

A Shared vision for the future of the BME voluntary & community sector

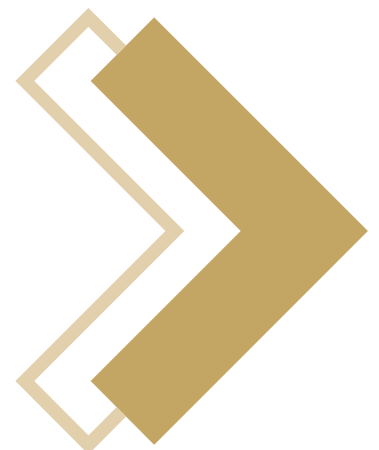


Executive Summary

The aim of this document is to set out a long term shared vision for the BME voluntary and community sector. This document identifies areas of action that policymakers can take working in partnership with BME voluntary and community organisations to improve outcomes for BME communities.

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Produced by Voice4Change England



A national voice for the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary & community sector

About the BME voluntary & community sector



The BME voluntary and community sector (VCS) is a diverse sector working across BME communities. Some organisations target specific BME groups whilst others work across all ethnic groups. Racism impacts on groups differently and because of this many BME voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) look at how their approach can meet the needs of different groups such as women, older people and those with mental health problems.

A shared vision for the future of the BME VCS

We want to see a **strong, resilient, sustainable and responsive BME VCS at all spatial levels**, including BME social enterprises. It will have an increasingly critical edge in **challenging inequality and strengthening civil society**. By developing a strong narrative on the importance of **promoting race equality, solidarities** will be created across all communities. Our voice will be valued by policy makers and will influence public policy at all spatial levels to better meet the needs of BME and other marginalised communities.

We want to see the **impact of racism** and the need to tackle inequalities widely **recognised**. We see BME VCOs speaking authoritatively on **equality in broader terms**, and developing synergies within the BME VCS and across wider equality organisations. We want to see existing evidence on BME communities and BME VCOs utilised by the Government and others to **develop policies and action plans to promote race equality**.

We imagine the BME VCS including small organisations as **integral to public service delivery** to all communities and in particular to the most disadvantaged and marginalised. The shift to local decision making will create **targeted programmes to reach and engage disadvantaged BME communities** who feel they have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

We picture **organisational development support** to BME VCOs including social enterprises that is **coherent, responsive, accessible and tailored** to meet their needs.

We see ourselves effectively demonstrating our **value and impact** and evidencing good practice.

We see **better collaboration** between the VCS, private sector and public sector. There is a **simpler, accessible and robust Compact** framework which strengthens mutual trust, involvement and partnership working between the government and BME VCOs.

We aspire to larger and more established BME VCOs **diversifying their income** and community based BME VCOs that can access light touch **grants programmes**. We want to see funders recognise and invest in our value.

In our advocacy role, we want to see BME VCOs making critical links between promoting race equality and environmental sustainability and in **tackling threats to our climate**.



Summary Asks

The BME VCS calls on policy makers to:

1. Continue to have a distinct Race Equality Strategy to identify, prioritise and tackle the continuing inequalities and disadvantage experienced by BME communities.
2. Carry out rigorous and timely Equality Impact Assessments as required by equality law and ensure all further obligations under equality legislation are met at all spatial levels.
3. Explore ways of providing a strong national steer on equality and human rights objectives whilst allowing local authorities to be responsive to local needs.
4. Ensure aspirations to engage local people in decision making have resources for implementation and monitoring.
5. Recognise and strengthen the value of BME VCS infrastructure support organisations in identifying and meeting the needs of frontline BME VCOs. Organizational development support should be widely accessible, responsive and tailored.
6. Improve and agree Compact commitments that are succinct and achievable with clear expectations for the Government and the VCS. Strengthen the Compact as a tool to deliver fairness especially during the spending cuts.
7. Recognise the cost of discrimination vs. the costs of tackling discrimination.
8. Recognise social return on investment as well as value for money in procurement.
9. Ensure fair access to funding with transparency in funding processes and measure which organisations receive funding for which purposes. Funding allocations should be based on indicators of deprivation, disadvantage and poverty.
10. Support the involvement of BME VCOs and BME communities in the climate change agenda.

For a more detailed list of ways policymakers can help the BME VCS to support BME and other marginalised communities and for details on what the sector itself plans to do download the full document from: www.voice4change-england.co.uk/shared-vision.html



The current climate for the BME VCS

“Since inequalities still exist in our society so there is a need for a sector that challenges that and seeks to address it through the services, the campaigning, the voice it puts forward. And I think that if the sector wasn’t there...that voice would not be heard anywhere and it may be absorbed or diluted by other agendas.” (Shared vision interviewee)

The current climate is a challenging one for BME VCOs who face loss of funding due to public spending cuts, a lack of focus on race equality under a single equality approach, increased competition and a drive to cut costs in commissioning and procurement. BME VCOs foresee a reduction in their numbers as many struggle to survive at all levels including the grassroots.

There are however opportunities. The localism and Big Society agenda will need to engage BME VCOs working with disadvantaged BME communities if they are to be successful. The drive to diversify public service providers will benefit from the innovation and reach of the BME VCS and the anticipation of an increase in BME social enterprises.

Three key opportunities for the BME VCS:

Collaboration: We need to increase collaboration in the BME VCS to share resources and speak with a collective voice on community needs. We need to take a wider view of equality whilst maintaining our focus on challenging racism and persisting inequalities. We should explore options for partnership working and even mergers not only to share back office support but to benefit communities. Where appropriate this could include closer partnership working with generic VCOs though it is important that the independence and voice of the sector is not lost and that we are clear about what our specialism is and what role we can play in collaboration.

Communication: We need to work together to better develop a shared narrative on race equality. This should communicate the effects of persisting inequalities facing BME communities in areas such as education, health and the criminal justice system. Whilst BME communities are diverse, it is becoming more important to bring out commonalities and to take a wider view of equality.

Celebration: We need to celebrate our successes and share good practice to raise our profile on a self promoted and declared basis. It is important that we are able to better articulate what we do and the impact we have on excluded and vulnerable communities. We need to have more examples of our work and demonstrate our role and value in wider civil society.

Voice4Change England has produced this document in consultation with the BME VCS.

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Voice4Change England is a strategic partner of the Office for Civil Society