

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Voluntary and Community Sector Rural Voice and Influence

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Research Outline

- The research aims to identify the voice and position of the BME Community and Voluntary Sector in relation to: -
 - a) The rural community and voluntary sector as a whole
 - b) Local, regional and national policy makers and funders
 - c) Mainstream provision
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Research Methodology

- Literature Review
 - 18 semi-structured interviews with BME led community groups in Cumbria, Hereford and Worcester, and the South West
 - 8 semi-structured interviews with strategic voluntary and statutory organisations in the above areas.
 - Participants were from a wide range of backgrounds, including African Caribbean, South Asian, East European, and South American.
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Timescales

- The project was set up in November 2013
 - Interviews were undertaken from January to July 2014
 - A TSRC Working Paper and Briefing Paper will be completed in early 2015.
 - Findings of the project will be disseminated through TSRC networks, BME networks and participants.
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Findings 1 - Population

- In comparison to some urban areas there is a lack of critical mass and very few people and/or groups in 'deep' rural areas, but rural BME populations have increased from 1% in 2001 to 3-5% in 2011
 - Despite small BME populations there is a wide diversity of backgrounds.
 - BME communities are not homogeneous – there is a 'scattering of ethnicities'
 - Distances and cuts to local transport and employment patterns are important factors in the capacity to organise.
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Findings 2 - Organisation

- Often around individual as opposed to group advocacy, acting as a bridge between people and services
 - Focus on social and cultural activities
 - Many groups fragmenting and dependant on voluntary effort
 - Activity tends to be in urban parts of predominantly rural areas
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Findings 3 – Strategic Context

- Disappearance of infrastructure, particularly RECs, and therefore loss of voice
 - Mainstream CVSs are also under-resourced
 - No links to established power bases/political systems
 - Funding is fragile and usually project specific
 - Big nationals seen as taking over – ‘ticking the boxes’
 - The activity is affected by local circumstances, including individual equality champions
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Findings 4 - Racism

- Host community seen as ‘in denial’
 - Isolation exaggerates the effects
 - Schools often the earliest experience of racism
 - Not mentioned by all respondents – need to ‘keep one’s head down’ to survive? Also some areas apparently experience less racism.
 - ‘Black vote doesn’t matter to them’
 - ‘Black people don’t drink tea’
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Findings 5 - Resilience

- Populations increasing and starting to organise
 - Some projects are actually surviving and developing, but there is a strong reliance on volunteers
 - Some projects engaging with host communities
 - The maintenance of cultural identity
 - Faith and interfaith organisations have an important role
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Challenges and Questions

- Is racism 'worse'/different in rural areas to urban areas?
 - How do you organise when there is no critical mass?
 - How important are issues of wealth and class in relation to ethnicity?
 - How will statutory /voluntary organisations respond to changing rural populations?
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