



ASSOCIATION OF TAMIL PARISHIONERS UK  
(ATP-UK)

# Needs Assessment October 2007

Report By

Anne Kaes\*  
Volunteer

\*About Anne Kaes: Anne is a citizen of Luxembourg who came to the UK as a student. She received her BA in Sociology from Goldsmith's University and her MA in International Relations from Brunel University. We are very grateful to Anne for assisting with both the project and this report, particularly for; arranging the initial consultation, devising the questionnaire, as well as helping to analyse the data to produce this final report.

This report analyses the findings of a survey, which was conducted in October 2007 by the Association of Tamil Parishioners UK (ATP-UK). In total, 80 out of 140 questionnaires (57%) were completed and returned. Most questions could be answered by ticking boxes. This was primarily for ease and time so that people could answer the questions quickly and without difficulty. We believe this greatly contributed to our good response rate. However, where required, respondents were given the opportunity to add further comments or give further suggestions. Furthermore, the last question of the survey gave respondents a chance to add general comments or suggestions about the questionnaire. People who felt strongly about a particular issue(s) could use this space to record their personal thoughts.

### **The Respondents:**

The following questions were asked to determine the background of the respondents:

#### ***Questions:***

- *15: Please indicate your age group.*
- *16: Are you male or female?*
- *17: Do you have children under the age of 18?*
- *18: How many years have you lived in the UK?*
- *20: Please indicate the name of your Borough (council)*

The questionnaire was developed for members of the Tamil community in general. However, since ATP-UK is based within the Lewisham area, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents come from the Borough of Lewisham (50 of the 80 respondents are from Lewisham). Therefore, the results of this survey mainly indicate the needs of the Tamil community within the Lewisham area.

The number of female respondents was slightly greater than the number of male respondents (48 female, 31 male). This should not present any problems on the outcome of the findings, as the proportion of male respondents is still a significant figure. Furthermore, it should be noted that the questions asked were not gender orientated and therefore, the results of the questionnaire will not be biased.

The respondents also came from diverse age groups, so the survey is representative of the community as a whole, and not just for one particular age group. Furthermore, the length of time respondents have lived in the UK also differs, ranging from a few years to more than twenty years.

#### ***Question 1: Which, if any, of the following, best describes how you see yourself?***

The first question was asked to determine how members of the Tamil community see themselves.

Unsurprisingly, there was no clear answer to this question. The results revealed that 31 respondents felt more Tamil than British whilst only eight felt that they were more British than Tamil. However, 27 respondents see themselves as equally British and Tamil. Eleven respondents felt that they were Tamil not British. Two people noted under the category "Other" that they see themselves as Sri Lankan. So, members of the Tamil community differ very much in how they see themselves and probably also their role in society. This is important information for ATP, which has to take into account the personal feelings of all individuals within the community in order to provide the most appropriate type of service relevant for all within the Tamil community.

