countries that have been strongly influenced by British culture and what, in the past, Britain has imposed on its institutions; for others this is not the case. Some therefore are more adept at adjusting to life in the UK. The extent to which "traditional culture" is adopted and maintained among Africans when living in the UK depends on factors like religion, tribal loyalty and social class. Sometimes culture affect the way different Africans interact with the host culture. Some have discerned differing attitudes between Africans from different countries, suggesting this may be partly due to cultural reasons. More marked might be the differences between Asians and Africans, that could give rise to conflict, but it is wise not to stereotype.

Social class: there are those who come from "higher" social classes and/or are wealthy and those from "lower" classes and/or are poor. Perspectives differ considerably as a result: for example the sense individuals have of tribal loyalty and traditional culture e.g. the importance of the extended family and, for some, already being in tune with a western mindset and being able to comfortably to adjust. Some, among the less well off, are used to getting by with little and are more dependant on family etc.; others, among the better off, possess more materially, are more independent and "western" in outlook. (One of the minor points noted by this author is an indifferent attitude to time keeping manifested by some Africans, possible reflecting a more laid back attitude toward life - but this is not always the case.)

Government: some are from countries that are relatively stable and with good government and where there is relative prosperity, which is fairly well spread among the population. Others are from countries that are unstable, including those where there is bad and divided government and widespread corruption, economic chaos, civil war, tribal or religious or political oppression, (and occasionally) genocide and a tendency for prosperity to be concentrated among a privileged (elite) minority. Some come to the UK specifically to escape such things; for others this is much less an issue.

Attraction: (to the UK) - many (maybe most) are attracted by the prospect of economic betterment and a perception that the UK will provide a (relatively) secure, stable and welcoming place to work and live. Some come to the UK as professionals or to fill the skills gap. Some come as students. Some come to join families already resident in the UK. Some come as asylum seekers with hopeful expectations.

African Perspectives

Given the wide differences among individual Africans, for example identified in the previous section, to give a generic perspective on many of the key issues affecting Africans, many of which are included in the questionnaire (Appendix 2), and these were issues identified in the initial Missing Communities research, is nigh impossible, but the following is at least an attempt. The range of perspectives presented among those questioned would seem to parallel what might be found in the host community.

Religion

Generally religion plays a more important part in the lives of Africans than the indigenous population as a whole. Often the religion adopted is Christianity of the more expressive variety. While many form their own "black" churches, others try to integrate into existing white congregations from a wide spectrum of denominations, with varying success. There is a significant African Muslim population from among many of the nations that are represented. For African Christians, cultural considerations often spill over into those faith communities that are African led, e.g. supporting each other, incorporation of African styles of music and greeting, heightened understanding of the spirit world and a preoccupation (some say unhealthily) with status and hierarchy. Some Africans try to integrate into existing "English" churches e.g. in Catholicism, but some have felt unwelcome and misunderstood by English churches. Often the pastor is regarded as a highly respected authority figure. Most African Muslims likely attend one of the three established mosques, even though these tend to be dominated by Pakistanis and Bengalis. Whether or not this gives rise to cultural or other issues was not investigated.

Asylum Seeking

While the proportion of asylum seekers among non-Zimbabwean Africans is significantly less than among Zimbabwean Africans (as well as Zimbabweans living in Southend significantly outnumbering non-Zimbabweans), during the research for this report a number of African nations were identified as presenting asylum seekers to the UK, including countries that would be deemed as being relatively stable, e.g. Zambia. The generic issues and concerns around asylum seeking are discussed in Appendix 3 and these are pertinent to the situations that many of the African asylum seekers find themselves in.

Schools

The research was not conclusive as to how well African children do in schools. While culturally the children tend to value education and respect teachers (something instilled in their upbringing) it is not evident that they do particularly well when compared with white British children (or as well as Asian children) or manage to get to go to the "better" schools. Issues such as adapting to a new culture and mastering a language, not normally spoken in the home, are relevant. How to help first generation African children bridge two different cultures, who are expected to find their own cultural identity, is something that may be worth exploring, and some spoken to have expressed concerns that children are sometimes caught between cultures, adopting neither that of their parents nor that of the host country.

Housing

While some Africans own their own homes, particularly if they are professionals in stable employment, most do not. The uptake of social housing among Africans is less than for the population as a whole, but notably that proportion has increased in the last year or so, as a result of South Essex Homes (the major social landlord in Southend) engaging with Africans and 'the word getting round'. Most Africans access private sector rented accommodation, and with varying success. While some spoken to have expressed satisfaction with their accommodation, there was evidence of some who are living in homes where the service provided by the landlords would be regarded as less than adequate. A lower expectation, due to lack of knowledge of rights etc., is likely to be a major cause for this.

Accessing Information

One of the recurring themes, found throughout the research, was that often people are disempowered because they lack information e.g. regarding the availability of services and rights and expectations - even though service providers often do make attempts to engage with the African community. This bears upon a full range of issues, many of which are discussed in this report. The result is that people suffer when this could be avoided. Helping to develop community "self-help" type groups can begin to

address these issues (discussed below) and making smart attempts to engage with these groups can partly address the gap e.g. as has sometimes been borne out in the SCHP Big Events. It would be wrong to say this is a perennial problem among all Africans. Some interviewed have shown remarkable awareness of the type of help that is available but generally such people were very much in the minority. One is hopeful this information can be disseminated and that the younger generation especially will be able to learn and adapt. Besides identifying this as a "first generation" problem and the vulnerability felt when being new to this country, factors such as peoples' country of origin, often having experienced little by way of free services or officials who are willing to help, are significant.

Communicating in English

Almost all of the Africans approached for information spoke excellent English and communication was never an issue. It would be easy therefore to conclude that there are no issues around communicating in English, especially when comparing, for example, with some of the other newer ethnic minority communities living in Southend, e.g. those from Eastern Europe. However, speaking to some, it is evident there is an issue, especially with written English, and as a result some lose out on services. This is also linked to the issue of not accessing information. While most African countries represented in Southend have English as either a national or official language, there are some that do not, for example where French, Portuguese and Arabic are the main languages, as in Congo, Angola and Morocco respectively, for example. While there are translation services available, these are sometimes tokenistic and inadequate to address the needs. A better alternative, discussed for example in the Missing Communities Final Report, is English language training, for example as provided by Southend Adult Community College (SACC). While this does help fill a gap, many who could benefit still miss out.

