

# **BME VCS INFRASTRUCTURE IN EAST LONDON SUB-REGION**

**FINAL DRAFT REPORT OF MAPPING EXERCISE CONDUCTED  
BY  
MiNet's CHANGEUP FUNDED  
SUB-REGIONAL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

**May 2007**



## 1. Overview

### 1.1 Policy context

There is clear evidence that often enough, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities have little or no access to support services and no structures through which they can identify and articulate their own needs or go some way towards finding solutions to their shared difficulties. BME Voluntary sector organisations provide a critical lifeline for the community and yet they are significantly less well funded, are mostly small and have little or no access to support services. There is also general acceptance of the need for BME Local Infrastructure Organisations to play the crucial role of co-ordinating the engagement of BME communities who are marginalised and disadvantaged, in policy and decision making at the local level, acting essentially, as the united 'voice' of the community; whilst also providing opportunities for BME frontline organisations to develop their capacity to deliver better quality services to the community; or at least, ensure that such support is available, appropriate and reaches those in most need.

However, most of the key structures they need to engage with now operate on a sub-regional level and although there is a London Regional BME infrastructure organisation in the shape of MiNet, there is currently no Sub-regional BME Partnerships to support it and to engage with the range of sub-regional structures such as Change-up, Learning & skills Council, CVS Partnership and the Strategic Health Authority, all of which have a significant impact on BME communities.

It is in this context that the East London BME network, comprising Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich, Hackney, Havering, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge and Tower Hamlets, is now positioned to play the crucial role of co-ordinating the engagement of marginalised and disadvantaged BME communities in policy and decision-making at the local and sub-regional level, providing the space for BME communities to examine their needs, articulate and present them to the appropriate structures as the 'Voice' of the community.

In order to meet the unmet needs of East London's BME communities, their ability to engage with existing structures to address disadvantage, East London BME Partnership will have as its key focus, the strengthening of the local BME infrastructure organisations so that they can engage locally as well as sub-regionally and London-wide. It is a key strategic body that will enable a more effective representation structure and a mechanism for effective consultation; ensuring that there is a clear framework

for feed-forward of community needs and feedback to the community on what actions are being taken to address their needs.

## **1.2 Background**

This report is the outcome of the mapping exercise undertaken in East London sub-region, looking at the state of the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector. It was carried out by MiNet as part of the six months Change-Up funded project to develop sub-regional 2<sup>nd</sup> tier networks for London's BME VCS to provide a more strategic voice for the BME sector in sub-regional policy development as well as facilitate their engagement in policy development in the five London sub-regions. The work was undertaken as a building block that will engender a better co-ordinated BME, which is able to influence the overall London-wide policy agenda through the MiNet structure.

### **1.2.1 Objectives of the project**

The overall objectives of the project were:

- Support the development of borough-based BME infrastructure organisations (through the development of a sub-regional BME infrastructure networks) where they do not exist and strengthen those that already exist for them to actively engage in ongoing development and review of ChangeUp framework and provide capacity building support to new and small frontline service delivery organisations
- Develop a mechanism to enhance the capacity of BME local infrastructure organisations to influence local and sub-regional policy, as well as help develop a channel to link borough-based BME 2<sup>nd</sup> tier organisations with MiNet and other London-wide BME VCS policy organisations.

### **1.2.3 Background to the project**

- The ChangeUp Equalities sub-group 'Gaps and solutions' paper identified gaps and the need to plug them, in BMER infrastructure provisions for frontline organisations in, among other areas, social enterprise and policy influencing skills.
- On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2005, MiNet convened a multi-sector workshop in Croydon, with the support of Croydon BME Forum. In addition to representatives of BME 2<sup>nd</sup> tier organisations, the workshop was also attended by representatives of GOL, ALG and South London CVS

Partnership. It sought to explore how to redress the fragmentation of support service to BME VCS and the desirability of aligning the structure of borough-based BME infrastructure networks with the CVS sub-regional framework. It was felt that this BME sub-regional network structure should provide a more viable means of facilitating the engagement of the BME sector with ChangeUp as well as enhancing its ability to better influence policy at the local, sub-regional and regional levels. This was overwhelmingly supported as a much needed and viable proposition. One of the two key outcomes of the workshop is the piloting of a sub-regional BME network in south London, which was supported with development support grant from South London CVS Partnership. The other was the identification of fund to replicate the south London pilot in the remaining four sub-regions of West, Central, North and East London.

