



ROTA and MiNet's PROPOSAL FOR THE LONDON EMPOWERMENT PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN 2009 - 2010

Nearly half of England's BAME population live in London. In some contexts interaction between communities is high. In others it is low. Unless decisive action is taken to promote positive interaction there is a danger that it will either not happen or that it will be a negative experience. Moreover, regional and local agencies need more than ever to be able to monitor what is happening in local communities. Information from national surveys or administrative data on service users or representation in formal civic life does not capture what is happening in communities that may be invisible or that may be distant from civic institutions

ROTA would suggest that the 'Supporting Local Action and Empowering Diversity' element of the Action Plan be strengthened and given substantial investment in order to identify and support local innovative approaches to BAME community empowerment. BAME communities are typically the most excluded and under-represented from democratic processes and structures as a direct consequence of the discrimination that they face. Mainstream services whilst widespread do not possess the expertise of the specialist organisations which exist in the BAME voluntary sector. These organisations cater to the needs of the disenfranchised sections of BAME communities and they should be supported and recognised for providing a service that is not available from mainstream services.

Another important factor for consideration is meaningful engagement, Local Area Agreements(LAA) and Local Strategic Partnerships(LSP) are key levers for the LEP to empower communities. Unfortunately, the first round did not consult with an adequate number of BAME organisations in relation to the size of the BAME population in London.

It is imperative for the LEP to influence and advocate for engagement with BAME communities and organisations to ensure that;

1. The voices of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised- and therefore the least empowered, in London are heard.
2. An evidence base is established which will then go on to inform how to engage and empower wider society as a whole.
3. Inequality London-wide is sufficiently addressed.

Race on the Agenda

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4. Commissioning takes into account and provides long term sustainable funding to carry out comprehensive research into the gaps in knowledge about the barriers to empowerment for certain BAME groups, for instance emerging communities, for which there is little and inadequate research.
5. An evidence base is established in relation to the BAME third sector around awareness/impact and influence over LAA's and LSP's and the need to capacity build the BAME third sector in this area- particularly in the current economic climate.
6. The evidence base should be collected using the expertise of known established infrastructure organisations such as ROTA and MiNet to ensure that the BAME communities by way of the BAME third sector are informed as to what is happening and how to exert influence.

As the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill placed a central government requirement on local authorities to 'inform, consult and involve' local people, it is imperative that this is done in a real and meaningful way in London, which means a focus on London's BAME communities in all aspects of the LEP Action Plan and why the 'Supporting Local Action and Empowering Diversity' is a crucial element to the success of the wider objectives of the LEP.

Another crucial element which must be taken into consideration by the LEP is the impact of funding difficulties of the BAME third sector and other specialised groups due to cuts in single group funding following the commission for integration and cohesion report and the havoc that this has wreaked

Finally, it is important that the LEP action plan is enforced as a bottom up rather than a top down initiative and that statutory sector agencies that sit on LEP support rather than dominate the VCS agenda

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