Health

One of the outcomes of some of the earlier research among Zimbabweans was that it was found that there were a variety of health issues among that group of people that were not always resolved in the best possible manner. The research undertaken among non-Zimbabweans suggests that these face similar issues. People do not always access services due to a lack of awareness of what help is available and views on health, particularly mental health, that mean they are less likely to approach health professionals. The stigma of admitting to mental health problems does exist and this is made more acute when considering that some come to the UK already traumatised because of their experience in Africa and/or having to adapt to a new way of life in the UK and of having various setbacks and disappointments. The idea of approaching health professionals is sometimes less obvious, where such services were not available in Africa and other means were sought, including in the "spiritual" and "herbal" realms. The issue of HIV Aids is a significant one, including that of prevention. Use of condoms, for example, is a moot point due to religious and other taboos. In the past, the local Primary Care trust, no doubt mindful of health inequalities and the need to promote health among Africans, compared with the population as a whole, have employed an African Communities Worker, but the author is not aware of present initiatives aimed at Africans or much in the way of PCT data gathering. With the government planning to scrap PCTs, the question of how to address health inequalities among Africans is one that concerns. During the research, the same questions were posed to Southend Hospital, the main provider of secondary care, and with sympathetic, albeit inconclusive responses.

Education, Employment and Enterprise

Some Africans, with a professional background and a job to go to when entering the UK, adjust and do well. It is easy (as some have admitted) for such to ignore the plight of fellow countrymen who are less fortunate. Often people come to the UK with good experience and qualifications from their country of origin but are unable to make this count due to different expectations and requirements in the UK. This

often seems to be the case among men and this can hit hard given the traditional role of men being the head of the house and the main breadwinners. Often a view was expressed that Africans wished to work hard, being willing to take up whatever opportunity comes their way, including doing menial jobs or taking a more enterprising and flexible approach if necessary. All this would suggest a need for information being made available as what can and cannot be done and the various opportunities, such as that of retraining, including that of making the adaptation to a different work paradigm. Recently announced caps on numbers of non-EU workers working in the public sector, as well as the economic situation leading to jobs being shed, could add to the problems but could also create opportunities.

Racism

Most Africans, spoken to during this research, have admitted to experiencing racist incidents. For most, the incidents are relatively minor, e.g. name calling or being ignored, and are usually brushed off. For some, these are more serious, for example discrimination in the workplace and schools and of physical attacks, although no current cases were offered that could be specifically investigated. The dearth of organisations or services advocating on behalf of individuals that experience discrimination is noted, and it is evident that individuals who have been discriminated against choose not to complain, even though there are procedures to do so. Police generally report relatively few racially motivated incidents (it is likely that many more incidents do occur but these go unreported). Racial tension can and does exist because of differences in cultural norms, attitudes and expectations between members of the emerging African and that of the host community and, poignantly to some extent the more established BME communities, although many Africans have also reported a feeling of wider community cohesion.

Domestic Violence

This was not especially followed up. The concerns expressed during the earlier "Zimbabwean" research may still apply though, e.g. domestic violence does exist in certain families and it is often not reported and the patriarchal nature of African society may make domestic violence more likely, especially given the conflict with western norms and culture and the stresses of adapting to life in the UK. Likely a link exists between domestic violence and victims' immigration status (if not settled). The existence of the "Girl Child Network", based now in Southend, with a strong African link, suggests there are issues. While most domestic violence is directed toward women by men, the reverse can also be the case.

Cultural Adaptation

The circumstances around which individual Africans find themselves before coming to the UK vary considerably. A general trend seems that while everyday life in Africa is less hectic and that family and community play a bigger role in individual lives, there is less available by way of welfare and other associated benefits and services or help from officials tasked to serve the people or by way of material possessions. Official corruption exists in many guises and in some places is rife. People tend therefore to be more self reliant or on that of the extended family and community. All this, no doubt, affects people's attitudes when coming to the UK. Some come to the UK with great expectations of economic betterment and being able to support family back home and are disappointed. Some have said they had hoped to make money in the UK (including supporting dependants in Africa) and return back to Africa and settle; but it turned out that they were unable to achieve this goal. Most, once settled in the UK, choose to remain. There will be considerable variations in people's attitudes to music, food, dress, daily routine, the weather and other aspects linked with "culture". As with many new immigrant groups there is an issue of holding onto traditional cultural norms and adapting to the host culture. In the interest of balance, it should be stated that many Africans spoken to expressed overall satisfaction with their lives in the UK and have adapted to life in the UK with relative ease, sometimes better than the new Eastern European immigrants for example, often due to existing UK and language and cultural links.

Community Organisation

One of the reasons why Africans come to live in Southend is that often they already know those (frequently from their home tribe or extended family) who are living in Southend. While some will feel isolated, many do associate with those experiencing similar circumstances and share experiences and offer and receive support to/from those similarly placed. A few organisations exist that facilitate this (see below) and (possibly more significantly) many belong to churches that do offer such kind of help.

African Associations in Southend

While there is evidence that people from the same country often do know and do support one another, more often than not, these groupings are informal or semi-formal, e.g. arising out of attending the same church or being part of the same tribe. Part of the research was to establish contact with formally established associations and with those seeking to serve Africans living in Southend, typically when from the same country of origin. The work done among Zimbabweans, e.g. the formation as SZN, has been documented elsewhere and offers a model for addressing many of the issues and concerns raised.

In terms of organisations specifically set up to serve the BME community (besides those which are part of organisations with a wider agenda), there seems to be little that effectively addresses the issues identified above, from a wider BME perspective, or substantially includes Africans in their number. Sadly, EREC no longer exists, and leaves a gap when it comes to advocating on behalf of Africans. SAVS attempt to set up a BME group, with the potential to substantially address issues of concern, had successes and did show some promise but now it no longer exists. SEMF do not appear to regularly address many of these issues, although there is hope, especially with Africans recently joining the Management Committee. An offshoot organisation to SEMF is the Essex Asian Women's Association (EAWA), which also includes African representation and which do things that benefit African women.

