BMG Research Results

Mapping the Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary Sector in the East of England

Prepared for MENTER
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Because people matter.

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1 Background

BMG Research was commissioned in Winter 2003 to conduct a survey on behalf of MENTER, the regional network for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community and voluntary organisations in the East of England.

MENTER commissioned this research as initial evidence shows that BME groups in the East of England often lack essential funds and support, with a view to helping MENTER to set up a better programme of support as well as to campaign more effectively to see that the needs of the BME sector are addressed.

The survey was designed to seek stakeholders' opinions and perceptions on a number of topics and issues, as well as to garner profile information on the various organisation that make up the sector.

397 organisations were initially mailed the questionnaire from a database provided by MENTER, and all those who had not responded within 4 weeks were sent a reminder questionnaire. In all, 90 organisations responded, which represents a response rate of 23%

2 Profile of Organisations

Staff, Trustees and Members

A quarter of respondent organisations have no trustees (23%), whilst a similar proportion have five or fewer (26%), and 23% have between 6 and 10. The most trustees any respondent organisation has is 35. MENTER will need to do more research to see what groups understand by the word "trustee" – to some BME community groups the word is only used if the organisation is a registered charity.

More than two-fifths of respondent organisations have no paid staff (44%). A third have five or fewer (33%), whilst 10% have between 6 and 10 and another 10% have 11 or more.

Given the high proportion of respondent organisations without paid staff, it is not surprising to find only one in ten organisations without unpaid voluntary workers (11%). One in three (30%) have five volunteers or fewer, whilst another one in four (24%) have between six and ten. Only one organisation has more than 50 volunteers (200).

The overall picture of the sector is therefore one of many small organisations operating with few staff, with a bias towards unpaid voluntary staff.

Three-quarters of respondent organisations are membership organisations. 27% of these have fewer than 50 members, whilst 38% have more than 100, the largest of these has 1340 although most have fewer than 500.

Most organisations have a predominant group among their trustees – only 11% have no majority group (although 24% did not provide an answer to this question). Half of the organisations (50%) have a majority of their trustees drawn from people aged 41-64, whilst a quarter (24%) have trustees predominantly aged over 65. 31% have a majority of their trustees aged between 25 and 40. 34% of organisations have a male majority among their trustees, whilst 31% have a female majority.

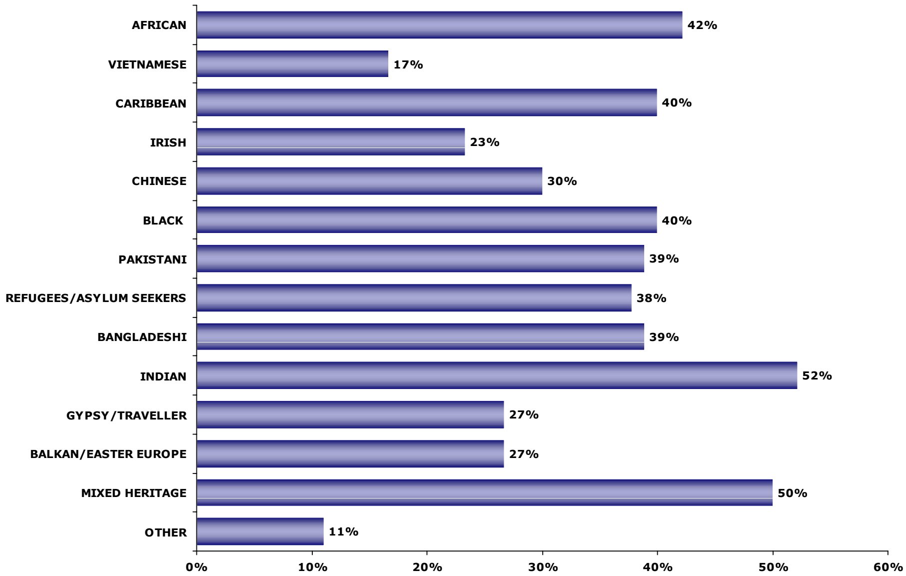
In terms of their membership, young people form a key group – 21% of organisations have a majority of their members drawn from the under 25 age group, and 44% have a majority between 25 and 40. Approaching half of the organisations (46%) have a female majority among their membership, compared with 36% with a male majority.

