



# Women's Resource Centre

## BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC WOMEN'S GROUPS

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### BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC WOMEN IN THE UK

- There are 2.3 million Black and Minority Ethnic women (BME) in the UK, making up 7.9% of the UK female population and 13% of the female population in England. <sup>1,2,3</sup>
- Unemployment rates are higher for women in every minority ethnic group than for white women, with the ILO unemployment rate for African, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and mixed race women being more than three times that of white women. <sup>4</sup>
- Although some BME women face linguistic and educational/training barriers to employment and increasing their income, many are well-qualified and skilled but nevertheless face discrimination in employment.
- Black and minority ethnic women also face institutional racism in the criminal justice system, where 24% of the female prison population is BME. <sup>5</sup>

### SCOPE OF THE BME WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR

- The number of BME women's groups in the UK is unknown, however, like BME women, most will be London based.
- In one study, BME women's groups accounted for 28% of organisations in London. <sup>6</sup>

### STAFFING

- 40% of London based BME women's groups had no full time paid staff, 36% had no paid staff. <sup>7</sup>
- 36% of organisations have had to re-advertise a position at least once during the last two financial years. <sup>7</sup>
- Groups are relying heavily on volunteers. <sup>8</sup>
- Black women are more likely than black men or Asian and white men and women to engage in formal volunteering. <sup>9</sup>

### FUNDING

- One study found that core funding and grant aid was being reduced or had remained static despite increases in the range of services offered and workload, and local agencies are failing to fund long-term initiatives for BME women. <sup>8</sup>
- Only 38% of organisations had received some core cost funding. <sup>7</sup>
- On average, 76% of funding of London groups was restricted. <sup>7</sup>
- 46% of London groups have ended a service or position due to funding cuts. <sup>7</sup>
- Groups are not given adequate reasoning and explanation about funding decisions. <sup>8</sup>
- "In the case of Black communities, they are set up as priorities for funding and then this undermining process from lack of understanding, whether intentional or not, results in failure of a bid with potential". (p19) <sup>10</sup>





- Funding applications are becoming more complex. Study participants discussed lack of capacity, staff and resources to develop and administer funding applications, which placed extra bureaucratic burdens on groups and detracted staff, time and resources from service provision. <sup>8</sup>
- Some groups described local authorities as "...myopic, sexist and racially discriminating when it came to the funding of black women's organisations". (p32) <sup>8</sup>
- An atmosphere of competition amongst women's groups is prevailing. <sup>8</sup>
- 73% of BME women's groups in London have experienced funding crises. <sup>6</sup>
- BME women's organisations were more likely to close or move and experience a less secure existence than other groups within the women's voluntary and community sector. <sup>6</sup>

## SERVICES

- A study found that services were being provided to meet funding criteria, despite the needs of the community. An example was given of an organisation who withdrew a service "...in order to pay for the salary of a manager to facilitate the high level of development and administrative work now required to sustain the organisation". (p27) <sup>8</sup>
- 88% of London groups were predominantly delivering services to women in their local borough. <sup>7</sup>
- A survey of BME women's groups in London found that 73% did not have a website. <sup>7</sup>
- "[M]any of the women who have come through our doors have now gone on to have solid employment or have developed their own businesses, or have become involved in public life that we have lost count. The investment is huge but so is the pay-off and it is hard to think of other agencies that can provide the same level of care and support". (p33) <sup>10</sup>
- BME women's organisations provide essential services to women affected by racism and sexism, including youth work, adult education classes, employment training, mental health services, advice and information, and refuges.
- Many BME women's organisations provide effective, successful 'one-stop-shop' services where women can access a range of services in community languages and with childcare provided.

## ENGAGING BME WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

- Interviewees in one study described the lack of awareness about race/ethnicity and gender amongst agencies with examples of inappropriate referrals e.g. black women being referred to black women's groups simply because they were black, despite the needs of the woman being outside of or different from the scope of the organisation's services. <sup>8</sup>
- Black women's organisations across England did not feel that they were being properly engaged with on local and regional strategic partnerships which was reflected in the limited funding given to black women's groups under New Deal for Communities or Health Action Zones. <sup>8</sup>

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