Of the other organisations that offer help, CAB does support Africans with issues and SAVS provide resources and information (although the take up among Africans is limited due to lack of awareness and also these services will reduce after April 2011 due to financial cutbacks). A number of other organisations in Southend, while not necessarily targeting Africans, do also offer help. In order to plug the gap left by EREC, a new organisation has recently been set up, Southend Racial Equality Network (SREN) (see Appendix 7 for its terms of reference). SREN seeks to advocate on behalf of BME people, especially in cases of racism. It has already achieved some success, notably among Roma people.

Each year, in October, Black History Month is celebrated, in various centres in the UK. In 2010, Southend put on a number of events around the Black History theme, attracting, and involving in its organisation, several Africans as well as representatives from several of the statutory and voluntary organisations, including schools. While this only involved a small number of Southend's African population and only touched on the many issues identified here, the events were successful and helped many who attended to better appreciate African history and culture, and this bodes well for the future. Africans also increasingly take part, in a variety of ways, in the SCHP annual (diversity) "Big Event".

One BME organisation that serves vulnerable African men (and others of BME origin) is the Balmoral men's (SOS) group, which meets each week. This was an initiative of Southend Mind's Reason project and, has been supported by SCHP, financially and with human resources, and also by Southend Adult Community College (SACC) with learning activities. Mind workers had frequently come across North African Muslim men who were socially disadvantaged, often having issues around mental health and substance misuse, and were often living chaotic and/or destructive lifestyles. They sometimes found themselves unwelcome at the mosques although some reconciling has since been achieved. Numbers

attending weekly meetings vary between 6 and 12, although some 20 persons are involved. A number of personal issues affecting the men, e.g. around self-esteem, housing, substance misuse and benefits, have been identified and some have been dealt with (although it is very much work in progress), and as a result there has been some linking with agencies that are equipped to help. Part of the regular activities is education, including a very successful Arabic class that has recently been concluded. Given the vulnerability of the men involved, there is a lot more to do, including making the group more self reliant and self-sustaining. The group also includes those of non-African BME origins. A sister group is now being set up for BME women. Such groups have much potential to empower their members. As this is being written, the future of the Balmoral group is uncertain due to coming to the end of existing funding, but there is a determination that it continue because it is meeting a need. Another initiative that helps socially disadvantaged BME people, referred to elsewhere, is the Storehouse project.

During the course of researching into Africans living in Southend, the author has come across a number of Africans seeking to support, in formal and informal ways, others from their own, or related communities, with their issues, including those identified in this report. One, an Angolan, has already done some advocacy work among other Angolans and Portuguese speakers but, in seeking for a current update, he could not be traced. Another, a Somalian, is already doing work among other Somalians and has received some help from other agencies. There is potential for him to do a lot more and we await developments. Another, a Tongonese musician, provides dance and drum classes to young people, including non-Africans. Yet another, a Zambian lady, helps to put on the Miss Malaika beauty pageant and uses this as a means to empower Africans living locally and to support children living in Africa.

One of the key agencies for helping Africans to set up organisations for charitable purposes, and possibly to secure funding, both in order to develop local initiatives and also to help fellow countrymen in Africa, is SAVS, although from April 2011, due to funding cuts, there will be restrictions in the services offered. One experienced member of staff is allocated to provide help and advice, if and when approached. He has provided contacts for a number of organisations and there has been some follow up, although more research needs to be done. One such organisation seeking to become a charity (Bondeko (or brotherhood)) brings together Lingala speakers from Congo and surrounding countries (currently 17 families). Issues raised as affecting their community, include many of the issues identified above: asylum seeking, accessing information, communicating in English, further education, schools, preserving culture and cultural adaptation. Further investigation could usefully be done among the Black African churches. Some come to SAVS for advice and nothing further is heard; some are in the process of setting up a charity and a few have successfully done so (including the Southend Zimbabwean Network, already referred to). One such charitable organisation that shows particular promise is the "East Coast of African Community" (charity no. 1138767). From the Charity Commission website (www.charity-commission.gov.uk) we are able to learn that their objectives are:

"TO PROMOTE THE BENEFIT OF INDIVIDUALS OF EAST AFRICAN ORIGINS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS IN SOUTHEND-ON-SEA AND SURROUNDING AREA BY;
A) THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION.
B) THE RELIEF OF FINANCIAL HARDSHIP.
C) THE PROMOTION OF GOOD HEALTH; AND
D) THE PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN THE INTERESTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE WITH THE OBJECT OF IMPROVING THEIR CONDITIONS OF LIFE.
2) TO RELIEVE POVERTY OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA IN PARTICULAR BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY BY THE PROVISION OF GRANTS. "

This group has met frequently at a local mosque (several being Muslims), although the premises is not ideal for the purpose, and they are looking for other places in which to meet. They deal with up to 80 persons from a number of African countries, including Tanzania, Burundi, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda.

Part of their work is educational and health awareness, including among children and addressing issues around English. They often provide support for those who need help on a variety of issues.

Finally, something further should be said about the Southend Zimbabwean Network (SZN). When the Missing Communities report was produced, SZN did not exist, even though there were a number of individuals and groups who where advocating on behalf of and supporting Zimbabweans. Since the report, SZN has been formed as a registered charity, with its own actively participating trustees (see Appendix 7 for its terms of reference). It has already undertaken a number of beneficial activities on behalf of the Zimbabwean community as well as engaging with and supporting the wider community. While there is evidence of individual Zimbabweans becoming more integrated and settled in Southend, many of the issues identified in the Missing Communities report remain, especially around asylum seeking (further discussed in Appendix 3). The SZN dream of establishing a resource centre that can serve the needs of its community remains a feasible one and, in the eyes of many, a worthwhile goal.

