Mapping the Black & Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector in the East Midlands

CONDENSED REPORT

voice
east midlands

The East Midlands Black & Minority Ethnic Voluntary Sector Forum

Introduction

• Background Information

In recognition of the lack of available, up-to-date information on the black and minority ethnic (BME) voluntary and community sector in the East Midlands, it was decided by VOICE East Midlands to carry out a mapping exercise of the sector. Traditionally information has been sparse, being held by agencies outside of the BME voluntary and community sector.

This study was designed to address this situation, to consolidate and build on existing information and for VOICE East Midlands, as the key regional BME voluntary sector forum, to develop a more comprehensive picture of the current state of the BME voluntary and community sector in the East Midlands.

• VOICE East Midlands

For those unaware of the existence or role of VOICE East Midlands, it is perhaps a good time to introduce the Organisation and give an overview of its function. VOICE East Midlands was first launched in January 2000. A key objective of the Organisation is to ensure that BME voluntary and community sector organisations take full part in decisions that affect their development and growth. Also to ensure that all BME organisations in the region benefit from regional initiatives.

VOICE East Midlands is one of nine regional networks in the English Regions for the BME voluntary and community sector.

Organisational Aims:

• To unlock funding for the sector at a regional level;

• To increase the effectiveness of the sector through capacity building support;

• To be an informed voice of the sector and promote it interests at a regional level.

Organisational Activities:

VOICE East Midlands' activities include, promoting BME voluntary sector interests within the region; developing the involvement and participation of BME organisations in policy and research; building the capacity of the sector to more effectively cater for BME communities.

This is currently being progressed via the following three channels.

Capacity Building: The capacity building programme has a key focus in supporting BME organisations and networks throughout the region.

Research & Policy: The research & policy programme is primarily aimed at establishing a baseline for the BME voluntary and community sector (hence this report) that will also measure the progress of the sector, from activities designed and delivered to improve their involvement and development.

Another aim of the research and policy agenda of the organisation is to contribute to the development of inclusive voluntary sector policies and initiatives.

Sports Development: The Regional Sports Manager based at VOICE East Midlands is currently working on developing effective links between BME communities, sports organisations, Sport England and Local Authorities to ensure that sport is accessible for BME communities and to help develop good practice in the region for sports and race equality.

• Objective of the Study

One of the objectives of the study was so that information on the BME voluntary and community sector would, for the first time, be held by a regional BME organisation, to be used for the benefit of all BME voluntary and community sector groups in the East Midlands.

For example, the project has created a database that is unique in its coverage. Analysis and mapping of this database can begin to answer many important questions about the current state of the BME voluntary and community sector in the East Midlands.

One objective of the final report of the findings of the study is to help inform the growing number of BME voluntary and community groups in the region (both large and small) about the range of development initiatives and to help deconstruct the plethora of terminology such as SSP's/ LSP's/ Community Strategies/ BME Compact Development/ Cluster Development etc.

Consequently, the better informed reader will be excused for bypassing some of the contextual information - but please remember that for a lot of smaller, less well informed groups, these initiatives are relatively new and require some explanation and clarification.

• The scope of the Mapping Exercise

In one of the largest studies of its kind in the East Midlands, this mapping exercise surveyed a broad section of the BME voluntary and community sector in the region. The term 'black and minority ethnic' is used here to mean 'visible' (non-white) minorities.

'Black and minority ethnic organisations' are defined as organisations primarily led by and servicing people from black and minority ethnic communities, but increasingly to a growing number of white communities. For example, many BME groups are competing for contracts and service level agreements on a par with white organisations.

The study was designed to not only begin to quantify the number and location of BME groups, but also to ascertain their levels of awareness and understanding of and participation in various regional, sub-regional and local initiatives.

In addition, the mapping exercise sought to identify current levels of regional BME funding and also identify barriers to the future growth of the regional BME voluntary and community sector, such as an under development of skills, training, funding etc *(details of the questionnaire can be found in 'Appendix 1').*

1,600 BME organisations were surveyed in the mapping exercise. The organisations were geographically spread throughout the region *(see 'Appendix 2')* and provided a wide range of services, in the main to people with significant social and economic needs.

