



# Greater Manchester BME Network research report:

## *Overview & Mapping of BME VCS & RCO Representation across Greater Manchester*

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MANCHESTER  
**BME**NETWORK

GMCVO

mccr  
manchester council for community relations

mrsn  
Manchester Refugee  
Support Network

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**Information contained in this report is accurate as of information collected between March-July 2011**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Greater Manchester BME Network project is a 3 year Big Lottery Funded project with the overall aim of ‘strengthening infrastructure support to BME communities in Greater Manchester’ and is funded until July 2012. To achieve this overall aim the project has four key outcomes, one of which is;

*BME VCS (Black & Minority Ethnic Voluntary & Community Sector) in Greater Manchester will have increased influence locally, through representation at a local level on each of the 10 LSPs (Local Strategic Partnerships), and regionally and nationally via representation on 1NW (1 North West)*

This particular outcome is the basis for this research and mapping report, which will provide an overview of BME VCS and RCO (Refugee Community Organisations) representation structures in each of the 10 districts of Greater Manchester. It will do this by providing a narrative overview about the ‘state of play’ in each area with regards to BME and Refugee networks/forums, key stakeholders and the representation structures that exist.

Although this research report emerges from the idea of looking specifically at representation of BME and Refugee communities within their local decision making structures, it was felt that it was important to look at both the BME/Refugee specific and the generic Voluntary/Third Sector networks or forums that exist in each district. Thematic networks, such as BME networks, often provide an arena for members and organisations from more marginalised communities to come together to discuss issues affecting their communities specifically. An active network/forum can increase influence and bring more confidence and knowledge into the Sector as well as increasing the confidence that funders and public bodies have in BME VCS Organisations and Refugee Community Organisations.

The information contained in this report is based on desk research and conversations with key workers in each of the 10 districts of Greater Manchester. Other sources of information include the mapping exercise that was carried out in Y1 of the project, and a mapping exercise carried out by GMCVO which focused on VCS representation on LSPs in each district. Intelligence has also been gathered through attendance at area based forums and meetings, and through one-to-one outreach work with organisations and groups. This report identifies development and support needs in relation to representation in each of the 10 districts.

As the situation on the ground is rapidly changing this report is based on evidence accurate at the time it was gathered. We expect to provide updates to the information contained in this report throughout the course of the project as and when we become aware of new information about each district from our own research and from information provided to us by our project stakeholders.

## 2. THE CHANGING POLICY LANDSCAPE

Since the outcomes for the project were first agreed, before the Greater Manchester BME Network project started in July 2009, the policy landscape has changed significantly at both a national and local level owing to the change in government.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAAs), which contained mechanisms for monitoring the level of involvement of local communities in decision-making have been abolished. It is also possible that the Duty to Involve will now be repealed by the coalition government. LSP structures are being dismantled in some areas, while there are plans to maintain some form of partnership structure in other areas.

In addition, the funding crisis currently facing a high proportion of VCS infrastructure organisations means that the support that was given to networks and forums representing BME VCS and Refugee Community Organisations may no longer be available (or only available at a reduced level). Based on the research we have carried out we know that many local infrastructure providers will be operating on less money and resources than previously e.g. Tameside 3rd Sector Coalition staff are now working on reduced hours. The impact of this is likely to be a lessening in the level of support that might be on offer to organisations. Likewise, because of financial cuts to VCS organisations and groups of all sizes, those members who have traditionally fulfilled the role of representative at LSP and other local board meetings may no longer be available to perform this role.

In light of these changes to the policy landscape, this report will conclude with a look at other potential areas to focus on in supporting BME VCS representation in the future, such as:

- Wider VCS Forums (e.g. Third Sector Assembly);
- BME involvement in Multi-Agency Forums (e.g. Migrant Worker Forums, or New and Emerging Communities Forums);
- LEPs;
- Engagement with the prime contractor for the Work Programme in each area;
- Representation on the boards of Pathfinder GP Consortia.

### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM ACROSS GREATER MANCHESTER

Below are the research findings based on desk research and conversations with key workers in each of the 10 districts of Greater Manchester. Each district profile contains information about BME and Refugee Networks/Forums, key stakeholders and representation structures, in the hope that members of BME VCS organisations and RCOs can make use of this information to get more support and become more involved in decision making in their local areas.

#### GREATER MANCHESTER SUB-REGION

As well as looking at each district individually we have also looked at the sub-region as a whole as there is work that goes on specifically at this level in terms of the VCS and more specifically with BME and Refugee community groups and organisations. This information is particularly useful for organisations that operate across the whole of the sub-region or those that would like to do so in the future.

Below are key networks/forums that have a specific remit to work with BME and Refugee organisations:

- Greater Manchester BME Network project – works to improve the infrastructure support available to BME VCS and Refugee Community Organisations (see introduction for more details). One of the key aims of the project is to set up a Greater Manchester BME Network whereby BME and Refugee forums, networks and organisations can come together from across the sub-region to network, discuss policy issues affecting the sub-region, share information and knowledge etc.
- Greater Manchester Equalities & Human Rights Forum – this operates out of GMCVO (Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation) and enables equalities organisations to come together to campaign and influence public policy; it also carries out mapping and research on various key policy issues.
- MRSN’s Refugee & Migrants Forum is based in Manchester but serves refugee communities from across Greater Manchester – see Manchester section for more details.
- Refugee Action has a BASIS Lottery Funded project which provides organisational development support to Refugee organisations across all the districts of Greater Manchester and Blackburn.
- BME Women’s Solidarity Forum - A forum of BME women representing the BME Women’s Sector involved in front line services, community groups and organisations and strategic groups across the NW and is born out of Oxfam’s Routes to Solidarity project.

### Representation Issues:

- GMCVO provides a lot of the representation on behalf of the voluntary sector within decision making bodies that operate across GM such as AGMA, GM Combined Authority (which has been in effect since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011) and its various Commissions and working groups, Transport for GM and the Local Enterprise Partnerships. Individual organisations will find it very difficult to influence at this level on their own and are more likely to have success if they are part of a network that feeds into this representation structure already. Organisations wanting to get involved in representation at this level should join GMCVO and subscribe to its policy networks and newsletters.
- GMVSS (Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Support Partnership), for which GMCVO is the lead body, provides on-line information and a directory of local support providers.

There are also other projects that are operating across the sub-region that cater for other parts of the VCS but are still useful to be aware of and make use of:

- CEMVO (Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations) - works with black and minority ethnic, faith, women, age and disability related organisations to strengthen communities and tackle inequalities.
- TRIO project – brings together three equality strands at a North West level. BME issues are represented by 1NW. Refugee Action looks at issues affecting Refugee communities and the Lesbian and Gay Foundation is the other partner organisation.
- A Disabled people's network for Greater Manchester organised by Breakthrough UK and set up via BASIS Lottery funding is currently being started up.
- Volunteering GM – this is run out of GMCVO and one of its key aims is to enable non-traditional volunteers to get involved and provide businesses with skills to take on these volunteers.

## BOLTON

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### **About the Network/ Forum**

Bolton has a Refugee Forum, but due to the withdrawal of funding from Bolton Equalities Centre, which supported administration and meeting costs, the future of the Forum is currently uncertain. There is no BME Network in operation locally. This may be because the Interfaith Forum and other faith led forums (such as Bolton Council of Mosques, the Hindu Forum and Church Leaders Forum) already deliver on equalities issues and go some way towards representing BME issues.

The Bolton Refugee Forum was established in 2005 by the Bolton Equality Centre. It is made up of both individual residents and representatives from local RCOs. When it was first established it had approximately 25 members. Meetings took place bi-monthly.