Comparing Non-Zimbabwean and Zimbabwean Africans

	Zimbabwean African	Non-Zimbabwean African
Religion	Most Zimbabweans are Christian and many belong to Pentecostal type African congregations, although some do integrate into existing churches. Evidence of greater store put on churches as a means to address "non-spiritual" issues. Often more respect is given to religious leaders than seen in "English" churches.	Many non-Zimbabweans are Christian; some are Muslim. Most Christians join an "African" church; some an existing "English" church.
Asylum Seeking	Possibly the majority of Zimbabweans are Asylum seekers (pending, failed or successful). There are issues of distress around not having settled immigration status. Many who apply for asylum are turned down.	Some non-Zimbabweans are asylum seekers, from a number of countries, including stable ones.
Schools	Zimbabweans traditionally value education and respect the teacher. No evidence that children do better (or worse) than English children - and if anything they underachieve (e.g. how many Zimbabweans are at grammar schools?) Some problems reported with language and cultural adaptation and identity.	Similar to Zimbabwe, although Zimbabwe is traditionally one of the better African examples when it comes to valuing and engaging education.
Housing	Few Zimbabweans own their own homes. Some access social housing (some do not through ignorance of how to get onto "housing ladder"). Most access private sector housing with varying degrees of satisfaction.	Similar to Zimbabwe, although many may be less aware of social housing options.
Accessing Information	"Knowledge is power" - many Zimbabweans tend not to have the knowledge of help / services available and are thus disempowered. There are wide variations but not knowing what is available e.g. by way of rights, services etc. remains a barrier to receiving appropriate help, although this is being slowly addressed e.g. the information provided by engaging with SZN etc.	Some are better off than the Zimbabweans; some worse off - depends on community cohesion for people concerned, and social status and ability to adapt to UK life.
Communicating in English	While Shona and Ndebele are the main languages spoken but English is an official language. Most Zimbabweans communicate well in English although there are issues for some who are less fluent. Not being	Some are better off than Zimbabweans, e.g. if English is the main spoken language; some

	able to communicate in English, particularly written, also relates to the ability to access information. Not being fluent in English can dent self-assertiveness.	are worse off, e.g. if English is not an official or a spoken language.
Health	Health inequalities for Zimbabweans are a significant issue. Many do not access services through ignorance. Some do not access GP services or feel able to change their GP if not satisfied. Mental health is often a taboo subject even though mental health issues are prevalent e.g. as a result of adapting to life in UK and escaping some of the abuses found in Zimbabwe. AIDS is still a significant issue. Issues around asylum create barriers to accessing services, sometimes through ignorance.	Similar to Zimbabwe, although issues around immigration status may be less.
Education, Employment and Enterprise	Not having leave to remain in the UK and being allowed to work is an issue for some. Often those who can work, who qualified in Zimbabwe for a particular job, do not access opportunities in the UK due to issues like acceptability of qualifications, need for adaptation. People, often men, take lower status jobs as a result. Need for information and retraining. Often a strong work ethic exists. Many Zimbabweans work in the Care industry. Some evidence of entrepreneurial activity.	Similar to Zimbabwe, although issues due to unresolved asylum status normally do not arise to the same extent.
Racism	Many Zimbabweans have had experience of being racially abused but many see this as a relatively minor issue and is something that (they feel) can be handled.	Similar to Zimbabwe.
Domestic Violence	No firm evidence this is a greater issue than with White British. Domestic Violence is severely under-reported generally; likely even less so among Zimbabweans. Issue of status of men is of concern - in Zimbabwe men have more authority in the home; in the UK they are less empowered especially in the work situation.	Similar to Zimbabwe.
Culture etc.	Aspects of Shona and Ndebele culture are discernible although Zimbabweans are now much more integrated. Fair degree of cultural adaptation due to a strong British influence. Concerns for young people not establishing cultural roots due to conflicting expectations at home and in the school. Many examples seen of artistic, musical creativity etc. Distinctive food preferences. Building on known sporting interests e.g. handball and basketball, is something worth developing. Importance of extended family and tribal ties are noted. Notable differences in way of life in Zimbabwe and in the UK.	Will vary from country to country, although some of the factors identified among the Zimbabweans are generally applicable.
Community Organisation	Several groupings among Zimbabweans for self-help and mutual support (often churches play an important informal role). Groups not always well coordinated or cross relate well with one another, often due to lack of trust, especially where politics is involved. SZN is an example of a group with considerable potential to make a difference, incorporating diversity in the community.	Ways / effectiveness of individual African communities to organise themselves will vary according to country of origin / circumstances. Informal networks exist.

Conclusion

Given the large number of faith adherents and Africans living in Southend and the small number from each who were spoken with, it is evident that this research is not complete and there is scope for much more investigation. There are still faith and African community representatives, who this author hopes to meet with, and others that are not known to him, who could share further useful insights and information. Some of the matters raised in this report, e.g. asylum seeking, require further investigation and, more importantly, joined up action, in order to benefit those who are affected. Some of the issues identified in the early "missing communities" research still remain unresolved and, therefore, more work is needed for these to be satisfactorily addressed. Nevertheless, regarding this research, much valuable information has been gathered, often from several sources for the same topic, with respect to many aspects of the two main areas of investigation (Faith and African communities), including that which increases our understanding as to how each of these relate to missing communities matters.

While there are, no doubt, further perspectives that could be brought to bear, were these to be presented, those provided here are important and, likely, are the main ones. While there may appear to be a lack of much by way of new "hard" (quantitative) data in this report (although the report has identified and has drawn upon what available existing data could be found), the considerable amount of "soft" (qualitative) data presented is still relevant, and is often not to be found elsewhere in a cohesive form. What is contained in this report should therefore better inform our understanding of and response to those communities and it is hoped that this will happen. It is important this information is circulated to interested parties. People are usually empowered through knowledge followed by action, and this is needed in order to "make a difference" and provide much needed support for our missing communities. One of the hopeful outcomes of this research is as a result of identifying individuals with a heart for their community, especially in the African case, and the goodwill seen in all the faith communities to serve our missing communities, that they all can be encouraged to join with other supportive organisations in order to help the communities that they represent to be better served. There are many statutory and the voluntary services, which could and do benefit members of these communities. It is hoped that, where there is need, services to help meet that need are made available, including new services to fill gaps. Concerning the need for information, advice and support, organisations such as SAVS and CAB will continue to have an important role to play. With respect to the faith communities, it is hoped that, where there is "outsider" ignorance, this will be replaced by a better understanding of the faith communities that exist in Southend, for barriers to be overcome and the capabilities of faith communities, and their potential to further serve our missing communities, to be further realised.

