



# RACE ON THE AGENDA

## **London Councils Phase Two Consultation: 31 - Undertake policy work and campaign / lobby for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Refugee and Migrant voluntary sector**

### **Introduction**

1. Race on the Agenda (ROTA) is a social policy think-tank that has been active since 1986. We work with London's Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities towards achieving social justice by the elimination of discrimination and promotion of human rights, diversity and equality of opportunity. We achieve these aims by informing London's strategic decision-makers about the issues affecting the BAME voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the communities it serves and by making government policy more accessible to London's BAME organisations. MiNet, the regional BAME network joined ROTA in 2002. Its focus is on strengthening the voice for London's BAME VCS in the development of regional policy.
2. ROTA uses the term BAME to refer to all groups who are discriminated against on the grounds of their race, culture, colour, nationality or religious practice. This definition includes but is not exclusive to those people of African, Asian, Caribbean, Irish, Jewish, Roma, South East Asian.
3. ROTA welcomes the opportunity to respond to London Councils Phase Two Consultation: 31 - Undertake policy work and campaign / lobby for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Refugee and Migrant voluntary sector. This submission draws on our experience working with BAME organisations, networks, policy makers and individuals. In addition, we have received contributions from The Asian Health Agency, the Black Neighbourhood Renewal and Regeneration Network (BNRRN), BME Community Care Forum - Newham, Croydon BME Forum, Olmec, Confederation of Indian Organisations, Organisation of Blind African Caribbeans, and Southall Community Alliance.

### **Do you consider that we have defined the best outcomes for the proposed service?**

4. The outcomes defined in section one of the draft service specification are very much needed for London BAME and Refugee and Migrant VCS. A report specifically on London's BAME Infrastructure by Janice Needham and Jean Barclay on behalf of ChangeUp in September 2004 noted significant gaps in infrastructure support for campaigning/influencing policy and representing communities.
5. We would suggest that BAME organisations need to engage with the Greater London Authority alongside the Greater London Assembly.

6. One member felt that outcome 2 could be broken down, so as to ensure areas could be delivered by different organisations with specific expertise in an area, such as health or regeneration. For example BNRRN carried out a research in 2006 on the needs of BAME VCS in LAA and LSP in all London boroughs
7. Another consultee was particularly pleased that there is a specific focus on disabled BAME people as a marginalised group, seeing this as potentially a significant development given the need to fill the gap left by the closure of Greater London Action on Disability.

**Do you consider that we are using the most appropriate data to show where need is located across London?**

8. The data used in the London Councils consultation document is useful and accurate in outlining some of the issues of inequality that are faced by London's BAME communities. They are also accurate and helpful in identifying where BAME communities are currently located across London.
9. ROTA would briefly add to the document's evidence of need that there are over 300 languages spoken in London's schools and that there are differences in educational achievement (with for example African Caribbean pupils having the lowest attainment of five or more GCSE grades A – C at 36% according to DfES). We also only have 18 % of our local councillors who are from BAME communities according to a London Councils 2004 survey.
10. There is a difficulty with making a direct correlation between numbers of BAME people in a specific borough and need. We would suggest the situation is complex. Different BAME communities face different issues of exclusion, as do equalities groups (such as women) within each ethnicity. For instance, according to the 2001 census 63% of Bangladeshi's and 57% of Black African's live in social housing. This compares with the 74% of Indians and 62% of White British who own their own homes.
11. At times the lack of BAME people in an area may in fact increase need. For instance in an area such as Barking & Dagenham where BNP councillors have been elected the 1.1% of the population from a BAME background may find it more difficult to tackle the issues of discrimination than if they had a larger BAME community around them.
12. It is also difficult to give a single figure to meet all needs. Some interventions may cost more than others. (For example investigating hate crime happening round the clock as compared to holding an information session on benefits law). Extras such as outreach work and translation also add to the costs of delivering services to those most marginalised in BAME communities.
13. There is the issue of high mobility levels in the capital as highlighted in London Councils recent report by Tony Travers at the London School of Economics. One group we consulted suggested that data sets on the mapping of communities in London could be done on a six monthly basis in order to have accurate and reliable data. This may prove too difficult and costly if one wished to ascertain and maintain detailed data across the

different ethnicities and the equalities groups within each ethnicity. It might also be difficult to collect data in all the different areas (e.g. in housing and health) where each ethnic group experiences different discrimination.