#### **Funding and Sustainability**

Bolton Equality Centre (BEC) provided facilitation and wider development support to the Forum (it also took a lead role around capacity building local BME organisations over the years). However BEC's Local Authority funding has been entirely withdrawn as a result of local budget cuts and it is now working on an exit strategy and is in receipt of transition funding.

BEC provided facilitation and administrative support to the Refugee Forum and covered the cost of meetings with funding provided by the Asylum Team. It is uncertain whether there will be funding available in the future to continue to support the Form.

#### **Development needs & recommendations**

The immediate development needs of the Refugee Forum include sustainability issues (particularly around attracting independent funding, and consulting with members on the aims and objectives of the Forum in light of recent changes).

### 2. STAKEHOLDERS

#### **Key Stakeholders**

Key stakeholders for the Refugee Forum include Bolton CVS and the Asylum Team at Bolton Council. Bolton CVS has provided advice to the Forum on governance issues in the past. The CVS has also received severe cuts to its budget and has been forced to make staff redundancies and reduce some of the support provided (e.g. in relation to training). However a development worker is still available to support newly developing groups (which often include BME community groups).

#### **Other Stakeholders**

Other stakeholders for local BME groups include Bolton Solidarity Community Association, the African Community Association of Bolton; BRASS; the Green House

Project (which provides training as part of a Comic Relief integration project); the CAB; the Interfaith Forum; Bolton Council of Mosques; Hindu Forum; and Church Leaders Forum.

### **3. REPRESENTATION**

#### **VCS/3rd Sector Representation**

Bolton CVS runs a Third Sector Forum (which has now merged with the Funding Forum), a Health and Wellbeing Forum and a Volunteering Forum. There is a separate Children and Young People's Third Sector Forum, which the CVS is represented on. The Third Sector Forum elects a representative to sit on Bolton Vision Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership). Bolton CVS and Bolton Council of Mosques also have separate places on the LSP.

#### **Statutory Representation**

The Bolton Refugee Forum did not previously have a dedicated representative on Bolton Vision Partnership (the LSP), though more general representation has been available via the mechanisms noted above.

The Refugee Forum was previously represented by BEC on the following decision-making and advisory structures. There is still some level of representation in a number of these structures via the CVS and other Forums:

- New Migrants Forum – a multi-agency forum.
- Equalities Forums - including the Racial Harassment Forum, and the Sexuality, Gender and Caring Forum. The Harmony Forum, which formed an additional equality forum has now been disbanded.
- PCT ETAG Groups.
- Be Safe Partnership - this is run by the Local Authority and focuses on Hate Crime.

BEC formerly represented BME communities on the following bodies:

- Stronger Group – focusing on Community Cohesion.
- Bolton Police IAG.

#### **Compact**

The CVS leads on the Compact locally. The Bolton Community Network Team have worked closely with local statutory, community and voluntary agencies to develop the Bolton Compact and associated Codes of Practice. Attached to the Compact, there are four Codes: the Funding Code; Partnership Code; Volunteer Code and Black and Minority Ethnic Code of Good Practice.

## BURY

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### About the Network/ Forum

Bury has a **BME community forum** which involves organisations who work with the BME community. It is regularly attended by 15 to 20 people, although there are 60 people on the invite list. The forum meets quarterly and focuses on issues affecting the BME community. There is a perception that in recent times, perhaps due to public sector partnership changes, the focus has shifted away from strategic issues affecting the BME community. However this has been recognised and is being addressed. Examples of issues they have addressed or are addressing include getting recognition of Eid as holidays in schools (as opposed to authorised absence) and helping start a circumcision service in local hospitals.

There is no local refugee forum but a local Refugee and Asylum seeking group is a member of the BME forum and Refugee Action attended Forum meetings.

Membership of the BME forum is open to all black and minority ethnic organisations in Bury who are committed to the aims of the Forum. However, it is recognised that there are many people from ethnic minority communities in Britain who do not identify themselves as being black but whom, because of their ethnic origin, language, culture or religious differences share a common experience of discrimination and inequality. These people also qualify to join the BME community forum.

#### Funding and Sustainability

The forum has been funded by Bury Council to March 2011. Funding beyond this is currently under discussion

#### Development needs & recommendations

The forum needs to revisit its terms of reference and develop a way to raise issues affecting the BME community at strategic level.

### 2. STAKEHOLDERS

#### Key Stakeholders

B3SDA supports BME and if needed RCO organisations within Bury and provides a secretariat and administration role for the BME forum. They are a third sector infrastructure support agency.

#### Other Stakeholders

ADAB, which is a community organisation whose services are targeted at all residents particularly those who are disadvantaged, with community cohesion and integration a central key component of all their services.



### **3. REPRESENTATION**

#### **VCS/3rd Sector Representation**

B3SDA supports the Third Sector Assembly, a generic network that provides a mechanism for third sector organisations to raise issues at LSP level and be involved in consultations which affect them. All third sector groups are able to be involved. There is also a Children and Young People Groups' Forum which relates to the Bury Children's Trust and Safeguarding Board.

#### **Statutory Representation**

No final decisions on the shape and nature of partnership working have been made. To the best of our knowledge a leaner LSP is being retained and partnerships will focus on delivering task and finish projects rather than meeting only to discuss the issues. The assembly is seen as a key part within the partnership structure and can be one avenue for BME representation.

#### **Compact**

B3SDA co-ordinates a Compact Strategy Group that works to promote "Working Together" (the Bury Compact) across public and third sectors. It has successfully helped reverse or put back decisions on funding cuts for a number of organisations.

## MANCHESTER

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### About the Networks

Manchester has both a **BME Network** and a **Refugee & Migrants Forum** (which also operates at a Greater Manchester level). The Manchester BME Network is an independent organisation. The Refugee & Migrants Forum is a project of MRSN (Manchester Refugee Support Network) which also works across Greater Manchester supporting refugee and asylum seeker communities.

**Manchester BME Network** came into existence in its current membership structure in 2003. Before this, a BME network was established by the Progress Trust (a BME regeneration body funded through SRB which came to an end around 2000/2001) and was known as “Focus BME “. When the Progress Trust closed the running of the BME Network was taken over by Tung Sing Housing Association. The Community Network for Manchester (CN4M) was set up at about the same time and was responsible for developing and supporting community engagement and empowerment across the city. It set up a number of thematic and area based networks to support its role in the city and supported the existing BME Network.

Tung Sing Housing association acted as the accountable body for the Network until 2004 when the full role of link and lead body for the Network was taken over by MCCR (Manchester Council for Community Relations). The Network appointed its chair and steering group to manage and run the Network. It also changed its name from “Focus BME” to the “Manchester BME Network”. The Network became a constituted body in 2008, appointing MCCR as its accountable body until 2010, when it became fully independent.

The Network has been successful in its development, membership and delivery. It has also been successful in securing funding from various sources to support its delivery and its members e.g.:

- Capacity Builders Project : jointly with MCCR it delivered a £70k 12 mth capacity building programme for BME VCS organisations across the City
- Secured funding from CN4M
- Secured funding from the Manchester Partnership to support area based work
- Secured £20k funding from the Home Office to support local organisations in dissemination of “home security information” for vulnerable groups
- Hosted volunteers from the British Council Youth Exchange programme for 3 months

The Network is currently funded through CN4M and that funding ceased from 30 June 2011. It is unclear (as at 28.6.11) how the Network will be funded in the future. It has sufficient reserves to continue until the end of September and is submitting funding applications and making representations for its future.