While there is room to do more research, for example find out more what faith communities do for our missing communities and gather a larger, more representative, set of data on what Africans think about issues affecting them, and what those issues are, there is an even bigger need to address those issues identified in this and earlier missing communities reports, within a partnership paradigm. It is one thing to be correctly informed but another to transfer knowledge into action. We do well to affirm those who are active in these areas. It would be helpful if those who do understand these issues, and are doing or have the potential to do things that help our missing communities, to have and/or continue to have a meaningful voice at a strategic level, e.g. Southend Together. Working effectively in partnership, sharing information and resources, is very important, and often this already happening. One recent example that has come to light relates to SBC's desire to provide newcomers to the town with a welcome pack detailing what Southend has to offer and where to find help, for "knowledge is power". While there have been a number of conferences recently where issues relating to meeting various needs have been aired, it is important that participants do represent those active in the wider community and these deliberations are means to achieve beneficial actions that impact on where the needs are greatest.

Appendix 1: Religious Questionnaire

The Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP) is currently undertaking research into what our faith communities (faith organisations, churches, chapels, synagogues, mosques, temples etc.) are doing to support our missing communities (the poor / socially disadvantaged / marginalised and also members of our newer ethnic minority communities). We would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to me (details given below):

Name of your organisation (faith community):

Your relationship with the above:

(Optional and details not to be disclosed) Your name / address / telephone no. / email / website:

What is the purpose of your organisation?

What are the main activities of your organisation?

What does your organisation do to support members of Southend's missing communities?

To what extent do you support those who do not share your faith / values?

What other things would like to do to help Southend's missing communities?

What is preventing you from doing this?

To what extent should faith communities be involved helping missing communities (and why)?

Please return the completed form to John Barber by 12th December 2010 (details included).
If you wish to contact me on the issues raised above please email or telephone.
Thank you for your cooperation - Please feel free to provide relevant additional information.

Appendix 2: Africa Questionnaire

The Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP) is currently undertaking research to profile residents who live in Southend, who are of (non-Zimbabwean) African origin. We would like to know which countries are represented in Southend (and how many in each) and specific issues that affect and perspectives of members of these communities. We would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return to me (details given below):

African community(s) commented on:

(Optional and details not to be disclosed) Your name / address / telephone no. / email / website:

Please describe the part of your African community living in Southend that you know about:

Please indicate to what extent the following are issues affecting your African community:
(0=not at all, 5=to a major extent - (optional) add further explanation if you wish)

Religion: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Asylum Seeking: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Schools: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Housing: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Accessing Information: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Communicating in English: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Health: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Adult Education: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Employment and Enterprise: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Racism: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Domestic Violence: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Organising your Community: 0 1 2 3 4 5

What do you feel are the main differences (if any) between being of African origin living in Southend and of white British origin?

Please return the completed form to John Barber by 12th December 2010 (details included).
If you wish to contact me on the issues raised above please email or telephone.
Thank you for your cooperation - Please feel free to provide relevant additional information.

Appendix 3: Asylum Seeker Issues

In his early "Missing Communities" research, the author spent a significant amount of time considering asylum seeker issues, affecting as it does many in our missing communities. While many immigrants, including asylum seekers, settle well when coming to the UK, some do not, and the sometimes problematic picture painted at the time, largely, remains true. In some ways it has become bleaker e.g. due to the cutting down of staff numbers in organisations, like UKBA, that deal with asylum seekers and their claims, and the reducing of the legal aid budget, considered by some to be inadequate to begin with, due to the government recent imposition of financial cuts. Some organisations that have provided free advice in the past, such as Refugees and Migrant Justice, no longer operate. Yet always there is hope, and this is evidenced by the number of organisations and projects that are engaged nationally in activities designed to benefit asylum seekers, some of which have sprung up relatively recently.

The asylum seeker paradigm is a complex one and is subject to frequent change, especially with respect to the changing rules governing immigration to the UK and how those claiming asylum are dealt with. While the scope of this current research did not extend specifically to asylum seeker issues, the fact that some Africans are asylum seekers and are members of faith communities that often find themselves supporting and advocating on behalf of asylum seekers, because they tend to often attract such people, makes this issue a particularly relevant one for this report. The issue around asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) is a particularly poignant one for often, not only do these people not qualify to claim benefits, they are not allowed to work legally. Some see that the only way to escape destitution is to live on charity or to break the law. While one might expect systems put in place preventing poverty if people were to engage with these, evidence of need, bordering on desperate, seems to be all too frequent. Some of the issues faced by "NRPF people" are the same as those facing some immigrants not in that category, and these include escaping poverty, accessing health services, finding suitable housing, being able to navigate around the system that appears daunting, issues around education etc. Since the "Missing Communities Final Report", there has been a change in government but no improvement, it seems, in the way asylum seekers are dealt with or in public understanding. Immigration is an emotive subject and much of the debate has focused on restricting and controlling immigration, with little political mileage to be gained by trying to improve the lot of asylum seekers. It still begs the question: how should asylum seekers be treated? Some would assert that the system that deals with asylum applications is unfair because the decisions made often seem arbitrary as to whether or not a claim is upheld, unwieldy because of the time taken to reach a decision and frustrating due to the difficulties in engaging with the system, especially if missing the requisite paperwork and proofs to substantiate a claim, and distressing because of the hardship and anxiety experienced while waiting for a decision, including being unable to claim benefits or work. This is then made worse when claims are rejected and claimants are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin. For many, not knowing where to turn for help or settle down to "normal" life creates considerable strains, and even when claims are upheld, issues around integration and settling down to decent a quality of life remain.

One recent but significant government announcement was that it is intended for Zimbabwean asylum seekers to be sent back to Zimbabwe, because the stability of that country has improved. A number of Zimbabweans have challenged this perception and it is still not yet clear what is going to happen. While people from a number of different African nations are affected, as well as a number of countries outside of Africa, there are more asylum seekers from Zimbabwe than from elsewhere. It is not clear how many asylum seekers choose to disengage with the system, but some do, including a few who are working illegally, and this understandably has repercussions. Some disengage due to a sense of abandonment as any gains from engaging are outweighed by the bureaucratic restrictions. Important questions include: how many Zimbabweans are in need and what is their precise status? Although not able currently to quantify the need because of the complex nature, it nevertheless is a substantial one.