- In November 2005, MiNet secured a six-month grant from ChangeUp Infrastructure Investment Programme in London, under the 'Modernising Infrastructure' strand.
- This report is therefore based on the outcome of work undertaken in Central London sub-region as part of the delivery of the ChangeUp funded six-month project.

### **1.3 Vision Statement**

East London BME Network believes that a strong BME VCS can contribute to creating an equal, robust and cohesive society. Through working with BME LIOs in the 9 boroughs and their wider membership, the network will aim to secure the engagement of local BME communities in policy and decision-making at the sub-regional and local levels and acting as the 'voice' of the community.

### **1.4 Mission Statement**

To provide a united 'voice' for the sub-regional East London BME communities, engage with other sub-regional structure whilst strengthening BME LIOs to continue to meet the unmet needs of BME communities.

### **1.5 Overall aims**

- 1.5.1 To provide strategic leadership for the BME communities in the East London Sub-region, acting as its voice and participating in decision making and policy development agenda.

- 1.5.2 To promote the wider BME Voluntary and Community Sector, ensuring it builds its capacity for sustainability and delivery of better quality services to the community.
- 1.5.3 To source and secure resources, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the Local Infrastructure Organisations.
- 1.5.4 To provide a structure for cross-borough working; development of joint projects; the sharing of resources, information, and good practice
- 1.5.5 To advocate on behalf of the BME communities and Voluntary sector organisations in addressing the disadvantage and marginalisation facing them and to act as a scrutiny body.

## **1.6 Key Objectives**

- 1.6.1 'Voice'- we will be the voice of the BME community, articulating the needs of the community to influence policy and decision making at the sub-regional level.
- 1.6.2 Gateway - we will act as a gateway to the BME community, providing opportunities for more effective consultation etc.
- 1.6.3 We will engage BME Networks and Second-tier organisations across London and in particular, will act as the East London sub-group of MiNet, who is at present, the London regional BME Network so as to ensure a London wide profile and a framework for addressing the issues facing the BME communities in the London region.
- 1.6.4 We will pool resources; sharing skills information and resources to strengthen activities in individual boroughs
- 1.6.5 Accountability – we will pull together the views of our communities on their priorities and needs; taking them forward to the appropriate decision making bodies and ensuring that they receive feedback on action being taken.
- 1.6.6 Awareness – we will make the BME community aware of decisions and consult them about issues arising from the various structures with which we will engage.
- 1.6.7 We will continually evaluate the impact of our contribution.
- 1.6.8 Engagement – we will take steps to increase the representation of the BME community at various structures,

identifying barriers to participation and putting into action ways of overcoming them.

- 1.6.9 Inclusive - we will increase membership by reaching out to non-participants, especially amongst the new communities where there are no structures to engage them.

## **1.7 Highlights: January 2006 – July 2006 – progress and milestones since the project began**

So far the group has met thrice and meetings are well attended (up to 70%) and issues generate lots of debates and further development ideas. There are lots of development ideas and the group is keen to (in their own words) “set a lasting legacy with this network”. More importantly be involved in ensuring the group lasts beyond July 2006.

Outputs so far-

- Agreed a Draft Terms of Reference
- Played both advisory and consultative roles in the two East London Third Sector Partnership researches on Workforce Development
- Forged and established good liaison and working relation with other BAME sub-regional networks
- Organised an Away Day to enable it to plan strategically for the progress and development of the network. This was further subsidised by grants that was raised from EL CVS ChangeUp Partnership.
- Group has subsequently produced a Strategic and Business Plan
- Agreed representatives to attend some sub-regional CVS partnership activities etc.

## **1.8 Challenges for 2007 – 2012**

- Fundraising
- Sustaining the network
- Securing cross sectoral support and buy-in

## **2. Mapping the sub-regional landscape**

### **2.1 Background of the East London Sub-region**

East London sub-region is made up of 5 inner (Greenwich, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlet) and 4 outer (Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Havering and Redbridge) London boroughs.

