

# **Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024**

## **Review of Black-Caribbean Provision Final Report**

### **1. Background**

The Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Grants Programme 2021-2024 aims to support a thriving and independent voluntary and community sector in Islington. The programme has 6 strands bringing together a diverse portfolio of organisations delivering services to residents across the borough in a variety of ways.

The Equality and Cohesion Networks strand of the Grants Programme brings together strategic leaders working across a range of protected characteristics. The council wants to ensure that the voice and challenge of organisations who represent or work with residents with protected characteristics is elevated. Critical to this will be collaboration and partnership between organisations who work with specific protected characteristics, to reflect the reality that many residents would identify as having more than one.

In January 2020 the grants programme was launched for applications across all 6 strands. In September 2020, the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee approved the recommendation to ring-fence funding of £30,000 per annum while a review was conducted to understand the needs and priorities for Black Caribbean residents in Islington. This was because the application and assessment process concluded without an organisation that could provide services for Black and Minority Ethnic led and focussed organisations and residents, in the Equality and Cohesion Networks strand of the grants programme.

In 2020 the structural inequality and racism being faced by different ethnic groups was highlighted by the Covid 19 pandemic and responses to the Black Lives Matters movement. This context presented an opportunity to pause, engage, research and consult on how the council can best support the Black Caribbean community in the most effective way possible going forward.

The aim of this review is to support the allocation of funding by identifying the needs and gaps in provision for both residents and voluntary and community sector organisations working with Black Caribbean residents in the borough.

### **2. Scope of the Review**

The estimated number of Islington residents from Black and Minority Ethnic groups in 2019 was 33,822, or 32% of the population (Islington State of Equalities report 2019).

According to the 2011 Census, 7943 residents identified themselves as of Black Caribbean ethnicity in Islington.

The review aimed to understand the current provision available for the Black Caribbean community considering:

- The needs of this community and gaps in provision in relation to supporting this community against other protected characteristics
- Whether the creation of a Black Caribbean hub/network is needed and possible
- Options for delivering the requirements of the Equality and Cohesion Networks strand of the grants programme with a Black and Minority Ethnic / Black Caribbean focus

The four areas of focus for organisations applying to this particular strand are detailed below:

- Act as a strategic leader
- Deliver, co-produce or provide sign-posting to services that improve wellbeing and quality of life for people with protected characteristics
- Transform attitudes and behaviours towards people with protected characteristics
- Work collaboratively across the wider equalities agenda to ensure residents facing multiple discrimination are recognised and supported

### **3. Methodology**

A mixed methods approach was taken to gather data and insight for this review. This involved a workshop with the voluntary and community sector, a survey sent to the wider sector and a focussed discussion with a previously funded provider.

The survey was shared widely across the sector by Voluntary Action Islington and the VCS Development team from Monday 8 February to Friday 5 March 2021. It posed eight open questions for organisations and individuals to share their experiences and insight.

The Voluntary and Community Sector Development team worked with the Challenging Inequality team at the council to plan and deliver an online workshop with local voluntary and community sector organisations. The workshop was promoted through Voluntary Action Islington and the VCS Development team and was held on Wednesday 24 February 2021 inviting voluntary sector organisations and key partners to come together to discuss the following:

- Does the current offer for Black and Minority Ethnic residents in Islington meet the needs of the Black Caribbean community? What do you see as the current offer?

- Can you identify any gaps in provision for the Black Caribbean community in Islington?
- What would you expect to see from an organisation aimed at supporting the sector to ensure needs are being met for Black Caribbean residents?
- How do you see the representation of the Black Caribbean community across the protected characteristics?
- Can you list the top 5 priority areas for support for Black Caribbean residents in Islington?

#### **4. Findings**

In the workshops and survey organisations were asked to consider if the current Black and Minority Ethnic provision in the borough was meeting the needs of the Black Caribbean community, where there were gaps in provision and support, and what the priority areas of support should be for both residents and organisations working with this community group.

The aim was to understand challenges and barriers which may inhibit the community from addressing inequality, feeling empowered and able to take action to address needs and aspirations in the borough.

Open questions were posed both in the discussions and the survey to encourage varied and detailed responses which would inform the understanding of what would be needed when allocating funding in the Equality and Cohesion Networks strand of the grants programme. This will ensure that the 'ask' in the prospectus represents the views of the voluntary and community sector and enables the council to best support the Black Caribbean community in the most effective way possible going forward.

#### **Insight from the Workshops and Survey**

The workshop was hosted on Zoom on the 24 February 2021. There were seven participants representing a variety of different VCS organisations including funders, youth providers, community hubs, support for families and mental health services. A total of seven responses to the survey were received and these were anonymised to ensure that those participating were encouraged to be open and honest in their feedback.