Currently the Manchester BME Network has around 200 member organisations and works towards the following aims:

- Share – exchange ideas and solutions at a variety of network meetings/events and showcase examples of good practice through regular publications
- Develop relationships and co-operations between BME organisations and assisting them to grow and develop by enabling access to support and resources available to them
- Lead on providing a voice of the BME VCS to influence decision makers by highlighting the needs of the BME community and developing a greater understanding of the key issues affecting them.

The **Refugee and Migrants Forum** has a membership made up of both individuals and RCOs, though the focus has latterly shifted more towards individuals. It is a well-established and well attended Refugee and Migrants Forum, facilitated by a Development Worker and assistant who are employed by MRSN.

The Refugee & Migrant Forum Manchester aims to enable refugees and asylum seekers to express the needs and aspirations of their communities and to play a part in influencing policy in the city of Manchester and across the UK.

The Forum delivers on three main outcomes: Campaigning; Community Leadership Training; and Awareness Raising. Current campaigns include the ‘Let Them Work’ campaign, and the Asylum Rights Campaign, which focuses on improving conditions at the UKBA reporting centre and ensuring the rights of asylum seekers are upheld. The Forum delivers Community Leadership Training to a cohort of 20 participants each year. The course is accredited by MMU. Finally, the forum delivers Refugee Awareness Training to a range of stakeholders across Greater Manchester.

The Forum is currently recruiting new members to participate in its Steering Group (responsible for the Forum’s strategic direction).

### **Funding and Sustainability**

In the past year in addition to the work the BME Network carries out as part of its funding from CN4M it has been involved in the following additional pieces of work: Researching the needs of BME communities in Trafford (separately commissioned), Developing a Manchester Compact (with Voice for Change), Equality Impact Assessments, BME fund review (with Manchester City Council), assessing needs of member organisations and encouraging partnership work. As the funding from CN4M ends in June 2011, the BME Network is currently looking for alternative sources of



funding and these additional pieces of work will be needed for the network to sustain itself in the future.

MRSN has been funded by the Big Lottery Fund to run the Refugee and Migrants Forum for 3 years (2009 – 2012).

### **Development needs & recommendations**

Refugee and Migrants Forum Manchester - Future development priorities include doing more outreach work in order to draw in RCOs from Greater Manchester.

## **2. STAKEHOLDERS**

### **Key BME Stakeholders**

Manchester Council for Community Relations (MCCR) is another organisation that works specifically with BME communities in Manchester, focussing on community cohesion and equalities issues; it previously fulfilled the role of a Race Equality Council. MRSN (Manchester Refugee Support Network) runs the Refugee & Migrants Forum and hosts a community development worker, as well as providing key support and advice services to refugee and asylum seeker communities in Manchester.

### **Other Stakeholders**

Key infrastructure support organisations in Manchester include Manchester Community Central, GIO Project, MACC (Manchester Alliance for Community Care) and CN4M (due to end in June 2011).

Support for RCOs is available from the Lottery BASIS funded Organisational Development Officer at Refugee Action. There are also a broad range of NGOs providing some infrastructure and development support to refugee community organisations and informal refugee community support groups. These include British Red Cross, Oxfam UK, the Boaz Trust, Save the Children, and Changemakers.

## **3. REPRESENTATION**

### **VCS/3rd Sector Representation**

In terms of BME representation on the Manchester Partnership (LSP), MCCR has a representative on the LSP board and one on the Public Service Board. Manchester BME Network has representation on the Agenda 2010 Steering Group (now ended) and the Community Cohesion Board, both of which feed into the LSP. The BME Network is also represented on the board of Manchester Community Central and the CN4M Executive Committee. There is currently no generic VCS forum or assembly in Manchester but there is a possibility that a Voluntary Sector Assembly could be created in Manchester in the near future. This would fill a gap that exists at the moment in terms of bringing together the wide ranging VCS organisations that exist in Manchester.



### **Statutory Representation**

Alongside its representation within key equalities led groups that feed into the LSP described above, the Manchester BME Network has also played a lead role in the BME Funding Review that has taken place within Manchester City Council in the last year.

The Refugee and Migrants Forum does not engage formally in the Manchester Partnership. However, representatives of the Forum are well connected with the MARIM team at Manchester City Council, and the Forum has strategic links with individual Councillors and MPs. The Forum regularly engages with the local branch of UKBA (which is responsible for the local reporting centre).

### **Compact**

Information is available through the Manchester City Council website at: [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200047/grants/5052/working\\_together\\_a\\_compact\\_for\\_manchester](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200047/grants/5052/working_together_a_compact_for_manchester) and the Area Co-ordination and Third Sector Team within the council Chief Executive's department has responsibility for this.

## OLDHAM

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### **About the Network**

Oldham does not currently have an active BME Network but has had one as recently as March 2011. Prior to this there was a BME Network that was run by OREP (Oldham Race Equality Partnership) that stopped meeting in 2007. Then Voluntary Action Oldham (VAO) restarted the BME Network as part of its embedding equalities work which VAO was commissioned and funded to carry out between March 2009 and March 2011 (VAO). The network covered both BME VCS and Refugee Community Organisations and met up on a bi-monthly basis between January 2010 and March 2011. During this period 36 different BME and non-BME organisations and agencies attended at least one of the network meetings and there are 70 different BME/Refugee organisations on a mailing list that is still able to be used to distribute information relevant to them specifically.

The BME Network played a key role in facilitating consultation on key issues in Oldham between BME communities and public bodies and representatives from several departments within Oldham Council and the NHS, PCT, GM Police have all attended meetings in the past. The BME Network, along with other networks run by VAO across Oldham, would feed into the VCFP (Voluntary Community Faith Partnership) which is the representative body and strategic voice for the voluntary sector in Oldham. So although the BME Network is no longer active, there is still a mechanism for organisations to come together and network within the VCFP.

There is also no specific refugee forum or network in Oldham for RCO's but they are incorporated into the BME Network. There has been a council run Migrants Forum. There is also an interfaith forum in Oldham which can provide additional support to some RCO's, and Refugee Action also actively works in Oldham.

#### **Funding and Sustainability**

The funding for the embedding equality work ended on 31st March 2011 and with it funding for the dedicated support to all equality networks, of which the Oldham BME Network is one. Prior to this there were two engagement officers, one role with an equalities focus and the other with a focus on the compact and running the VCFP. From April onwards there is now one engagement officer role, which will focus on running the VCFP and compact rather than the equalities work. In the future, any development needs of BME and refugee organisations will be dealt with through VAO's generic services via their development team.

#### **Development needs & recommendations**

Now that the BME Network is no longer active it must be made clear what other support is available to the organisations within Oldham. These organisations should be

directed to the VCFP for representation issues and as noted previously, VAO's development team for capacity building support.

## 2. STAKEHOLDERS

### Key Stakeholders

Voluntary Action Oldham is the key support organisation for voluntary and community groups in Oldham. It has carried out both engagement work and development (capacity building) work with VCS organisations. They will continue to provide mainstream support to BME organisations and RCO's.

### Other Stakeholders

Other key stakeholders are OREP (Oldham Race Equality Partnership), Oldham LINK, Oldham Children's HUB, OCAS (Oldham Community Accountancy Service)

## 3. REPRESENTATION

### VCS/3rd Sector Representation

The key way in which all VCS organisations are represented in Oldham is through the **VCFP** (Voluntary Community Faith Partnership) which is run by VAO's Engagement Team. Its role is to be the key representative body for the voluntary sector in Oldham with its aim to exist as a body *'to consult, to advocate and to influence policies, planning and delivery of services in Oldham'* on behalf of the sector.

The structure of Oldham Partnership (LSP) has recently undergone changes and in its new arrangement a broad range of organisations involved in the VCFP will be invited to participate in the Oldham Forum, which will feed into the LSP decision makers. The Chair of the VCFP will sit on the Public Service Board and the Chief Executive of VAO will sit on the Executive Management Board. VCFP representatives will continue to sit on each of the thematic partnerships.