### **Problems in the Community:**

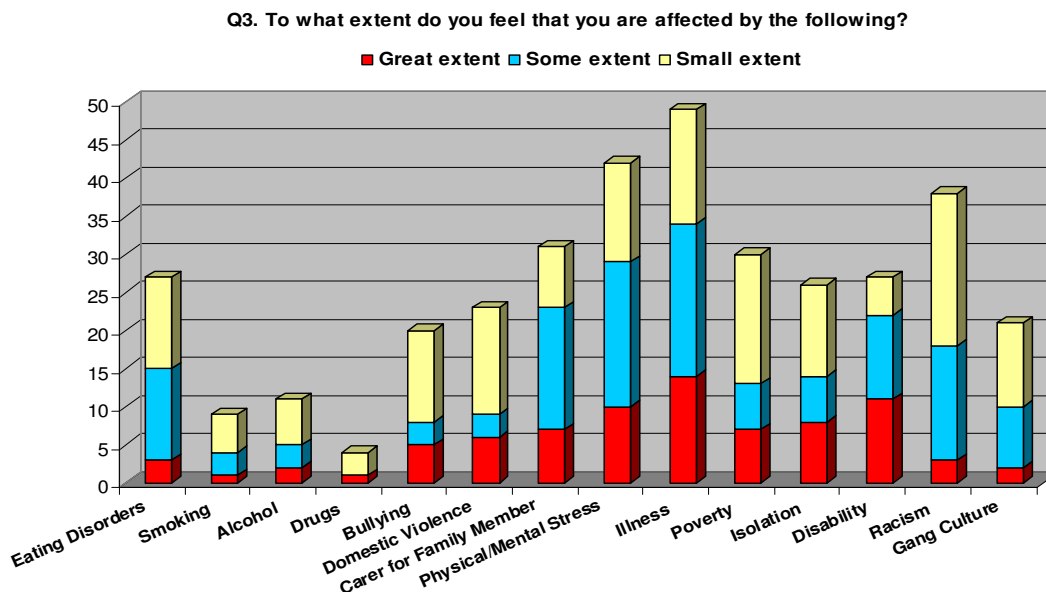
This section of the report identifies and analyses the issues that are most prevalent within the Tamil community. This will be important to help establish what kind of help/advice and services ATP should provide to the Tamil community.

**Question 2:** *To what extent do you think generational differences create tensions in Tamil families/the Tamil community?*

This question was asked because past discussions have indicated that many problems within the Tamil community are associated with generational differences. Indeed, many children born in Britain have grown up differently than their parents, who having been born in Sri Lanka grew up in a different environment under different circumstances. Conflicts in Sri Lanka, different traditions and values may all contribute towards conflicts between different generations of Tamils living in Britain today.

This is supported by the findings of this survey: 30 respondents believe, to a great extent, that generational differences create tensions in Tamil families, while 36 believe that this is true to some extent. Therefore, the vast majority of respondents believe that generational differences can negatively impact members of the Tamil community. In fact, only five of the respondents thought that generational differences did not create tensions in Tamil families.

**Question 3:** *To what extent do you feel that you are affected by the following?*



The information derived from this question will provide some of the most important data that will help direct the future work carried out by ATP-UK. By asking this question of the respondent it is possible to gain accurate firsthand information as to how many of those participating in this study suffer from problems such as eating disorders, smoking, alcohol abuse etc. This question will help us estimate how prevalent such issues are within the Tamil community. The results show that 14 people felt that they were severely affected by illness, 11 by disability, and 10 by physical or mental stress. Eating disorders also seem to be a problem within the community, as three people claimed to be affected to a great extent, 12 to some extent and 12 to a small extent. Isolation, bullying and domestic violence are also reported to be prevalent problems within the Tamil community.

According to our findings, **Illness, disability and stress** have been identified as being the most prevalent issues affecting the Tamil community. This is closely followed by isolation, poverty and domestic violence. Interestingly, problems associated with drugs and smoking, seem to be the least prevalent. Even though some issues seem to be more prevalent in the community than others, all of the issues mentioned in the question seem to present some problem in the community. Indeed, results show that at least one person is strongly affected by one of the categories. This question has helped to identify issues which ATP should focus its attention.

*Question 4: Would you know where to get help or find information if you faced any of these problems in the future?*