An important source of help is the CAB through its immigration specialist. While the CAB does advise, there is often a dearth of help, e.g. sympathetic solicitors, advocacy services, welfare organisations, it can refer clients to, that might help resolve the frequently presented asylum related issues, although individuals and faith and other groups can be supportive. Government agencies can be referred to, e.g. UKBA (www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/asylum/helpandadvice) provides restricted help. Some asylum seekers fear to engage with agencies like the UKBA since these also police the way asylum seekers are expected to act and take action if anything appears remiss. While statutory services have to engage with the UKBA, some VCS representatives have reported negative responses and a disinclination to engage. There are local services that can and do provide limited help, as has been proved in the case of the SBC asylum seeker team, whose remit is to help those classed as NRPF and with HIV and other community care needs, the housing options team, who will try to help those with housing needs, even if only by making known what is available, and the "Supporting People" service that maybe able to offer limited practical help. Within SBC / Southend Together, there are other services with an interest in asylum issues e.g. school welfare, equality and diversity, partnership and community cohesion, as well as statutory services around health and social care (in many guises), education (child and adult), community safety etc. But there have been successful outcomes when people have engaged with some of these services, especially when issues have concerned children and health. But often, given the main remit of statutory services is to focus on doing what they have to do by law, they do little more than advise and refer those seeking help to the VCS, who while maybe wanting to help, are restricted, often due to a lack of resources and expertise. As a result, vulnerable people can and do fall through the net.

The need to understand issues, identify help available, join up those who can and want to help, ensure the message is disseminated to the public and those affected, is considerable. During the course of this research, the author and the CAB immigration specialist met and shared perspectives and information with a Red Cross worker, who is researching into asylum seeker issues that affect Essex. We keenly await the report and the Red Cross adding to the services for local asylum seekers. The work of Amnesty International, with its strap line that "destitution should play no part in the asylum process", (www.stillhuman.org.uk), the NRPF (local authorities) network (www.islington.gov.uk/nrpfnetwork) and the Immigration Advisory Service (www.iasuk.org), a charity providing representation and advice in immigration and asylum law, and the Refugee Council (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk), that provides services to asylum seekers, is significant. The Boaz Trust (www.boaztrust.org.uk) helps NRPF asylum seekers in Manchester, e.g. with accommodation needs, and facilitates a national NRPF network. The author recently attended a national conference that it had arranged and found it to be especially helpful.

As a way forward toward gaining a greater understanding of the issues, finding out what is happening locally to support the needs of asylum seekers, especially those experiencing destitution, and bringing together interested parties to improve the lot of asylum seekers within a partnership paradigm, a conference is being convened for his purpose. The date set is 25 May 2011. This has been initiated by SHAN but several organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors are now involved. The conference will include speakers who are expert in related aspects and/or have experienced first hand some of the issues, workshops to look at issues around: immigration law, NRPF help, survival strategy, health inequalities, mental health, children and young people, domestic violence and housing, with networking and plenary sessions in which participants can ask questions and seek solutions that may address the gaps in service provision. Rather than being an end in itself, it is hoped that the conference will be a catalyst for further action to help and empower this needy group, and to do so within the law.

What has been written are rudimentary notes aimed at presenting the current situation and some of the pertinent facts. Few, if any, fully understand all the key issues affecting asylum seekers, and there is much misinformation and apathy. There are wide service gaps and insufficient help, particularly of the "joined up" variety, that could be brought to bear. The needs, often complex, of asylum seekers experiencing distress, are considerable; but so is the need and opportunity to help them and offer hope.

Appendix 4: 2001 Census data - Ethnicity and Religion

The following information was obtained from the ONS website and relates to Southend. We await the profile that will relate to the April 2011 census and expect to see significant changes. It should be borne in mind that there is likely to be considerable discrepancies between the number of those who state they belong to a particular religion and the number of those who actively practice that religion. For example, only a small proportion of the 110000 who claim to be Christian actually attend church regularly. Also, since the census results are based on the return of the main house occupant, these will include children who, arguably, in many cases, have yet to decide whether they will follow their parent's religion. It should also be noted that there is a distinction to be made between religion as a way to label people (generally favoured in surveys) and that which relates to active faith (usually a lot harder to gauge).

Southend - Religious and Ethnic Breakdowns from the 2001 Census

Ethnic Group (all people)	Value	Eng & Wal - Rank/376[4]
White	153483	251
Place of birth (all people)	**Value**	**Eng & Wal - Rank/376**
Born in UK	150623	233
Born elsewhere in EU (inc Rep Ireland)	3107	146
Born outside EU	6527	135
Religion (all people)	**Value**	**Eng & Wal - Rank/376**
Christian	110016	309
Buddhist	418	98
Hindu	935	101
Jewish	2721	17
Muslim	1958	108
Sikh	103	218
Other	610	63
No religion	30195	42
Religion not stated	13301	61

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/00kf.asp#ethnic

Ethnic breakdown	Southend	England
All People (Persons)	160,257	49,138,831
White (Persons)	153,483	44,679,361
White: British (Persons)	148,912	42,747,136
White: Irish (Persons)	1,619	624,115
White: Other White (Persons)	2,952	1,308,110
Mixed (Persons)	1,768	643,373
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (Persons)	520	231,424
Mixed: White and Black African (Persons)	237	76,498
Mixed: White and Asian (Persons)	606	184,014
Mixed: Other Mixed (Persons)	405	151,437
Asian or Asian British (Persons)	2,712	2,248,289
Asian or Asian British: Indian (Persons)	1,223	1,028,546
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani (Persons)	694	706,539
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (Persons)	457	275,394
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian (Persons)	338	237,810
Black or Black British (Persons)	1,107	1,132,508
Black or Black British: Caribbean (Persons)	295	561,246
Black or Black British: African (Persons)	739	475,938
Black or Black British: Other Black (Persons)	73	95,324
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group (Persons)	1,187	435,300
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese (Persons)	799	220,681
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other Ethnic Group (Persons)	388	214,619

http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=3&b=276844&c=Southend&d=13&e=16&g=405474&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1291752448718&enc=1&dsFamilyId=87

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[4] Southend is one of 376 areas in which statistics were gathered. The column ranks where Southend stands re. the other 375.

