



Centre for Ethnicity & Racism Studies



University of Leeds

# Research Findings

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**Chinese Action Research Project:  
household needs, public services and community  
organisations**

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## Introduction

During the late 1980s and early 1990's all Chinese community organisations in Leeds became united in their efforts to identify their own community needs, establish their concerns on local political and policy agendas and secure resources for community based activities and service provision. This activity was supported by the collection of relevant research data drawing on fieldwork with Chinese households and businesses. The subsequent report and recommendations made a strong case for urgent action (Law 1990) This report is included here as Appendix 3 for future reference and because many outstanding issues and recommendations remain pertinent. As a result of this activity a variety of new initiatives and organisations developed including the establishment of Leeds Chinese Community Association (LCCA) and the establishment of the Chinese Community Centre on North Street with the assistance of Urban Programme funding. For further information on LCCA see Appendix 4.

This report and its associated programme of work was commissioned by Chinese community groups based on a continuing recognition that community needs were not being adequately met, community organisations needed greater support and that key issues affecting the local Chinese community were often given little institutional attention. This report can also be seen as a follow-up to the local study carried out in 1990. This project was funded by a Health Action Zone grant and by Leeds City Council's Equal Opportunities Unit and Social Services Department and was carried out by Dr. Ian Law in conjunction with Chinese community groups in Leeds.

This project was conceived as an action research initiative, which means that community based skills development, empowering community organisations and building collective agendas and initiatives have gone hand in hand with more normal research methods techniques in collecting data and identifying various forms of need. Lai Fong Chiu's doctoral work on health education and Chinese women in Leeds is a model example of effectively implemented action research in this field (Chiu 2003).

The project began in March 2004 and was managed by a steering group including representatives of Chinese community organisations who initially identified a core set of community concerns. A team of ten Chinese women were trained in fieldwork techniques and they carried out a survey of 110 adults. Each member of the team also provided a personal report of their experiences of doing this fieldwork together with their own observations on the issues addressed, which are included in an edited form in this report. The questionnaire was designed and data analysis carried out used Compass Software which is available from the Policy Research Unit, Leeds Metropolitan University. This is very easy to use and is designed for community groups to carry out their own needs assessment studies. Also focus groups were carried out with representatives of Chinese organisations and at Leeds Chinese Community School, additional material was drawn from interviews with some members of the Chinese community. Firstly, a summary of key findings and recommendations is given.

This report also draws on the author's research studies which have incorporated analysis of the needs of Chinese households (Law et al 1994, 1995, 1996 and Law 1996).

## **Summary of Research Findings and Recommendations**

Despite misguided perceptions that Chinese households are doing well in comparison to other ethnic minority communities, many urgent problems and issues remain hidden with little attention being paid by public services. This study, led by Ian Law working collaboratively with Chinese community organisations, examined housing, health and social care needs and the challenges that face both community groups and mainstream service providers.

1. High levels of violence and deprivation are suffered by Chinese people in Britain.
2. The local Chinese population in Leeds is rapidly growing, particularly with the settlement of migrants from mainland China. Households are becoming smaller as traditional patterns of family support are declining.
3. Chinese households are both increasingly concentrated in inner city areas with others being isolated and scattered across all city wards.
4. Persistent poor housing conditions are generating strong demand for help and advice.
5. High levels of racist violence were identified with about 80% reporting problems. Domestic violence was also identified as an issue requiring urgent attention.
6. Poor physical and mental health, lack of attention to disability issues and problems in accessing health services were all identified as causes of concern. Over half of respondents said mental stress and lack of physical exercise were problematic.
7. Chinese elderly are increasingly in need of improved housing, social care and health service provision,. Social Services were unknown by many in the Chinese community, and the urgent needs of many Chinese individuals were often unknown by service providers.
8. Improving support for single parents was identified as a further priority issue.
9. At school, racism and bullying of pupils and poor communication with parents was highlighted, together with high educational aspirations.
10. Community organisations identified the need to work together to both overcome their own exclusion and to realise significant improvements in the lives of Chinese families. This is to be achieved through building a collective agenda for action and campaigning around the issues identified in this study.

## **1. High levels of violence and deprivation suffered by Chinese people in Britain**

Nationally, Chinese people are more likely than other groups to:

- be subject to racial harassment and racially motivated property damage (16% of adults, this is higher than any other minority ethnic group)
- live in deprived areas
- live in households whose incomes are less than the national average (34% compared to 28% of white people)
- be unemployed (10% compared to 6% of white people)
- be unable to understand the language used by their doctor (33%)
- live in poorer quality, overcrowded housing conditions.

(Cabinet Office 2000, 2004)

Twenty years on many problems affecting Chinese communities in Britain remain. The Home Affairs Committee report on the Chinese (17.1.1985) said,

'Lack of English, ignorance of their rights, cultural differences, scattered settlement and long unsocial hours together constitute a formidable barrier to full participation in British life' (para 27, 1985).

Chinese communities face a series of problems, which have gone unnoticed partly because, 'we are not a vocal community' (para, 1, 1985).

All these issues require urgent attention and this study is concerned to identify how these issues impact at a local level and what forms of intervention are particularly needed.

## **2. Rapidly growing population**

The Chinese population of Leeds is a 'community of communities' covering three broad groups;

- an established community of households primarily from Hong Kong and the New Territories which is enumerated in the Census being about 3,500 people
- a large transient population of students from mainland China
- a more hidden group of illegal residents, refugees and asylum seekers roughly estimated at about 1-2,000
- China itself is a diverse nation with over forty ethnic minority groups identified

This study is particularly concerned with the needs of established Chinese households and issues affecting the more hidden group of migrants from mainland China. The needs of the rapidly increasing number of Chinese students in Leeds require attention and warrant further research.

The Chinese population is rapidly growing with a 67% increase from 1991 to 2001. This is the highest rate for any ethnic group, apart from Black Africans, and is a result of natural increase, intra-UK migration and international migration. Patterns of household formation are changing due to the decline of traditional patterns of family support, e.g. for the elderly.

## **3. Settlement: increasing concentration and increasing isolation**

The settlement patterns of Chinese households portray two distinct features as the population grows: increasing concentration in the most deprived areas of Leeds and isolated, scattered dispersal outside the inner city with increases in most wards from 1981-2001 (Law et al. 1996, BMG 2004). Both these patterns are happening at the same time but they pose differing problems and challenges including poor physical housing conditions and detachment from community interaction.

#### **4. Poor housing conditions and strong demand for advice**

Mrs V is a single parent with arthritis and six children. She speaks little English and has difficulty in communicating with the Housing Department about repairs. She complains of damp in her house and is in fear of being rehoused in a worse area.

Our survey of 110 Chinese residents showed that about one third were living in housing in poor physical condition with multiple problems of general disrepair, leaking roofs and damp. About a fifth were overcrowded and living with inadequate cooking, toilet and bathroom facilities. Just under a half of this group wanted to move primarily because of poor conditions and expressed the need for help with meeting their housing requirements. Language problems lead to ignorance of housing rights and opportunities and there is a substantial demand for information and advice. This pattern has changed little since the late 1980's (Law 1990).

#### **5. Racism, crime and isolation**

Mr X has lived in Leeds with his family for twenty years. Over the last few years kids have thrown stones and excrement into their windows and doors, and fireworks threw their letter box. They have phoned the Police lots of times. This family was very disappointed when the police didn't turn up.

79% of Chinese adults surveyed reported experiencing varying forms of racist violence and harassment together with lack of confidence in agency responses. Also high levels of burglary, vandalism, car theft, street robbery were reported, with additional problems of threatening behaviour from gangs of youths, general neighbourhood nuisance, domestic violence and sexual harassment. Overall, 42% of Chinese people felt isolated where they lived. Many examples of the grave impact these problems were having on everyday life, e.g. health, were reported.

Mrs Y has face constant abuse from her husband since she arrived in the UK six years ago. After some time in a refuge she was moved into a council property where she remains with constant threats from her husband, increasing depression and little English.

#### **6. Poor health, disability and problems in accessing services**

About 20% of respondents reported generally poor health, with over half reporting stress/anxiety and lack of exercise. 20% of respondents and 10% of children had never used a dentist. Many Chinese people find health services very hard to use for a variety of reasons including language and communication problems, poor interpreter systems, the cultural incompetence of health professionals together with lack of knowledge. Disabilities amongst children were highlighted including deafness, learning disabilities and behavioural problems. Generally, disability was an issue

which was rarely discussed and it has received very little attention in the Chinese community. There is an urgent need to work with Chinese families to promote health awareness, disability awareness and service take-up.

## **7. Social Services and the elderly**

Social Services were unknown by many in the Chinese community. Where services had been used, support from social workers was often highly valued but meals on wheels, home care, aids and adaptations, social service nurseries, adoption and fostering and day centre provision was often rated as poor. Elderly respondents identified needs for help with personal care, taking medication, housework and shopping, and reported problems with mobility both inside and outside the home and personal safety. Greater effort is needed to bridge the divide between Chinese clients and mainstream services.

Mr Z is elderly and deaf. Although he lives with his family he feels very isolated and lonely. Sometimes he doesn't want to live anymore and is very depressed. He has no idea what Social Services can provide.

Declining support for the traditional extended family is leading to increasing needs amongst the Chinese elderly for improvements in the provision of housing, social services, health services and benefits. Weak perceptions of citizenship rights, negative perceptions of service providers and lack of assistance, combined with neglect by public agencies is producing poor service take-up.

## **8. Lack of support for single parents**

The Chinese Christian Church particularly highlighted problems that single parents were experiencing in the community including anger, depression, anxiety and loneliness. They proposed the establishment of a Chinese Family Centre to provide support, advice and counselling.

## **9. Racism and poor communication at school**

There was a strong sense of educational urgency expressed by many Chinese parents with an emphasis being placed on achievement and access to higher education. But, many parents could not and did not communicate with school staff. Chinese children frequently reported bullying, racist abuse and physical violence experiences at school together with a sense of isolation.

## **10. Need for community organisations to work together**

Chinese community groups have themselves identified the need for collective working and sharing of information and experiences. Despite many constraints these organisations provide excellent services and have built up a wealth of knowledge of community needs. These organisations include the Chinese Women's Group, Chinese Community School, Chinese Community Centre, Wah Kwong Association, Chinese Advice Centre, Chinese Christian Church, Mandarin School and Advocacy Support. Chinese individuals expressed strong support for Chinese community groups and often demanded greater opportunities for involvement and increased



service provision. There is an urgent need to transform casework concerns into a collective agenda for action and campaigning to realise significant improvements in the lives of Chinese families. Much work still needs to be done to identify specific initiatives, available resources and ways of working that will enable these goals to be pursued. In addition, capacity building is needed within many of these organisations, together with the establishment of a new collective action group that will facilitate cooperation and present a coherent common voice.