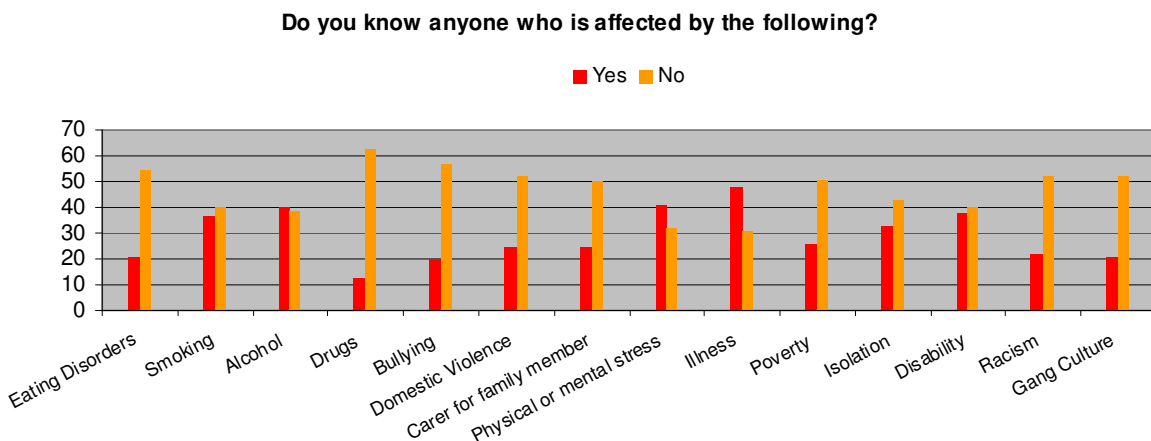
Question 4 is directly related to the previous question. This question was asked to determine if people knew where to seek help if they faced any of the problems mentioned in the above question.

The findings of the questionnaire indicate that more than half of the respondents did not know where to go if they faced such problems. Specifically, 20 respondents reported that they did not know where to get help while 25 respondents ticked the box “Don’t know”. This indicates that the majority of respondents do not have a clear idea where to get help. Less than half of the respondents (35) claimed to know where they could get help from if faced with any of these problems in the future. This is clearly an area in which ATP can provide help to the members of the Tamil community; offering help or directing individuals to other organizations, which can offer the type of support, they require.

*Question 5: Have you, in the past or currently, received any help and support from any of the following?*

Two options were given: Tamil Organisations or Other Organisations. The results for this question were inconclusive, as some people did not reply to the question. However, from the answers that were given the overwhelming majority had not received any help from any organization. Importantly respondents, who had received help from organizations in the past, did so from Tamil Organisations. This indicates that when members of the Tamil community need help they are more inclined to seek help from Tamils, rather than people from outside of the community. This is an important point as being a Tamil organization ATP-UK is clearly better suited to meeting the needs of Tamils who will only seek help from members of their own community.

*Question 6: Do you know anyone who is affected by the following?*



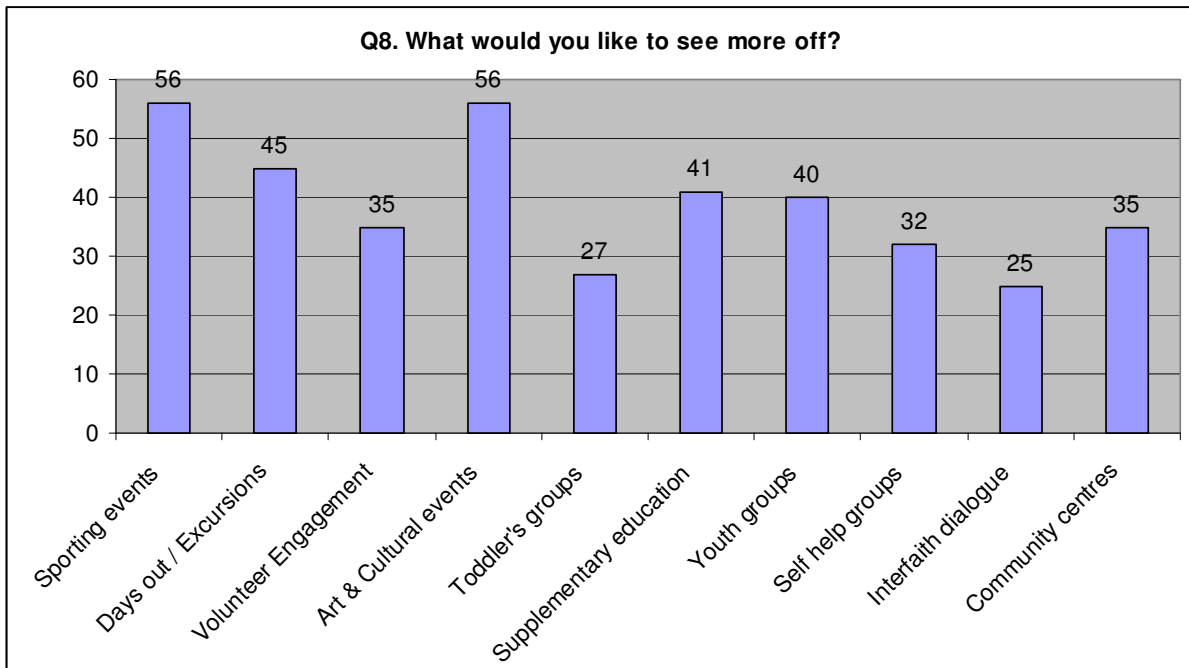
This question is similar to that of question 3 and was asked as a means of trying to determine the most prevalent problems within the Tamil community. The results reveal that once again problems