In terms of BME/RCO specific representation, the BME Network did not have nominated representatives within decision making structures. A couple of the VCFP representatives are from BME communities, particularly within the Strong Communities Strategy Group that feeds into the Safe & Stronger Communities Board which was set up after the riots to focus on community cohesion work and now has more of a commissioning focus. Even if some of the VCFP reps are from BME communities they represent the whole of the sector rather than just BME specific issues.

### Statutory Representation

The BME Network did not have any specific representation on any other bodies. Although the VCFP's main role is around representation within the LSP structure it also supports representatives in the following areas; Economic and Enterprise boards, Housing, Supporting People, Learning Partnership.



### Compact

The Compact is called 'One Oldham Stronger Together' and it has 3 codes of practice linked to Engagement, Volunteering & Commissioning. It has gained national recognition by being awarded Green Flag status and VAO's previous engagement officer working on the compact was awarded National Compact Champion of the Year.

Voluntary Action Oldham continue to take a key role in the compact and the engagement officer at VAO will lead on Compact issues in Oldham.

## ROCHDALE

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### **About the Networks**

There has been some form of BME Network in Rochdale since 2001. Rochdale Centre for Diversity originally managed the Network. It received funding each year from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Community Empowerment Fund to manage the BME Network and this allowed for it to have dedicated workers. The BME Network consisted of both BME individuals and community groups. However, when the Centre for Diversity closed in August 2009 due to a withdrawal of its funding by Rochdale Borough Council, the BME Network became inactive.

In the summer of 2010 the Greater Manchester BME Network began to work more actively in Rochdale as it was a priority district for support in Year 2 of the project and this work was to be done in partnership with CVS Rochdale (CVSR) as the local infrastructure and development organisation. CVSR already has responsibility for running several thematic networks i.e. Children & Young People and they were keen to restart the Rochdale BME Network. The first meeting of the newly re-formed BME Network took place in August 2010 and it has continued to meet on a monthly basis, with a Terms of Reference agreed in March 2011. It has the following overall aim: *'to bring together BME Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Organisations, and members of the community to influence local policy, shape delivery service and provide a voice for and engage BME communities within the borough of Rochdale's decision making structures.'*

The BME Network has around 30 BME member organisations and other individuals that were involved in the previous BME Network.

There is no specific network or forum for Refugee Community Organisations (RCO's) and so they are integrated into the BME Network. However, all organisations are classified as BME organisations on CVSR's database so it is not known specifically how many RCO's there are in Rochdale. There has been an increase in demand for start-up support from RCOs, so there are likely to be an increased number of smaller RCOs wanting further support in the future, and integrating them into the BME Network or setting up a dedicated refugee network may become a priority.

#### **Funding and Sustainability**

CVSR does not receive any specific funding at present to run the Rochdale BME Network but provides basic administration and facilitation support for meetings, distribution of information and maintaining a contacts database in addition to helping the network to engage and influence decision makers. The local council underwent a change in leadership, from the previous coalition to Labour controlled, as many councillors resigned in the wake of the funding cuts being announced. This has meant that

negotiations for many Council funded contracts have taken longer than expected. CVSR is currently not funded to include the work of the BME Network in the new contract. Funding is being sought to sustain the group and continue the support of the facilitator and administration support.

### **Development needs & recommendations**

The BME Network, in its current form, has only existed for less than a year so the membership will continue to develop and grow, particularly as more RCO and other small BME groups seek help to start-up. In the past, the BME Network has struggled to attract all members of Rochdale Borough's diverse BME communities and it is looking to become more representative of the make-up of the BME population in order to increase its credibility as a representative voice for BME communities in Rochdale, as per its overall aim.

## **2. STAKEHOLDERS**

### **Key Stakeholders**

CVS Rochdale is the only infrastructure organisation supporting voluntary, community and faith organisations in Rochdale. It provides the following functions: Finance, Quality Assurance, Training, Funding, Governance, Collaboration & Consortia, Human Resources, Volunteer Centre including Carers Co-ordination.

### **Other Stakeholders**

One of the key sources of support to many BME communities is their local community centre, which acts as a hub to both organisations and individuals. These are brought together under the Community Based Network run by the Borough Council. The council previously ran a New & Emerging Communities Forum that fed into the LSP structure as a sub-group of its Safer Communities strand. This brought together all the key agencies that provide services to Refugee and Asylum Seeker communities, but Rochdale Council recently announced that they would no longer have the capacity to support the Forum.

## **3. REPRESENTATION**

### **VCS/3rd Sector Representation**

The LSP for Rochdale Borough, Pride Partnership, is currently undergoing a massive restructure that is still being put in place. Under the previous structure, the Voluntary Sector fed into each strand of the LSP via Forums run by the CVS e.g. Health & Wellbeing Forum, and many of the lead groups include VCS representatives. CVSR's Chief Executive represents CVSR's members on the LPSB. At the moment there is not an overarching VCS forum or assembly for all VCS organisations in Rochdale to feed into and it is not known if there are plans to create one in the future. There used to be a 'Thriving Third Sector Forum' but this no longer meets as the LAA indicator that led to its formation is no longer relevant due to it being scrapped by the coalition Government. There is currently no specific BME representation via the BME Network within the Pride Partnership structure.



### **Statutory Representation**

Within the LSP structure there is a Community Cohesion group which has BME representation. However, the people that attend were part of the previous BME Network run by the Centre for Diversity; they do not represent the current BME Network and are there as individuals rather than representing BME communities as a whole.

On a more positive note the new BME Network has been asked to send a representative to the Voluntary Sector Partnership which is run by the Borough Council and brings together liaison between councillors. VCS forum that exists will provide input on the Borough Councils' decisions and policies. If the new BME Network can show that it is credible then it might be invited to provide representatives to LSP groups and committees.

### **3.3 Compact**

Many of CVS Rochdale's staff have knowledge of the compact and have recently been involved in writing the refreshed compact. A new Steering Group is currently being set up with representation from Statutory and Voluntary Sector organisations See their website at <http://www.cvsr.org.uk/rochdale-borough-compact> for more details.

## SALFORD

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### About the Forum

Salford has an active refugee forum (Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum), which has benefitted from dedicated development support from Salford CVS and a range of other organisations. A BME Network previously existed (not currently in operation) as one of a number of Communities of Identity supported by Salford CVS. However BME groups continue to be supported individually and come together for discussions on policy changes affecting the BME sector alongside discussions on the possibility of working together on joint projects.

The **Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum** meets twice monthly on Saturdays. 30-40 individuals regularly take part in the Forum. Approximately 8 of the 15 Salford based RCOs are regularly represented. An AGM was held in April 2011 to formalise the governance structure of the Forum and 10 members were elected to serve on the Management Committee.

The Forum covers the whole of Salford and has an outreach programme for involving other RCOs. The Forum is divided into four sub-groups working on the following themes: Networking, Partnerships, Finance, and Training.

The main services and projects delivered by the Forum include refugee awareness training; representation of refugee communities; and development support to smaller groups (in the form of admin and financial assistance to organise specific events and projects). The Forum is also heavily involved in delivering Refugee Week activities with partners from across the city. The Forum is in the process of developing a refugee awareness project with local schools. In the future, the Forum plans to offer capacity building and development support to RCOs (combining an advice and signposting element).

