



## Summary

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### **Humare Avaaz (Our Voice) – Barriers to Independent Living Faced by Disabled Asian Women**

#### **About the DRILL Programme**

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DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the projects supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at [www.drilluk.org.uk](http://www.drilluk.org.uk).

#### **Overview of the project**

This project focused on Asian women with a physical disability, learning disability, mental health or long-term health condition.

It concentrated on documenting positive outcomes, where Asian women had overcome barriers and utilised their experiential knowledge for changes to social policy.

## Approach

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The project adopted a qualitative approach, using seven focus groups made up of 74 women and conducting eighteen in-depth interviews. The participants were interviewed by a Bangladeshi Muslim member of the project through activities at East London Mosque. This encouraged coproduction and active involvement of disabled women from different Asian backgrounds.

The project took place across London, looking specifically at the systemic attitudinal barriers to independent living faced by disabled women in London's Asian communities.

## Findings

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The project identified a selection of different categories for independent living for disabled Asian women. Participants saw independence as the ability to carry out housework and care for their family without help instead of economic independence, which precludes disabled women deemed unable to fulfil this role.

Many of these women felt isolated by their family and community, where they were being avoided, ignored or subjected to negative comments. Sometimes, they excluded themselves (for protection against negative attitudes) and some felt unwelcome in Asian places of worship. This was heightened by the lack of support.

There also appears to be an absence of information impacting taboos surrounding disability, which is particularly prevalent within the areas of mental illness and dementia. The support systems in place are often inaccessible, both in relation to health and social care services.

Informal care tended to be undertaken by the women and some were receiving no help from social services. Many participants saw the third sector as a valuable resource in knowing about accessing services as they provide a service beyond mainstream availability.

Religious beliefs also played a large role in attitudes towards disability, with some faiths believing it was a punishment from God, or a test for an eternal reward. The general feeling was that this was caused by a lack of information, as mothers were often being blamed for their children's impairments.

## Findings (continued)

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The poor health of young Bangladeshi participants was identified, with a number speaking about experiencing depression, anxiety and pain.

Future plans for older women caring for disabled adult children were not common, with some hoping that a marriage could be arranged or that siblings would continue the care when their mother was no longer able to.

## Recommendations

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The project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. All recommendations are included in the full report which is linked below.

- Professionals should adopt ways of working that respect traditional beliefs, whilst offering accessible and credible alternatives
- Removal of the presumption within social services of a lack of willingness or ability for families to provide informal care
- Dementia services which understand the needs of Asian families are required to support families caring for older people with dementia
- Introduction of awareness campaigns about public health must target Asian communities and include disabled people
- Asian media and businesses should do more to raise awareness of, and normalise, disability within Asian communities
- There needs to be attitudinal change from communities, as well as faith leaders, to challenge discrimination
- Further research into the Bangladeshi community, looking specifically at the high incidence of mental illness and autism amongst young Bangladeshis
- Contributions from Asian voluntary organisations to help Asian women overcome independence barriers through advising, advocating and providing services for Asian people who are disabled or caring for disabled relatives.

## Final report

[Humare Avaaz \(Our Voice\) – Barriers to Independent Living Faced by Disabled Asian Women](#)

Please click on report name to read the full report.

## Project partners

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**Asian People's  
Disability Alliance**



**Apna Ghar**



**Brent Indian  
Association**