associated with health and well being are the most commonly reported issues with physical/ mental stress, illness, isolation and disability being the prevalent issues. The least prevalent problem was identified as drugs, however, 13 out of 80 respondents still claimed to know someone who is affected by drugs. Interestingly, this question revealed that respondents know of other members of the community who suffer from smoking and alcohol related issues. This is in contrast to question 3 which reported that respondents themselves do not suffer from smoking or alcohol related issues. Taken together none of the problems can be regarded as insignificant and therefore, all these issues pose a real threat to the Tamil community.

**Question 7:** *From what age do you think that children/young people should be made aware of the dangers of the following?*

This question was asked to help determine at what point ATP-UK should work with younger people and when young people should be made aware of issues relating to alcohol, drugs, sexual health, eating disorders etc. This will help ATP-UK to establish the most appropriate and relevant form of support and guidance. Furthermore, if ATP-UK should work with younger members of the community, it will be important to establish what the Tamil community expects ATP-UK to do for them. The majority of respondents felt that the most suitable time to inform young people about these dangers was between the ages of 11 and 16. However, a significant minority felt that this should happen earlier, before the age of 11.

**Question 8:** *What would you like to see more of?*



We also asked what specific kinds of activities respondents would like to see more of in the future. This is a very important question for ATP because it relates directly to the organisations work in the community. The answers recorded for this question provide an insight into what the community expects from an organization like ATP-UK.

The survey shows that more than half of respondents indicated that they would like to see more sporting events, art/cultural events, days out/ excursions, supplementary education and youth groups. The least popular activities/ services included toddler's groups and interfaith dialogue.

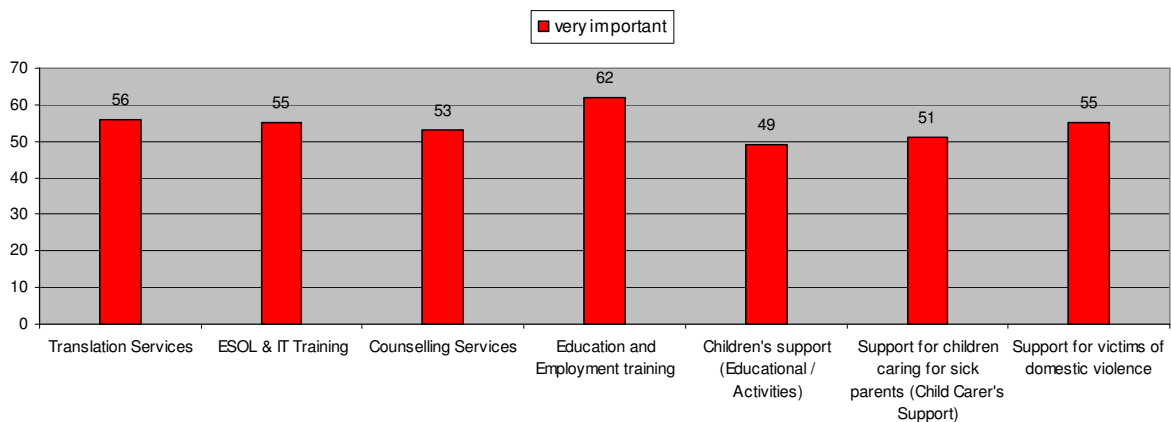
Respondents were given additional space to note what types of activities they would like to see more of in the community. Activities suggested included “Social get together”, charity events, creativity (sewing etc.) and health and advice groups.

