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## USE OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AMONGST ETHNIC GROUPS - A SERVICE EVALUATION

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**Introduction:** London Borough of Waltham Forest is composed of an ethnically diverse population. In some ethnic groups, mental illness may prevent access, or influence non-attendance when referred to Mental Health Services.

**Objectives:** To examine referrals received by our service and first appointment attendance with respect to gender and ethnicity.

**Aims:** To assess the characteristics of referrals and first appointment attendance when accessing mental health services during August 2009 and compare with ethnic demographics of the borough.

**Methods:** We retrospectively analysed psychiatric referrals received. Data was collected from electronic patient record.

**Results:** Of the 159 referrals evaluated, 39% referrals were White, 13% Asian, 13% Black, 3% mixed and 4% other. Majority of referrals were from general practitioners. In 28%, ethnicity was not recorded. 60% were female and 38% male. 52% were referred for mood symptoms. 24% Whites attended their first appointment as opposed to 9% of Asians and 8% Blacks. While referrals reflected the wider population, there was a higher rate of non attendance amongst ethnic minority groups than Whites. Interestingly a higher number of females attended their first appointment compared to males. This may explain for lower number of female admissions compared to males.

**Conclusion:** We found several possible explanations for the above findings from literature which highlighted stigma as a major determining factor. Our trust has an Equality and Diversity Work plan to promote engagement of minority ethnic groups. However there seems to be a relative poverty in accessing services in our Borough.