



Race Equality Network Annual Report

1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At Race Equality Network (REN), we believe that Bradford District can take a strategic approach to eradicating racism and inequities faced by Global Majority communities at all levels, through decision-making, public service and facilitating a delivery programme that is inclusive of community engagement, collaboration and partnerships. It is a model that should be core to the district's growth and prosperity. Over the past year, REN has successfully implemented this model by working collaboratively with key stakeholders such as Bradford Metropolitan Council, the West Yorkshire ICB other VCS infrastructure organisations, to build capacity of our communities in Bradford District to achieve equity on a day-to-day basis.

I am pleased to say that with a strong Board of Directors and a skilled staff team with Humma at the helm we have made enormous strides during the last year. We have secured significant amounts of funding and have embarked upon an ambitious programme to transform the organisation and to ensure we are able to fulfil REN objectives particularly in combatting race inequality. What is noteworthy is the funding we have received from Esmee Fairbairn which will allow REN to create a national profile. That work is underway, and it marks an exciting time for REN to be able to work towards national recognition and to influence agencies at the regional and national level. I look forward to progressing this piece of work alongside the many other initiatives we are undertaking. My sincere thanks to the Directors, to Humma our Executive Director, the staff team and the many volunteers who have done extraordinary work to get us to where we are.



Yusuf Karolia
REN Chair



Humma Nizami
Executive Director

In the time of adversity and uncertainty for the voluntary and community sector, we face many challenges to grow, and the challenge to harness our energy and inspire people for a fairer society and racial justice, are what we consider to be the important factors of REN's existence. REN has a track record of successfully engaging in racial justice and racial inequality work by pushing ourselves to be at the forefront of addressing racism and its impact on our communities.

REN is the strategic lead for the Global Majority led VCSE sector who work tirelessly to support ethnically diverse, marginalised and seldom heard communities across Bradford district and Craven. We represent our membership of over 80 grass roots organisation's by amplifying their voices through various system wide boards including the Bradford District & Craven's Health & Wellbeing Board, West Yorkshire ICB's Community Voices Panel, Bradford District's Systems Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, Reducing Inequalities Alliance and the Root Out Racism Race Equality Board.

To develop our work further, we need to continue to work effectively with our members, partners, allies and stakeholders and use opportunities and platforms to operate strategically to influence our work where possible. Through passion, strong belief, and the desire to right a wrong which are the founding motivations of REN, I am so proud of all that the team has achieved in the last year despite the challenges. Our success and growth have been tough but achievable through the strategic direction and leadership from our chair Yusuf Karolia and all the trustees, and the dedication of a highly skilled staff team. Our achievements over the past year would not have been possible without the 3-year funding we received from Esmee Fairbairn, which has enabled us to develop our capacity by recruiting two Programme Development Officers.

I look forward to building on our success in the year ahead including developing an Anti-Racist Strategy for Bradford District and Craven and building strong relationships with our regional, national and international partners so we can collectively continue to make a crucial difference to tackle racism, inequalities and inequity and improve the lives and wellbeing of our diverse population.

ABOUT US

Race Equality Network (REN) is a registered charity and Infrastructure organisation that provides support to over 60 grass roots Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups and organisations that work primarily with ethnically diverse communities in Bradford District and Craven. REN champions race equality at a grassroots and strategic level to ensure that services such as education, employment, health, social care, housing, training and volunteering are inclusive and accessible to all communities. We promote equality and inclusion through providing a range of services including advice and support to our members, EDI training, co-production, networking, developing partnerships with the public sector and so much more.

OUR MISSION

"To build a strong network of organisations and individuals that work together to diversify and strengthen the voluntary and community sector and work towards achieving equitable outcomes for all communities"

OUR OBJECTIVES

- To promote equality and inclusion
- To unify communities
- To celebrate diversity
- To foster and promote good community relations

OUR APPROACH

We strive to work in collaboration and in partnership with our members, partners and stakeholders to ensure that equality, equity, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of service delivery and development.

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR: OUR IMPACT

VCS INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

In January this year, Bradford Council announced significant cuts to council services due to national austerity measures, inflation and increased demand. The impact of the budget cuts included an increase in council and cuts in funding to libraries, leisure services and the VCSE infrastructure support. Since these cuts were announced, REN's Executive Director has been working closely with other Infrastructure leaders including VCS Alliance, CNet, Participate, Hale and Community Action Bradford & District (CABAD), to review and develop the new service specification which aims to support communities. The VCSE infrastructure organisations will work collaboratively to deliver the Health and Care Partnership's vision to keep people 'happy, healthy and at home'.