**Question 9:** *Would you like to see more events being organised, which bring Tamils together with people from other communities?*

This question was asked to determine how members of the Tamil community feel about events, which would bring them, closer together with people from other communities. The majority of respondents replied yes to this question. Ten respondents noted that they did not wish to see more of these events. It was noted that 15 respondents replied, “Don’t know” to this question. It would be interesting to investigate further the reasons for this reluctance even though it is an opinion shared by a minority of Tamil’s. However, it is important to point out that a minority of respondents did note the need for interfaith dialogue in the previous question. So, whilst there may be a certain part of the community, which seem to show reluctance toward interfaith events, some members of the community regard this as being important.

**Question 10:** *Please rank the importance of the following services, in improving the life of Tamils.*

Q10. Please rank the importance of the following services, in improving the life of Tamils (1=very important; 5=unimportance)



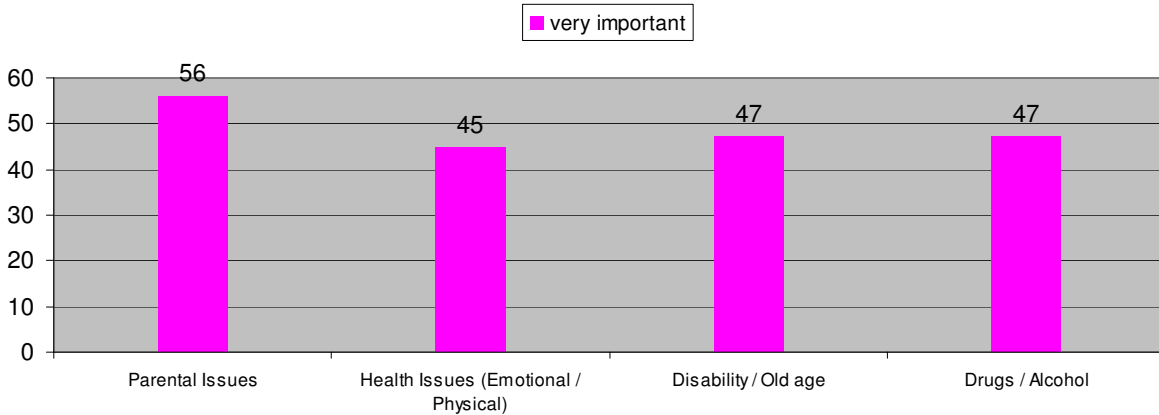
We asked members of the community which services they think would help the community as a whole and improve the lives of Tamils.

**Results revealed that none of the proposed services were considered to be unimportant by respondents. The majority ticked the box “very important” for all of the services: however, Education and Employment Training was regarded as being the most important with 62 out of 76 respondents recording this service as being “very important”. From the feedback obtained through this question we can conclude that all the proposed services (Translation Services, ESOL & IT Training, Counselling Services, Education and Employment Training, Children’s support, Support for children caring for sick parents and support for victims of domestic violence) are important for the community.**

**Question 11:** *Please rank the importance of information and support in the following.*

Once again, the feedback suggests that it is important to provide information and support for all areas. In fact more than half of the respondents thought that information and support in all of these areas was very important for the community. Of the choices given information and support in the area of parenting issues was considered to be the most important.