## **General Recommendations**

- Seek recognition from CRE, Home Office, Foreign Office and other relevant government departments of the persistence of high levels of violence and deprivation are suffered by Chinese people in Britain, and the lack of integration of Chinese people in British society.
- Report findings to other Chinese community organisations in the UK and organise an event to share experiences and initiatives, and to seek ways to establish regional and national cooperation.
- Leeds City Council should acknowledge that the local Chinese population in Leeds is rapidly growing, particularly with the settlement of migrants from mainland China and that their needs should be explicitly taken into account in the preparation of policy and strategy across all relevant departments and related agencies
- Local housing agencies should recognise that Chinese households are both increasingly concentrated in inner city areas with others being isolated and scattered across all city wards and that persistent poor housing conditions are generating strong demand for help and advice. They should therefore review the effectiveness of their provision of housing service in the light of the needs of this community and consider appropriate action to be taken.
- Local agencies concerned with hate crime and racist violence need to recognise that Chinese households suffer high levels of racist violence which, together with problems of high crime levels, domestic violence and social isolation, are having serious detrimental effects on everyday life. They should consider improving levels of reporting of such crime from this group and identifying ways in which support and responses can be improved. Very few incidents are being reported at present and there appears to be little use of Hate Incident Reporting Centres.
- Local schools should recognise that racist bullying of Chinese children is prevalent and requires attention. Poor communication with Chinese parents was also highlighted as an issue that schools needed to address. High educational aspirations amongst Chinese families was common and review of the extent to which this has been realised should be carried out.
- Local health service providers should recognise that poor physical and mental health amongst Chinese adults and children together with problems in accessing health services is a cause for concern. They should therefore review the effectiveness of their provision of health services in the light of the needs of this community and consider appropriate action to be taken.

- Social Services were unknown by many in the Chinese community, and the elderly are increasingly in need of improved housing, social care and health service provision. Improving support for single parents was identified as a further priority issue. Regular dialogue with Chinese community organisations to identify how improved services can be provided should be established.
- Community organisations identified the need to work together to realise significant improvements in the lives of Chinese families. This is to be achieved through building a collective agenda for action and campaigning around the issues identified in this study. Firstly, a cross-community Action Group should be established to lead in prioritising actions needed and in campaigning to achieve these goals. Three achievable objectives should be set by this group to improve the living conditions of Chinese people in the following areas: housing for the elderly, healthy living and alleviating racist violence.

### **Summary of recommendations arising from fieldworkers reports**

#### **Elderly**

- Development of contacts with Chinese elderly who are in urgent need but not in contact with community organisations
- Improved support including opportunities for trips and physical exercise, and daycare provision beyond luncheon club activities
- Provision of supported housing for the elderly managed by the Chinese community
- Provision of home safety communication systems
- Bilingual health visitors are strongly needed to visit the Chinese elderly and there is lack of services in Leeds for the Chinese elderly to meet together

#### **Interpreting**

- Review and improvement of interpreting services across the city in conjunction with relevant public services
- Interpreters or bilingual (health, social, community and housing) workers should be adequately available for facilitating communication at different levels (e.g. promoting awareness of services and supporting access to services)
- Training in basic interpreting skills should be provided for members of the Chinese community (Alexander et al. 2004);

#### **Racist and domestic violence**

- Improved support for those suffering from racist and domestic violence and public education about these issues and available opportunities for support
- Neighbourhood based programmes for promoting harmony and reducing the likelihood of racist violence

#### **Access to public services**

- Improved information and advice about public services including health, benefits, housing and social services and dissemination of appropriate messages and information in the Chinese language to the Chinese community from local government (Leeds City Council) and mainstream service providers and statutory and voluntary sectors, Leeds Housing Association, the National Health Service (NHS), etc.
- Networking and communication (through workshops, seminars or conferences) should be established between these agencies so as to improve the effectiveness on their work for empowering the Chinese community for the appropriate use of all sorts of services provision
- Attention to the needs of isolated Chinese school children and improved communication with parents
- Public education work with Chinese families about healthy lifestyles and disability issues and development of a community based healthy living project

### **Staff development**

- A need for the education and training of service staff (with regards to cultural sensitivity issues) who are currently working for the Chinese community, especially nurses, doctors, social and housing workers, advocates, etc;
- Joint training between staff from the social care and health services and staff from voluntary organisations should be encouraged, because it can enhance the efficiency in delivering culturally appropriate services to the Chinese elderly.
- All NHS staff, from front line staff to senior managers, should have equal opportunities and race equality training, in order to shift attitudes and focus on the needs of black and other ethnic minority communities.
- The NHS/social care services should employ more bilingual staff to ensure accurate information and knowledge about policies and services are being delivered in the local Chinese community organisations

### **Local authorities**

- It is vital for Leeds City Council and other local authorities to make sure that the voices and needs of Chinese community are always represented and addressed. Also, there must be a continuing commitment to promoting Equal Opportunities Policy and compliance with the race relations legislation in service delivery, education and employment and tackling issues in relation to discrimination

### **Chinese community organisations**

- Expansion of Chinese community facilities bringing together Chinese organisations, services and associated activities to significantly extend and improve on existing provision
- Encourage greater take-up of services provided by Chinese community organisations and improved opportunities for access by disabled users
- All the volunteers and staff in the local Chinese community organisations should be provided with regular and up-to-date training about the services

provided by social services and about the need for advice for the Chinese community

- All local Chinese community organisations should work closely with mainstream service providers
- Chinese organisations should consider setting up a Chinese Family Centre
- There is a need for quality control of services provided by local community organisations, and effective policies are required to monitor the quality of staff employed, particularly interpreters and volunteers.

#### **Asylum seekers**

- Development of contacts with Chinese asylum seekers and provision of English language classes together with information, support and advice, and provision of opportunities to participate in community activities

#### **Further research**

- Further research and development is required to highlight those areas of concern to the Chinese community including the labour market experiences of young men, Chinese student's experiences and the economic and social welfare of new Chinese migrant workers.

## National context

A recent Cabinet Office report (2004) which sets out a national assessment of inequalities facing ethnic minorities in employment, housing and education has suggested that,

'Chinese are, on average, doing well, and often out performing Whites in school and in the labour market. Their success shows that there are no insuperable barriers to successful economic and social integration' (Cabinet Office, 2004:1)

This seriously flawed statement reproduces the myth of Chinese successful integration in British society. As this study will show many Chinese people live harrowing, isolated lives in deprived conditions, lacking integration within their own community let alone wider society. This central point is confirmed by Chau and Yu (2001) and Song (2004). Concentration in a 'racialised small business sector' and working some of the longest hours per week in Europe are identified as imposing huge constraints on everyday life. Many Chinese households are poorly integrated into their own community, that community and its organisations are poorly integrated at a local level, local Chinese communities are poorly integrated with other Chinese communities in Britain and there is little integration of the Chinese diaspora across different countries (Baker 1987). In a recent report on Chinese older people, Wai Kam Yu (2000) highlights their twin detachment from both mainstream society and the Chinese community drawing on fieldwork in Glasgow, London and South Yorkshire. Lack of participation in mainstream political parties and a very limited Chinese presence in popular culture are two further indicators of a lack of 'belonging' in British society (Song 2004:869). A further recent report by Chan et al. (2004) has highlighted a set of key difficulties experienced by Chinese people in the UK including concern over financial hardship and pensions, communication difficulties with health professionals, racial discrimination and racial attacks, the pressures of long working hours and related problems in providing family care.

Nationally, Chinese people:

are more likely than any other minority ethnic group to be subject to racial harassment and racially motivated property damage (16% of Chinese adults) (Modood et al 1997:266)

work the longest hours of any minority group (Owen 1994 quoted in Jones 1998: 19)

are more likely to live in households whose incomes are less than the national average (34% compared to 28% of white people)

are twice as likely to be unemployed as white people

are more likely to be unable to understand the language used by their doctor (33% of Chinese adults)

live in deprived areas and in poorer quality, overcrowded housing conditions.

(Cabinet Office 2000, 2003, 2004)

Nationally Min Quan (2004, see weblinks) have highlighted evidence on widespread racism suffered by Chinese catering workers which goes unreported. It is interesting to note that levels of racist violence against Chinese people are high in other key migration destinations like Canada. Harris's (2004) recent study showed that in Calgary racism was reported by 50% of this Chinese community either at work, school or in a public place.

In examining Labour Force Survey data for 1998-2000 set out in Mason (2003:72) it is clear that the unemployment rate for Chinese women (10.5%) is very close to the unemployment rate for Black Caribbean women (11.5%) and all South Asian groups

(11.5%). Also that for Chinese men the unemployment rate (11.8%) is approximately the same as it is for South Asian groups (12%). Both the figures for Chinese female and male unemployment rates are approximately double that of white women (4.9%) and white men (6.1%).

Official neglect of the needs of Chinese people can be frequently seen in reports which either fail to collect adequate data to say anything meaningful, or, worse still, fail to mention this group altogether. The National Health Service's statement of key concerns about ethnicity and health addressed the needs of African-Caribbean and Asian people and failed to mention the needs of the Chinese (Balarajan and Raleigh 1995).

The 2004 Cabinet Office report does however acknowledge that 'the Chinese are not doing as well as they should be' and that the Government needs to establish a framework for action to address the needs of the Chinese, as well as those of other groups. The most detailed government account of Chinese needs was set out in the 1985 Home Affairs Committee report on the Chinese in Britain. Twenty years on many problems affecting Chinese communities in Britain remain relatively unchanged,

'Lack of English, ignorance of their rights, cultural differences, scattered settlement and long unsocial hours together constitute a formidable barrier to full participation in British life' (para 27, 1985).

Chinese communities face a series of problems, which have gone unnoticed partly because, 'we are not a vocal community' (para, 1, 1985). All these issues require urgent attention and this study is concerned to identify how these issues impact at a local level and what forms of intervention are particularly needed. In addition this study is also concerned to identify issues that have received very little attention within Chinese communities themselves including domestic violence, disability and mental health.

Of all established minority ethnic communities in Britain it is the Chinese who have the weakest perception of being part of British society and of their citizenship rights, for example in claiming benefits which drew on fieldwork in Leeds (Law et al 1994, Law 1996):

(i) Chinese exclusion from social citizenship rights

- Evidence of failure to claim benefits

The key factors associated with non-claiming and under-claiming amongst the Chinese community can be grouped into supply and demand factors. On the supply side, the administrative complexity of benefit delivery and the inaccessibility of the Benefit Agency to Chinese households due to inadequate provision of information and ineffective interpreting arrangements were frequently reported. On the demand side, a vicarious family pride and sense of stigma attached to benefit receipt, together with a lack of basic benefit knowledge, lack of knowledge of sources of advice, concerns about seeking information from employers for those eligible for Family Credit and worries over residence status and passport checks acted to deter claiming. Some of these factors can be seen operating in the cases of seven families who were eligible for Family Credit but not claiming. In all cases the father was working on low pay in the catering trade. Four respondents felt that after consideration they would claim, one was unsure and two refused. One of those who wanted to claim had no knowledge of the benefit system at all, did not know where to go for help apart from friends and felt the main barrier to claiming to be her inadequate English. Three of those who wanted to claim were broadly aware of their

possible eligibility as they had either been told by friends or had seen TV adverts. But, one person was particularly worried about the difficulty of obtaining information from his employer, one person was put off by the prospect of waiting and being interviewed and also he felt he would be looked down on in the community. The third person disliked the fact that she would 'have to ask people to do everything for me' as her English was very poor. The person who was unsure about claiming had unwarranted concerns about the status of their residence despite living here for eight years and was also worried about ignorance of the system, having poor English, "relying on the government" and "believed in self-support". The two who rejected claiming had divergent views. One was aware of the benefits available, aware of their broad eligibility, knew where the Benefit Offices and Advice Centres were, took pride in their good English, saw no difficulties in the process of claiming but firmly refused to claim and refused to explain why. The interviewer noted the underlying factors operating here as being feelings of "shame" and not wanting to rely on "charity from government". This was also the only family credit non-claimant interviewed in the 16-29 age group. The other respondent was unaware of the relevant benefits and had no perception of their eligibility. Claiming was seen to involve many difficulties including long waiting times, problems in form filling and communication due to poor English and hence dependence on other people and generally lots of "trouble". Similar problems were evident for another Chinese respondent who was eligible but did not claim Income Support. There was no basic knowledge of the benefits available, little knowledge of English, no knowledge of where to apply or where to obtain advice and assistance apart from friends and a general feeling that it would be too troublesome to claim. In this case there were no negative feelings about state dependency and it was perceived that the wider family would support claiming.