The new contract will start on 1st July 2024 and through taking a data-driven, continuous-learning and asset-based approach, these VCSE infrastructure organisations will deliver opportunities for people to take control of their own health and wellbeing, and to contribute to the partnership's insight and intelligence about the communities we serve. REN will play a key role in ensuring there is accountability across the three main elements of the new Infrastructure Support Programme including:

- Strengthening the Sector - support to medium sized VCS organisations to strengthen their systems and processes in supporting their communities around statutory health and care support.
- Voice of Citizens - supporting existing VCSE anchor organisations to develop a more coordinated, effective and targeted approach to citizen and VCSE sector voice
- Targeted VCSE voice and influence - paying advocates from across the VCSE sector to co-design and support delivery of various workstreams such as Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities and Children, Young People and Families.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME

Bradford West has the highest deprivation level of all the Community Partnerships within Bradford District & Craven. REN are working in partnership with Reducing Inequalities Alliance (RIA) to deliver the health champions project and have secured the Together 4 Health CP4 Core20Plus5 funding which aims to support interventions aimed at reducing health inequalities and improve health outcomes for ethnically diverse communities living in Together 4 Health Ward priority areas including City, Manningham, Little Horton and Toller.

Through the funding received we have commissioned 4 members organisations working within the Manningham, City and Little Horton and Toller wards to recruit health champions. In order to ensure we meet the needs of those communities impacted based on ethnicity data received from RIA, we have recruited Health Champions from these communities who are being trained on the impact of chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and hypertension in order for champions to engage with their own communities to improve health literacy. The four organisations commissioned by REN include BYO, Grange Interlink, Girlington Centre and European Drom CIC.

RESEARCH CHAMPIONS: HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME (HPOC).

Race Equality Network worked in partnership with VCS Alliance and WY Integrated Care Board (ICB) Research & Development team to recruit and support 3 paid research champions from the Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi community. The role of the Research Champions was to strengthen and develop engagement within research amongst those from ethnically diverse and underserved communities. Champions were trained on research techniques to help spread the word about the impact of taking part in research studies such as BaBi for expectant mums and genetics and health, and the difference engagement with research can make to their own lives and that of their communities. Researchers also helped health and care professionals and systems understand patient experience of research and build mechanisms that support longer term dialogue around health research and lived experience of underserved communities accessing health systems.

REN MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT

In May 2023, we launched our members' meetings which are held bi-monthly to bring our members together and discuss any issues their communities are facing around racism and inequality. Our members meetings are really well attended as we provide a safe space for grassroots organisations to build their capacity, develop relationships with other VCS groups, organisations and develop partnerships to submit joint funding bids which will enable them to develop and strengthen their work streams in order to support their own communities. We invite key stakeholders to meetings as it gives our members an opportunity to learn about the various programmes and services being delivered to support Global Majority communities across our district, to utilise resources and avoid duplication. Stakeholders that have attended our members meetings include Bradford 2025, VCS Alliance, CABAD, Impact Hub Bradford and the Reducing Inequalities Alliance team.

LOCAL ACCESS PROGRAMME

Our Executive Director, Humma sits on the board of the Local Access Bradford District (LABD) which aims to support REN member organisations that have investable ideas for them to move along the pathway of social investment. Due to the lack of understanding and awareness about social investment opportunities for VCS organisations, REN are working closely with the delivery partners, Impact Hub Bradford and Airedale Enterprise Services, to build a pathway for them to support REN members explore and take up social investment opportunities. Since the programme started, three of our member organisations have been supported through the LABD programme and we hope that more of our members are supported in the future.

VCSE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

We have been working in partnership with VCSE leaders to help shape Bradford Council's Adult Social Care's 5-year commissioning strategy for the VCSE Sector. The overall ambition of this piece of work is to support a sustainable and diverse local VCSE sector that works in partnership with the statutory sector to support Bradford residents to be happy, healthy and at home, to create a place where people have choices about their health and wellbeing, and to ensure there is equity throughout the council's commissioning processes. Our Executive Director meets with commissioners and other VCSE leads regularly to ensure commissioning processes and policies are fair, equitable and transparent.

EDI TRAINING

Over the past year, REN have successfully trained over 800 staff from a range of sectors and backgrounds around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We have worked closely with EDI training specialists to develop three new training programmes including Power and Belonging, Black Identity within Britain and Decolonising the Curriculum. Some examples of our training include:

- 33 senior leaders and managers from across the council, VCSE and health and care were trained on Power and Belonging.
- 100 staff from Bradford Council trained on Black Identity Within Britain as a part of the RESPECT Allyship Programme during Race Equality Week.
- 10 staff from Staying Put were trained on Anti-Racism.
- 15 educators were trained from Bradford College around Decolonising the Curriculum, which a programme we are developing further.
- 45 researchers from the National Institute for Health & Care Research (NIHR) trained on Cultural Competency
- 12 researchers from Ethnic Minority Research Institute (EMRI) trained on Cultural Competency: Training the Trainer. Due to the increase in demand, we hope to develop and deliver more EDI training programmes in the coming year.