Beneficiaries and Services

The following figure shows the beneficiary groups supported by the respondent organisations. It suggests a broad coverage of the sector within the region.

Figure 1

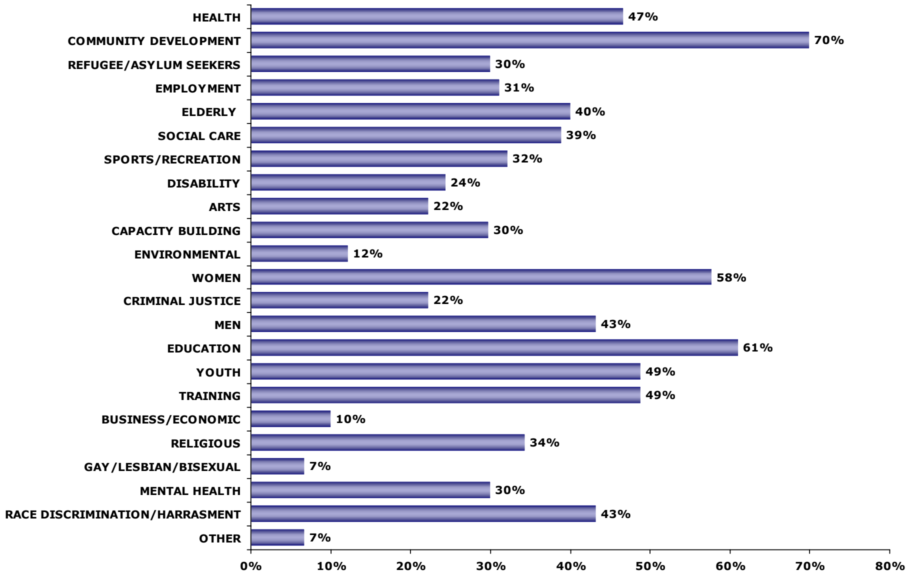
MAIN BENEFICIARIES OF THE RESPONDENT'S ORGANISATION (ALL RESPONDENTS)



Respondent organisations were also asked to identify what types of services they provide or which groups they support. The figure below shows the spread of services on offer.

Figure 2

SERVICES PROVIDED AND GROUPS SUPPORTED BY THE RESPONDENT ORGANISATIONS
(ALL RESPONDENTS)