Of the 9 boroughs, most have established BME local infrastructural organisation in the form of Race Equality Councils (REC) and voluntary umbrella organisations e.g. Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum (Newham) Involvement Consortium (Tower Hamlet) Black and Minority Ethnic Working Group (Hackney), BME Alliance (Waltham Forest).

### **2.2 History of co-operation between BME networks in the East London**

No formal BME Networks existed in the East London sub-region although BME infrastructural groups got together borough by borough to address BME issues with regards to government initiatives as Compact, Community Empowerment Network, Local Strategic Partnerships, ChangeUp and Regeneration. Such borough collaborations are usually funded through LA 's one-off funding, varying from consultation on how schemes will engage and involve BME communities through to staging or providing special development support programmes to further augment the input of BME communities.

Other instances of BME network borough collaborations are contained in the ChangeUp Draft submitted by some local authorities. For example, in Greenwich, due to there being no BME supporting infrastructure groups, NYATAE a “potential infrastructure BME group” was encouraged to attend future partnership meetings<sup>1</sup>. Whilst the lack of BME infrastructural organisations have resulted in the few local BME groups using the services of existing infrastructure organisations and signed posted to sub-regional and regional specialist infrastructural organisations where appropriate. In some other boroughs e.g. Barking and Dagenham, the LA have actively established a number of networks including Refugee Network, LBGT Forum, Faith and BME Network however there is still lack of infrastructural support to BME VCOs. In Tower Hamlet, there are other infrastructure groups that provide some services as part of their remit to sub- sections of the sector, mostly of service specific issues.

Such liaisons have also encouraged communication and co-operation between infrastructural, network and partnership organisations to regional and national agendas.

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<sup>1</sup> ChangeUp Greenwich 2005

## 2.3 Process undertaken through this project to begin sub-regional working.

These included:

- Desk Research of publications e.g. Infrastructure for BME Organisations in London, Janice Needham & Jean Barclay Sept 2004<sup>2</sup>; Infrastructure Needs of the BME Voluntary Sector, Dalvinder Ghaly & Christina Julios March 2003.<sup>3</sup>
- Making Contacts via phone calls, email and/or arranging courtesy visits to ROTA contacts [Regional and Sub-regional public sector agencies (GOL and ALG), and partnerships, Thames Gateway London Partnership etc]
- Building Alliances with other strategic partners through visits, events participation and meeting attendances e.g. LIDP partners and Local Authority e.g. Havering Council.
- One-to-one meetings and interviews with local BME LIO directors (e.g. Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets etc), RECs (Bexley) and CVSs (Bexley and Havering)
- Consultations, guidance and advice from the co-ordinator of East London CVS Network
- Outreach and other visits to borough infrastructural and co-ordinating organisations e.g. visits to CVSs (Havering, Hackney) and RECs (Greenwich)
- Promoting the networks to sub-regional partnerships e. g. East London ChangeUp Partnership
- Active participation through representation in sub-regional consultative and special committees or task groups for example:
  1. Member of recruitment and interviewing panel for EL CVS Network research consultants
  2. Champion for involvement and engagement of BME volunteers in the Workforce Analysis software project
  3. Member of East London Workforce Development Coalition for the Third Sector, a TGLP 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Partnership
  4. Member planning and working group of the EL CVS Network Commissioning and Procurement Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> Infrastructure for BME Organisations in London, Janice Needham & Jean Barclay Sept.2006

<sup>3</sup> Infrastructure Needs of the BME Voluntary Sector, Dalvinder Ghaly & Christina Julios March 2003