ROOT OUT RACISM (ROR)

Over the past year, we have been working with a number of EDI leads to mobilise Phase Two of the Root Out Racism (ROR) movement. The purpose of ROR is to strive for inclusion and support the system to achieve fair race equality outcomes for everyone across the public sector in West Yorkshire. The intention of ROR is to reboot the ambition and commitment to a shared programme that drives out racism. It is not designed to replace any existing statutory duties and reporting arrangements, instead it will complement or strengthen action in supporting these duties. The ROR Advisory Board are working with systems leaders to provide technical expertise, constructive curiosity and a robust challenge to accelerate the pace and scale of ambition to drive out racism across all structures. Through the strategic direction and leadership by Ali Jan Haider at West Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS), who has now sadly retired, the advisory board has a sharp focus on raising the profile of race equality and to promote a culture of anti-racism across Bradford district and Craven. The ROR workstream is a key focus for REN going forward as we are leading on two workstreams within the programme including, Tackling Racism in Maternity and Developing an Anti-Racism Strategy for Bradford district and Craven.

WEST YORKSHIRE HEALTH & CARE COMMUNITY VOICES PANEL

REN have continued to feed into the steering group for the West Yorkshire Health and Care Community Voices Panel in order to amplify the voices of grass roots communities at a regional level across West Yorkshire. In April 2023, Kim Shutler through her new role as West Yorkshire VCSE lead submitted a paper to the WY Integrated Care Board (ICB) highlighting the important role that the VCSE sector plays when it comes to reducing health inequalities and improve population health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities across the region. Following on from the ICB Paper, funding of £1.1m was allocated to the VCSE across West Yorkshire, with a particular focus on tackling health inequalities, capacity building and sustainability. £110,000 of this was allocated to the VCSE Voices Panel who worked together to establish and co-design a delivery model of supporting grass roots organisations receive £3,000 to develop a business plan and funding bids. In addition, REN has successfully advocated for funding from the Bradford funding pot, to develop a part time, 12-month post for Black Health Forum to work with the health and care sector to reduce inequalities for Black Women accessing maternity services.

WINDRUSH CONFERENCE

In July 2023, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Windrush, we hosted the first every Windrush 7 C's Conference in partnership with Windrush Generations. The conference was the first of its kind and highlighting the 7 C's of Windrush including Contributions, Commemorations, Celebrations, Care, Challenges, Conflicts and Change. The conference was a huge success with over 100 people from across the country in attendance. We were joined by local and national keynote speakers at the conference including Bishop Dr Desmond Jadoo MBE, Cllr Susan Hinchliffe, Duncan Cooper (RIA) amongst others.

REN NEWSLETTER

We have a monthly newsletter that has over 400 subscribers across the VCSE and Public sector professionals. The newsletter is a fantastic opportunity for our members, partners and stakeholders to keep up to date on all our projects including days/weeks of awareness, funding opportunities, events and REN recommends which features some of favourite books, TV shows and films.

DAYS/WEEKS OF AWARENESS

As always, we highlight the important days/weeks of awareness through our social media platforms and events including Race Equality Week, Refugee Week, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day and Islamophobia Awareness Month.

MOVING FORWARD: THE YEAR AHEAD

To build on the excellent work delivered by the staff in the past year, we are working on a number of programmes in the coming year which include:

- **Working with Runnymede Trust and Amnesty International:** for the submission of the UN International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in the UK report.
- **Collaboration with Project 6:** on the Drug and Alcohol Needs Assessment for South Asian Communities with Bradford district and Craven.
- **Unity Week July 2024:** working with our members to host a series of events to unite communities and build community cohesion.
- **Pakistan Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office:** developing on our discussions about the role of the Pakistani-diaspora and mobilizing the diaspora to create change.
- **Ella Baker's New Organising Conference:** convened by the Ella Baker School of Organising and the Labour Rights Project of the Network for Social Change the conference will explore the strategies and tactics we can use to enable us to build the power we need to effect the changes that justice demands. REN's Executive Director is delivering a Pechakucha presentation on her reflections on the new UK Government and the staff are hosting two sessions at the conference, 'Solidarity in the times of Crisis' and a session on 'Understanding Youth Organising' with partners from Norway and Czech Republic.
- **Women Leading the Way Network:** we are currently working on developing a mentorship programme for women of colour to support them with their professional development and career journey.
- **Refugee Week:** we are collaborating with Bradford City of Sanctuary, University of Bradford, director of Sanctuary Seekers of Bradford, Tom Harmer and The Great Together to host events such as discussions and a film screening to showcase Bradford as a city of sanctuary and ways to support refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Months and days of awareness:** we will continue to work in collaboration with our members and partners to deliver events and activities to celebrate months and days of awareness including Windrush Day, South Asian Heritage Month, Black History Month, Islamophobia Awareness Month amongst others.



THANK YOU!

We would like to thank our staff, volunteers, members, partners, allies and funders for all the support they have provided to REN over the past year. We would like to thank our Board of Trustees for the continuous support and strategic direction. We look forward to strengthening our partnerships further by continuous collaboration with you all to reduce racial inequalities and achieve equitable outcomes for all communities across Bradford district, regionally and nationally.

STAY IN TOUCH AND JOIN THE NETWORK!

If you're not already a member and want to change that - send us an email or visit the website. We're pretty talkative... stay in touch via our social media, 'News' section on the website and our monthly newsletter.

Race Equality Network (REN)

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