Services included the provision of education and training, health support, mental health, services for women, men, the disabled, the elderly, young people, gay / lesbian / bisexual people, refugee/asylum seekers, as well as additional services dealing with community development, arts, criminal justice, social care, training, religion, employment,

business/economics, the environment and a host of sports and other leisure activities *(a full breakdown of the services provided by organisations in the sample, can be found in 'Appendix 4').*

From the feedback received from respondents, it was possible to develop a comprehensive overview of the current state of the East Midlands BME voluntary and community sector.

Executive Summary

• Summary of key Findings

A profile of the BME Voluntary and Community Sector in the East Midlands

It is estimated that there are as many as 36,000 voluntary and community sector organisations in the East Midlands[15]. As a result of this mapping exercise, coupled with extensive networking and capacity building between VOICE East Midlands and the BME voluntary and community sector in the region, it is estimated that there are approx 7,000-8,000 BME groups in the region (which equates to 20% of the sector as a whole).

The regional voluntary sector employs approx 28,000 (full & part-time) paid staff; with BME organisations employing between 2,000 - 3,000 paid staff, which is less than 10% of the total number of employed staff within the voluntary sector as a whole.

The voluntary sector has approx 327,000 volunteers, with 70,000 of these volunteers being attached to BME groups, which equates to 22% of the total number of volunteers.

These findings show clearly that compared to the rest of the voluntary sector, the BME voluntary and community sector has considerably less paid staff and is disproportionately more reliant on the goodwill of volunteer help.

• Regional Funding

Due to a lack of available comprehensive information from key funders in the region, any attempt to estimate, or extrapolate figures relating to levels of regional voluntary sector funding should be treated cautiously. However, the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) have estimated that the general income for the East Midlands voluntary and community sector is approx £500,000,000.

In view of the fact that approx 20% of the overall voluntary sector is made up of BME groups, the equivalent income for the BME sector should be approx £100,000,000 which would equate to approx £12,500 per year, per group.

The mapping exercise has shown that for the majority of BME groups in the region, their annual income from grants or from the statutory sector is considerably less than £12,500 per year. In real terms, over 90% of BME groups surveyed, reported a desperate lack of funding.

From **Figure 1**, it is clear that significantly more BME organisations were dependent on self-funding & donations, than those who received funding from a recognised funding agency. In general, extremely low levels of BME groups accessed funding. There was a serious lack of awareness of funding programmes, coupled with a need for development of skills regarding applying for grants / writing bids etc.

From the findings, it was also apparent that mainstream agencies (CVS's, Local Authorities, Local & Regional Funders / including European Funding Agencies, etc.) often fail to meet the needs of the BME voluntary and community sector in the region.

Further investigation into various regional funding programmes and the extent to which they fund BME groups, revealed some startling findings. For example, over the past seven years, the Community Fund (Formerly the National Lottery Charities Board) has funded a total of 1,100 voluntary sector organisations in the East Midlands region. Of these 1,100 grants, only 61 were made to BME groups, which is fewer than 6% of the total grants made by the Community Fund in the region.
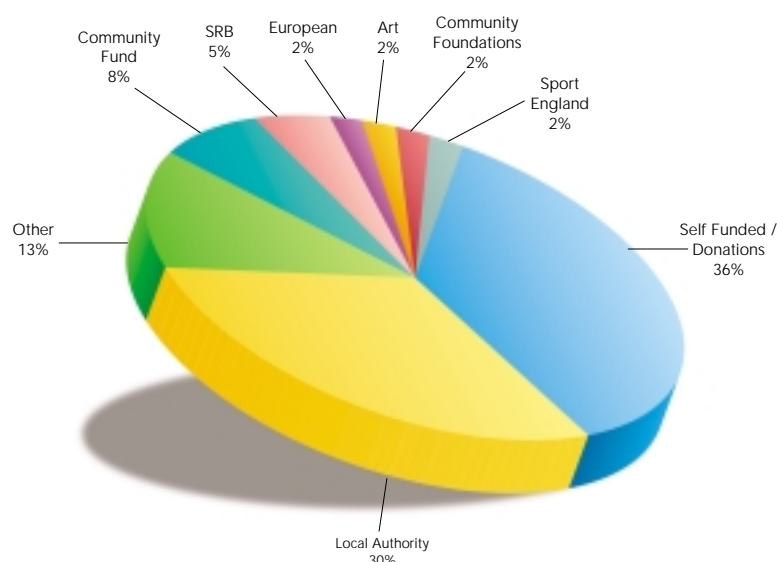
It is clear that much has to be done if any attempt is to be made to redress this balance. As a result of the mapping exercise, Voice East Midlands are now more aware of the serious levels of under funding experienced by the BME voluntary and community sector in the region and are eager to take steps to remedy this situation.