#### Other special tasks

- a. Drafting and commenting on the “Building a World-Class Third Sector Workforce in London Thames Gateway” research brief
  - b. Member WfD (Workforce development) research and report group
  - c. Successfully attracted extra funds into the project through the EL BME Network Strategic and Business Planning proposal
  - d. Writing articles on EL BME Network etc
- Mapping BME LIOS, - designing templates, distribution of same electronically and actively encouraging potential members for completion and returns. Other times, partial entries were made through researching data and other information through websites and soliciting for further ratification, clarification and/or approval of information.
  - Formal launch of the Network- Following contacts and discussions with local BME networks, there was a formal launch of EL BME Network on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2006 with participation from 5 BME LIO. There are currently 12 BME LIOs and all except one has yet to formally join the EL BME.
  - Organising and running cyclical sub-regional meeting (fully serviced by MiNet)
  - Attending and supporting members events e.g. Newham Involving Communities in Health Conference
  - Maintaining contacts and building trust amongst members through email and regular phone calls
  - Actively choosing and supporting individuals to act as champion and vice for the sub-region

## 2.4 Borough Analysis: East London Sub-regions

### 2.4.1 Barking and Dagenham

Barking and Dagenham (B&D) is the 9<sup>th</sup> most diverse borough out of the East London boroughs as measured by the proportion of the population classified as non-white <sup>4</sup> and also has a high deprivation ranking in London, 9<sup>th</sup> out of the 33 boroughs. B&D has a relatively

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<sup>4</sup> Barking & Dagenham Local Authority Audit, 2003

small BME population (15%) who are mainly from the Black communities<sup>5</sup>.

Some VCO experience a level of instability through not being able to access appropriate funding for core functions and project development. So a number of network have been established relatively recently often with active support and participation from the Local Authority. These include Refugee network, LBGT Forum, Faith and BME Network.

EMPA, set up by the council in 1993 through the Community Care Forum is the only active and established BME LIO in the borough. The organisation now exists to empower BME groups to have a voice in influencing decision making of all local authority services in health etc.

Generally there is a regional and national perception that there is a lack of infrastructure support to BME VCOs in particular in Barking and Dagenham. So EMPA sets up periodic forums to help engage smaller local BME groups in regeneration and other government schemes. Presently, facilitates local networks e.g. E-networking and carers' and shares good practice among BME groups and other voluntary and community and statutory sectors; as well as work as partners with specialist BME organisations running LA projects.

Ethnic Minority Partnership Agency  
417 Wigham House  
Wakering House  
Barking, Essex IG11 8QN  
0208 507 4377

Women's Empowerment Network  
82 Neasham Road  
Dagenham, Essex RM8 2LX  
0208 220 5415

## **2.4.2 Bexley**

Bexley, one of the least deprived London boroughs has a low BME population<sup>6</sup>, i.e. 8.6% of the population (2001 census figure) who are mainly from the Indian subcontinent especially Sikh communities.

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<sup>5</sup> London Against Gun and Knife Crime, Greater London Authority 2006

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 5 above

There are no large BME organisations or BME LIOs networks in Bexley although the borough has about 20 BME local and community organisations run by volunteers. This according to our research might be due to a number of factors e.g. lack of funding from the Local authority, not much incentive for groups to strengthen their organisations, some are not organised while some are resigned to the description of “just being seen and not heard”<sup>7</sup> .

Bexley CRE addresses most of the issues as they affect BME communities in Bexley. So as well as providing advice and policy guidance with regards to Race Relations with statutory establishments, BCRE also runs advice and welfare benefits.

BCRE also runs elderly Chinese and Vietnamese Health Link programme and organises conferences and seminars on Refugee and Human Rights. Through the Mental Health Links Work, BCRE works with the local PCT and in partnership with the council on policy matters and sits on Bexley Strategic Partnership.

Bexley Council for Racial Equality  
Library Building  
Walnut Tree Road  
Erith, Kent DA8 1RY  
01322 340316

### **2.4.3 Greenwich**

23% of Greenwich population is made up of BME communities<sup>8</sup>, a diverse London borough with over 100 different languages ; currently being regenerated and the strategy seeks to maximise benefits for residents by improving skills, income, housing, health, environment and transport.

There is no formal BME supporting infrastructure group in Greenwich, although in addition to the Greenwich REC, there are some other local specialist and /generic BME organisations that could potentially be described as infrastructural organisations, namely AHEAD Refugee Project and NYATAE.

GREC is set up to oversee Race Relations Act through policy development, public education, community development etc. Also runs welfare rights for elderly BME members and advocacy sessions for BME groups on negotiating and lobbying for financial support.