- Strong attachment of shame to claiming benefits and very weak sense of 'right to claim' and 'citizenship'

In the Chinese community it was felt that;

"claiming benefit is a subject that many try to avoid discussing"

"they (claimants) should rely on themselves not government benefit"

"some (people in the Chinese community) are sympathetic with the claimant, some patronise and are jealous".

The general perceptions of the claiming process were underlain by feelings of discontentment and dependency which were linked to critical views held by family members;

"my husband feels we shouldn't rely on government"

"my mother-in-law does not like it"

"family don't feel very good about it".

The perception of a right to claim benefit was considerably weaker amongst Chinese respondents than other minority groups. Most respondents perceived that they had a right to claim benefits, and the main reason that they gave for this was their previous payment of National Insurance Contributions (NICs). Indeed it was striking that payment of NICs was regarded by respondents as conferring an entitlement to all benefits - contributory and non-contributory alike. Other important reasons given were UK citizenship, lack of job and low/inadequate income, the moral responsibility of the state, and benefit legislation.

Amongst the Chinese, culturally-based notions of shame were more commonly attached to claiming and "reliance on government" was often strongly condemned with less counterbalancing sense of citizenship rights and feelings of inclusion.

- Unwarranted passport checks

The continuing practice of unwarranted passport checking became evident in the cases of four elderly Chinese respondents who had all been asked for passport

identification despite the claimants living in the UK for an average of twenty years; this check was carried out at both the Benefit Agency and the Housing Benefit Office in different cases.

- Evidence that advice work emphasising 'needs and rights' could overcome cultural notions of shame

Targeted take-up initiatives and campaigns are required which must be particularly sensitive to traditional notions, such as vicarious family pride, a dislike of state dependency and a sense of shame involved in claiming benefit, as well as to language. Our findings support those of Bloch (1993) in pointing to productive joint work carried out by Chinese Advice and Community Centres and benefit providers. There does appear to be evidence that such welfare rights advocacy work through emphasising needs and rights can, over two or three years, start to overcome prevailing community-based perceptions of stigma attached to claiming and lead to an accumulating pool of knowledge amongst informal community networks and advisers, thereby improving levels of take-up (Law et al 1994) . The general double deprivation noted by Alcock (1993) resulting from such limited initiatives, i.e. reduction in Benefit Agency take-up initiatives and geographical exclusion of those living outside the normal area of outreach provision (the inner city), may be relevant for Chinese households due to their higher levels of geographical dispersal compared to other minority groups. But this tends to ignore wider social networks, rather than localised networks, which are often strong amongst the Chinese community (e.g. levels of participation in the Chinese Community school) and which facilitate transmission of information about benefit eligibility and sources of advice.



## Migration and settlement

The Chinese population of Leeds is a 'community of communities' covering three broad groups;

an established community of households primarily from Hong Kong and the New Territories which is enumerated in the Census being about 3,500 people

a large transient population of students from mainland China

a more hidden group of illegal residents, refugees and asylum seekers roughly estimated at about 1-2,000

China itself is a diverse nation with over forty ethnic minority groups identified

This study is particularly concerned with the needs of established Chinese households and issues affecting the more hidden group of migrants from mainland China. The needs of the rapidly increasing number of Chinese students in Leeds require attention and warrant further research.

The historical patterns of migration and settlement of Chinese people to the UK and locally to Leeds have been well documented, see appendix 3 for further information (Law 1990).

The local Chinese population is rapidly growing with a 67% increase from 1991 to 2001. This is the highest rate for any ethnic group, apart from Black Africans, and is a result of natural increase, intra-UK migration and international migration. Patterns of household formation are changing due to the decline of traditional patterns of family support, e.g. for the elderly resulting in increasing formation of smaller households and increasing demand for sheltered and supported housing for the elderly.

Chinese households are under-represented in social rented housing and over-represented in the private rented sector. The worst housing conditions for Chinese households are in the private sector. The weak socio-economic position of many of these households affects their ability to repair and maintain their property. High levels of damp and general disrepair were reported in our survey together with strong demand for housing advice and sheltered housing for the elderly. Local authority monitoring of house renovation grants 2001-2003 confirms the very low number or non-existent Chinese enquiries and applications for grant support.

The settlement patterns of Chinese households portray two distinct features as the population grows: increasing concentration in the most deprived areas of Leeds and isolated, scattered dispersal outside the inner city with increases in most wards from 1981-2001 (Law et al. 1996, BMG 2004). Both these patterns are happening at the same time but they pose differing problems and challenges including poor physical housing conditions and detachment from community interaction. Particular clusters of Chinese households were identified in University, Headingley, Horsforth, Weetwood, Moortown and City and Holbeck wards (BMG 2004). It is unfortunate that the BMG research failed to adequately identify either a significant Chinese quantitative sample and analysis or carry out focus group research with Chinese people. Chinese households housing perceptions and preferences are presented in greater detail based on focus group research in Law et al 1996, extracts from this data are given below :

### (i) Changing household formation

In this sample, one of thirteen households was an extended family and two families contained non-dependants. This group were concerned about the disintegration of the extended family, the increase in single parents and spatial dispersion to find suitable employment.

'There is family breakdown as the children have no sense of duty. When they grow up they don't pay enough attention to their parents',

'The younger generation do not want to look after their elderly and they don't want to live with their parents. They don't care what happens to us',

'Only a few would live with their parents',

'Sons and daughters don't want to listen to what you have to say. They don't want to live with you - they want to be independent as soon as possible',

'The younger generation do not want to live with their parents',

There was also a sense that the importance of marriage and starting a family were becoming less important,

'The younger generation do not like to get married, they prefer to live together. they have no sense of responsibility',

'The younger generation do not want to get married until they are older, say 25 - 30yrs, whereas in our generation people got married between 18 and 23yrs - and they don't want to have many children'.

Much concern was expressed about the lack of respect shown to elders from the younger generation. However, there was a general acceptance that for second/third generation Chinese people, the ability to speak and write two languages; British and Chinese (be that Cantonese, Mandarin or Hakka) was something to be proud of. Overall, for this group, our data showed increased formation of smaller households due to a combination of changing family patterns and the impact of economic activity.

#### (ii) Locational preferences

Chinese households stressed the importance of proximity to schools and a good bus service. For a number of households who lived in either Chapeltown or Harehills, having the Chinese Advice Centre and the Chinese Elderly Luncheon Club 'on the doorstep' was of paramount importance. For other households who lived either in Moortown or Crossgates, these two facilities were very important and their absence from their local area was noted.

'There are a lot of Chinese around here and Chinese groceries - so I will stay in my own community',

'I like being close to the Chinese Advice Centre, they help me a lot',

'We want to be together so that we can celebrate festive events',

For the two households who lived in Moortown, this had been a positive choice of area due to the fact that a Chinese doctor was practising nearby,

'I prefer this area as there is a Chinese doctor up this way'.

For the households that lived in Leeds 14 and 15, they did express a feeling of isolation from the Chinese community and talked about need to live somewhere that was familiar to them,

'Familiarity and friends - I prefer this'.

Most households knew that other Chinese people tended to live in and around Harehills but were unaware of patterns of suburbanisation and were not influenced by these concerns. It would seem that Chinese households within Leeds 7 and Leeds 8 were more concerned about decent housing and being involved in the Chinese community and that these two areas catered adequately for their needs. There appeared to be very little support for moving out.

'I want to live in an area that has a Chinese feel to it',

'I prefer to live in Leeds 8 - I like to be around other Chinese people, it's very important to me. I prefer it, it's familiar',

'There are a lot of Chinese people here, so I will stay in my own community'.

However, for those households who did live elsewhere, whilst being involved in the Chinese community was seen as important, it was not seen as more important than finding better housing conditions.

'I would like to be among Chinese people for support, but I'm not that sure if it is more important than the right house',

'The right house is more important to me',

'It's not important to be around Chinese people. I prefer to be in a nice quiet house up here',

'Finding the right house in the right area with good neighbours is more important to me, but I would prefer to stay around here',

The view was expressed amongst many Chinese households that they felt that a sense of community was in existence in Harehills (Leeds 8) and that they would prefer to live amongst other Chinese people, there was acknowledgement that they would have to leave the area if they were in search of 'better' housing conditions, cleaner streets and larger houses. Few Chinese households knew where other Chinese households were beginning to move to and maybe this was because the numbers so far are too small to notice. What is clear, is that Chinese households are prepared to move to areas seen as 'White' areas as long as the neighbours appear 'friendly'.

Again the reputation of an area plays a significant part in their decisions on where to live and from the sample the only part of Leeds that was considered out of the question was Leeds 7 i.e. Chapeltown. Many felt the reputation of a 'high crime' area influenced their opinions, despite many having never experienced it personally.

'I wouldn't live in Leeds 7 - I've heard about a lot of violent crimes there',

'Leeds 7. There's a lot of violence around that area. When I lived there, I was frightened to go out at night in case I was beaten up and robbed',

'Leeds 7, because I have friends who live there and hearing what they say makes me not want to live there',

'I'm living in the worst area in Leeds - Chapeltown',

'I wouldn't live in Leeds 7 or other violent areas',

'I wouldn't like to live in Leeds 7 - listening to friends about events happening such as muggings and people getting beaten up'.

(iii) Tenure preferences

Chinese households, even those happy with their present tenure, be that housing association or council or private rented, did expect to be home owners at some point, and expressed a preference for, home ownership. Home ownership was seen as 'better'; 'offering a sense of security'; an investment and as 'belonging to you',

'I would be happier if I owned my own house. I could choose where to live, the kind of house I wanted and the right size',

'I am happy right now as I can't afford a mortgage. But I expect to buy in the future. Until then I will stay here'.

This view was not held as consistently as amongst Indian households, and some saw no stigma attached to renting,

'I'm happy to be renting whether it is from the council or a HA. There's nothing wrong with it'.

Others foresaw a change from owning to renting as they became older. For two elderly owner-occupiers, home-ownership had been important for them earlier in their lives, as it offered security and they were able to make choices regarding where they lived. But, in later life, they now regarded owning to be too much of a responsibility, even though neither had any outstanding debts on their property. Both preferred to rent in future,

'When I was younger I was happy to buy, now I would like to rent from the council or an association. I don't like the responsibility of the worries anymore',

'I would prefer to rent from a Housing Association. I would like a sheltered complex with a warden at hand'.

(iv) Overcrowding

Qualitative fieldwork showed that Chinese households had fewer dependant children and that particular problems of overcrowding stemmed from low wages and high rents in the private sector resulting in more than one un-related family sharing accommodation. Three of the thirteen households interviewed had left their previous accommodation due to overcrowding, and two families were currently living in overcrowded conditions,

Lone parent and three children, 'Yes I felt overcrowded as three families were sharing one two bedroom house',

## The experiences of Chinese households

Chinese households in Leeds and in surrounding parts of West Yorkshire suffer poor housing conditions, racism and racist violence, crime, social isolation, poor health and problems in accessing public services. This section of the report presents a wealth of material that illustrates these problems.

### **Single parent: poor health and housing problems**

Mrs V is a single parent with arthritis and six children. She speaks little English and has difficulty in communicating with the Housing Department about repairs. She complains of damp in her house and is in fear of being rehoused in a worse area.

### **Single parent: poor health and isolation**

As a separated mother living in such a run down area with two young kids I feel very frightened most of the time, I am unable to work due to illness thus am stuck in the home for long periods of time. When the kids come home I have to put a brave face on so they don't feel unhappy.