• Awareness / Involvement in Local, Sub-Regional, Regional Partnerships and Initiatives

Approx 75% of BME organisations were unaware of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's), so had no involvement in these. A similar situation could be found for Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships (SSP's). Equivalent low figures were found in relation to awareness of Community Strategies, so BME groups had little or no involvement in these.

Furthermore, 75% of BME groups were unaware of BME Compact Development and had little or no involvement in this.

Figure 1: East Midlands BME Voluntary & Community Sector Regional Funding Breakdown

Community Fund 8%

SRB 5%

European 2%

Art 2%

Community Foundations 2%

Sport England 2%

Self Funded / Donations 36%

Other 13%

Local Authority 30%

Such low levels of involvement in local/ sub-regional/ and regional initiatives clearly highlight the extent of exclusion of the BME voluntary sector from contributing to the development of regional social and economic policy. Obviously this has a significant local impact, whereby BME groups are not part of the strategic development of their own communities.

This rate of exclusion from local, sub-regional and regional strategic development, could perhaps offer some insight into continued high levels of social deprivation, evident throughout many BME communities.

• Regional Socio-Economic Development

For the first time, the mapping exercise considered to what extent the BME voluntary and community sector were aware of wider regional development initiatives or regional economic strategies. The study found the majority of BME groups had a serious lack of awareness of how they *'fit'* within broader regional context and little awareness of the long-term value of working in partnership.

There was also little awareness of the contribution that the BME sector makes to the overall regional economy (and its significance for the regional economic strategy - *emda*)

• Training / Skills Needs

From the study, a number of skills shortages became apparent. However, these could be split broadly in the following areas:

1. Management Skills - Committee Member training / Financial Management Skills / Business Planning.

2. ICT - Use of IT Skills / Access to IT / IT Communication, Internet, Email etc / Acquisition of IT equipment.

3. Fundraising Skills - Awareness of funding programmes and developing skills in Applying for Grants.

4. Support Services - Improving support services for newly established or existing community groups. For example if a project is failing at an early stage, there are no support services available from funders, other than the usual monitoring procedures.

Obviously without these skills and resources, the BME voluntary and community sector is again restricted in terms of the nature and scope of its work.

• Research & Development Issues

From the outset of the study, it was clear that there is a serious lack of knowledge on the state of the East Midlands BME Voluntary Sector (both past and present). To a certain extent, this finding might be viewed as one of the most surprising. For example, the existence of BME communities within the East Midlands region is certainly not a recent or new phenomenon.

Since the 1950's and 60's there has been a visible BME presence within the region and consequently an increasingly visible BME voluntary and community sector, as people began to organise a range of community initiatives and self-help programmes to improve the situation for themselves and their communities.

Today there is a strong, vibrant and experienced BME voluntary and community sector, extremely capable of providing a wide range of services to BME communities, as well as to the wider communities.

From the lack of information and data on the regional BME sector, any research or policy development on BME Voluntary Sector inclusion is obviously starting from scratch. As the challenge to address this situation gathers pace, it becomes evident that there is a serious need for up-to-date, useful, available data on the BME Voluntary & Community Sector.