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<sup>7</sup> Mapping Exercise on BME groups; Report by Bexley Council for Racial Equality, Dec.2005

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 5,6 above

The Refugee Development Project based in AHEAD supports African refugee groups providing service and signposting them to statutory and other local services within Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley. The project also acts as the voice for African and other refugee BME communities.

NYATAE described as a potential infrastructure organisation for BME organisations (Greenwich ChangeUp 2005) works with local BME organisations to increase business skills, understanding and knowledge base by creating better organisational and operative structures.

Refugee Development Project works in partnership with local Social Inclusion and Justice Forum. GREC works with Greenwich LA, Health Service, PCT, Police and Belmarsh Prison Services. NYATAE offers a platform through which BME local communities are informed of services, programmes and activities that are available to them

Refugee Development Project (AHEAD)  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor 122/130 Powis Street  
Woolwich London SE18 6NN  
0208 317 0865

Greenwich Council for Racial Equality  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor 1-4 Beresford Square  
Woolwich, London SE18 6BB  
0208 317 7191

NYATAE  
P.O.Box 44852  
London SE18 5XL  
07821 968 759

#### **2.4.4 Hackney**

Out of the estimated population of 215,700; 56% belongs to BME communities and the number of languages spoken at home other than English is 80 in the borough<sup>9</sup>. Hackney is recognised as the most deprived borough in the country and its challenges include poverty and unemployment and the voluntary sector is highly diverse with projects providing care for the elderly and advice to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 5,6,8 above

lone parents, to community groups working with drug users and the homeless.

BME VCS organisations in Hackney are generally small in size and financed/funded mainly by unsustainable combination of short-term funding and premises arrangements.<sup>10</sup> In addition to ethnic diversity, Hackney has strong religious diversity. This ethnic, religious and cultural mix makes Hackney bring many benefits to the borough and ensures that voluntary and community activities are informed by a wide range of perspectives, attitudes and beliefs. Not surprising, the voluntary and community sector have had a key role to play in supporting, informing and advocating for Hackney citizens.

Out of the 1900 voluntary and community organisations operating in Hackney, 70% are very small with a budget of less than £10k per annum and a disproportionate number of these groups are BME agencies.

One of the active local BME Networks that works at strategic level within the borough is the Black & Minority Ethnic Working Group BMEWG; a health and social care network with a membership of over 170 organisations and individuals. Like most other BME groups in Hackney, the organisation has no premises. BMEWG works with another umbrella organisation providing health and other guidance to PCT on issues affecting BME members of the communities who are over 50 and delivers a Health literature project with the local social Action for Health.

BMEWG also promotes partnership working especially with regards to working with public sector agencies e.g. Metropolitan Police as well as bridging gaps between service providers and strategic bodies.

Black & Ethnic Minority Working Group  
Unit C4, 3 Bradbury Street  
London, N16 8JN  
0207 923 2229

#### **2.4.5 Havering**

Havering has 225,500 residents and a very small BME population. In fact, only 5% of Havering residents belong to a BME group<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> LinkUp Hackney 2005

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 8

The borough has a large population of people aged over 60 years and is one of the least deprived boroughs in the capital, although it is acknowledged that there are recognised areas of deprivation in Havering.

Not only is there no Racial Equality Council in the last 2 years but there is currently no BME infrastructure organisation within Havering. The majority of BME groups that do exist have no premises and staff and so use the services of existing infrastructure organisations and other times sign posted to sub-regional and regional specialist organisations where appropriate. Few BME organisations that exist within the borough are all relatively under-developed and currently none employs any staff.

Havering council has since March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2006, set up the Black Asian Minority & Ethnic Network which aims to give BME communities a chance to network and discuss issues that may concern them on health, housing, community safety and funding. Whilst the South BME sub-regional network was one of the speakers at the event, the ELBNet was in attendance to link up with the necessary LA team with regards to updates and progress of the group. Group is yet to be fully operational but the appropriate local authority department (Community Regeneration Team) has been kept informed about ELBNet. ELBNet has been invited to be involved in setting up a BME forum in Havering and the council has also requested (Jun.2006) for a meeting just at the end of this project. One of the outcomes of the subtle pressure and support resulting from the participation and continued liaison of south and East London BME networks.