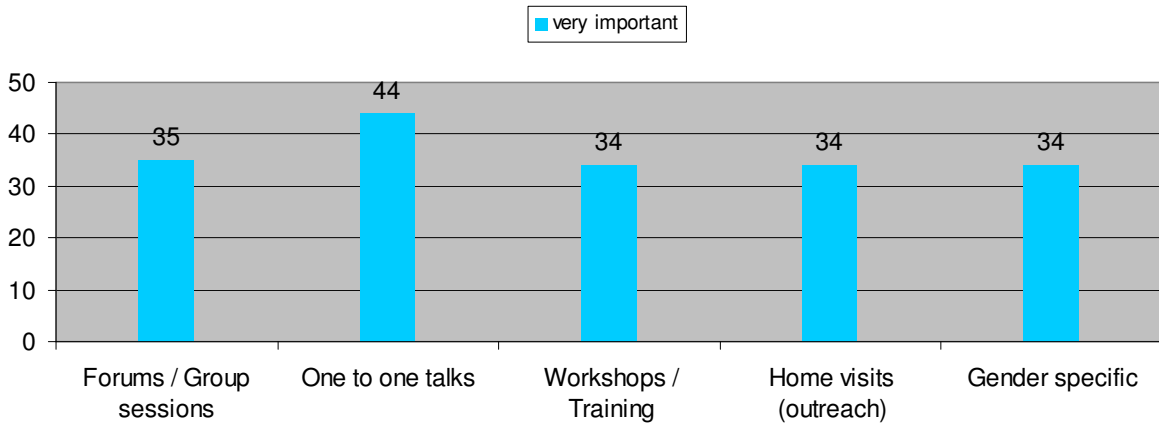
Q11.Information and support in the following (1=very important; 5=unimportant)



Interestingly, results from this question revealed that parenting is an issue of great concern within the Tamil community. None of the respondents reported that support with parental issues was unimportant. Moreover, 56 of the 80 respondents reported that support in this area was very important. This is clearly an area that ATP-UK should focus its attention when planning what services it should provide.

*Question 12: What style of advice and guidance is most preferable to you?*

Q12. What style of advice and guidance is most preferable to you? (1=very important; 5=unimportant)



When respondents were asked what style of guidance they preferred, a number of preferred styles were recorded. The order of most important style of guidance was recorded as: one to one talks (44) > forum/ group sessions (35) > workshops/ training (34), home visits (34), gender specific (34).

*Question 13: Had you heard about ATP-UK before you were given this questionnaire?*

This question was asked to determine if members of the Tamil community were aware of ATP-UK. Just over half of respondents reported to have heard about the organisation, while 35 respondents reported they had not heard about the organisation prior to being given the questionnaire. Now that more community members are aware that an organisation exists within Lewisham to support the needs of the Tamil community it is likely that more people may seek guidance and advice from ATP-UK. Certainly, it will provide greater publicity for any events ATP-UK run in the future and subsequently begin to exert a greater influence within the Tamil community.

***Question 14:*** *Do you think that ATP-UK should provide help and support to enhance the quality of life in the community?*

The question was asked to determine if the community felt the need for an organisation like ATP-UK to support members of the Tamil community. The question was purposefully kept simple to ascertain the level of support the organisation could expect from community members. Results revealed that the vast majority of respondents support the idea of ATP-UK providing help and support. Only five out of the 80 respondents noted that ATP should not provide this service for the community. A small, but not negligible minority did not have a clear opinion on this matter.

***Question 19:*** *What is your religious affiliation?*

This questionnaire was not simply addressed to one Tamil faith group. Although the majority of the respondents were Christian (48) a significant number of the respondents were Hindu (29). The answers given in this survey are thus representative of the Tamil community as a whole and not just limited to one faith group.

***Question 14b:*** *Please write any comments or suggestions you may have relating to this questionnaire or the work of ATP-UK.*

Overall the comments recorded as part of this question were very positive. Although no negative comments were noted, comments did suggest that respondents expect a lot from ATP-UK. This is an important outcome for ATP-UK as it clearly indicates a need to provide services to the Tamil community whose members will seek help from if required. Many of the comments reported that all of the proposed services were needed in the community because currently it was not known where Tamils could get the necessary help and advice.