Key themes and insight from the workshop and survey have been anonymised and detailed below under each of the discussion/survey headings:

#### **Does the current offer for Black and Minority Ethnic residents in Islington meet the needs of the Black Caribbean community?**

- Question around the clarity of the Black and Minority offer for residents and the limits of categorising community groups using this term which encompasses many varied ethnicity groups
- The current provision of services/activities for Black and Minority Ethnic residents does not at first appear to be meeting the needs of this community group
- Does the sector understand what is available and how can we better promote and share information on services/activities to residents?
- A roadmap would be useful for organisations to understand where and how to obtain information on local services/activities
- Need to use inclusive language
- People's experiences of services can demoralise so need to consider representation and discrimination
- Accessibility may be a barrier - Need to consider how people access services, and also why they may be choosing not to access these
- Importance of building trust to understand barriers in place which may make residents feel excluded
- There doesn't appear to be a clear space/place where this community comes together

**What is working well in the current offer for the Black-Caribbean community in the borough?**

- This community group do not appear to be well-represented in the borough which makes it difficult to communicate, shape engagement and consider the overall offer for residents
- There are some activities/services available in the borough for this community but lack of a general understanding of where these are and the numbers attending
- Lack of knowledge of what the current offer is for this community group

**Can you identify any gaps in provision for the Black Caribbean community in Islington?**

- There are gaps in provision around health, employment, education and social connectivity and limited resources could be the cause of this
- Need to start with young people and consider their needs/aspirations
- Need coaching for young people to prepare them for opportunities which may be available (i.e. apprenticeships /employment /interviews)
- Need accessible opportunities that will then trickle down to others in the community
- Apprenticeships for young people
- Youth led social action / projects should be encouraged and supported
- Tech belt opportunities needed

- Services for young girls aged 7-15
- Support for those over 65
- Support for young boys in secondary education
- Young people may not feel comfortable sharing information about themselves so we need to encourage sharing of skills and sense of community
- Debt and money management is needed
- Lack of places to meet, eat and connect
- Amongst this community there may not be much community cohesion and collaborative working across groups/areas of the borough
- A homogenous offer is not suitable or appropriate for this community group which is scattered across the borough and not well connected
- Need to focus on community cohesion to bring residents together
- This group is not considered economically powerful and this affects opportunities and also confidence

**Can you identify any gaps in provision for organisations working in the voluntary and community sector aimed at supporting Black Caribbean residents?**

- A specific organisation serving this community would be useful
- Funding made available to support smaller, grass-roots organisations working with this community group or to encourage the community to become involved in existing projects/activities
- Funding focus is often on the end result or outcome and therefore doesn't consider the time and work needed to engage with this community. Need to consider the whole offer and support/fund organisations appropriately for this work
- Need to ensure the Black Caribbean community are engaged in consultations to inform future service delivery, and VCS organisations need to ensure they are identifying the needs of this community during the pandemic
- Ongoing or longer-term funding would take organisations to another level where they can deliver a lot more support without having to stop projects
- Targeted gardening/ growing clubs and spaces

**What would you expect to see from an organisation aimed at supporting the sector to ensure needs are being met for Black Caribbean residents? What impact could this have on your own organisation?**

- Recognition that the Black Caribbean community is fragmented as within this community group there are many cultures and identities
- Provision of sensitive and culturally specific support from organisations that understand the needs and aspirations of the Black Caribbean community
- Support for organisations in recruitment/sharing opportunities with residents and across the sector

- Lots of advertising, information about what is going on in the community, so that everyone is informed and can participate. The impact would be less isolation and more friendships formed
- Is a one stop shop for information possible?
- Need trusted spaces where people can go for information
- Black Caribbean residents are over-represented in mental health services and they are not always heard and understood in primary care
- Working with the Black Caribbean community via specific organisations would help to gain insight, inform commissioners and in the longer-term help shape services to meet local need
- If one looks at indices of deprivation, educational achievement, unemployment, and other factors, this could evidently be beneficial to all and the voluntary and community sector more broadly
- Any organisation working in this space should offer clients a range of support (advice, welfare, employment, education and training, well-being)
- Outreach is needed as young people usually won't go to unfamiliar or unknown places
- Network of organisations may be helpful to bring people together in existing trusted spaces and look to upskill in these areas rather than creating a new network which is unknown in the community
- Promote the benefits and values of volunteering
- Ask currently funded organisations what they are doing to support different community groups
- CYP Voluntary Sector forum funded by LBI is a good place where organisations come together to support and discuss key issues
- Need capacity-building for the sector to support smaller organisations to grow, develop and become sustainable
- A manifesto to encourage commitment may help to support this work

**Have you, or are you currently working with Black-Caribbean residents /organisations? Can you tell us about this work, and its impact /benefits to the community?**