Our survey of 110 Chinese residents showed that about one third were living in housing in poor physical condition with multiple problems of general disrepair, leaking roofs and damp. About a fifth were overcrowded and living with inadequate cooking, toilet and bathroom facilities. Just under a half of this group wanted to move primarily because of poor conditions and expressed the need for help with meeting their housing requirements. Language problems lead to ignorance of housing rights and opportunities and there is a substantial demand for information and advice. This pattern has changed little since the late 1980's (Law 1990).

### **Racial harassment case**

Mr X has lived in Leeds with his family for twenty years. Over the last few years kids have thrown stones and excrement into their windows and doors, and fireworks threw their letter box. They have phoned the Police lots of times. This family was very disappointed when the police didn't turn up.

#### Experiences of racial harassment

- I have been frequently attacked by people from the area, they keep throwing stones at my house, verbal abuse and smearing excrement on my windows.
- I sold my takeaway because of constant racial harassment and broken windows.
- When I moved in, children shouted 'Foreigner go home', 'chinky' and other rude words.
- When I pass through the neighbourhood, I have been verbally abused when I am alone or with my kids
- My next-door neighbour's children always point to me and say "Chinese, Chinese!"
- My children suffered from name calling at school the children asked if they can stay at home rather than be verbally abused at school
- I have been verbally abused by the Pakistani children after picking up my daughter from school
- When I walk down the street with my family a gang of youths throw stones at me and abuse me
- I always get the response 'you go back to China, you shouldn't be here'

79% of Chinese adults surveyed reported experiencing varying forms of racist violence and harassment together with lack of confidence in agency responses. Also high levels of burglary, vandalism, car theft, street robbery were reported, with additional problems of threatening behaviour from gangs of youths, general neighbourhood nuisance, domestic violence and sexual harassment. Overall, 42% of Chinese people felt isolated where they lived. Many examples of the grave impact these problems were having on everyday life, e.g. health, were reported.

#### **Domestic violence case study 1**

Mrs Y has face constant abuse from her husband since she arrived in the UK six years ago. After some time in a refuge she was moved into a council property where she remains with constant threats from her husband, increasing depression and little English.

#### **Domestic violence case study 2**

Mrs X is 35 years old. She is married with one young child and arrived in Britain six years ago to join her husband. Since arriving in the UK she has faced constant abuse and violence from her husband. She has tried to run away several times to the homes of friends and relatives but she has returned home each time. Recently she ran away to stay at a women's refuge. She has very little knowledge of English. Since she has been here she has been working for her husband in a Chinese takeaway. She had little time to go out, and any friends that she does know are through her husband. She has never lived independently in the UK before. The women's hostel helped her to apply to be rehoused along with applying for welfare benefits. She was allocated a house, but she needed to buy furniture. She started to rely on friends to help her find a solicitor and buy furniture. The refuge also helped with buying some furniture. However because of the language difficulties it has been difficult for them to communicate to her. Mrs X would receive letters, which she could not understand the contents of. Sometimes she would ask a friend and sometimes ask other residents in the refuge for help. However, her friends told her husband all about her current situation. Hence he now knows where she is now living. After the successful application for a council house she began to prepare the house for her to move in to. After three weeks Mrs X was still living in the refuge. She had had difficulty with finding people that she could trust or even friends that could help her as her husband had warned them not to. Eventually Mrs X was forced out of the hostel due to difficulties with her housing benefit. She had already signed for the tenancy of her council house but she was still living at the women's refuge. The city council told her that they couldn't carry on paying the rent for two places at the same time and that she had to move immediately. Therefore she had to move into a property with basic furniture and no carpets. She didn't know and didn't know how to contact the utility companies so she lived for about a week with no heating and no hot water. Mrs X is currently becoming increasingly depressed. Her husband, almost daily, contacts her or goes to her house to threaten her, but she doesn't know how to phone the police. She said that she hadn't learnt how to say her new address in English yet. Recently her problems have been exacerbated by problem by her four year old son. She has contemplated taking him to Hong Kong to receive schooling, whilst she returns back to UK, however she has been warned that this would be a criminal offence. She managed to get some help from a neighbour so that they could register her son at a nearby school. Her son is currently staying with the father, due to the son not wanting to go back to her mother after an overnight visit to his fathers. Mrs X feels that it is because of her current situation, not having a television or any games to entertain her son with, her son feels it's more 'fun' to be with the father. A referral was made to social services, who have themselves referred her to one of the

sure start project in her area, however they were not sure how to make contact because of her language difficulties. Social services were unable to provide an interpreter. Mrs X feels that her situation is extremely dire. With no support network of friends or family she is becoming increasingly isolated and depressed. The voluntary and statutory organisations that have attempted to help her have found it problematic in that they cannot overcome the initial problem with language. Her housing office has been extremely unhelpful with her new home, e.g. she has had difficulty in getting repairs and keys, and this is made even more difficult when you can't communicate your needs or even when you want to complain.

About 20% of respondents reported generally poor health, with over half reporting stress/anxiety and lack of exercise. 20% of respondents and 10% of children had never used a dentist. Many Chinese people find health services very hard to use for a variety of reasons including language and communication problems, poor interpreter systems, the cultural incompetence of health professionals together with lack of knowledge. Ridge and Lees (2004) confirm that the health needs of Chinese people in the UK are being ignored despite Government commitments to tackle health inequalities amongst patients. They specifically highlight problems Chinese people have in relation to missing vital cancer diagnoses and delays in treatment.

Disabilities amongst children were highlighted including deafness, learning disabilities and behavioural problems. Generally, disability was an issue which was rarely discussed and it has received very little attention in the Chinese community. There is an urgent need to work with Chinese families to promote health awareness, disability awareness and service take-up.

Social Services were unknown by many in the Chinese community. Where services had been used, support from social workers was often highly valued but meals on wheels, home care, aids and adaptations, social service nurseries, adoption and fostering and day centre provision was often rated as poor. Elderly respondents identified needs for help with personal care, taking medication, housework and shopping, and reported problems with mobility both inside and outside the home and personal safety. Greater effort is needed to bridge the divide between Chinese clients and mainstream services. Empowering older Chinese people to take an active role in defining needs and the pattern of caring services provided is central to this process (Chiu and Yu 2001)

#### Perceptions of social services

- I feel awkward, don't really know enough about the services that are available and even if I was aware, I would still find it a struggle to get help due to not being able to speak English.
- I think Chinese people would be ashamed to use this service. I don't know how to contact them.
- Services are good and helpful, especially for the elderly. But communication is a problem because of the language barrier.
- There are only limited services that are useful, too much form filling and when it comes to asking for help feels very embarrassed.
- I don't trust them and I think they are just for the British, and won't treat us the same.
- It's fine. I have had good support from a Chinese social worker in my divorce case.

### **Elderly, deaf and depressed**

Mr Z is elderly and deaf. Although he lives with his family he feels very isolated and lonely. Sometimes he doesn't want to live anymore and is very depressed. He has no idea what Social Services can provide.

Declining support for the traditional extended family is leading to increasing needs amongst the Chinese elderly for improvements in the provision of housing, social services, health services and benefits. Weak perceptions of citizenship rights, negative perceptions of service providers and lack of assistance, combined with neglect by public agencies is producing poor service take-up.

The experiences of Chinese asylum seekers are considered in the first fieldwork report presented in the next section. The case study below begins to indicate some key issues affecting this group.

### **Asylum Seeker Case Study**

This family of three, which includes a thirteen year old daughter, moved to the UK about six months ago appealing as asylum seekers. The daughter had to wait for five months to enter a local high school and the school expressed clearly in the interview that they would not be able to provide any support in language due to their financial difficulties. She is currently taking two afternoons every week to learn English at the Leeds Chinese Community Centre. Due to the language difficulties of the parents the girl has to take responsibilities for family issues such as opening a bank account, going shopping with the parents, seeing doctors and arrange travel for the family. They are also caring for their grandmother who is seventy five and half blind. Currently the family only have contact with one other family, who are relatives. They are now jointly running a Chinese takeaway shop in a local area and due to their language problems are unable to build up relationships with their customers and neighbours. At the moment the parents are working day and night under a lot of pressure. The girl is also struggling at school to catch up with other students. They have little opportunity to participate in any activities that release them from the pressure of their daily life.

Pieke, Nyiri, Thuno and Ceccagno's research on human trafficking of Fujianese migrants has highlighted the ruthless exploitation of Chinese labour in the UK, predatory criminal gangs as well as lack of integration of this group into mainstream society (2000). A recent Guardian article by Hsiao-Hung Pai (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004) highlights the continuing violation of basic employment rights and poor living conditions experienced by Chinese workers in the UK post-Morecambe on farms in fireworks factories and in domestic labour.



## **Fieldworkers reports**

This section gives voice to the ten Chinese fieldworkers on this project. The fieldworkers who carried out the household survey often wrote movingly of the day to day difficulties Chinese people were experiencing. Edited material from these reports is set out below. The first report concerns asylum seekers from mainland China. Next, four reports deal more generally with housing and neighbourhood experiences and perceptions of health and social services together with some suggestions for change. This followed by four reports that deal more specifically with the perceptions and experiences of Chinese elderly. Lastly, the needs of single parents are considered. Recommendations arising from these discussions are set out in the summary at the beginning of this report.

### **Fieldwork with asylum seekers (Xu Xiao Chuan)**

My interviewees are all asylum seekers in UK. This group of people have unique problems and situations which are different from many other residents of Leeds. One interview usually takes me two or three hours or even more, because I found if I wanted to let the interviewees say more or tell me more stories about themselves, I must spend more time in changing the relationship from strangers into friends. So I would also tell them my own stories. We shared ideas, experiences, happiness and sorrows. We became more trustful of each other. Usually I did the interviews in their home, because they aren't familiar with the city. Also it is difficult for them to travel because they do not know English to ask the way or communicate with the bus driver.

The living situation of this group of people is very poor. Most of them live in poor quality housing, with no heating, no basic furniture, only a small space and with lots of problems with plumbing, cooking and laundry facilities. I remember one of the interviewees who lived in a room with one bed, one table and three broken chairs.

Some interviewees suffered domestic violence, abuse and discrimination. Most of them feel very alone and almost totally isolated from the society outside. They are under stress, anxious and even feel hopeless about life. Though there are lots of Chinese communities and social services, the access to these services is limited. There is a lack of information about what services are available to them and how to get in touch. They mostly depended on help from one organisation, like Advocacy Support for example.

For the health service, they try to avoid going to see a doctor or going to hospital because they cannot understand English and it makes them more nervous. One person told me that he went to see the doctor and there was no interpreter in place. The doctor talked with him for a long time but he could not understand anything, so he kept silent. The doctor became very angry with him, because the doctor thought he was not listening carefully. He told me after seeing the doctor that day, he went back home and felt very useless. Other interviewees also had similar problems. They lack the information on how they can access the GP and hospital services. They need interpreters with whom they are familiar and can trust to begin to get health services.

Overall, they need lots of help to make a basic living and to survive in this city. They face lots of problems from almost every aspect of their lives. Most of them dreamed of earning money by working here. Some of them did not earn money but got diseases or suffered in terrible marriages. For them, their soul has almost died. Several times, I asked them why they continue this terrible life here. They said they

were ashamed to go back to China to face their families. For the ones who earned some money, they told me the price of doing it is very high. If they went back and had to choose again, they would have stayed in China and never left. They are stressed by work and lack of holidays or entertainment. They are struggling to make a living and bring up or educate children. However, they have an extraordinarily strong life force and no matter how hard a life they have, they never give up and never think of suicide. What they often think of is how to improve their lives. This is why I really respect them and feel proud of them.