Black Asian Minority Ethnic Network  
c/o Community Regeneration Team  
London Borough of Havering  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Mercury House  
Mercury Gardens  
Romford, Essex RM1 3SL  
01708 432494  
07949 107791

Ms Anne Baughen  
Havering Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations  
19/21 Eastern Road  
Romford, Essex RM1 3NH  
01708742881

## 2.4.6 Lewisham

34% of the 263,400 residents in Lewisham are from the BME communities and Black people form the biggest BME group. According to ChangeUp Plan<sup>12</sup>, Lewisham has about 1000 voluntary and community organisations whose work are mainly carried out by volunteers and covers issues as employment, personal finance, education, health, welfare, faith, race and diversity, equalities etc. The report also talks about there being in recent years, greater emphasis on networking, partnership and in some cases coalitions. However, the level of coalition remains low because most infrastructure organisations rely on project funding which priorities on meeting outputs as against joint working.

Previous Lewisham networks include Lewisham Community Network which had designated portfolio holders for BME communities.

Past history of partnership working in Lewisham include Black & Minority Health Initiatives working with North Lewisham Primary Care Group and Voluntary Action Lewisham. Issues highlighted include lack of representation and involvement of BME communities in decision-making. One of the recommendations to the latter is to establish a BME network to provide a structure through which BME can be involved in the Primary Care Trust.

Of the local networks Lewisham Ethnic Minority Partnership (LEMP) and REAL are quite proactive with engagement and promotion of BME issues. LEMP has a membership of around 40 community groups and engages bilaterally with stakeholders on LSP with other statutory agencies e.g. police and NHS.

REAL has a direct remit to enforce the Race Relations Act 200 and see that the statutory authorities were complying with the Act as part of its work. Both of these networks are yet to actively engage in the new ELBNet.

Lewisham Ethnic Minority Partnership  
Unit 1, Resolution Way  
Mechanics Path  
Deptford, SE8 4NT  
0208 692 5274

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<sup>12</sup> Lewisham Local Infrastructure Development Plan Sept 2005

## 2.4.7 Newham

Newham is one of the poorest boroughs in London and ranks number one for income deprivation<sup>13</sup> although contains areas as the Docklands and Canary Wharf. 61% of the total 262,000 population is from BME communities. The borough is presently undergoing regeneration and hopes to reap economic benefits from the 2012 Olympics.

Newham VCS has been described as vibrant and well established with over 1500 organisations of which 70% are from and/or serve BME communities. There is also a good history of local organisations and infrastructure agencies having worked together through Government schemes such as the Community Empowerment Network and Local Strategic Partnership.

One of the 11 Newham VCS organisations that could be described as a BME infrastructure organisation is the Black & Minority Ethnic Community Care Forum (BMECCF). This was set up in 1991 out of a network of BME community groups in Newham and exists to ensure that community care services meet the needs of BME communities and that BME communities have a stronger voice in health and social care planning. Group also plays a consultative role (especially offering a platform through which local African and Asian communities concern are raised with statutory and public sector networks) and offers capacity building support to local BME voluntary and community groups.

BMECCF works in partnership with Metropolitan Police, Newham Social Services and Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium. Been described by one of the local BME organisation as the “LA’s preferred partner” regarding Community Chest Fund and other schemes in Newham.

Newham African Caribbean Resource Centre is another local BME infrastructure organisation funded by the Newham council to provide resource facilities (hall and room hire hot-desking project, After School Club etc) to other local organisations to enable them provide their services effectively.

Black & Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum  
2-3 St Marks Centre  
Tollgate Road  
Beckton, London E6 5YA  
020 7473 9513

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 11

Newham African Caribbean Resource Centre  
627-633 Barking Road  
Plaistow, London E13 9EZ  
020 8471 2258

#### **2.4.8 Redbridge**

Redbridge, one of the London boroughs with low levels of deprivation and overcrowding has a population of 251,700 of which 34% are made up of BME communities mainly of Asian descent<sup>14</sup>.