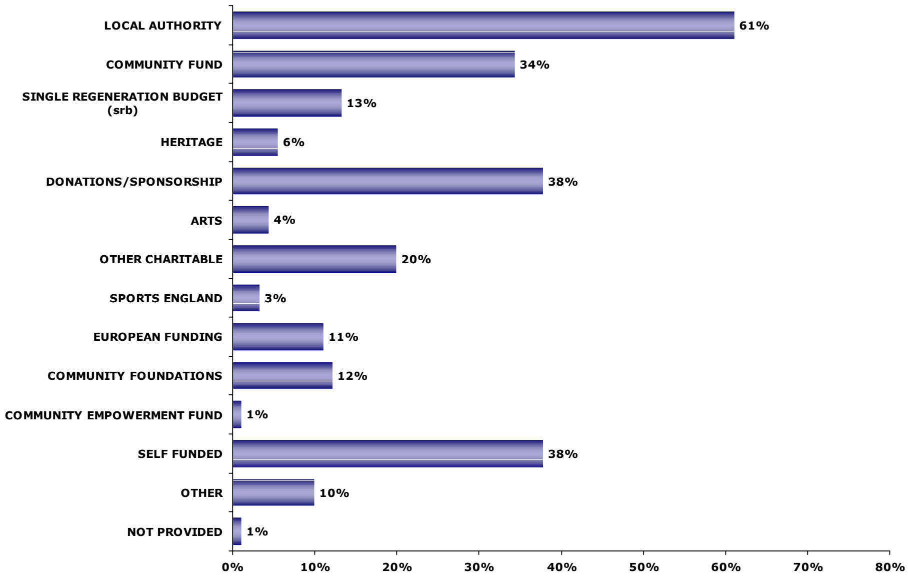
Funding and Assets

9% of organisations have an annual income of less than £1000, and another 16% have an income less than £5000pa. 30% have an income between £5000 and £50,000pa and 24% have an income higher than this. 19% of organisations failed to provide an answer to this question.

The following figure shows the sources from which organisations are receiving funding. It is clear that there is a strong dependence on funding from local authorities.

Figure 3

SOURCES FROM WHICH THE ORGANISATIONS RECEIVE FUNDING
(ALL RESPONDENTS)



When asked to rate their understanding of the way that the public sector funds and supports the voluntary sector, half of the respondents said they understand this reasonably well (52%), whilst another 12% understand it very well. Nonetheless, 28% say they don't understand the process very well, and 1% don't understand it at all well.

Respondents who said they didn't understand the processes for public sector funding were asked what would help them with this. Two-fifths (46%) said they would like more information about funding, whilst a select few highlighted more specific issues relating to the availability of funding for their type of organisation or the group they support.

60% of respondent organisations have their own premises, most of which are rented (76%). The largest proportion of those that don't have their own premises operate from community members' private homes (39%) while a further 19% use Council premises and 14% use community centres or halls.

Organisation Status

Organisations were asked from a list, what the legal status of their organisation is. 39% of respondent organisations are a community group or voluntary organisation with no other legal status. A third are registered charities (37%), whilst another 13% are limited companies with a registered charity status. Only 2% are limited companies without charity status.

A quarter of the respondent organisations have been in operation for five years or less (27%), and a similar proportion of organisations have been in operation for between 6 and 10 years (24%). The oldest organisation surveyed has been operating for 113 years, but most have been so for less than 50 years.

3 Sector Support

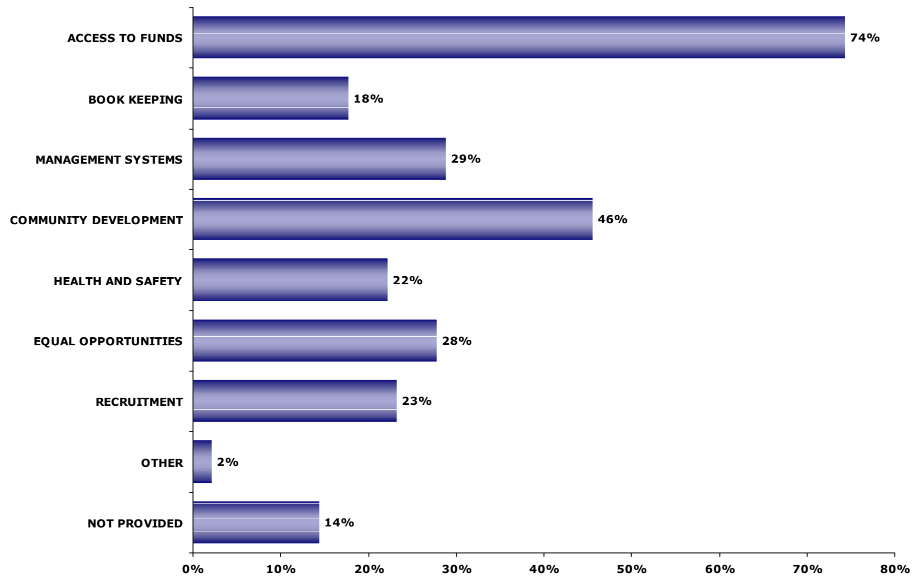
More than half of the respondent organisations have received information or help from the Council for Voluntary Services (57%); even more have had this from the Local Authority (66%) and a further 44% from Racial Equality Council. Only 11% of respondent organisations have not received any information or help.