This group of people have a strong requirement for education. They want to have English courses taught in Chinese. So they can quickly learn some basic vocabulary and expressions to manage the communication in daily life. This group of people have many problems with day-to-day living, mainly because they do not understand English. They are not a small group. I think Chinese overseas students can be of great help here. Many Chinese students can speak English well, are well educated and enthusiastic to do some volunteer work. They know that China is still poor and that many people need help.

### **Fieldwork with Chinese households: 1**

The majority of the interviewees had a unique occupation structure and work pattern – working in the catering industry doing late, unsocial hours. In order to ensure quality of relevant data or information as requested, the fieldworker eagerly sought to hear voices and experiences (e.g. discrimination and harassment, domestic violence, etc.) from different respondents during the interviews, specifically in the open-ended questions. Also, almost half of the interviewees had a language barrier and they stated that interpreter provision was one of the pertinent determinants affecting their reluctance or motivation for having access to various services in general. The majority of respondents were female (80%).

In terms of the difficulties, and impressions that came through during the process of the interviews, the fieldworker was conscious of the question of identity crisis – Britishness in relation to being Chinese. This also included questions of identity affecting some of those interviewees from different origins who:

- migrated from China for marriage;
- were born in the UK;
- came from Hong Kong;
- came to the UK for other reasons and through other means not mentioned above.

For most of these people, their identity as Chinese was contested in terms of access to social, health care services and housing needs provision, and also in relation to non-Chinese neighbours. Thus quality of care and welfare was sometimes linked to their status and identity. This was in turn connected to language and communication and cultural traditions. Eight out of ten respondents claimed that they had been racially discriminated or attacked by their non-Chinese neighbours. They usually experienced racial abuse by being called 'Chink', and they were all considered to be the same under British hegemonic imperialism as long as they were seen as ethnic Chinese; it does not matter where they come from. On the other hand, there was no reported experience by the other two respondents, who had resided in this country for more than ten years. They also reported there was no problem at all for them in getting access to services regarding social, health care and housing needs.

In general, it seemed the majority of the interviewees were satisfied with their present home. It is unusual nowadays to know someone who is Chinese living within an extended family (involving at least two generations) as compared to ten years ago in this country. One respondent (among the ten) and her husband were very dissatisfied with their current accommodation and were desperately looking for help in getting social services and housing support due to emotional domestic harassment and threats from her family in law and living in a congested environment. This also caused her and her husband serious problems relating to such health issues as stress, anxiety, sleeplessness and depression, etc. in their daily life. The fieldworker advised them to seek help from the local housing association and other community agencies like the Advocacy and Interpreting Services (AIS).

Another respondent had been experiencing severe physical and mental domestic violence, and a lack of freedom, by her husband and family in law for almost ten years. Language and communication problems and having no knowledge about service providers were her main difficulties. It is noteworthy that fortunately she had made her final decision to divorce and had got support from a social worker in the end. The fieldworker had encouraged her to go to other Chinese community organisations such as the Leeds Chinese Christian Church for friendships and further support.

The information gathered from this fieldwork raised a number of significant issues as follows:

- Language and communication obstacles;
- A lack of knowledge of existing resources or systems from different service providers;
- Personal values and perceptions in relation to identity and cultural beliefs;
- Racial discrimination and domestic violence; and
- Limitation of time due to family and (catering) business commitments.

It was noted that further action should be acknowledged and implemented sooner rather than later in order to improve the quality of life and welfare for the minority ethnic Chinese community in Leeds. Recommendations for action together with those from other fieldworkers are included at the end of this section.

### **Fieldwork with Chinese households: 2**

My first respondent was a widower in her early fifties. She lives alone in a huge block of flats not far from St. James Hospital and speaks very little English but has spent some time going to special classes that have taught her basic English skills. She has previously worked as a kitchen assistant at a Chinese restaurant but is currently out of work due to her poor health, and also wears a hearing aid. At the moment she spends her spare time going to classes to improve her English. She told me that she is happy with her accommodation simply because she is on her own although she did complain that her hot water is not always hot enough. She told me that she gets very lonely at times, and feel frustrated and angry at not being able to communicate with English people and having to rely on organisations to read her mail for her and accompanying her to doctors, dentist and hospital appointments.

My next respondent is also in his early fifties and lives with his wife and ten year old daughter in a rented council terraced house. He is currently out of work and has worked as a chauffeur in the past; he also mentioned that he has worked as a kitchen assistant at various Chinese fast food takeaways. His wife suffers from a

mental illness which is kept under control by permanently taking medication. The couple told me that the area that they live in is quite a rough part of Leeds; I could tell this by the amount of rubbish that was scattered on the streets, that many of the houses on the street have boarded up windows and the majority of the houses have security gates fitted to their front door to prevent break-ins. The couple told me that they feel very insecure living at their present address they have had a few incidents where gangs of youths have thrown eggs and other substances at their front window. The couple also mentioned that they are not happy about the health service especially having to wait a long time for appointments and then waiting a long time to see the doctor once an appointment is made.

My third respondent is in her early forties is separated from her husband and living with her two children in a rented council terraced house. She is currently out of work, recovering from cancer, speaks very little English and relies on friends and Advocacy Support for help. Her house is in desperate need for repair, her walls are very damp making it very cold. She needs central heating and she is being told by the council that the central heating will not be fitted until the summer and she is still waiting to hear from them about the repair work. She is very depressed but she is a very strong lady who is putting on a very brave face for the sake of her two children, she is a very good mother who is constantly worried about her daughters. She tells me that her youngest daughter is extremely underweight; she has tried vitamin tablets, and various other methods to help her gain weight but nothing seem to have worked. She has also asked me if I could find some information for her regarding swimming lessons for her daughters. She seems very lonely and I really do admire her for all that she has gone through and for being a strong person who despite her illness and problems with her husband can still put on a brave face to protect her children from harm.

My fourth respondent lives in a council house. She is also separated from her husband and has six children, four of whom are currently living at home with her while two are away at university. She is currently not in employment due to her health problems: she is suffering from arthritis, but has previously worked in a Chinese take-away. She can speak a little English but needs help with filling in forms, and arranging repairs that are needed around the house, she complains that the council do not respond to housing repair requests very well, saying that she has to wait a long time for somebody to come out. She is also unhappy that she is not in a fit state to maintain her garden and could do with some help with it. She also complains that her house is quite damp, but will put up with it and stay where she is; simply for fear that she may be rehoused in a poorer area. She is another unsatisfied user of the health service; she tells me that she finds it distressing having to wait days for a doctors appointment and that by the time the appointment is due, she is normally almost recovered.

My fifth interview was with an elderly lady in her eighties who is living alone. I was very touched, sad and upset during and after the interview with her. When I first learned that I was to interview an elderly lady of around eighty years old, I did wonder to myself whether she was mentally fit enough for the interview, but I was reassured the moment I rang her to arrange our interview; I could tell instantly that she was a very unhappy lonely lady. She greeted me with a huge smile on the day of the interview; she seemed so pleased to see me and instructed me to go into the living room where the television was on very loud, showing a Chinese film from a Chinese channel. She has lived in the UK for over forty years, and has been a Chinese restaurant owner before she retired, She speaks little English, has five children but only one who lives in Leeds and told me that her daughter from Leeds goes to visit her once a week but doesn't see much of the other four children. She fully

understands all the questions asked and became extremely angry when asked if she had heard or used "home helps". She tells me that she has used home helps before and that the person that was responsible for helping her around the house stole some pension money from her and various other items from her house which has put her off very much and she has since not requested for another home help. She became very tearful and wept when I asked her if she ever felt lonely and isolated, she told me that she feels so lonely and depressed because there is nobody to talk to and that she is all alone. She wished that someone could go to her house and just sit and talk to her and listen to her, she finds it quite difficult walking long distances due to a problem with her knees which is the main problem that is preventing her from getting out and about. At the moment she is relying on her walking sticks and holding on to the furniture and walls around the house. She used to go to the Chinese elderly group but the group takes place at premises that requires climbing up a flight of stairs which is preventing her from going. Her food shopping trips require her to pay for a taxi to take her to the supermarket and back because she is unable to travel on the public transport. She complains that she finds it difficult to climb up the bus and due to her heart problem finds travelling on the bus too bumpy. She is still able to do most things around the house but did stress that she does not have the strength to maintain her garden, which she is quite worried about. She desperately needs help; her only companion is her television and she is obviously very unhappy due to loneliness. She has suffered a heart attack, is diabetic and has difficulty walking around her house and may suffer a fall.

My sixth respondent lives alone in a rented council flat and is currently unemployed but has previously worked as a chef in Chinese restaurants and take-away. He says he is learning English at the moment. He tells me that the area that he lives in is very run down, he says that he has suffered racial abuse and graffiti and problems with dumping of litter outside his flat.

My seventh respondent is in her forties, separated and unemployed due to health problems and is on permanent medication. Her main concerns are her health and her inability to speak or read English. She told me that she feels awkward and inconvenient having to ask organisations for help, and she also feels lonely and isolated because she cannot communicate with her neighbours and other people on her street. Her only interest is watching the Chinese channels on television. She enjoys organised day activities and outings that are organised by the Chinese organisations because this gives her the opportunity to meet and chat to other Chinese people. She also complained about the health service and told me that on one occasion she had a very deep cut on her finger which did not stop bleeding so she ended up at the accident and emergency and after waiting for a few hours, she ended up leaving without getting treatment. She was extremely annoyed and angry.

My eighth respondent lives in a council flat with his wife and two young children, they are waiting to be rehoused, because the flat is overcrowded. His main concerns are the safety of his children and their well being.

My ninth respondent is a retired gentleman in his sixties. He used to work as a chef in Chinese take-away but now suffers from asthma. His house is in need of urgent repairs and he needs help with accessing council and health services.

My tenth respondent is a widower and lives with her teenage son and two year old daughter. She is on the verge of a nervous breakdown and feels that there is no one to talk to since the death of her husband. She is having problems with her teenage son who is suffering from behavioural problems and truants from school which is something that he has never done before. He will not talk to her but just locks himself

in his bedroom and plays on his computer. She speaks very poor English and feels very lonely and depressed. She cannot maintain her garden or sort out house repairs. She is unhappy about the health service yet again complaining about the length of time that she usually has to wait before she is seen. She is also very unhappy with her son's dentist where he was referred to the dental hospital for him to have braces fitted. She said it has now been a year and they have still not heard from the dental hospital.

In conclusion, although there are a lot more organisations that are available to help the Chinese community now, which has made so much difference to the non-English speaking Chinese community, there are still a lot of Chinese people who choose not to go for help for fear of being looked down on, or who are simply too embarrassed to seek help. Nine out of ten of the people that I have interviewed have worked or are currently working in the restaurant or take-away trade making their social life very unhealthy. Many say there are no other job prospects; working as a chef or kitchen assistant does not require them to communicate in English, the financial outcome is quite rewarding and in a lot of cases accommodation is provided with the job. Many eventually go on to owning their own Chinese take-away. A majority of the respondents feel that their houses are in need of repair, but are waiting for long periods of time before any work is carried out. I was quite shocked to hear that my third respondent is having to wait months to get central heating; her house is so damp, not to mention the fact that she is recovering from cancer. All ten respondents have complained about the health service. Unless they are suffering severely most choose not to visit their GPs.

### **Fieldwork with Chinese households: 3**

Most of the ten respondents I spoke to need their son, daughter or relative to take them to their doctor or hospital appointment, because they lack English skills. If their children are working then they have to find an interpreter to accompany them. They didn't even know there is an interpreting service run by the Leeds City Council, they told me social service or Leeds City Council do not send them the information by post or translated into Chinese.