As a part of Refugee Week 2011 the Forum and Revive delivered a successful awareness raising conference at Salford University ('No to Homelessness and No to Cashlessness'), which around 140-150 delegates attended. During Refugee Week the Forum, along with Salix Disability Focus Group, also organised an event on 'celebrating diversity' which around 300 people from all communities attended. At the event a film about celebrating diversity which was made by the Forum and Salix Disability Focus Group was premiered and has since been streamed by BBC Manchester.

The Forum has been offered the use of office space at Salford CVS in Eccles but need a more central base. The Forum currently uses office space at Revive (available until June 2011), for which it makes a nominal contribution. The Forum plans to use office spaces in a range of locations on rotation in order to be more accessible to its members.



## **Funding and Sustainability**

The Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum is funded by Salford Local Strategic Partnership, and the funding is administered via Salford CVS. The Forum submits a quarterly action plan to the Communities of Identity Task Group (linked to the LSP), setting out how funding will be used.

The Forum received development support from the Communities of Identity Development Worker at Salford CVS (who met regularly with the Forum's Management Committee to discuss progress against their quarterly action plan). The Forum has also received in-depth development support from Community Pride Unit (Take Part Pathfinder Project) and Revive.

Following a review of the Communities of Identity project a revised approach will be implemented in 2011/12. However this will have minimal impact on the support offered to the Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum (one of the Communities of Identity) – they will continue to receive development support from Salford CVS and Salford City Council, and funding will be available to support activities and projects carried out by the network.

Small amounts of funding for one-off-events (e.g. Black History Month celebrations) have also been provided to the Forum by Salix Homes and the Health Improvement Team.

The Forum has previously worked without funding, but any future loss of funding (particularly withdrawal of travel expenses) would affect who can take part in Forum meetings. The Forum has been exploring several options for securing a sustainable future income. These include charging for translation services, charging for refugee awareness training and payment for hosting social science placements.

## **Development needs & recommendations**

The Forum has identified that it needs further training on general business planning; quality assurance and monitoring; and report writing. The Forum has also identified the need for training on how to support skills development amongst its volunteers.

The Forum would benefit from stronger links to other refugee Forums (especially the Manchester Refugee and Migrants Forum), and better sharing of resources. It would also benefit from more partnership work with other projects on strategic issues (e.g. TRIO Project).

## **2. STAKEHOLDERS**

### **Key Stakeholders**

Development support to BME groups and RCOs is provided by Salford CVS and Salford City Council.

## Other Stakeholders

Other Stakeholders include Greater Manchester Police, Salford University, NHS Salford (Health Improvement Team), Refugee Action, Salford City Council, Sailex Homes, Salford City College (ESOL department), Community Pride Unit (Take Part Pathfinder Project) and Revive.

## 3. REPRESENTATION

### VCS/3rd Sector Representation

Currently, representation of particular interest groups happens through 'Communities of Identity'.

'Communities of Identity' grew out of the Community Network in Salford and these continue to be funded by the LSP. There are 5 forums focussing on giving communities a voice within the LSP: Disability Forum, Faith Network, LGBT Network, BME Forum, and the Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum.

### Statutory Representation

**Partners in Salford** (LSP) - Despite the Government's announcements that local areas are no longer required to run an LSP, Councillor John Merry, Leader of Salford City Council and Chair of Partners in Salford, announced that Salford would be maintaining a partnership structure at the Partners in Salford Conference in January 2011.

Local refugee communities are currently represented in the following decision-making and advisory structures:

- G.M. Police - Independent Advisory Group. The Salford Division IAG will continue to meet after March 2011. The Forum also works with the First Response Team
- Housing - Sailex Homes
- NHS Salford Faith and Ethnicity Health and Social Care Forum
- Refugee Multi-Agency Forum – participants include lead members, councillors, UKBA and a range of other stakeholders.
- Refugee Week Planning Committee
- Community Committees – there are 8 of these in total. They involve the Neighbourhood Manager and members of the local community and are responsible for distributing small grant pots.
- Migrant Impact Fund Task Group – this has a remit around ESOL and commissioning.
- Equalities and Cohesion Team – this is responsible for Hate Crime Awareness Week. Some Neighbourhoods have their own Cohesion Task Groups.

BME communities and representation:

- The Interfaith Network involves representatives from the BME community. It is in its early stages of development.



- The LGBT Network aspires to improve the level of BME representation.

### **Compact**

Salford CVS leads on the Compact locally. The Compact is mentioned in local Service Level Agreements.

### **Other**

A new Community Cohesion Toolkit is currently under development.

## STOCKPORT

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### **About the Network/ Forum**

Stockport's BME Network is currently under development. A refugee support group meets regularly on Saturday's.

The establishment of a BME Network in Stockport is an ongoing process, which the Greater Manchester BME Network has supported since Year 1 of the project. This process has been set-back by the withdrawal of grant funding for Stockport CVS in 2010, and its subsequent closure. The work on the development of the BME Network is currently on hold but those involved will soon be able to access "facilitated self-help" from Anchorpoint Stockport. Financial support will also be available (see below).

#### **Funding and Sustainability**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, Anchorpoint Stockport will be able to channel Lottery BASIS funding to support Networks in Stockport. Some resources will be made available to support the initial stages of developing a Network.

#### **Development needs & recommendations**

Start-up capacity-building support for the BME Network, covering topics such as structure and governance, funding, strategic planning etc. New members may also benefit from training around influencing decision-making.

### 2. STAKEHOLDERS

#### **Key Stakeholders**

The contract to deliver comprehensive infrastructure support services for the VCS in Stockport has been awarded to Stockport Synergy (to be delivered under the name of Anchorpoint Stockport). It was previously held by Stockport CVS, until funding was withdrawn in 2010.

Anchorpoint Stockport is the new support service for voluntary organisations and community groups. It has three overall priorities – to enable the voice of the sector, to promote volunteering and to provide information and support including funding advice. Anchorpoint Stockport is a standalone project managed by Synergy Stockport, a consortium of voluntary organisations in the borough. Synergy Stockport is legally accountable to the Council for the financial governance and responsible for staff of Anchorpoint Stockport. The Turning Tide have been commissioned by the Local Authority to consult with members of Stockport's VCS and to oversee the establishment of the new operational structure for infrastructure support in Stockport. The Local Authority has commissioned 3 years of infrastructure support, covering volunteering, capacity building and an information and communications function (responsible for raising awareness of grants and contracting opportunities).

The final stage in the consultation process (which took place on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March) involved VCS members voting on a range of proposals. Following the appointment of the Advisory Board (made up of elected representatives from the local voluntary and community sector), the staged appointment of paid staff will begin (there will be 5 in total). The Advisory Board will also be responsible for refining the draft outcomes for the service, determining indicators and milestones, and baselining the starting point for the agreed outcomes.

Frontline organisations will be encouraged to come together in order to access support, which will be commissioned according to need. There will be ongoing support for specialist interest networks and forums.

### **3. REPRESENTATION**

#### **VCS/3rd Sector Representation**

Anchorpoint Stockport will be responsible for supporting a Voluntary and Community Sector Forum, and a Funding Forum (which will sit within the VCS, but with a high level of input from the Local Authority). As well as offering networking opportunities within the sector, the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum will focus on evolving new approaches by drawing on the experience of communities of interest and identity. It will be structured around the ‘three I’s’: Ideas, Inspiration and Intelligence.

#### **Statutory Representation**

There is currently no direct BME or refugee representation on the Stockport Partnership (the LSP). The Stronger Communities Partnership, one of the LSP’s thematic partnerships, has focused on the themes of a ‘thriving third sector’, community engagement and empowerment, Neighbourhood Renewal, and social inclusion (though its focus may now change). There is VCS and faith sector representation on this Partnership. Although BME representatives were invited to take part in the Partnership when it was first formed, there has not been any ongoing representation.