Appendix 5: Africans by Ward (School Data Only)

Southend-On-Sea Ward Map
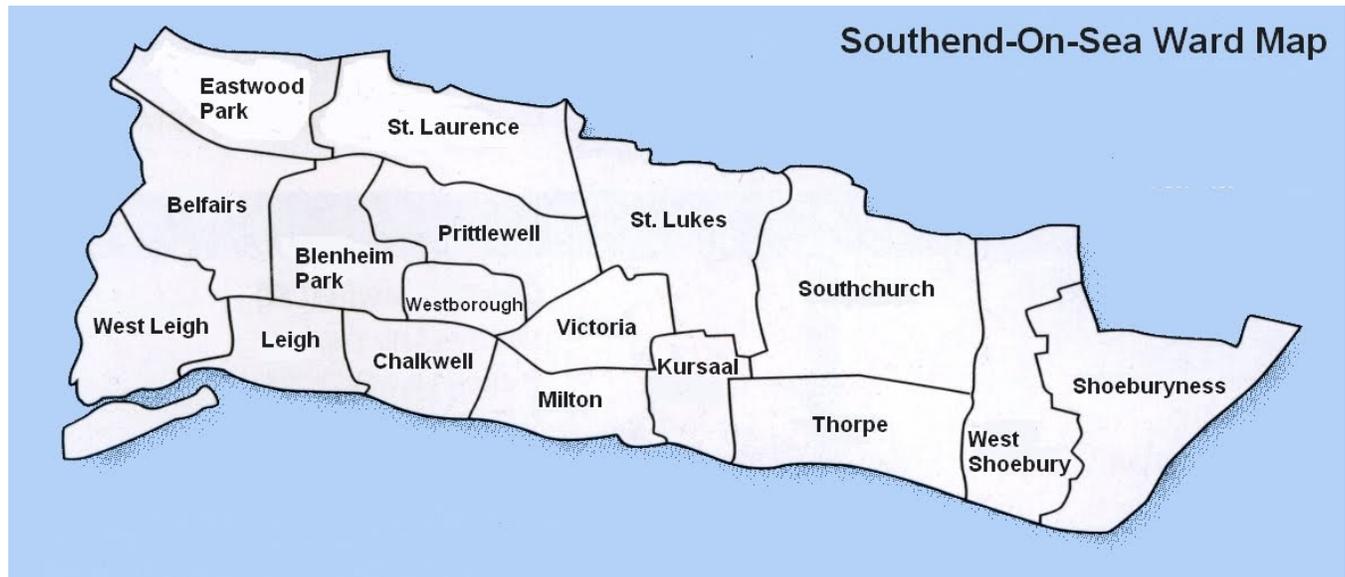
Extract from the Southend School Census Data

Note: care needs to be taken interpreting this data - one cannot necessarily extrapolate for the African population as a whole and ward numbers here refers to children going to a school in the ward. The figures do indicate the rising African school population and its concentration toward central Southend.

Total No. of Africans (2008)	Total No. of Africans (2009)	Total No. of Africans (2010)	Total No. (all pupils) (2010)	Name of Ward
81	105	136	3198	Unknown
4	4	7	1024	Belfairs
14	16	17	1623	Blenheim Park
14	10	13	914	Chalkwell
7	10	11	1021	Eastwood Park
71	77	74	1622	Kursaal
4	1	0	1144	Leigh
66	55	52	939	Milton
37	47	47	1380	Prittlewell
23	26	23	1769	Shoeburyness
27	27	31	1556	Southchurch
11	13	14	1182	St Laurence
40	51	56	2001	St. Luke's
9	8	6	1217	Thorpe
66	71	68	1565	Victoria
3	3	3	1162	West Leigh
43	42	51	1840	West Shoebury
52	51	55	1821	Westborough
572	617	664	26978	Total

Appendix 6: Map of Africa

Africa
- International Boundary
- Road
- River
- ★ National Capital
- • City or Town

0 400 1000 KM
0 400 1000 Miles

© 2007 Geology.com

Appendix 7: Organisations - Terms of Reference

Southend Race Equality Network (SREN)
- To provide a network, made up of citizens and representatives of local BAME Community Groups from Southend, committed to race equality.
- To advise organisations in relation to the implementation of race equality legislation and public duties.
- To improve access for BME communities - employment and service delivery across Southend.
- To promote a better understanding of race equality issues across Southend through training and education.
- To provide a network that is an integral part of the public and voluntary and community sector that discusses and implements issues of race equality and contributes to public duty implementation.

Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP)
- To celebrate the diversity, culture and heritage of the local community.
- To promote a greater understanding and tolerance within the community.
- To break down barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding.
- To encourage and facilitate partnership working among community groups for their mutual benefit.

Southend Homeless Action Network (SHAN)
- To meet from time to time, but a minimum of four times a year, to discuss homeless issues with a view to finding and implementing solutions and do so in a spirit of partnership.
- To provide a compassionate network, based on trust and understanding, that will support members in the work they do concerning homeless and other vulnerable persons.
- To understand the issues around homeless people, including how needs are being met or not being met in Southend, and propose, support and help implement practical and enduring solutions, including the identification and promotion of good practice.
- To understand government (central and local) policies with respect to homeless people and specifically to engage and partner with Southend Borough Council in the implementation of its Homelessness Prevention Strategy and whenever needs are identified or opportunities arise.
- To share and disseminate information regarding homelessness and issues affecting those who are homeless, within SHAN and to those who are in contact with SHAN members.

Southend Zimbabwean Network (SZN)
- To bring together the Zimbabwean community living in Southend and District.
- To represent the Zimbabwean community in its dealings with the statutory authorities, voluntary bodies and other organizations.
- To provide information and other services to the Zimbabwean community.
- To encourage the Zimbabwean community to integrate into the wider local community.
- To welcome members of the local community to support the objectives of SZN.
- To ensure the voice of the Zimbabwean community is heard it its dealings with the public.
- To act and represent individual Zimbabweans' interests as and when required.
- To facilitate any other activities that are in the best interest of the Zimbabwean community.
- To raise funds.

