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'WHO IS ON MY SIDE?' - QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES EXPERIENCES OF MENTAL HEALTH RELATED STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

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Introduction: The Time to Change (TTC) anti-stigma campaign, launched in January 2009 in England, intends to make fundamental improvements across England in: public knowledge, attitudes and discriminatory behaviour in relation to people with mental illness. To be effective and valid the campaign must reach a wide range of diverse audiences. This study explores attitudes of people from ethnic minority communities in relation to mental health.

Objectives: The study investigates:

- (1) General attitudes and perceptions about mental illness in ethnic minority communities;
- (2) How we might increase awareness about mental wellbeing and decrease stigma in ethnic minority communities.

Methods: Ten focus groups with members of ethnic minority groups were conducted. Five groups consisted of service users and five were composed of non-service users. Two groups comprised participants from an Indian origin, two Somali origin, two Afro-Caribbean origin and the other groups were mixed.

Results: We will present findings regarding the ways in which traditional perceptions of mental health and personal experiences of ethnic minority service users affect their perceptions of sources of support such as family, friends, medical staff and religion and how this feedback could inform anti-stigma interventions.

Conclusion: The study suggests that in order to maximise the impact of anti-stigma campaigns, attention should be given to sources of discrimination and traditional perceptions of mental illness which are emphasised by ethnic minority groups. When planning anti-stigma campaigns it is important to incorporate experiences and perceptions from a wide range of audiences.