BME groups can engage with Stockport Partnership and Stockport Council via sub-groups, operational groups and task groups (for example, in relation to Black History Month activities). These groups can also influence via the Stockport Partnership Forum which is usually held twice a year.

## TAMESIDE

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### About the Networks

Tameside is unique across Greater Manchester in that it has both a **BME Network** and a **BME Women's Network**, both of which are run by T3SC. The BME Network started in 2002 with the women's network starting a year later. Both networks operate around the same key aim;

*"To provide a space for open discussion and debate regarding the issues concerning BME Voluntary and Community Groups. To improve the lives of people from BME backgrounds in Tameside by developing a clear, effective and efficient voice on the issues that concern and affect them."*

In terms of the mailing list for the BME Network, there are 50 BME groups that are members and over 100 individuals receive information sent out about the BME Network. The Women's BME Network has a much smaller list of members: 5 organisations that are specifically for BME women, and workers from women's projects based at other organisations make up the membership. There is not a separate forum/network for refugees in Tameside as there are very few refugee organisations present in the district. **TARA** (Tameside African Refugee Association) is really the only organisation that T3SC knows of that work specifically with refugee communities in Tameside.

Each network meets at least quarterly and in the last year funding has been available to run additional meetings on particular themes and issues such as employment and training. In terms of numbers attending meetings, the Women's BME Network has 17-25 people per meeting and this has been consistently more highly attended than the general BME Network meetings, which have sometimes struggled to get double figures attending recently.

Many statutory agencies, such as the NHS/PCT, regularly consult with the BME networks on strategies, policies and other key issues that affect BME communities in Tameside.

#### Funding and Sustainability

T3SC has had to reduce staff hours to cope with a funding cut from Tameside Council, with many workers now operating on 3 or 4 day weeks, including the BME policy & participation officer post. Consultation on how the BME Networks will operate and their priorities for the upcoming year will take place in April/May 2011 and meetings will start up again in June 2011. The additional meetings that took place in 2010-2011 will not be able to be repeated due to reduced funds and it is possible that given the reduced resources available for all the networks that T3SC runs (health & wellbeing etc.) that the Women's BME Network might merge with the wider BME Network in the future. Future funding for the network is not secure at present.

## Development needs & recommendations

Securing funding is the key for the future of both of the networks. Reassessing the priorities for each of the networks will also help to keep organisations engaged with the networks by taking ownership of the agendas that will be discussed at meetings.

Many small BME organisations in Tameside are struggling to survive at the moment due to funding cuts and so groups are trying to keep their own organisations afloat rather than attend external meetings. Meetings based around helping groups to be sustainable and survive might result in higher attendance at meetings. A focus on helping organisations to compete within the commissioning environment is a key role that T3SC performs currently and will continue to be important in the future.

## 2. STAKEHOLDERS

### Key Stakeholders

Tameside 3rd Sector Coalition (T3SC) is the key infrastructure support organisation for VCS organisations in Tameside. It hosts many networks, several with their own dedicated Policy & Participation Officer posts within T3SC, and it also hosts Tameside LINK and a Credit Union Development Worker.

### Other Stakeholders

**VOLCON** is the Voluntary Chief Officers Network for Tameside and is open to any chief officers, deputies or managers from voluntary and community organisations operating in Tameside. **Tameside Race Equality Council** aims to work in partnership with frontline service providers, employers and voluntary organisations to eliminate and promote greater equality of opportunity for BME people in Tameside. In terms of refugee support, there is a refugee and asylum seekers support team that function through the libraries department of the council. There is also a brand new Lottery funded project called **Asante Cultural Forum** that is looking to bring together those from diverse communities.

## 3. REPRESENTATION

### VCS/3rd Sector Representation

Tameside BME Network has had one elected representative and a further shadow place on the CCCP (Culture & Community Cohesion Partnership) which is one of the thematic partnership that is part of the Tameside Strategic Partnership (LSP) structure. The Women's BME Network also has had an elected representative on the CCCP. The structure of the LSP in Tameside is currently undergoing changes and the CCCP will no longer exist in its own right but as part of the 'Supportive Delivery Board' which is one of the delivery boards that makes up part of the new LSP structure. The BME and Women's BME Networks will both continue to have elected representatives in this new group.

The BME and BME Women's network alongside the other networks run by T3SC come together under **Tameside Voice** which is known as the 'network of networks'



encompassing BME, Children & Young People, Economic Development, Health & Social Care, Interfaith, Older People, Transport and Chief Officers networks. Tameside Voice represents the whole of the voluntary, community and faith sector in Tameside in terms of representation issues with 2 places elected to the TSP Board on which T3SC also has a place.

### **Statutory Representation**

Although the BME Networks do not have any specific representation outside of the LSP structure there are many other networks that are run by T3SC that do send VCS representatives to external boards/committees.

### **Compact**

Within T3SC the Manager of the Policy & Participation Team takes the role of compact officer. There is a Compact Compliance Officer within Tameside Borough Council but the person in post has recently taken redundancy so no replacement has currently been named. The function of the cross sector Compact Delivery Group is being reviewed alongside the TSP review process.

## TRAFFORD

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### **About the Network/ Forum**

Trafford has a network representing the needs of BME communities (Voice of BME Trafford [VBMET]). There is no separate refugee network in Trafford and there are no known refugee community members currently taking part in VBMET.

Voluntary & Community Action Trafford (VCAT) and Voice of BME Trafford (VBMET), are working in partnership to improve local support and networking for BME voluntary and community groups in Trafford.

**Voice of BME Trafford (VBMET)** was launched in 2006 to address issues raised by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities living or working in the borough of Trafford. One of the group's aims is to find representatives to champion the causes, concerns and issues affecting BME communities in Trafford. Members must be a BME resident, operating a BME-led business or working for BME communities in the borough of Trafford.

Key Objectives are: i) To build relationships, trust and co-operation in the BME communities in Trafford. ii) To encourage participation from BME communities in Trafford in the work of VBMET. iii) To elect representatives to represent BME communities on various decision-making bodies in the borough, and to champion issues affecting BME communities.

VBMET was established with development support from MCCR (Manchester Council for Community Relations). It is a fully constituted organisation and is currently applying to become a registered charity. VBMET is currently seeking management committee members. Its management committee meetings take place monthly. VBMET organises consultations with local BME communities on issues such as housing and local public sector budgets. Themed meetings take place quarterly. VBMET previously ran drop-in sessions (the funding for these finished in Oct 2010) and has worked on empowering BME youth through the Emerging Voices project. It is currently running a pilot Cancer Outreach project funded by the Department of Health.

The Manchester BME Network was commissioned to carry out research on the needs of BME communities in Trafford. The report 'Researching the needs of BME groups in Trafford' made several recommendations about how VCAT and VBME could work together more effectively in the future to support local BME communities. The report's recommendations were presented to members of the local BME VCS in March 2011. Following this meeting it was agreed that there will be a re-launch of VBMET in May/June 2011. This would serve the purpose of raising the profile of VBMET and encouraging wider membership.

### **Funding and Sustainability**

VBMET receives a modest amount of funding from Trafford Borough Council. This is used to fund an Admin Worker for a maximum of 3 hours per week. Funding has been promised until March 2012 and comes from the Local Authorities' Chief Executives Budget rather than the main voluntary sector pot.

VBMET does not have rental costs as it is hosted in Council owned property (Old Trafford Library), however there are overhead costs in the form of fees for the use of the Council's computer system and insurances for staff and volunteers.

### **Development needs & recommendations**

VBMET would benefit from support around widening participation (particularly encouraging participation from the local refugee community).