Appendix 8: Bullwood Hall - Case Studies

The following cases studies are presented following interviews conducted among inmates of African origin at Bullwood Hall international (medium security) prison between April and September 2010, and were included in the report that was earlier submitted to SCHP. The stories told by the inmates often tie in with what others in the African community, not involved in criminal activity, have said. Identities have not been revealed to protect individuals taking part. The cooperation of prison staff and inmates was much appreciated. At the time of writing, the future of Bullwood Hall is uncertain. While there is opportunity for involvement by those outside of the prison (and this does happen), given most prisoners are not released locally, there is less opportunity to build up local support for individual prisoners.

Case 1: Michael (Ghana)
Michael came to UK when he was young in order to study and now has a home, wife and child and is well settled. He is now able to relate to life in the UK better than he can to that in Ghana. He works in the financial services industry. He is in prison for fraud. He recounted incidents of encountering racial discrimination. He notes that not having good English or knowing ones rights adds to the problems of some of the inmates. In the prison he has a job to advocate on behalf of other prisoners. He has noted that many of those in prison who are without the right to settle in the UK would prefer to go back to country of origin if it can be arranged. He has concerns about prisoner resettlement and feels they would be better off if placed within their own community. He feels there is a role that churches can play in this regard. He would like to see more halfway houses but recognises these are few and far between. He identifies that for those who are released not having work and the lack of suitable supervision are two reasons why some reoffend. He notes that Africans tend to be proud people who want to work yet are often hindered. He further notes that women tend to push the boundaries more and are more adaptable but this can create tension in the marital homes and lead to domestic violence.

Case 2: Mohammed (Somalia), aged 22
Mohammed was born in Kenya. His family fled there due to the situation that prevailed at the time. The family came to and settled in England as they came to realise they were not particularly welcome in Kenya. He first went to prison when aged 17 for violence. On release he got drawn into a drug dealing culture because of its allure. Not having work was a factor behind this. He rose in the drug gang hierarchy. He is aware of many of the issues but chose to ignore these as he was earning good money. While he regarded his victims as "zombies", he felt during this time he was losing his own humanity. He recognised the violent gang culture that prevailed although he personally tried to avoid it. He would like to go straight upon release and be able to help others. He has learnt a new skill in prison (plumbing). His mother, 2 brothers, 2 sisters are around and although there is some relationship he is unsure how to pick up on this because of being disowned due to his previous criminal activity. He notes that people do treat you differently because of colour. Sometimes they think you are going to rob them. There is a tendency to join gangs as there is security in numbers and the bond helps. He feels more attention needs to be given to help inmates on release in their accommodation and rehabilitation.

Case 3: David (Zimbabwe)
David fled Zimbabwe for political reasons and came to the UK, claiming asylum. He cites unfair treatment, the breakdown of democracy and the national fabric, and "all hell breaking loose" as the nation was in the throws of disintegrating as some of the reasons for leaving. He has had minimal support from Local and Immigration authorities. He finds difficulty in being expected to survive without sufficient resources, having to find expensive accommodation, social networking being disrupted because of the policy of relocating those asylum seekers who are on benefits, not being allowed to work despite being desperate to do so, and the long drawn process in addressing his claim for asylum culminating in his application being refused yet not being able to return Zimbabwe, and so

he feels left in limbo. As a result he felt he had to resort to all sorts of things to survive such as looking for work in the black economy and resorted to creating his own false documents. He is uncertain what will happen upon release. He would like to be able to have a meaningful life and be able to engage in and give to the community and, of course, to be secure regarding money and residency.

Case 4: Sejojo (Rwanda)
Sejojo and his family were caught up in the 1994 genocides where some from the majority Hutu tribe conducted mass killings upon those from the Tutsi tribe and pro-peace Hutus (of which his family were part). The family came to the UK in 1995 and were accepted as refugees in 1998. Since then he has over time come to adjust to the culture, weather, food and a new language and has been able to settle down. One big cultural difference was that in Rwanda it is generally accepted that authority figures, like teachers, know best and accordingly are afforded respect. He has 3 children by 3 different women. During this time he set up a charity to help assist asylum seekers in employment, education, health, and cultural activities. He has been an interpreter, translator, and a legal representative. He has found that people are often at a loss as what to do, they lack of guidance, there are barriers to overcome, it is difficult stepping outside of one's comfort zone and understand where people come from. He has appreciated what he has gained inside prison e.g. website design abilities. On release he would like to continue his charity work. He feels the people he wants to help need to be empowered and the gaining of more confidence and that without the support of friends or family they can easily go astray.

Case 5: Amame (Ivory Coast), aged 29yrs
Amame came to the UK in 2006 as an illegal immigrant. He has seen very little of the UK, having in effect lived underground throughout his stay, while outside prison. His mother and father died while he was a boy. After which he was treated badly and eventually was sold as slave to Gambian business man but later he managed to leave. He is concerned because of uncertainties about his future. He understands he may be sent back to Africa, but is unsure where to. There are other unresolved issues that were touched upon in this interview and no clear path for resolving.

Case 6: Peter (Eritrea)
Peter fled persecution in Eritrea and eventually arrived at the UK via a tortuous route that took him through several countries, with harrowing tales on the way. When he arrived in the UK he claimed asylum and received some benefits. When his asylum claim was turned down his benefits were stopped and it was then that he resorted to illegal means in order to survive. He later found a Christian faith and this is important to him. He is concerned for his uncertain future. Note: I know another Eritrean man, who was until recently living in a house run by the "Ark Project", who has a remarkably similar story. I had hoped to link the two men up, but it was not possible due to this other man since moving away.

A Final Thought

I gave a beggar from my little store   *I gave a thought and through that thought of mine*
Of well earned gold, He spent the shining ore   *He found himself a man, supreme, divine,*
And came again, and yet again, still cold   *Bold, clothed and crowned with blessings*
And hungry as before.   *And now he begs no more.*   *[manifold*

Quoted in "100 Not Out: Southend-on-Sea Guild of Help and Citizens Advice Bureau 1908-2008", when reflecting on "*the spirit of the embryonic Civic Guild*" that was "*established with the aim of improving the conditions of the poor*", which sought to provide practical help for the poor and to apply "*such remedies as are likely to make the applicant self-dependent*"… and promote "*co-operation with the Poor Law Authority of all the various individuals and charitable agencies in the district*". It shows that ideas of compassionate response; self-help, partnership working and faith, have long been linked.