



**BUILDING A THRIVING
BME THIRD SECTOR**
DECLARATION OF INTENT

Voice4Change England

A NATIONAL VOICE FOR THE BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC THIRD SECTOR

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THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Inception

A national summit of over 40 national, regional and local Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) organisations was held in London in October 2005. The overwhelming conclusion of the day was that the BME Third Sector needed a national voice to shape Government policy-making.

Government responded to this call with financial support. The vision of a co-ordinated national policy voice for Third Sector BME groups is now being realised.

Declaration of intent

As it approaches its first anniversary as a funded organisation, Voice4Change England has produced this declaration as a clear statement of strategic direction for the next two years.

In keeping with Voice4Change England's ethos the declaration is the result of a collaborative and dynamic process involving workshops, meetings, briefings and interviews with Voice4Change England partners and other key stakeholders. The declaration is also informed by Voice4Change England's 'Bridge the Gap: What is known about the BME Third Sector', a baseline mapping of the BME Third Sector.

Acknowledgements

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Finally, thanks go to Voice4Change England partners (see back page) for their vision and drive. Particular mention should be made of MENTER for acting as accountable body for Voice4Change England and Black Training and Enterprise Group for its role as employing organisation.

FOREWORD

The Government has made considerable efforts to achieve equal opportunities for all. However, ongoing disparities remain for BME people in terms of health, housing, education, employment, wages and skills. There is growing recognition that the next generation of policy initiatives require the input of a strong and coherent voice for the BME Third Sector.

This voice needs to be representative of the diversity of BME interests and communities; led by and accountable to the BME Third Sector; and, above all, effective in achieving improved outcomes for BME communities.

This is the inspiration behind Voice4Change England.

Voice4Change England arrives in a period of intensive public policy development on Third Sector issues generally and equalities and community cohesion in particular.

The Government's Third Sector Review has set out its vision of a Third Sector at the heart of society. At the same time the debate on equality and cohesion is being reframed by new institutions such as the Commission for Equality and Human Rights and the Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

These developments are welcome. However, care must be taken not to sideline the good work already carried out by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and organisations to combat inequality and social fragmentation.

Meaningful social cohesion is possible only when allied with progress towards equality – the purpose of much of the BME Third Sector. Without these efforts, social immobility, lack of opportunity and isolation go unchecked and erode common ground in society. BME Third Sector groups and organisations therefore make a vital contribution to UK social and economic well-being.

The BME Third Sector is diverse and becoming more so, e.g. with the arrival of new migrants. It includes non-constituted neighbourhood groups through to housing associations with property portfolios worth millions of pounds.


The BME Third Sector therefore does not have one voice to be represented but many. With 18 national, regional and local partners, Voice4Change is well placed to ensure that this diversity is both reflected and co-ordinated.

By shaping the future through partnership, Voice4Change England represents a shift in the way that the BME Third Sector operates. Government too is signalling its desire for change. I am confident that both sides can rise to the challenges ahead.

A thriving BME Third Sector and a more equal and cohesive society is a long term goal. This declaration sets out Voice4Change England's contribution. This declaration is also a call to action for other stakeholders to join Voice4Change England in its work.

I urge you to respond to the call.

Caryl Agard OBE

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, somewhat abstract scribble followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

**Chair
Voice4Change England**

ABOUT VOICE4CHANGE ENGLAND

Voice4Change England is a national policy body dedicated to strengthening the BME Third Sector as a positive force for change. It provides a co-ordinated policy voice for BME groups and organisations and supports them to thrive.

As Voice4Change England develops it will:

- Shape national policy development and decision making;
- Participate in the planning and management of Third Sector initiatives;
- Seek resources and build capacity to strengthen the BME Third Sector.

Voice4Change England's structure

Voice4Change England is unique in design. Its foundation is a partnership of 18 organisations, networks and initiatives with a track record of delivering successful outcomes for BME communities and beyond. Voice4Change England builds on these achievements through joint working combined with accountable structures and governance arrangements.

The Voice4Change England Partnership:

- Reaches into a wider network of more than 5,700 BME Third Sector groups and organisations;
- Includes BME infrastructure organisations that provide support services such as advice and advocacy;
- Covers seven of the nine English regions as well as leading national organisations;
- Operates within a memorandum of agreement to support a healthy partnership built on fairness, transparency, integrity and a can-do approach.

The new West Midlands Race Equality Advisory Board has accepted the invitation to join the Partnership. However, there is currently no regional BME infrastructure organisation in the South East of England. Voice4Change England will work collaboratively with others to fill this gap.