In Redbridge it is recognised that many of the smaller organisations do not have the infrastructure or management capacity to meet baseline requirements for tendering for large contracts but nevertheless, do play a vital role of providing guidance and access for statutory services provided for BME communities.

One such organisation is the Redbridge BME network which is an off shoot of the Redbridge REC set up in 2004 by the LA to provide information, advice and advocacy to local BME communities. Being a new network, the group needs lots of support with developmental issues e.g. have only a part-time post; although works with LA, health and other local statutory organisations.

Redbridge Racial Equality Council  
Methodist Church  
Britannia Road  
Ilford Lane  
Ilford, Essex IG1 2JZ  
020 8514 0688

#### **2.4.9 Tower Hamlets**

Tower Hamlets is also one of the boroughs that is undergoing regeneration and the Olympics will provide a welcome boost for its residents. This inner London borough has a population of 227,000 of which 57% belongs to a BME group, mostly from a Bangladeshi background<sup>15</sup>. Between 1996 and 2016, the population is expected to grow at a faster rate than the rest of London.

A large proportion of Tower Hamlet inhabitants live in deprived areas especially in terms of housing, health and income.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>15</sup> Ibid 8

In general, Tower Hamlet's voluntary and community groups are at 3 different stages of development and sustainability<sup>16</sup>. Stage 1 groups are described as emerging usually with annual income of between £0 and £2K, handling single grants and funds; project focussed and dissolves at the end of the project.

Stage 2 groups are improving, working on compliance issues and generally strengthening their internal management and procedure. With annual incomes of between £20- £250K; most may be delivering public services and other government initiatives.

Stage 3 groups have been classified as successful in delivering a matrix of public services with annual incomes of £250- £5 million.

There are specialist BME infrastructure providers who are involved in the development and delivery of infrastructure development plan. These include Involvement Consortium, Ethnic Minority Enterprise Project and Minority Ethnic Regeneration Group. There is also the Community Organisation Forum which is a BME led and staffed infrastructure body that works in partnership with other BME specialist organisations.

The Involvement Consortium was set up in 2001 through Primary Care Trust funds to ensure that BME communities actively participate and have a voice in local health and social care issues in Tower Hamlet. Presently the organisation describes itself as a representative umbrella organisation for BME communities that promote partnership working as a way to aid local ownership of health services, promote joint working and reduce health inequalities.

Main focus of THIC services is consultations and engagement of BME in health and social care issues for LA and the PCT. The group's other networking activities with other public sector agencies include member of the Task Force set up on Homelessness.

Tower Hamlet Involvement Consortium  
St. Margaret House  
15A Old ford Road  
London E2 9PL  
020 8880 7111

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<sup>16</sup> Tower Hamlets Infrastructure Network-Infrastructure Development Plan 2004-2014

## 2.5 Findings

### 2.5.1 Level of BME LIOs engagement in local partnership and networks

Seven of the nine boroughs in East London have some semblance of local BME networks that work with LA, PCTs and other statutory and public sector agencies. It is fair to conclude from this work that BME LIOs are proactive at helping to promote and deliver the government agenda.

In fact most local BME organisations are members of one or more local voluntary sector networks and partnerships. However, our interviews with most BME networks members showed that although BME groups have enabled social inclusion and civic engagement i.e. contributing to enable LA to achieve their targets regarding key policies and strategies; there are still the lack of recognition on parts of most Local authorities to reflect these contributions in the level of and types of funding offered to local BME groups.

Our development work also revealed that BME VCSs need avenues to influence the London Agenda sub-regionally especially as most London stakeholders want influence of BME in the LIDP. ELBNet members felt the Network offered them the opportunity to make the necessary direct linkage with London strategists.

In one of the two East London's sub-regional boroughs without BME networks, the LA has positively been addressing this through encouraging the development of BAME network. The project is still in its infancy and needs further development and support. Luckily MiNet has been asked to offer support and advice to progress this work.

Most partnership workings are borough based although through ChangeUp, some local BME networks e.g. BMECCF and THIC have been involved at sub-regional levels.

Members felt the networks offered group opportunity and platform to work more strategically at managing their resources more efficiently.