Some of the families have been subjected to racial abuse from kids, and think that nowadays kids are getting worse and have no respect for Chinese people. Some of the Chinese families won't let their children go out at night in case they will get racially attacked or robbed. There was one particular family that had been racially attacked by their neighbours, who threw stones at their windows and doors, spread excrement onto their windows, threw eggs at their house and put fireworks through their letterbox. This family was living in fear constantly and have contacted the local police many times, but they cannot press charges because of a lack of evidence. The neighbour said that it was not their children who did it, so this family had to contact the advisory group and Leeds Chinese Wah Kwong Association to ask for help. The groups had to contact the police and complain about what's happening, and ask where they can seek further advice apart from the police. The groups have contacted the housing department and Leeds Racial Equality Council for advice, and they have found out that their neighbours had rented their house from the council. The council have temporarily fitted CCTV in their house so that both they and the police can monitor what is actually happening. When they got some evidence, they went to their neighbour and showed it to them. It proved that their children and their friends had carried out the abuse, and the police gave them a warning and threatened that if it happened again they would be evicted from their present house. This family had told me they have lived there for more than fifteen years. Years ago their street was peaceful and quiet, now it is getting worse and worse. Nearly every weekend police

cars are there waiting for the drug dealers or burglars, and a few weeks ago a pregnant lady was raped. This family are so scared to go out at night, and although their neighbours had stopped their abuse, they still have verbal threats from other kids who live nearby. This family hope the council can reduce crime rates and teach the children to behave properly. They have been thinking about moving away from the area but cannot afford to do so.

I had interviewed one member of this family who is deaf. Although he lives with his family, he feels really isolated because of the lack of communication. Most of the time he stayed in his bedroom, or went to the elderly people's luncheon club for lunch, but he still cannot communicate with other people in the club, so he feels really lonely and added to this, he lost his partner recently. Sometimes he feels he doesn't want to live anymore and is depressed. He told me he had been married for more than sixty years. I told him he can still enjoy life because he is a great granddad and has quite a few great grandchildren, and he is lucky to live with his son and daughter-in-law. He has no idea what kind of services that the social services offer.

With another family I interviewed, the man's mother-in-law has lived with him for thirty years, she's now in her seventies and thought she was not entitled to claim any pension. Her son-in-law thought the same, until he did this survey and asked me whether I could help him apply, because he doesn't speak or read English and has no idea where to seek advice. I asked him if he had ever asked the local Chinese group for advice, to which he said he felt too ashamed to ask for help.

Most of the families wanted sheltered housing and other forms of housing provision similar to that available in Chinatown in Manchester with its own warden and Chinese social worker. Most of the elderly don't speak English and these are the people who need health services with the use of interpreters. I suggest that the social services and housing departments do more advertisement or arrange meetings with the local Chinese groups to do presentations on their services.

#### **Fieldwork with Chinese households: 4**

Many Chinese households prefer to live in council housing. However, because many wanted to apply for it, there is a lot of competition. Thus they often have to wait for a very long time. But it is in very poor condition generally and they are not satisfied, and they can't afford to repair it.

Chinese people are discriminated against by other communities in Britain, they are frequently verbally abused by their neighbours and often worse. Chinese people are afraid of this situation and feel that they can only live with Chinese friends, which makes them isolated from society. Apart from this, the Chinese are conservatively natured and they prefer to keep away from people they don't know well. Both of these factors make the Chinese community isolated.

The language barrier is a common problem. Even some elderly people who have lived here for many years can't speak English at all. They rely on interpreters or other family members to help, but they complain there are not enough interpreters available. The lack of awareness of social services is mainly caused by the language barrier and Chinese people find the hospital service really hard to use. First of all, it takes a very long time to get an appointment. They are always kept in waiting list, which may lead to bigger health issue whilst waiting. Secondly, they need to find an interpreter to go with them in most cases and they are really hard to get hold of sometimes. When they get to see a doctor after all those difficulties, the doctors sometimes treat them with ignorance. This only happens rarely but even so, I wish

these doctors really could change their attitudes, because Chinese people are human beings too. They really shouldn't discriminate on health issues.

Chinese people are always hard working and have little time to take care of themselves or other family members. Chinese families should give more attention to health issues, for example trying to learn more about health services.

During this survey, I found out that many people are asylum seekers here. They came here with unrealistic ideas of what the UK would be like. After a while, they found that everything was different. But they cannot go back now. This is the only way for them is to survive. Some lucky ones get what they want through very hard work. But many are still struggling here.

During the survey in the Mandarin school, I found out most of the parents wish their children could get better education than they had. But some problems bothered them, such as the language barrier. They can't communicate with school staff to learn more about their children's performance at school. Another thing is that Chinese kids are sometimes isolated in local schools, just like Chinese people are isolated in this society. Or even worse, they can be verbally or physically abused by other kids.

#### **Fieldwork with Chinese elderly: 1**

I was working in conjunction with the Chinese Women's Group; therefore most of my interviewees were elderly people who use the Chinese Women's Group's services or attend the lunch club. Most of my interviewees were elderly ladies; there was only one interview that I had to make a home visit. Also, almost all of my interviews were conducted in Cantonese. Out of the participants that I talked to, language seemed to be their main problem when using social services, especially when they were trying to use the health services. If they their children cannot go with them, some would ask the staff from the Chinese Women's Group or the Advice centre, but they could only help during the daytime. There was a lady who once stayed in the hospital as an in-patient, unfortunately she was in pain in the middle of the night but she couldn't tell the doctors or nurses because she didn't know English, so she had to wait until the next morning when someone visited her to translate for her. There were few others who had similar experiences either in hospital or in a doctor's surgery. They suggested there should be more Chinese translators or employees in the hospital services; such as Chinese dentists.

I remember going to the clinic once with my grandma to attend a talk on diabetes, where the nurse explained to the elderly what they need to be aware of, the kind of food they can eat and should avoid. They also gave out leaflets to the family member who was accompanying the elderly or asked them to take it home for their children, so the family is aware of the issues. Perhaps the Chinese community could arrange similar talks (in Chinese or Haka) for the elderly to raise the awareness of certain conditions that are usual for them and inform them where they can get help and what they can do. As well as health talks, a few ladies also suggested exercise demonstrations/classes; in Hong Kong I have heard of in some health clinics or community centres which arrange classes for the elderly to do exercise, in order to enhance their physical health and mobility.

Many of them go to the lunch club to meet up with other elderly people to chat or to shop around because most of them live alone and sometimes feel a little isolated and lonely at home. I also noticed from talking to the elderly that some of them like to go to the casino; they said mostly they sit and talk with others, rarely gambling that



much. When it was suggested to some of them that if there was a community centre, would they stay in it rather than going to the casino, they said they would. That made me think of the community centres in Hong Kong, which are usually blocks of flats that are provided by the government which are for the community to use, both old and young. The centre would arrange regular activities and talks for the community perhaps costing very little, for example; I went to one of the activities that the centre arranged especially for elderly. It was a day trip to take them to visit temples, have lunch, and go to a museum; families were also welcome, so I went with my grandma. There were a number of volunteers on each coach to make sure everyone was there and to look after the elderly who went alone. I noticed that even though most of the people didn't know each other, the younger people were willing to help the elderly who were alone and everyone there was very friendly towards each other. It was a chance for some of the elderly to get out and visit places, although Hong Kong is small but there are places that can be quite far and difficult to get to without transport. I know there are community centres in different towns but the Chinese elderly do not seem to use those facilities, because some don't know that these kinds of centres are available and their friends don't live in the same area, and even if they do go they could not talk to the other elderly people, hence they decide to go to town and the casino instead. Also most of the elderly I come across in Hong Kong or here in the UK like people visiting them because as they get older, their children (if they have any) have moved away and they get lonely and if people visit them and talk to them, they feel that people care about them.

When asked about some of social services that are provided to the elderly, only a few of them have heard of some services; and when asked about their opinions on the services or benefits that they are currently receiving, most had no comments because they responded that they did not know the type of services they could use. Most of them receive some forms of benefits or pension and do not use other care facilities that the social services provided. Even if they are entitled to the services and help from the social sector, most of them still would not use it unless it was absolutely necessary, that is perhaps due to culture difference. They feel that if they are still able to manage and look after themselves, they do not want people to help. Some people that I approached did not receive any benefits at all. Perhaps talks and conferences (in Chinese) should be organised for the Chinese community (not just for the elderly) to provide a chance for the people to get to know their rights and help and benefits which they are entitled to as a citizens.

Most of the interviewees' housing was privately owned and they were satisfied with it, but a few did have problems with the area they lived in, such as harassment from youths in the neighbourhood, houses being burgled and muggings in the street. One lady told me about the constant harassment she received from the neighbourhood youths, she rarely reported it to the police because they could not do much, and she did not go and confront them because she fears retaliation. She felt the youths persistently trouble her due to her being Chinese, and suggested that it would be beneficial if there was some kind of community programme within their neighbourhood to introduce everyone to everyone else. It could provide a chance for them to try to understand each others culture and to try to live in harmony.

Living in a different country is difficult, one has to familiarise yourself with the area, get to know the people, the customs and cultures. Although many of the interviewees had lived in the UK for many decades, some of them seemed to feel that they are still outsiders. Both the Chinese community and local council should make effort to ensure the Chinese know and understand their rights and entitlement to benefits and help.

## **Fieldwork with Chinese elderly: 2**

The survey has selected participants who are all known users of the local community organisations, and are regarded as being more active and motivated. However, the sample has neglected other elderly people who are not users of these services; the needs of a housebound elderly individual can be very different to an elderly who is active, therefore the result of the survey could not represent the whole Chinese elderly population in Leeds.

From the information collected during the interviews with my Chinese elderly interviewees, it seems very clear that most elderly lack information and understanding of both the social and health service provisions available to them. In addition strong reliance on interpreters, the lack of language skills and accessible transport and information about most mainstream services are the key factors in forming a barrier for them in using these services and therefore uptake is low.

The feedback from the participants details a concern with their entitlement to benefits. They claimed that they are uncertain about how their benefits are being calculated and whether the amount is adequate. A small number of participants have claimed that the benefits are not enough for both living (food, housing, etc) and other expenses.

In addition, most of the elderly from my survey have experienced verbal racial harassment from young children. My interviewees felt that this is not a serious problem - unless it escalates into physical violence - as they have experienced such abuse for a long period of time. An individual has reported that they have reported harassment to the police, cases such as breaking their takeaway windows and disturbance in the takeaway. He felt there is no further assistance available, and he had this reply from a police officer; "If you want to avoid such problems, you should change your windows to plastic or wooden boards". This is an amazing attitude from a police officer. Is this the kind of assistance that one should receive in such a situation?

There is a concern with the nature of the services provided by the Chinese community organisations; some participants have reported that they wish to receive more help in planning activities which are appropriate for them and they claimed that it is very difficult in finding someone who can translate the meaning of their English letters and fill in application forms for them. Also sometimes when they do seek assistance, occasionally they are refused help because of time constraints or a lack of staff.

Some participants feel that it is difficult to go to hospital and seek help from the local council on their own, as they find it confusing not knowing their way around and the language barrier. Such services are very limited in Leeds, as the elderly claimed that it is very difficult to arrange an interpreter by themselves, because of the inflexible appointment times at surgeries and lack of interpreters. Although interpreters can be booked by doctors and health professionals, the elderly said these interpreters can only translate for them and cannot advocate for them. Some individuals feel that visiting their GP can be very irritating, because they felt they were receiving a shorter length of consultation and being treated differently in terms of attitudes. The elderly claimed that some health professionals show a lack of understanding with Chinese people who cannot communicate in English.