Anonymised responses have been quoted below for reference:

- "Work is being undertaken with a wide range of residents and we have identified the higher population of Black-Caribbean/African communities on a particular estate. Residents especially express that they feel they are ignored, not listened to and nothing ever changes in their community"
- "We've never really done a dedicated piece of work with this community, and though we've been hoping to (and nearly got there pre-pandemic) we're not serving this community as strongly as other BAME communities"
- "We work with many Black-Caribbean residents, supporting them notably in terms of welfare benefits and debt problems. We assist many Black Caribbean residents.....we undertake much work supporting those with mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues and ex-offenders, it is evident that this

community is over-represented with in these cohorts, given the general demographics”

- “As we are engaging those most disadvantaged through our foodbank...we are collating info to signpost Foodbank recipients to services to support them with all the issues they are currently facing, to get the support they need to address them, as we realize many are not aware of the support available and how to access it. We are also delivering a range of health and well-being activities, informed by extensive consultation, aiming to address inactivity, lack of social connections and loneliness”

### **How do you see the representation of the Black Caribbean community across the protected characteristics?**

- Multiple protected characteristics are more common than we think and can present a real challenge amongst this community
- Education is needed to acknowledge and raise awareness of intersectionality and to challenge inequality and discrimination
- There is stigma and taboo in many cultures about identifying with particular protected characteristics
- Support for lone parents is needed and consideration of the impacts an absent parent has in a young person’s life
- A queer youth worker was employed in one organisation and work was done to integrate him with young people, this took time but was successful in challenging behaviours and attitudes and promoting inclusivity. Similar examples and learning need to be shared across the sector
- Hate crime – key message that we need to challenge this behaviour in ourselves and within our organisations
- People may be worried about disclosing Mental Health needs or other personal details to organisations or services
- Organisations need to promote inclusivity and provide safe spaces so residents feel comfortable to approach them
- Emphasis on safe spaces to build trust and get communities buy in
- Training and support needed for the sector in dealing with intersectionality

### **What mechanisms and opportunities are currently available, or needed to elevate the voices of the Black-Caribbean community across the voluntary sector in Islington?**

- Covid has amplified the inequality and disparity for many and recent events in the media have highlighted the entrenched systemic racism in many institutions

- Need to consider different age groups and the offer for these groups
- Communication needed alongside extensive outreach and advocating the views and opinions of this group as there are often multiple needs not just simply being black
- There are barriers to joining services that make people feel excluded, which we need to identify and address
- Outreach and collaboration opportunities are needed for organisations and individuals
- Need diversity officers in organisations promoting inclusivity
- Consider the language being used and if this is inclusive and plain English, or difficult to understand and engage with
- Capacity building organisations is key
- Need representation on boards and committees to ensure funding and opportunities are made available to communities which are most in need
- Organisations need to capture equalities monitoring but this can be onerous
- Funders need to understand challenges and support organisations, recognising the benefits to the community
- Governance and ability to raise funds / seek funding

**Can you list the top priority areas for support for Black Caribbean residents in Islington?**

- Employment
- Housing
- Education – including understanding the causes of high exclusion rates amongst this community
- Healthcare and wellbeing – including food, nutrition
- Mental Health – including access to advocacy and counselling
- Sense of identity and building trust/confidence
- Youth Crime
- Poverty
- Community Cohesion
- Financial inclusion and advice
- Growing spaces
- Priority areas may vary amongst different age groups

**Additional discussion points:**

- Personal development is key and consideration of people's identities and the conditioning which influences these beliefs is important in order to understand and support change
- Need to build trust first and then can look at confidence building in the individual or community identifying needs and aspirations
- Speak to the community groups in different areas for insight and understanding

- Economic growth is an issue as this group may not see themselves as powerful
- Progression opportunities should be identified across all areas
- Need to tap into businesses / opportunities

### **Discussion with previously funded provider**

On 9 February 2021 a meeting took place between the VCS Development team and an organisation which has previously been funded as a strategic lead representing the views of the Black and Minority Ethnic community, particularly the Black Caribbean community.

Insight and discussion points have been captured below which detail some of the challenges and opportunities identified by this organisation in their work with the community:

- There's less cohesion across the borough in terms of the Black Caribbean population/led VCS orgs, than in other neighbouring boroughs which makes it difficult to bring this all together into one cohesive organisation/coalition
- In neighbouring boroughs there appears to be more black community activism/ and black-led groups which have organically established themselves than in Islington
- Current Black and Minority Ethnic offer tends to focus on language/migration/advice/accessibility of info, whereas Black Caribbean community may not face those same issues which may be particular to specific community groups
- The majority of the underlying issues for the community are not homogeneous and are wide reaching making it harder to find an organisation to focus on all things Black Caribbean, and in fact there are orgs set up for young people and older people but there appears to be a gap for those in between
- Many of the systemic issues that are being raised today by young people, Black Lives Matters movement and older generations in this community (e.g. Windrush Scandal) stem from deeply entrenched racism in institutions such as schools/workplaces/justice and enforcement and so is this what we should be looking to address? How can we support the sector to address this?
- May be interesting to consider funding particular issues to support the VCS to address these in the community such as - Mental Health, exclusions in school, poverty and deprivation.