35% of respondents who received help or information from these bodies found it to be very helpful, and a further 55% found it fairly helpful. Only 6% said the help or information they received was not helpful.

Thinking about the aspects of their operation about which they would like further information to help their organisation develop, the most commonly cited issue was funding. This and the other priorities for respondent organisations are shown in the figure below.

Figure 4

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THE RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO HELP THEIR ORGANISATION DEVELOP
(ALL RESPONDENTS)



Two-thirds of respondents (66%) are aware of Local Strategic Partnership development in their area. The majority of these have had some involvement, but not a lot (58%). 18% have had a lot of involvement.

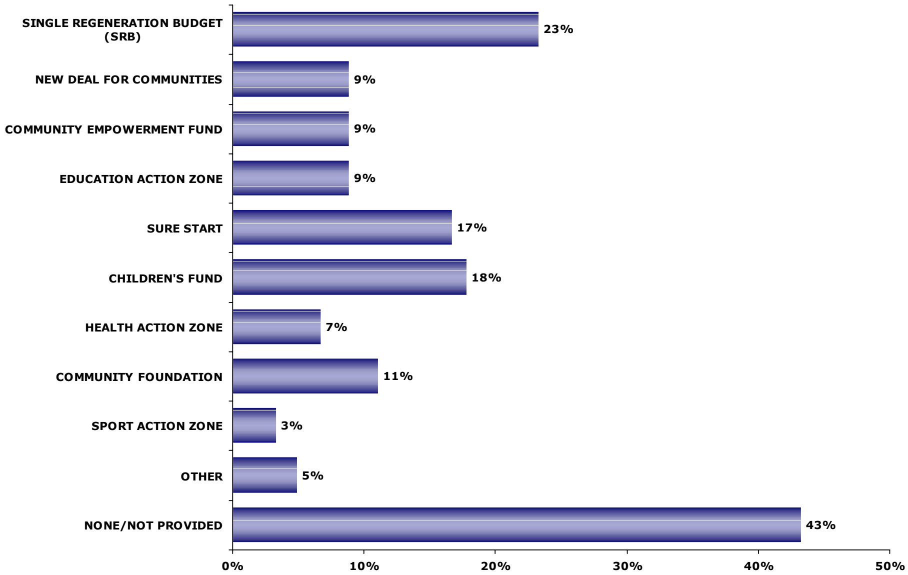
Just over half (56%) are aware of the development of community strategies. Where they are aware, 60% have had some involvement, but not a lot. 16% of respondents have had a lot of involvement with the development of community strategies.

Again, just over a half of respondents are aware of the development of BME Compacts (53%). 58% of these have had limited involvement with the development, whilst 13% have had a lot of involvement.

The following figure shows the local programmes, partnerships and initiatives in which the respondent organisations are involved. Just over half are involved in any of the programmes.

Figure 5

LOCAL PROGRAMMES, PARTNERSHIPS OR INITIATIVE IN WHICH THE RESPONDENT'S ORGANISATION IS INVOLVED
(ALL RESPONDENTS)