Due to the process of ageing, some participants are having problems with their teeth, it has been causing problems with the type of food that they can eat; they tend to

avoid meat, fibre and fruit which may result in being more prone to illnesses. As most services are not known even after a brief explanation of the nature of the service, the elderly have decided these services are inadequate and inappropriate for them. For example, the use of meals on wheels; they considered the meals are culturally different and that they would dislike them.

From my observations, most elderly Chinese people are living in a house without their children, and although they have reported on the questionnaire that they aren't lonely, it is very clear that they have to rely on their relatives or interpreters to accompany them when visiting the health service. In addition, they were very welcoming to the interviewers when we visited them, because we provided company for them to share their feelings with. In a few cases, the participants have to take medication to control their medical conditions, but there is concern about whether they are taking them correctly and whether their conditions have improved or not.

### **Fieldwork with Chinese elderly: 3**

In this survey, I found that most of the elderly even the younger people did not know what kind of services they could use or how to get hold of them. In Chinese culture, people tend to hide their actual needs and feelings unless the problem is very serious and they cannot handle it anymore. For example one of my interviewees, an elderly lady, did not ask people to help her to see the doctor when she was sick. The reason is that she is afraid to bother people and feels embarrassed to talk. In Chinese culture, people are afraid to tell others about the problems they are facing even if they cannot handle it.

On the other hand, some elderly people who live with their family said if they have any problem with their health, their family member would sort it out for them. It shows that the care they get completely depends on their family. They tend to be passive in getting any information about their welfare or available services. I keep thinking about social care for those elderly people who have no family or relatives and what happens to them. Also, what happens to those elderly people who live with their families if the families suddenly leave?

I was surprised that the elderly people's awareness of their needs in social care and health care was so small. When I ask about the services such as meal on wheels, foster care etc, which can help them to improve the living standards, the majority of the elderly people did not use the services that I mentioned and had not even heard of them before. The biggest difficulty for the elderly to get the services they need is the language barrier. They cannot communicate with people directly.

On the health services, one of the interviewees suggested that she preferred the bilingual service leaflet, so that she could understand what kind of services she can get and how to get them. Moreover, she hoped more interpreters would be available in the service, to help her to understand what people said. For example, when she gave birth to her first child, she couldn't understand what had happened to her baby when talking with the doctor.

Furthermore, one of the elderly women said she wanted some special service to help her especially during the holidays such as some emergency number she can call. In Hong Kong, every single person with long-term illnesses has a safety bell installed in their homes. This safety bell is directly connected to the central operator. The operator will contact the closest hospital and arrange for paramedics to visit. I think this is a good idea for the council to consider, as it is good for the elderly who

cannot speak English and would save time when searching for which number they should call.

In the social services, the majority of elderly spend their leisure time at the casino. Some time is spent gambling and some is just for meeting friends and chatting. However, I do not think that is a good meeting point for them in the long term. Most of interviewees said that they felt bored and had nothing to do. One of my interviewees said she had to go out every day because she felt bored at home. So, she went to the casino about 5 days a week.

When I was a social work student three years ago. I chose my placement in an elderly persons centre. This centre is for those aged 50 or over and provides many activities to occupy the elderly people's time such as outings, courses, health talks, and so on. Also, the centre is open at from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, so the elderly can come anytime and use all facilities in the centre such as newspapers, drinks, and fitness facilities. Every two or three months, the centre will invite volunteers to measure blood pressure and give free haircuts. In the centre, there is a supervisor, a welfare worker, a clerk and a cleaner. I not only provided activities but also a counselling and referring service. Before they used the service, they needed to pay around £4 for membership. The centre allowed them to make friends and socialise.

Participating in voluntary work can increase the volunteer's self-esteem and help others as well. Most of the elderly people may think that they are useless and a burden to their families. Organising regular health talks and visits to health centres or hospitals can improve their health awareness and knowledge about the health services and health information.

The quality of the elderly lunch club can be improved. For instance, they could provide some activities after or before the meal. Another service provided by Leeds Chinese Women's group is advising and interpreting. The elderly normally come to ask them to translate some documents or letters. For example, they will ask for arrange health-checking appointments or come in for a chat. Both of these are felt to be useful. We could encourage more elderly people to do some voluntary work to contribute to our society again and help them to spend the time in a more valuable and meaningful way.

I am glad that I met so many elderly people within a short space of time; they were so kind and lovely. It was really surprising for me. I hope the services for the Chinese elderly can be improved soon.

#### **Fieldwork with Chinese elderly: 4**

At first I found it wasn't easy to do this survey in the Chinese community because of the traditional culture. Chinese people are shy, quiet and don't want to make any trouble. So a lot of Chinese people don't want to be interviewed, especially the elderly. They are worried and they don't want anyone to know that they have family problems or this survey would affect their benefits. I explained to them this survey will help raise awareness amongst relevant agencies of needs and issues affecting the Chinese community. Then they were happy to accept my interview.

Secondly, the major problem of the Chinese community is the language barrier, especially the elderly. The majority of the elderly came to live in England over 20 years ago. They all worked very hard in Chinese restaurants and Chinese takeaway shops for long hours. So they didn't have a chance to learn English when they were

young. They have no knowledge of health services, housing services and social services provision. They have to work hard in order to support their families i.e. financial. They have got other problems, they didn't have time to communicate with their children, so they don't have a good relationship with their children. Then some of the children had behavioural problems and some of the children had learning difficulties due to the lack of language support at school.

One lady came from Hong Kong about five years ago. She is divorced and has one teenage daughter. Her ex-husband is in Hong Kong and she has no relatives in England. She can only speak basic English, so she asked the Chinese Advice Centre workers to help her claim benefits. The lady wanted to have a new start in Leeds. Unfortunately she faced plenty of problems and this made her suffer from mental health problems and her daughter suffer from behavioural problems.

She lives in a council house in Leeds. Her daughter went to a local high school. She was attacked and bullied by her schoolmates after she told the head teacher the problems were getting worse. The schoolmates were her neighbours. They kept hanging round her house and they destroyed her vegetables and the children broke her mother's car window. One evening after the lady and her daughters came back from shopping they saw their house had been burgled. The burglars got into their house through the kitchen window and stole their valuable property. They were so scared and they believed the burglars were the schoolmates. Luckily the Chinese Advice Centre workers and a Touch Stone worker helped her to find a refuge and a new high school for her daughter. Both agencies gave great support to them. Now they are safe, but the lady is still suffering from stress and she has to take medicine to ease the problem.

Some Chinese elderly were very active before and usually joined the Chinese community activities. But they are getting old and have mobility problems. So they are stuck at home and feel lonely and isolated. They all need care but they don't know how to get the social care provision. They also worry that they have to pay large amounts of money to get the services.

I knew the other big project is the China Town project proposed by Leeds City Council. If a Chinese elderly scheme and a Chinese nursing home can be built on the top of the shopping centre, or a separate building within the China Town, it will be perfect for the Chinese elderly. They won't have communication problems and don't need to travel a long way to buy Chinese food, as the one in Manchester. They can also join the Chinese community activities within walking distance. Although it is just a dream house for the elderly I hope it will happen. Quite a lot of Chinese people complain that the hospital and GPs should provide an interpreter for them. Some women suggested that the NHS put Chinese health leaflets in different health centres. When they are waiting for the services, they can read the health leaflets. Then they will know more about the new health information directly.

### **Fieldwork with single parents**

The Chinese Christian Church particularly highlighted problems that single parents were experiencing in the community including anger, depression, anxiety and loneliness. They proposed the establishment of a Chinese Family Centre to provide support, advice and counselling. This case was set out in detail in a fieldwork report:

Single parents and their children constitute a rapidly increasing population in the Chinese community, and my fieldwork focussed on this group. However, social development in the Chinese traditional sense has not prepared either males or

females to be single parents. There are lots of local organisations, which specially provide services for single parents, but there was none for Chinese family. Their problems include anger, depression, anxiety and loneliness. Solo parenting can be exhausting particularly if the other parent isn't involved. Death of a partner or an absentee ex-partner puts all the responsibility on their shoulders. They are angry with the other person for causing the situation and for causing them pain. They either feel anger at their deceased partner for dying or at their partner for asking for a divorce. The death or break-up happened and there is nothing to bring the other person back. Acknowledgement of the situation often brings depression. This could be a quiet, withdrawn time as they soak in the situation. If they do not receive enough support or suitable counselling, their symptoms may prolong for several years. The depression is accompanied by anxiety. The uncertainty itself generates anxiety, 'Where will I live?' 'How will I cope financially?' 'Will I cope with the children by myself?' 'How will the children react to a broken home?' 'Can I really cope with living alone?' 'What will my parents think?' 'What my friends say?' Perhaps the most intimidating question is simply, 'What will become of me?' A further problem is loneliness. Marriage usually provides some sort of companionship. They may find themselves fabricating excuses to ring people or running down to the shop at the slightest pretext. These can be a heartbreaking period. Single mothers and fathers need to establish strong support networks, personal friendships, and new social networks, and work on improving their self-esteem. Many single parents learn to live on reduced incomes. Overall, single parents have a tough job. Many are struggling to pay the bills, hold a household together, and heal their own emotional wounds. At the same time, their children are wrestling with hurt, guilt, and confusion over a personal world that has been torn apart. How can the church meet these crucial and growing needs?

Chinese Christians can provide a Building Healthy Single-Parent Families Training Course. It is an everything-you-need-to-know program born out of years of ministry to single parents and their children. It is specifically designed to enable the church to help the growing number of single-parent families work through the trauma of divorce and find life on the other side. It provides leaders with curriculum and resources to begin and maintain a 12-week course to empower single parents. Single Parent families can begin the journey towards healing, wholeness, and hopes. They neither minimise nor exaggerate problems but seek solutions. They acknowledge the difficulties (e.g., lack of personal time, restricted social life, sole responsibility for meeting multiple needs, financial stress) without self-pity or bitterness. They attempt to achieve it through physical, spiritual, emotional and/or social means. They are connected to others on whom they can call on for practical and emotional support.

Chinese organisations should consider setting up a Chinese Family Centre. Many people who are working with single families are volunteers and about 90% of our frontline work is delivered by people unpaid. We excite their interest and people stay commitment, often for many years, because they have found a fulfilling role. However, we still need our own Chinese Family Centre to develop a strategic planning that will allow us to plan how to use our resources to achieve our aim. We also need professional counsellors to deal with some complicated emotional problems of single families. We have to tackle causes not symptoms. We could bring together marriage and family experts to give information on marriage enrichment and revitalising marriage. The centre could hold some family workshop and conference to the general public. We should also assess attitudes toward marriage in today's youth culture, and investigate the best ways to help young people prepare for marriage and provide marriage and family-life education programs in the Chinese Schools. Moreover, there is relatively little serious research being conducted today on the importance of marriage. To help fill the marriage knowledge gap, we may encourage, commission, monitor and conduct research on marriage and marital relationships.

The centre may issue regular reports on the status of marriage, and publish other information on marriage.

## Survey data

During April to June 2004 110 interviews were carried out with Chinese individuals. This group was drawn from lists provided by every Chinese community based organisation in Leeds: the Leeds Chinese Community Centre, Chinese Women's Group, Chinese Elderly Luncheon Club, Chinese Community School, Mandarin School, Leeds Wah Kwong Association, Advocacy Support and the Leeds Chinese Christian Church. This method was used to ensure that perceptions and experiences of people interviewed would be indicative of the range of different networks and constituencies making up the Chinese community as a whole.