Voice4Change England has a staff team of four. They provide Voice4Change England with a vital resource to drive through on its commitments and work programme. The full time staff team is: Vandna Gohil (Director); Martin Ball (Head of Campaigns); Arjumand Kazmi (Head of Policy); and Bola Adeneye (Administrator).

"Through partnership we reach parts other BME Third Sector groups can't."

Vandna Gohil, Director,
Voice4Change England

VOICE4CHANGE ENGLAND'S STRATEGIC GOALS

Voice4Change England emphasises clarity of purpose. This allows it to make the most effective use of its resources.

Voice4Change England focuses on generic issues that affect the ability of the BME Third Sector to thrive. Voice4Change England's generic remit complements its national partners which have specific expertise in health, education, economic development, regeneration, social enterprise and communities of interest.

BME Third Sector focus

Voice4Change England is a BME-led national Third Sector initiative.

Voice4Change England defines the term BME inclusively to include all those not identifying as 'White British'.

Voice4Change England also uses a broad definition of the Third Sector. It includes 'community groups, voluntary organisations, faith and equalities groups, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives, mutuals and housing associations.'¹

A national partnership that can effectively reach the BME sector

Paul Harris, One NorthWest

"Voice4Change England is about achieving recognition and real opportunities for BME Third Sector organisations and communities."

Shakila Sharif, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action

¹Department for Communities and Local Government (June 2007) Third Sector Strategy for Communities and Local Government; Discussion paper

Voice4Change England organises its priorities into four strategic goals.



1 Improving BME Third Sector influence

Enhancing access to decision-makers and influencers.

For example:

- Working with other organisations to enable the creation of a BME Third Sector All Party Parliamentary Group;
- Establishing networks and alliances with other influencers for mutual learning and to achieve shared goals.

2 Enhancing BME Third Sector impacts

Enabling the BME Third Sector to strengthen performance, evaluate and demonstrate its achievements.

This includes:

- Assembling and disseminating data on BME Third Sector achievements;
- Supporting appropriate regional structures that maintain and develop BME Third Sector infrastructure and front line organisations.

3 Resourcing the BME Third Sector

Securing appropriate funding, skills and inputs for the BME Third Sector.

For instance by:

- Developing funder awareness of the diversity of the BME Third Sector;
- Securing appropriate resources to enable effective performance and reduce counter-productive competition within the BME Third Sector.

4 Shaping the BME debate

Providing BME Third Sector perspectives on issues that shape society.

This includes:

- Emphasising the role of equality alongside integration and cohesion;
- Ensuring that the needs of organisations with a single community focus are met.

These strategic goals are dynamic. They will evolve over time to reflect feedback from the wider BME Third Sector and developments in policy.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Voice4Change England has already undertaken a series of strategic activities.

BME Third Sector intelligence

Voice4Change England has mapped the BME Third Sector. Initial findings show that the BME Third Sector is much larger and more active than previously estimated. It is, however, often disconnected from decision making and in need of investment to fully engage in policy development.

Consultation responses

The Voice4Change England Partnership has collaboratively produced responses to Government policy consultations, i.e. on the Community Assets Fund, The Compact Business Plan, Effective Consultation and the Department for Communities and Local Government's Third Sector Strategy.

Voice4Change England partners are also playing a lead role to ensure that BME groups do not lose out from single community funding proposals from the Commission for Integration and Cohesion.

Strengthening the BME Third Sector

Voice4Change England reaches out to the BME Third Sector. It held its first BME Third Sector regional road show in Bristol in June 2007 to develop knowledge and stimulate debate on proposed health and local government reforms.

Other issues

Voice4Change England, for reasons of principle and practicality, will apply criteria to decide on the issues it deals with. Voice4Change England will avoid duplication and draw on other credible expertise inside or outside the Partnership.

Where Voice4Change England makes a strategic choice not to intervene in an issue it may be constructive in other ways, such as:

- Referring or deferring to a partner organisation, e.g. Black Training and Enterprise Group on employment or training related topics;
- Referring or deferring to a non-partner organisation, e.g. the Muslim Council of Britain on specific Islamic issues and other relevant faith groups;
- Endorsing the position of another organisation, e.g. NCVO on charity reform.

Voice4Change England therefore works collaboratively with other BME and non-BME groups and organisations.

"A thriving BME Third sector and prosperous BME communities go hand in hand."

Rupert Daniel, Black South West Network

HOW VOICE4CHANGE ENGLAND WORKS

Voice4Change England will work towards its strategic goals through three main interventions.

