



*Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK (CLAUK)*

# CLAUK's response to Healthwatch Haringey consultation

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28/08/2013

## **Brief overview of the Latin American community**

The Latin American community is one of London's fastest growing groups, with 113,500 in 2008 and increasing numbers coming from Spain, Portugal and Italy fleeing the economic crisis. The largest national groups are Brazilians, Colombians, Ecuadorians and Peruvians. The London Borough of Haringey is one of the areas of highest Latin American concentration in the UK.

In general terms, the Latin American community is a highly qualified group with high rates of employment (85%). However, many Latin Americans are employed in the cleaning and catering sectors, which lack regulations and are characterised by extremely poor working conditions (40% report workplace abuse, 11% is paid less than the National Minimum Wage). These working conditions and recent funding regulations make it extremely difficult for Latin Americans in work to access ESOL provision.

In spite of low incomes, only 1 in 5 Latin Americans claim some form of welfare benefit, which is much lower than the London average. This situation translates into poor living conditions and limited access to services. Latin Americans' lack of access to health services is particularly worrisome: at least 1 in 5 Latin Americans are not registered with a GP, and only 4 out of 10 have been to a dentist in the UK<sup>1</sup>.

## **Issues affecting Latin Americans access to health services**

### **The language barrier**

As a coalition of organisations with daily contact with Spanish and Portuguese speaking Latin Americans from all areas of London, we strongly believe that the lack of translation and interpreting services is an important problem working against the efficiency of health services. Having no help with dealing with the language barrier often lead Latin Americans to:

- Refrain from visiting GPs for check-ups and information.
- Miss out on important information about their health and treatment.
- Attend appointments only to re-schedule them.
- Seek help outside the NHS.
- Repeat treatments and tests that are part of their medical history.

For those who can't speak English fluently, interpreting services are indispensable when attending appointments. If non-English speaking patients are unable to find translators, they end up missing or rescheduling their appointments. This situation often leads to physical and mental health deterioration and further use of NHS resources. In addition, those who have a medical condition bring their medical history in Spanish or Portuguese. As the NHS does not offer a translation service, this information is either lost or translated by others who are not specialised in health.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: McIlwane, C.; Cock, J.C.; and Linneker, B. (2011). *No Longer Invisible: The Latin American Community in London*, commissioned by Trust for London and LAWRS.

## Lack of access to information

For migrants whom come from countries where the health system does not require registering with a doctor prior to the first appointment, lack of access to basic information about the NHS is an important barrier to service access.

Although the vast majority of Latin Americans either have citizenship status or are in the path to citizenship, many are not familiar with the requirement of registering with the GP before needing assistance. All sectors of the community should be properly informed about available services in the NHS and access regulations. With over 130,000 Latin Americans living in London, this vital information should be printed in Spanish and Portuguese.

In addition, we strongly believe it is extremely important to deliver cultural and linguistic specific informative campaigns for Latin Americans about key health issues and available services. A communication strategy that involves the voluntary sector should be developed in order to ensure all groups are informed about available services and access requirements.

## Let's Stop HIV (*Paremos el VIH, Vamos parar o HIV*)

In response to the issues stated above, we work to improve Latin Americans' access to health services. "Let's Stop HIV" is a response to the raise of new HIV infections among Latin Americans "since 2005 there has been a notable increase of South Americans newly diagnosed with HIV in the UK" (HPA, 2011). We fear that due to the community's invisibility, the numbers of new infections are significantly higher than those reported.

"Let's Stop HIV" aims to raise awareness about HIV prevention and testing among Latin Americans and inform the community about available services at the NHS. We are distributing informative postcards and posters throughout London. The campaign was launched with a workshop for front-line community workers, and we have also started delivering workshops for the community, focusing on safe sexual practices and STDs, promoting and running HIV testing through Naz Latina, and distributing condoms and information about available services in the NHS.

This campaign is run by CLAUK, in partnership with Naz Latina, a project of Naz Project London. For more information, please visit <http://www.clauk.org.uk/stop-hiv/>

## About CLAUK

CLAUK is a coalition of Latin American organisations from the voluntary sector, providing services to Latin Americans in the UK. Our mission is "to raise awareness and understanding of the issues facing the Latin American community in the UK and to provide a collective voice for, and represent the collective interests of the Latin American community in the UK". We focus our work on three priorities: gaining official recognition of Latin Americans as an ethnic minority; improving Latin Americans access to health services; and improving Latin Americans access to labour rights. CLAUK's member organisations are:

- [The Latin American School of Artistic and Cultural Education](#) (ESFORAL)
- [Indoamerican Migrant and Refugee Organisation](#) (IRMO)
- [Latin American House](#)
- [Latin Support Group](#)
- [Latin American Disabled People's Project](#)
- [Latin American Women's Aid](#) (LAWA)
- [Latin American Women's Rights Service](#) (LAWRS)
- [Movimiento Ecuador](#)
- [Naz Latina](#)
- [Teléfono de la Esperanza](#)
- [The National Secretariat for Migrants from the Ecuadorian Government](#) (SENAMI, Observer)

For more information, please visit [www.clauk.org.uk](http://www.clauk.org.uk) or contact CLAUK's Advocacy & Campaign Coordinator Lucila Granada at [lucila@lawrs.org.uk](mailto:lucila@lawrs.org.uk)