East London BME network members described the network as an avenue to engage and accomplish multi-sector /agency partnership working.

## **2.5.2 Barriers to engagement and participation**

Whilst ELBNet has and continues (through the partnership and liaison works of some of its members e.g. BMECCF) to engage at some sub-regional networks such as the EL CVS ChangeUp , there is still lots of developmental needs within both sub-regions to have self-servicing and sustainable BME networks. So in general there is need to further consolidate and support both networks to actively start engaging and participating in their respective sub-regional networks.

Some of the barriers that members said limited their engagement and continued participation in local partnerships included:

- Lack of time for events e.g. meetings, consultations etc as majority of BME LIOs have no core funding that might cover these events.
- In adequate staff resources- staff usually engaged and/or tied down to delivery of funded projects/ services.
- Lack of skills to engage and make meaningful contributions and/or effectively participate in these liaisons
- Lack of evidence of mutual benefits, most members queried the usefulness of participating or engaging in these liaisons especially as in some cases their previous contributions in some other instances have not been acknowledged
- Inadequate provision of resources to cover some costs of participation. This was one of the problems identified at one of the sub-regional meeting. Accordingly members felt devalued as what was being offered to cover their costs of participation was not at par with what their CVS counterparts received.

## **2.5.3 What members said about joining the sub-regional network:**

- A chance to be part of a wider BME network that is working on similar issues
- Opportunity of knowing what is going on within other BME organisations
- Awareness of what is happening around BME VCS and opportunity to discover that most members have identical

concerns etc. A very gratifying opportunity of knowing that one is not alone

- Opportunity to learn from other network members and identify with them about things that will shape and affect London now and in the future
- Being part of the voice for BME communities in London
- An opportunity to avoid duplication and of sharing good practice

#### 2.5.4 Potential risk to the future sustainability of the network

	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>
1	If there is no funding for ELBNet, then the network will close	Medium	High
2	If the network is not held accountable by the Tier 2 organisations, then it will have little credibility or influence	Low	Low
3	If we cannot work together effectively the people will leave the network and it will become unrepresentative	High	High
4	If there is no shared vision in the network it will lead to infighting and division	Low	Medium
5	If the wider context impacts upon local issues (e.g. international relations, media perceptions of BME communities and other 'terrorism' related incidents then progress and additional resources may be harder to implement	Medium	Medium
6	If nothing happens after the Development Plan is created then we will be unable to realise the Vision	Low	High

### 3. Strategic priorities

- Introduce measures to improve the sustainability of groups e.g. set up boards in both sub-regions and secure support from MiNet for servicing meetings and local activities.
- Source out external funds to fully support and sustain the network until workers are in post e.g. cover costs for meeting attendances, backfills transport etc for members.
- Start identifying and planning joint sub-regional partnership and collaborative working amongst members. For example apply for funds to

help provide shared/joint premises for members. Almost all the members were operating from rented premises.

- Work closely with MiNet and ROTA taking advantage of close liaison and collaboration to engage and influence London issues until the network is able to exist on its own e.g. once funds are secured for development posts in the sub-region.
- Participate and engage in other interagency partnerships and joint working through individual member engagement where contacts and opportunity already exist for this.
- Proactively recruit more members especially from other minority groups e.g. faiths, refugees etc.

### 3.1 KEY ACTIONS: Next steps

The actions outlined below are informed by the outcome of the consultant facilitated 'Away Day' held on 14 June 2006.

KEY ACTIONS	Proposed Timescale	Lead Partners/ Agencies	Resource Implication
<b>Regional</b>			
Co-ordinating the sharing of best practice			
Promoting leadership			
Shaping regional policy through stakeholders			
Liaising with national BME infrastructure to raise BMER voice			
Catalysing partnership working with mainstream VCS			
<b>Sub-regional &amp; local</b>			
Determining the gaps in provision (mainstream and BME)			
Shaping sub-regional and local policies through stakeholders			
Develop new networks in boroughs where there are gaps			
Mapping front-line needs and how they are currently being satisfied			
Mapping relationships with borough and sub-regional Strategic Partnerships and statutory sector bodies			

Partnership working with mainstream VCS and CVS networks			
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