The quantitative data is given in detail in Appendix 1 and an analysis of survey variables by gender is given in Appendix 2. Although some selected material from the survey has been presented previously in this report in various forms, this section highlights some key quantitative data.

### (i) General characteristics

- 71% of those interviewed were women
- 32% of those interviewed were over 65
- 37% of those interviewed were separated, divorced or widowed
- 8% were living in an extended family household
- 35% had been living in the UK for over 21 years
- 93% of those in work were working in restaurants or takeaways

### (ii) Housing

- 37% were in social rented housing
- 23% felt they were living in overcrowded conditions
- about 20% felt their cooking, laundry, bathroom and toilet facilities were inadequate
- about a third of all households were living in damp properties and had poor heating
- 36% felt their homes were in general disrepair
- 13% had a leaking roof
- 24% wanted to move mainly to find better quality housing
- 83% wanted to stay in Leeds if they moved
- 10% wanted sheltered housing
- 42% wanted housing advice services



(iii) Neighbourhood and crime

- 42% felt lonely and isolated where they lived
- 52% had problems with gangs of youths hanging around in their area
- 41% had had their property or car vandalised
- 35% had been burgled and 19% had been robbed on the street
- 79% had experience of racial attacks

(iv) Social Services

- over half did not know of specific social services such as day centres or meals on wheels
- those who had support from social workers were very satisfied, but those who had used other social services felt these to be poor

(v) Elderly needs

- a variety of urgent housing and health needs have been identified for this group as indicated above
- 42 elderly Chinese people were asked about their personal care, mobility, domestic and personal safety needs, the majority of Chinese elderly reported personal independence in these areas of daily life, but care needs to be taken in interpreting this given difficulties elderly people may have experienced in disclosing this information due to family values
- a small group (about 10%) reported need for help with washing, bathing, taking medication, use of stairs, mobility and transport outside the house, housework and shopping, and personal safety matters such as negotiating traffic, using cookers and fires and having falls

(vi) Health

- 19% reported poor health
- 55% reported anxiety, 45% stress, 40% sleeplessness and 27% reported depression, (see Chan 2001 for a fuller discussion of stress and its impact on Chinese women in Leeds)
- 45% felt their health suffered through lack of physical exercise
- 19% reported hearing problems and 16% sight problems
- 12% had weight problems and 6% problems due to smoking
- 30% were living in a household with someone who had either a long-term illness or disability

- 24% were living in a household with a child who had either a long term illness, learning disability, behavioural problems, hearing impairment or asthma
- 15% felt that the support they received with their child's health problems was poor
- high levels of satisfaction with GPs and other primary care services were generally reported, and fairly good levels of satisfaction were reported with hospital services except accident and emergency services were 57% were dissatisfied
- 20% receiving treatment reported dissatisfaction with dentists, but 21% had never been to a dentist and a further 34% had not been for over two years, also 26% of children had either never been to a dentist or had not been in over two years
- 27% reported problems in obtaining dental care

## **Community organisations and the need for collective action**

Chinese community groups have themselves identified the need for collective working and sharing of information and experiences. Despite many constraints these organisations provide excellent services and have built up a wealth of knowledge of community needs. These organisations include the Chinese Women's Group, Chinese Community School, Chinese Community Centre, Wah Kwong Association, Chinese Advice Centre, Chinese Christian Church, Mandarin School and Advocacy Support. See appendix 3 and 4 for information on the background to most of these organisations. Chinese individuals expressed strong support for Chinese community groups and often demanded greater opportunities for involvement and increased service provision. There is an urgent need to transform casework concerns into a collective agenda for action and campaigning to realise significant improvements in the lives of Chinese families. Much work still needs to be done to identify specific initiatives, available resources and ways of working that will enable these goals to be pursued. In addition, capacity building is needed within many of these organisations, together with the establishment of a new collective action group that will facilitate cooperation and present a coherent common voice. Firstly, a cross-community Action Group should be established to lead in prioritising actions needed and in campaigning to achieve these goals. Three achievable objectives should be set by this group to improve the living conditions of Chinese people in the following areas: housing for the elderly, healthy living and alleviating racist violence.

Zhou's (2003) study of the importance of community-based institutions in Chinatown, New York illustrates the key role they play in helping,

'disadvantaged Chinese immigrants and their families cope with settlement hardships, poverty and inner city problems, while fostering a sense of origin, orientation, purpose and identity.' (2003: 35)

Furthermore such social capital also helps these families to cope with and overcome 'linguistic and social isolation' and move closer into mainstream society. The limited literature on the role of Chinese voluntary and community sector organisations in the UK, who are noticeably absent from a recent review (Reid 2004), is indicative of both the relative weakness of this sector and the need for further research and development.

Chinese community organisations in Leeds are much more limited and weaker in comparison and serve a smaller community. This can only make the day to day challenges that Chinese families face harder to deal with and with less opportunity to draw on sources of advice, assistance and support. Strengthening the Chinese community infrastructure must therefore be a key objective for management committees and staff, and assistance in capacity building for these organisations is vital.

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## Web links

### Min Quan

The aims of Min Quan are;

- 1) To provide legal, moral and practical support to Chinese people suffering racial harassment, domestic violence and policing problems
- 2) To monitor the responses of institutions and authorities with regard to these issues
- 3) To provide information and training on these issues
- 4) To support and liaise closely with other organisations to bring these issues to the public attention

Min Quan is part of the [Monitoring Group](#) based in Southall who have assisted victims of racial violence for over 20 years. Min Quan has its own sub - committee consisting of members of the Chinese Community who develop strategy and oversee the work.

[http://www.monitoring-group.co.uk/TMG%20services/minquan/community\\_history.html](http://www.monitoring-group.co.uk/TMG%20services/minquan/community_history.html)

### British Chinese Society

Events, activities and fund-raising for the Chinese community in Britain

The British Chinese Society aims to enhance the relationship between members of the Chinese community in Britain to:

- organise and publicise [events and activities](#).
- to benefit [needy causes](#) in the Chinese community

<http://www.britishchinese.org.uk/>

### Chinatown Online

Chinatown Online is a non-political, non-religious and non-partisan site which provides information about China, the Chinese community in the UK, Chinese businesses and business involved in trade/commerce with China.

There is a dual focus to the site: information and education. Specific areas of the site are geared towards the educational sector and/or activities for children.

<http://www.chinatown-online.co.uk/pages/community/>

### UKChinese Weblog

The aim of UKChinese.co.uk is to build a stronger Chinese community within the UK. Although our name may suggest otherwise, we are an open community. Whether you are Chinese or not you will always be welcome.

<http://www.ukchinese.co.uk/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=index&catid=&topic=1>

### London Chinese Community Network

London Chinese Community Network is a project funded by the Home Office to promote the interests of the London Chinese voluntary and community sector (VCS). The work of the Network includes community research, publishing, brokering partnerships, organisational capacity building and holding consultation conferences and community activities.

LCCN aims to build a network among our stakeholders in London. We help Chinese community organizations forge partnerships in London, but we also do [much more...](#)

<http://www.chinese-network.net/english/>

### Chinese Links (Wales)

All Wales Black and Minority Ethnic Mental Health Group

The provision of a forum, which brings together users, carers and workers concerned with the provision of mental health services; working and creating greater opportunities for the members of such communities with mental health difficulties in

Wales. The education of the general public services on how mental health issues affects minority ethnic communities.

[http://www.awetu.org.uk/links\\_chinese.htm](http://www.awetu.org.uk/links_chinese.htm)

### **Great Britain China Centre**

The Great Britain – China Centre is a centre of excellence in the promotion of understanding between Britain and China particularly in the areas of legal and judicial reform, and labour reform. The Centre has an unparalleled experience of running exchange projects with Chinese partners and working with many different UK organisations. The Centre is able to respond rapidly and effectively to the need for dialogue in a particular area and is recognised on both the Chinese and UK sides as being a trusted facilitator. The Centre has worked effectively with the UK's Department for International Development, the FCO's Human Rights Project Fund, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the EU Delegation in Beijing, the British Council and the Ford Foundation. The Centre was recently appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights to be an implementing partner in human rights training for the Chinese police.

The Centre's core activities are the development and management of an exchange programme with Chinese partners.

<http://www.gbcc.org.uk/>

### **Chinese in Britain Forum**

The Chinese in Britain Forum works to promote equal access to public resources and services for Chinese people living in the UK, and to assist the voluntary sector to participate effectively in voluntary activities and community development.

<http://www.cibf.co.uk/english/index.htm>

### **The Chinese Information and Advice Centre**

This organisation is a UK Chinese charity offering free legal advice and support to disadvantaged Chinese living in the UK.

[http://www.ciac.co.uk/english\\_index.htm](http://www.ciac.co.uk/english_index.htm)

### **The Chinese Link**

This organisation aims to provide a forum for expressing the opinions of members of issues and affairs which affect the Chinese community in London. To promote and foster links with similar organisations in the UK. To provide a forum of social contact for adults of Chinese origin living in London. To provide social and educational opportunities.

<http://www.chineselink.org.uk/>

### **Chinese Youth Forum**

The Chinese Youth Forum is an independent registered charity for young Chinese people. It is based in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Its main objectives are:

1. To introduce young Chinese people to our society
2. To prepare them to find work or to continue to further/higher education
3. To provide facilities for recreation and other leisure-time activities

<http://www.cyf.org.uk/>

### **Doncaster Chinese Community**

This website intends to communicate the needs and aspirations of the Doncaster Chinese Women's Group, and the Doncaster Chinese Learning and Resource Centre as the main umbrella organisation for the Chopstix Youth Group, Chinese Men's Group and the Doncaster Chinese Arts and Culture Group.

<http://www.doncasterchinese.com/>



### **The LongYang Club**

Established in 1983 to support gay Oriental guys in the UK, LYC London has developed and grown into a fun, relaxed, friendly, successful and important sports and social group.

<http://www.lyclondon.com/>

### **The Chinese National Healthy Living Centre**

We aim to promote healthy living, and to provide access to health services, for the Chinese community in the UK. The Centre takes an holistic approach, tackling both the physical and psychological aspects of health.

<http://www.cnhlc.org.uk/english.html>

### **British Born Chinese**

The idea of the site is to provide a forum in which British Born Chinese can share experiences, ideas and thoughts. We strive to be a community driven site which allows diversity of opinion and respects diversity in general. Although there are many life experiences that we will have shared, we remain individuals, and through your contributions we hope to be one of the UK's most dynamic, relevant and visited grass roots web site.

<http://www.britishbornchinese.org.uk/>

### **Mingai**

It was set up in March 1993 as an initial effort to promote social, cultural, educational and economic exchanges among the peoples of Hong Kong, China and Britain together with all other peoples, without distinction of colour or creed.

<http://www.techoriginal.co.uk/mingai/mali/mali.htm>

### **Dimsum**

This is a website for people interested in the experience of being Chinese or East Asian in the UK. They want to create a space where people can discuss the problems that come out of living in a multicultural society. Our aim is to raise awareness of the complex issues Chinese people face in trying to fit into a predominantly European culture. Most of all, Dimsum hopes to be able to give voice to the views of ethnic minorities that have, until now, been silent or ignored. We welcome letters and views from any anyone who can contribute to the discussion whether they are Chinese or not. We particularly welcome contributions from or about the smaller ethnic minority communities, such as Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Thai to name a few. Our needs are often neglected because we do not make up large enough numbers to appear on government statistics. Nonetheless our needs and experiences of discrimination are no less important than those of the larger minority groups. Dimsum hopes to provide a place where your views can be voiced and heard.

<http://www.dimsum.co.uk>