Based on the findings of the BME Network report, VBME would benefit from addressing the following issues in the future: engagement (strategic level representation, community engagement and getting involved in the commissioning process); activities (training, volunteering, mapping groups etc); capacity building (health checks, sharing good practice etc); and inequality (addressing issues of marginalisation, LGBT agenda, working with young people etc).

## **2. STAKEHOLDERS**

### **Key Stakeholders**

The key stakeholder involved in supporting the local BME community is VCAT (Voluntary & Community Action Trafford). VCAT was created in 2000 by the Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS) to meet the development needs of the VCS groups in Trafford. VCAT is a membership organisation that is governed by a board of directors elected from the organisations, groups and individuals working within the voluntary and community sectors in Trafford. VCAT provides developmental support from VCS groups in Trafford, and has worked actively to support VBMET in developing an active BME network for Trafford.

Another key stakeholder involved in supporting the local BME community is Trafford Housing Trust.

### **Other Stakeholders**

Based on the recent BME Network report, other stakeholders involved in supporting the local BME community include the Police Service; the Disability forum; Barnardos; Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society; Peacemaker; Manchester District Housing Trust; Trafford Sport; Community Foundation Greater Manchester; and the Arts Council.

### 3. REPRESENTATION

#### VCS/3rd Sector Representation

There is no VCS assembly, as found in other boroughs. VCAT represents the voluntary & community sector on a number of partnerships, along with representatives from voluntary and community organisations and community representatives.

VCAT represent the VCS on the Local Strategic Partnership and plays a key role in the developing Stronger Communities Partnership and the Diverse Communities Forum.

#### Statutory Representation

**LSP** - Khan Moghal (on behalf of VBMET) previously represented BME communities on the Trafford Partnership Board. Due to the re-structuring of the LSP this no longer exists. BME representation will now be through the 'Stronger Communities Forum', which has been expanded in order to feed into all of the thematic areas of the LSP (VBMET was not previously part of this). VBMET will also continue to represent local BME communities in the Diverse Communities Forum.

**G.M. Police** - VBMET previously represented the needs of BME communities via the Trafford Division Independent Advisory Group.

Based on feedback from local BME organisations, the BME Network report recommended that VBMET should seek to represent the BME community in the following structures: LSP; Neighbourhood Partnerships; Police Authority; the Safeguarding Board; and Housing Committees. In addition it was felt the network should seek to influence the Health Sector and NHS; Scrutiny Panels; and Wellbeing Strategic Panels.

#### Compact

VCAT and key representatives from the voluntary and community sector have worked with partners to develop the Compact, and related Codes of Practice, for Trafford. There is a Code of Practice specifically relating to BME groups. The BME Code set out a number of principles and priorities to support the development of the BME sector. VCAT has worked closely with Voice of BME Trafford, Manchester BME Network and the Greater Manchester BME Network to develop these. In 2011 these partners published research into the needs of local BME Groups.

VCAT Development Manager is the lead for the Compact in Trafford.

## WIGAN

### 1. NETWORK/FORUM

#### About the Network/ Forum

'World in Wigan' previously represented the BME community, but this ceased to operate in 2010. Currently there is neither a BME Network nor an RCO Network in operation in the Wigan area.

#### Development needs & recommendations

Should a refugee forum develop in the future, it would need start-up capacity building support covering topics such as structure and governance, funding, strategic planning etc. Training may also be needed for new members around influencing decision-making. Such a network would also benefit from strong links to the Refugee and Migrants Forum Manchester, and projects such as the TRIO project, as well as links to the local Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly.

### 2. STAKEHOLDERS

#### Key Stakeholders

There are 3 RCO's/ refugee support organisations in operation in the Wigan and Leigh area. Key local stakeholders providing capacity building support to these organisations have included Wigan and Leigh CVS, the Department of Adult Services at Wigan Council, Refugee Action BASIS project and GM BME Network.

### 3. REPRESENTATION

#### VCS/3rd Sector Representation

A new Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly held its inaugural meeting in June 2011. Wigan and Leigh CVS have worked with NAVCA to devise the new structure, and it was approved by the VCS at a consultation event in January 2011. The Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly will be an independent representative body that is facilitated by Wigan and Leigh CVS on behalf of the community and voluntary sector. An interim executive group will be formed to lead on the assembly's strategic development and work plans.

#### Statutory Representation

Wigan Life, Wigan's LSP, runs via thematic delivery partnerships which include: Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing Partnership (EECH); Health and Wellbeing Partnership; Building Stronger Communities Partnership and the Children Young People and Families Partnership (Children's Trust).

VCS representation on the LSP previously happened principally through Encompass. The Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly will lead on representing the local VCS. There are also opportunities to influence local decision making through the 10 Township Forums and PACT (Partners and Communities Together).



RCO Representation – The Refugee and Migrants Forum is a multi-agency forum which meets quarterly and provides an important information sharing role. The forum is run by Wigan Council. The Cultural Exchange Group also has a remit around refugee and BME communities, for example in planning Refugee Week activities.

## 4. EMERGING ISSUES

From the district descriptions above it is clear that the level of support available to BME and Refugee networks/forums and the level of representation they have within decision making structures varies massively between each district. Some areas have established BME Networks/Forums (Manchester, Tameside, Bury, Rochdale) and Refugee Forums (Salford, Manchester, Bolton). Other areas have some sort of BME Network that is struggling to sustain itself financially or through lack of engagement (Trafford, Oldham). Only Stockport and Wigan do not currently have either a BME or Refugee network/forum in operation, though strong community based informal support networks do exist. The fact that these districts have the smallest BME populations could go some way to explaining this.

Many districts have, or are looking to develop, Third Sector Assemblies (also called Voluntary Sector Assembly/Forum/Partnership). In those districts that do not have strong BME/ Refugee networks, this is the way in which VCS organisations can get their voices heard within decision making structures. By bringing together the whole of the Voluntary & Community Sector in this way it strengthens the voice of the Sector within that district. In those districts that have a long established VCS Forum's e.g. Oldham and its VCFP, the representation of the Sector within the LSP for instance is much stronger than in areas without one.

The withdrawal or uncertainty of funding is affecting the majority of networks and forums currently and the lack of sustainability can affect engagement with member organisations. Local infrastructure support organisations, in particular CVS's, are best placed in most districts to facilitate various networks, including BME networks, but this will become increasingly difficult for them to do as funding for the majority of them has been heavily cut.

It is clear that decision making structures are changing at a local level, with LSPs being restructured and some of the themes and functions no longer part of that structure i.e. Children's Trust Boards. Although it is important for the Voluntary & Community Sector and more specifically, BME and Refugee communities, to be represented within the LSP there are other decision making structures/bodies that will become important in terms of securing adequate representation in the future, including:

- G.M. Combined Authority
- LEPs
- GP Consortia
- Children's Trust Boards (the structures which will replace these)

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Networks and Forums:

- Encourage LSPs and individual statutory sector partners to recognise the importance of BME/ Refugee specific Networks and Forums as the key mechanism for engaging BME/ RCO communities.
- Assist BME Networks to highlight the importance of single equality themed Networks/ Forums to funders and statutory sector partners by providing them with key resources and knowledge and linking them to national campaigns such as the Voice for Change campaign.
- Encourage learning, sharing of best practice and collaborative working between BME and Refugee networks within and across districts.
- Continue to capacity build and develop Networks. For example, assist Networks to identify successes, develop strategic plans, and demonstrate transparency and accountability - all of which increases credibility with funders and decision makers.