### **5. Analysis of findings**

Analysis of the range of views and information collated have provided a detailed and interesting insight into some of the challenges, issues and opportunities for the Black Caribbean community but also the voluntary and community sector as a whole.

There does not appear to be a cohesive and all-encompassing offer for Black Caribbean residents in the borough and the current Black and Minority Ethnic offer does not currently meet the needs of this community. The findings from the review suggest that this may not be the most appropriate way to address the wide-ranging needs and aspirations within this community.

Fundamental to all of the discussions which took place was a need to recognise, understand and address structural racism and inequality and how this leads to a lack of trust, opportunity, support and progression for many in this community. That this inequality is deep-rooted and has affected how many people think about themselves, the services available to them and their surroundings. This means that any work aimed at addressing this will take time and must involve building trust, growing confidence, empowering individuals and communities, and taking positive action towards real and meaningful change.

There is a need to consider the provision of sensitive and culturally specific support from organisations that understand the needs and aspirations of the Black Caribbean community while also working with and supporting the VCS to ensure that the voice of this community is represented across service offers and governance boards more widely.

There are organisations working with particular groups of this community such as young people and older residents in a variety of ways however, there are also significant gaps in provision as highlighted in the priority areas of support the sector have identified above.

Funding and capacity-building have been mentioned numerous times with the need for more flexible and supportive funding practices to encourage and enable grass roots community action which is resident-led, alongside support for the sector as a whole to ensure that organisations can secure funding, develop and grow. There is a recognition of the need for trusted spaces across the borough where residents feel safe and able to go to for information, advice and sign-posting to services and that there may be existing spaces which need to be identified and supported or upskilled.

The inclusivity of services has been questioned along with a need to carefully consider the language being used to ensure that this does not present barriers or make people feel excluded. This should form part of the overall work to look at how engagement takes place with the community in the community.

The insight makes consideration of a homogenous offer tailored for this community a complex task to approach. While there appears to be a need for a network or coalition to represent the Black Caribbean community, bring organisations together and champion their views, the varied cultures, issues and needs within this community and the geographical spread across the borough could make this challenging.

## **The Challenging Inequality Programme**

It is also important to consider the wider context within which this review is taking place. The council has recently launched a Challenging Inequality Programme which aims to tackle the deep-seated inequality amongst disadvantaged groups – both in the community and in the workplace.

The Challenging Inequality Strategy sets out a framework and detailed action plan for how the council will address inequalities in the borough. This will involve a detailed piece of work looking at the gap between those with secure, good-quality housing and those without; between those with the confidence, networks and qualifications to seize opportunities and those who feel such opportunities are out of reach.

The wider consultation and engagement work will involve focus groups with residents and organisations to fully understand the range of issues which are being experienced by groups of the community and formulate a collective approach to tackling these.

The information and feedback from the Challenging Inequality consultation will have implications for how the council looks to fund and support the Black Caribbean community moving forward. The information from this current review will be shared with the Fairness and Equalities team to inform them of the range of views presented in this report. Insight from the wider consultation being planned may inform or shape the development of a coalition or network who can provide support to, and representation for the Black Community in Islington. It may also highlight an alternative method of supporting the voluntary and community sector in its work with residents.

## **6. Recommendations**

The recommendation being proposed is for the ring-fenced funding of £30k per annum to be used to work with Islington's Black Caribbean community, with the aim of developing a programme of capacity-building support to establish a formalised group of community representation.

Implications of this approach:

- The VCS Development team can work creatively with colleagues in the Equalities team to understand what the most appropriate means is of supporting the voluntary and community sector in its work with the Black Caribbean community, following the findings of the wider engagement work currently taking place.
- Insight from this wider work will enable the council to better understand if there is an existing coalition or network which can bring together organisations working with Black Caribbean residents in the borough, or appetite to establish a new one, with the VCS Development team providing support for any capacity-building needs organisations wishing to apply may have.

- It will also allow learning to be shared for how we work with residents coming out of the pandemic. Many organisations have adapted or changed the way they work in the community because of the challenges in the last year and this has resulted in innovative and creative approaches to working with residents. It will be important to reflect on this and consider how we can best support the voluntary and community sector to tackle inequality, address racism and support residents moving forward.

## **7. Next Steps**

Recommendations will be taken for formal approval to the Voluntary and Community Sector committee on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021.