> VOICE East Midlands will be calling upon funders and other agencies in the region to help sustain this information gathering process in the future.

The information collected as part of the VOICE East Midlands mapping exercise will be amongst the first to contribute to the regional BME Voluntary and Community Sector information base. There has been a serious lack of consultation with and inclusion of the BME sector from the major regional bodies and the BME Sector has largely been excluded (by default) from regional planning, policy and development initiatives.

• Summary of Recommendations

- Financial investment must be made, to help enable the BME Voluntary and Community Sector to operate to its fullest capacity and to bring it up to par with existing funding levels of the mainstream Voluntary Sector. This is essential to enable the recruitment (and retention) of more paid staff / the development and acquisition of ICT equipment / training and appropriate premises etc.

- Barriers to BME groups accessing funding need to be swiftly identified and action taken to enable groups to overcome these. BME groups need to be encouraged and enabled to access a wider range of funding - For example, European funding programmes.

- There must be further regional capacity building to enable BME groups to realise their potential and participate actively at local, sub-regional and regional levels (involvement and inclusion in the development of various partnerships and the future planning of these, etc).

- Key regional agencies need to be brought up-to-date regarding the current state of the regional BME Voluntary and Community Sector and made aware of its size and scope and potential ability to contribute to the region's future social and economic development. Regional BME voluntary and community organisations already play an important role in delivering the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and promoting social inclusion. However, in order for the contribution and future role of the sector to be both properly recognised and fully realised at the regional level, a clearer understanding is required of the size and level of contribution of the sector.

- Increased marketing and publicity of the BME Voluntary and Community Sector as a reputable, local / sub-regional / regional provider of services to all communities and its contribution to social inclusion and socio-economic agendas. This will ensure that the sector has a stronger voice at a regional level, raising both the visibility of BME groups and their ability to unlock funds.

- There is clearly a need for the co-ordination and dissemination of information - on funding opportunities, benefits of working in partnership, info on local and regional partnerships (LSP's, SSP's, Community Strategies, BME Compact etc) and broader regional policy.

- In view of the failure of existing agencies to meet the needs of the BME sector, VOICE East Midlands should become more visible in the region, as the Regional BME Voluntary & Community Sector Forum, to take a more active role in the future strategic planning, management and (re)distribution of regional BME Voluntary Sector Funding.

- There is a need for investment in training and development particularly in relation to Management Training / ICT / Fundraising

- There should be ongoing development of an up-to-date knowledge base on the regional BME Voluntary Sector, to keep all regional players aware of gaps in provision and current developments.

- There is a need and demand for providing support services to BME groups at various stages of capacity development. For example, an advisory support service to help reduce / prevent groups from failing.

- The ongoing collection of information and data on the BME sector to inform the future research and development of the regional BME voluntary and community sector is essential. For example, the continuous development of a database to build an even better picture of the profile of the BME sector within the region.

- There should be proactive engagement of the BME voluntary and community sector by Regional/ Sub-regional/ Local Agencies to promote economic and social inclusion.

- There is clearly a need for an advisory role on LSP's / SSP's to help promote BME representation on these strategic partnerships. An organisation such as VOICE East Midlands would be ideally placed to offer this support and to act as a conduit through which BME representation could be secured on different bodies.

- In terms of providing LSP's & SSP's with a framework for helping to improve BME representation, VOICE East Midlands should develop a checklist for strategic partnerships to use, in order to promote good equality and inclusion practice.

- This research (in addition to other research carried out in the region) provides an opportunity for grant makers to 'benchmark' their own pattern of funding to the BME voluntary and community sector, against the wider pattern. In the future, there may be an opportunity to create more formal data-sharing arrangements to the benefit of all.

Over the coming months and years, VOICE East Midlands will be working with a range of Organisations throughout the East Midlands to ensure that every effort is made to address and implement some, if not all of these recommendations.