14. Due to the issues outlined above we would urge caution in using the population statistics at a borough level to define spend, unless frequent and accurate measurements can be taken. We would suggest that within current resources taking a London wide rather than local approach to measurement may give the statistics a greater degree of accuracy and make them more useful.
15. We agree with the consultation document that the BAME VCS is the best vehicle for encouraging the social inclusion and civic engagement of BAME communities. The ChangeUp BAME Infrastructure report we mentioned specifically noted that there is a need for and significant scope for development in the policy and representation role at a local and regional level.

**Do you consider that our proposed outcomes would support applicants to meet the needs of people in greatest need and would promote accessibility?**

16. The outcomes could support organisations to meet the needs of people most marginalised, if certain underlying issues are taken in to account.
17. As one of our respondents noted, there are BAME sub-regional networks being established who are looking to provide this voice rather than capacity building but need support to do so. The support is needed at local, sub-regional and regional level.
18. Another suggested that the research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is correct in its assumption that the BAME VCS is the vehicle through which this policy work can best be delivered. It will be helpful if the approach taken is to prioritise issues, like improving civic engagement, rather simply looking at 'BME matters' generally and thereby diluting the quality of the debate and subsequent work.
19. Policymaking that is not evidence-based or representative of the communities it aims to reach should be questionable. The London Councils consultation paper is accurate in saying that "The provision of second tier policy and voice services can reduce the extent of marginalisation and exclusion, and ensure that the voice, interests and needs of BAME communities/ people are taken into account".
20. At ROTA we engage with our members and the communities we aim to represent through events, consultation exercises and qualitative and quantitative research and we would recommend that while commissioning its services, the Councils ensures that BAME VCS infrastructure organisations funded also have a good record of consulting with their stakeholders or the ability to do so. Recently we carried out a consultation exercise with London's VCS on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. Over 150 organisations were involved in the event and/or responded to the consultation documents. Their views informed a paper with recommendations for the Commission and the VCS.

21. The consultation paper identified a number of areas of need to be addressed by the outcomes. In our experience, we believe that these correspond to the current priorities of the communities we serve. As it is important that the work commissioned has the greatest impact possible to the lives of the people it is aimed at, we would urge London Councils to keep a broad yet flexible approach acknowledging that change takes time, whilst adapting to key changes in society that impact on BAME Londoners. Political or media pressure (as for instance around gun and knife crime), can prevent a sensible delivery of services and skew funding and delivery.
22. One area that though is not explicitly mentioned in the consultation paper but that all respondents felt important is the need for London's VCS to work together. This is particularly true for BAME VCS organisations not only because there are limitations to how funding is prioritised and allocated across the sector, but also because it is through coordination and collaboration - at the local, sub-regional and regional level and between organisations with different specialisms, that the best outcomes are achieved. We have no wish to see repetition and duplication of work as the limited resources will not be used effectively while important policy and research needs will remain unaddressed. We would also expect London Councils to only support bodies able to work in partnership with mainstream VCS and policy makers, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for BAME Londoners through the BAME VCS.

#### Other issues:

23. Whilst we are aware that there are limited resources, all groups who responded felt that the resources London Councils were able to make available would not be adequate to cover all the outcomes to a sufficient depth.
24. ROTA would like to thank London Councils for the opportunity to respond to the London Councils Phase Two Consultation: 31 - Undertake policy work and campaign / lobby for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Refugee and Migrant voluntary sector, and we look forward to receiving feedback in due course.

For more information about this response please contact Dinah Cox: [dinah@rota.org.uk](mailto:dinah@rota.org.uk) 020 7729 1310

**ROTA, Unit 101, Cremer Business Centre, 37 Cremer Street, London, E2 8HD**

[www.rota.org.uk](http://www.rota.org.uk)

Registered Charity 1064975/0, Company Limited by Guarantee 3425664

ROTA is funded by the Big Boost Fund, Cabinet Office, Capacitybuilders, City Parochial Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, European Union, London Councils and the Safer London Foundation.