### 5.2 Infrastructure Support:

- Continue to provide basic facilitation and administration to support the running of local networks.
- Encourage more efficient use of resources (e.g. encourage Refugee Networks to link into BME Networks in local areas so costs for venue, catering, facilitation are shared).
- Continue to support the effective flow of information between BME/ Refugee Forums and wider VCS forums.
- Where changes are anticipated to the infrastructure support or administration support for a Network, ensure there are clear exit strategies in place so information (particularly member contact details) are not lost.
- Encourage infrastructure support organisations to make sure that the development support and other mainstream services they offer are fully accessible to BME and Refugee community groups and that they understand the needs of these organisations.
- Improve BME and Refugee representation within boards and committees of infrastructure organisations so that they are more in line with the voluntary and community sector within each district.
- Ensure there is timely exchange of information about grants, commissioning opportunities and relevant policy news.

### 5.3 Representation:

- Where a BME Network does not exist, the Third Sector Assembly (or equivalent) must ensure its make-up fully represents the local VCS, and BME community organisations must in turn engage with the Third Sector Assembly as the best mechanism for getting their voices heard.

- Where a BME Network exists, communication mechanisms must be in place in order to feed information back and forth to the Third Sector Assembly (or equivalent). Third Sector Assemblies must also ensure they are accessible and inclusive.
- LSPs - Since in many areas LSPs are being re-structured or are in flux, it is important that BME (and wider VCS) representation is prioritised and LSPs take this opportunity to improve representation mechanisms.
- Networks and infrastructure support organisations should keep local organisations informed about changes to representation structures so that they can get involved and discuss issues at the right level.
- Refugee Community Organisations and representation - Since LSPs do not directly address a number of issues of relevance to refugee communities, Refugee Forums (or individual RCOs where no Refugee Forum exists) should look to maintain strong links with the following: Local Asylum Team; the local Multi-Agency Forums for new and emerging communities or refugees and migrants (which provides links with housing providers, ESOL providers etc). Refugee Forums should also look to participate in VCS led forums at the Greater Manchester level, e.g. MRSN's Refugee and Migrants Forum, which will allow them to represent the needs of their communities to statutory agencies such as UKBA.

#### 5.4 Compact:

The Compact is a set of principles which establishes a framework for better partnership working between the government and the voluntary and community sector, at both a national and local level. It also outlines a way of working that improves their relationship for mutual advantage. The Compact offers support and guidance on important issues such as protecting the independence of the voluntary and community sector, establishing ways to ensure that organisations are involved in the design and delivery of services and policies, and ensuring funding arrangements are established in the fairest way possible.

- Infrastructure support providers/ Third Sector Assemblies should look to promote the Compact more effectively, and raise awareness to all VCS groups about how it can be used.
- Infrastructure support providers, Third Sector Assemblies and VCS groups should actively use the Compact as a tool in negotiations with statutory sector partners to ensure greater Compact compliance in all areas of activity.

#### 5.5 Role of Greater Manchester BME Network

It is apparent from this mapping exercise that a sustainable Greater Manchester BME Network could play a key role in:



- Supporting and strengthening district level BME Networks by enabling them to access a broad range of knowledge and information resources, as well as opportunities for networking and partnership development.
- Enabling members to have a voice at a City-Region level.
- Acting as a mechanism to respond to the new economies of scale we are witnessing in public service delivery. For instance, initiatives such as the Work Programme are being delivered at a City-Region level, and a Greater Manchester wide network would give BME organisations a greater chance of accessing commissioning opportunities at this scale.
- Where district level BME Networks do not exist, a Greater Manchester wide Network could also act as a mechanism for filling the gap by allowing local BME organisations/ RCOs to participate in a wider forum and benefit from the networking and partnership opportunities this represents.

## 6. APPENDIX

### Contributors to district sections:

Greater Manchester – GMCVO, GMVSS  
Bolton – Bolton Equalities Centre, Bolton CVS  
Bury – Bury Third Sector Development Agency (B3SDA)  
Oldham – Voluntary Action Oldham, Oldham Council  
Manchester – Manchester BME Network, MCCR, MRSN  
Rochdale – CVS Rochdale, New & Emerging Communities Forum (RMBC)  
Salford – Salford CVS, Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum  
Stockport – Stockport Synergy  
Tameside – T3SC  
Trafford – Voice of BME Trafford, VCAT  
Wigan – Wigan Council, Wigan & Leigh CVS  
Greater Manchester – GMCVO (GMVSS)

### Current Network/Forum Contacts:

#### **BOLTON**

Bolton CVS:

Helen Tomlinson, Development Co-ordinator, Bolton CVS E: [helen@boltoncvcs.org.uk](mailto:helen@boltoncvcs.org.uk)  
T: 01204 546017

#### **BURY**

Chair of the forum is Anwar Haq, Project 29.

Secretariat and administration is provided by B3SDA E: [info@b3sda.org.uk](mailto:info@b3sda.org.uk) T: 0161 797 1968

#### **MANCHESTER**

Manchester BME Network:

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Atiha Chaudry (Chair, Manchester BME Network)

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Refugee & Migrants Forum:

Elinah Mugwagwa (Forum Development Worker, MRSN). E: [Forum@mrsn.org.uk](mailto:Forum@mrsn.org.uk), T: 0161 2028916.

#### **OLDHAM**

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Interfaith Forum: E: [oldham\\_interfaith@msn.com](mailto:oldham_interfaith@msn.com) T: 0161 6246733



## **ROCHDALE**

Rochdale BME Network:

Sarah Harper (Communication & Information Officer, Rochdale CVS)

E: s.harper@cvsr.org.uk, T: 01706 631291

Chair is Mohammed Parwez of Asian Leader

## **SALFORD**

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Wilson Nkurunziza (Chair, Salford Forum for Refugees and People Seeking Asylum), E: wilson@salfordrefugeeforum.org.uk

## **STOCKPORT**

The staff team for Stockport Anchorpoint is currently being recruited. Interim information and contact details can be found at:

<http://www.anchorpointstockport.org.uk/>

## **TAMESIDE**

Tameside BME Network & Women's BME Network:

Derin Adefajo (Policy & Participation Officer, Tameside 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Coalition (T3SC)) E: derin.adejajo@t3sc.org T: 0161 339 4985

Compact Officer E: ben.gilchrist@t3sc.org.

## **TRAFFORD**

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## **WIGAN**

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## **GREATER MANCHESTER**

Greater Manchester BME Network Project:

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Estelle Worthington (Project Officer, RCO's) E: eworthington@mccr.org.uk

Equalities & Human Rights Forum:

Chris Heard (VSS Manager) E: chris.heard@gmcvo.org.uk, T: 0161 277 1030



**Refugee & Migrants Forum (MRSN):**

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**Refugee Action (BASIS Project):**

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E: [FergalM@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:FergalM@refugee-action.org.uk), T: 0161 831 5460

**BME Women's Solidarity Forum (Oxfam):**

[info@womenssolidarityforum.co.uk](mailto:info@womenssolidarityforum.co.uk) – for general enquiries  
[coms@womenssolidarityforum.co.uk](mailto:coms@womenssolidarityforum.co.uk) – to become a member

**GMCVO Networks/Representation Work:**

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Nasir Hussain (Policy Officer, leads on Regeneration Network)

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Neil Walbran (Health Partnership Officer)

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## 7. FEEDBACK FORM

**Name:**

**Organisation:**

**Tel:**

**Email:**

**Address:**

**Is there any additional information that you feel should be included in the report?**

**Is there an update that you can provide for any of the information provided in the report i.e. situation in each district, funding, new projects etc.**

**Any other feedback?**

**Once completed please return to Greater Manchester BME Network team:**

**Email: [gmbmen@mccr.org.uk](mailto:gmbmen@mccr.org.uk)**

**Post to: 141-143 Princess Road, Manchester, M14 4RE**