1. Voice

Voice4Change England will represent and reflect the interests of BME Third Sector groups and organisations. It will seek influence through campaigning, advocacy, policy development and research.

Voice4Change England will:

- Work proactively with decision-makers at all levels and other influencers, such as research bodies and think tanks to develop a more informed perspective on the BME Third Sector;
- Respond to government policy consultations where these impact on the BME Third Sector;
- Operate in a solutions-focussed manner, for example, where Voice4Change England objects to a Government proposal, it will clearly state the reasons for its position and suggest a way forward where appropriate;
- Develop its mapping research into a robust evidence base on the role and state of the BME Third Sector;
- Provide leadership on important and challenging issues that face the BME Third Sector, such as the sustainability of BME groups and organisations.

2. Engaging the local, regional and national BME Third Sector

Voice4Change England will develop broader and deeper links to the wider BME Third Sector to ensure that its voice is authentic.

Voice4Change England will engage the BME Third Sector through:

- The extensive member networks of Voice4Change England partners and a new Voice4Change England supporter/member base;
- Practical involvement tools such as web and email surveys;
- Events – in particular by hosting an annual high profile gathering of the BME Third Sector as a forum for celebration, networking and innovation.

3. Supporting the BME Third Sector

Voice4Change England will strive to create a positive environment for the BME Third Sector and provide targeted support services.

Voice4Change England will complement support services already available to the BME Third Sector with targeted:

- Advice and information services such as providing policy digests and research findings;
- Support and development services e.g. through networking and project collaboration opportunities;
- Troubleshooting, for instance playing a constructive role where strategic BME Third Sector groups and organisations are under threat.

“Voice4Change England brings diverse voices together on one platform.”

Tanwir Rauf, Community Development Exchange

WHO VOICE4CHANGE ENGLAND WORKS WITH

Voice4Change England has a clear action plan with three main constituencies.

For decision makers, funders and other influencers

Voice4Change England will:

- Promote broader understanding of the scope, impacts and perspectives of the BME Third Sector;
- Work with funders to boost resources available to the BME Third Sector;
- Campaign for appropriate structures to support BME infrastructure organisations that sustain and develop the BME Third Sector.

For the BME Third Sector

Voice4Change England will:

- Use existing and create new engagement opportunities to reach BME Third Sector groups and organisations;
- Provide targeted support services to complement those on offer from Voice4Change England partners and others;
- Keep the BME Third Sector and other stakeholders up to date with Voice4Change England's progress.

For Voice4Change England itself

Voice4Change England will:

- Extend the Voice4Change England Partnership to cover all nine English regions;
- Establish a member/supporter base;
- Develop plans for Voice4Change England to become an independent organisation;
- Continue to invest in good governance and leadership;
- Demonstrate exemplary practice in how Voice4Change England conducts its internal and external relationships.

"Voice4Change England will influence the future in a spirit of partnership."

Buddhev Pandya MBE, Confederation of Indian Organisations

"Voice4Change England is an example of shared vision and shared responsibilities."

Naheed Arshad-Mather MBE, Yorkshire and Humber BME Regional Panel

A FINAL WORD

Voice4Change England is designed to be different.

This declaration marks the next stage in its journey. Voice4Change England's destination cannot be reached alone and it will develop alliances and work in an open and constructive manner to make progress.

Voice4Change England invites full participation from all those that share its vision of a thriving BME Third Sector as a positive force for change.

**Voice4Change
England aims to improve
the lives of BME people
by strengthening the
voice of the BME
Third Sector**

Jeremy Crook OBE, BTEG

**Voice4Change
England is a vehicle for
raising the profile and
validity of the BME
Third Sector**

Abdul Khan, BECON

PARTNER AND CONTACT DETAILS

The Partnership

The Voice4Change England Partnership is made up of the following 18 organisations, initiatives and networks.

- BECON (North East BME Network)
- Black Development Agency
- Black South West Network
- Black Training and Enterprise Group
- Community Development Exchange
- Confederation of Indian Organisations
- Connections for Development
- Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations
- Ethnic Business Development Corporation
- FATIMA Women's Network
- MENTER (East of England BME Network)
- MiNET (London BME Network)
- One North West (North West BME Network)
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
- The Pillar Consortium
- The Social Business Company
- Voice East Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humber BME Regional Panel

Links to partner websites are available through Voice4Change England's website:
www.voice4change-england.co.uk



Contact us

To find out more about Voice4Change England or to become a Voice4Change England member or supporter please contact us.

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