Planning for the Future

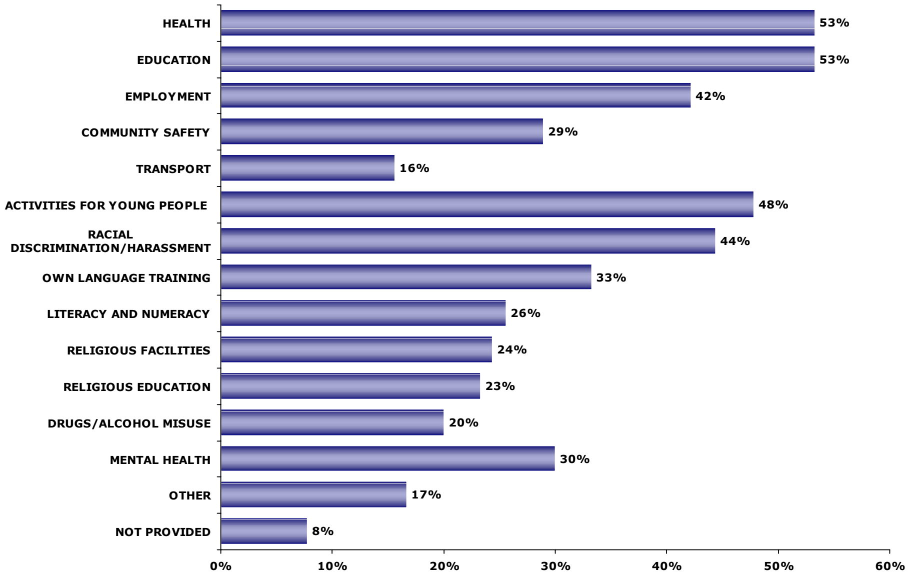
Half of the respondent organisations (52%) have a business plan which lays out the organisation's future activities. In the majority of these cases (70%) the plan covers the next 3 years or less, and a further 15% stretch to 5 years.

In almost all cases the plan covers the way in which the organisation intends to communicate with their community (94%) and the project work which they intend to carry out within their community (89%).

Issues presently facing respondents' communities are quite varied and obviously dependent on the community the organisations support. What is noteworthy however is that a large proportion of organisations provided a large number of issues here suggesting the problems facing communities are manifold and potentially interrelated.

Figure 6

MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES PRESENTLY AFFECTING THE RESPONDENTS' COMMUNITIES (ALL RESPONDENTS)

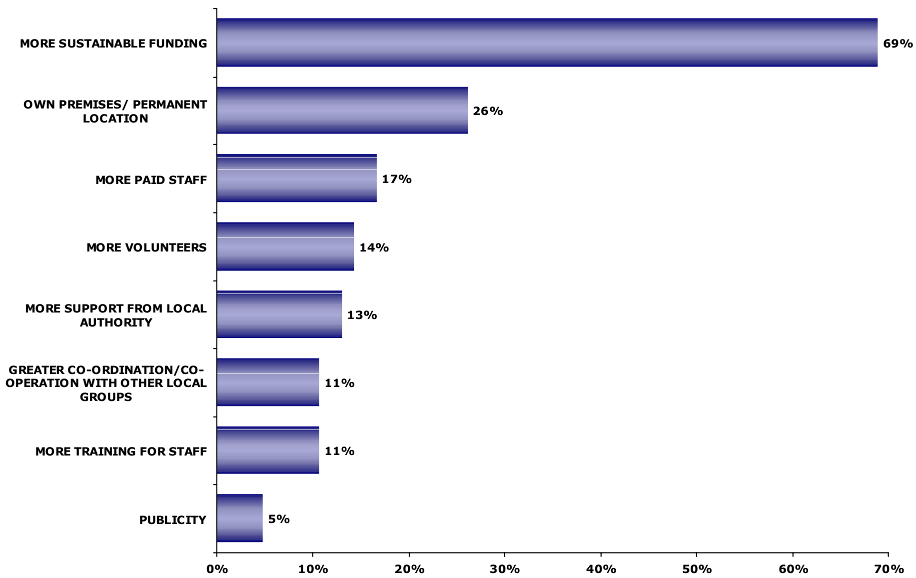


% of respondents say that their organisation has not been consulted on any issues of public service delivery in the past year. Those that have are most likely to have been consulted by the NHS (14%), police (11%) or the Local Authority (10%).

The things that would enable organisations to carry out their work more effectively are outlined in the figure below.

Figure 7

WHAT WOULD HELP THE ORGANISATION TO CARRY OUT ITS WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY (ALL RESPONDENTS)



The majority of organisations feel that their staff are trained to a satisfactory level (56%), but 41% do not agree. Where shortfalls are identified, 41 feel their staff need more knowledge of fund raising or accessing finance.