



**Regional Forum  
Development Paper No. 3**

# Building the Foundations

Towards a strategic approach to capacity building  
the BME sector to deliver learning and skills

**Report of the Yorkshire and Humber  
BME Regional Skills Panel**

**Commissioned by the  
Learning and Skills Council West Yorkshire  
on behalf of the  
Yorkshire and Humber Regional LSC**

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# 1 CONTEXT

## 1.1 The Learning and Skills Council Working Together Strategy

1.1.1 This paper, commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council West Yorkshire, sets out to do the following:

- Outline the policy and strategy context which shapes contemporary developments for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in general and for the Black and Minority Ethnic sector in particular;
- Describe the influence of the LSC Working Together strategy and the Home Office ChangeUp report;
- Identify the process by which the Regional Forum set up a pilot BME Regional Skills Panel as commissioned by the LSC;
- Summarise and analyse the issues identified through a stakeholder questionnaire sent to both BME organisations and regional stakeholder organisations;
- Summarise and analyse the issues raised through the discussions of the BME Skills Panel;
- Set out the recommendations of the BME Skills panel as to how a more strategic approach to developing the capacity of BME organisations to deliver learning might be developed;
- Propose an action plan based on short-term “quick wins” and the medium term.

The Regional Forum was advised that it could go ahead with the project in January 2005 and that the completion date would be the 15 April. This presented a challenging timetable. In order to achieve this the Gus John partnership was sub-contracted to deliver the project with project management and support from the Regional Forum.

The Learning and Skills Council are to be commended on taking the constructive step in commissioning this work. It also needs to be noted that having such a tight timescale also put a strain on the BME organisations who wished to be involved. Some of these organisations made the point strongly that not enough time was allowed in order to both do this work in depth and to recognise the capacity constraints of BME organisations.

1.1.2 Contemporary developments make this an interesting time for the voluntary and community sector in general and also for the black and minority ethnic sector. Two government strategies were published in 2004 – the Home Office ChangeUp report on VCS infrastructure and the LSC Working Together strategy on developing the relationship between the LSC, the VCS and the BME sector.

1.1.3 The Working Together strategy was published by the Learning and Skills Council in 2004. A key aim of the strategy is to:

- Create a step-change in its relations with voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in order to maximise the contribution they can make to the accessibility, range and quality of education and training provision for individuals, employers and the wider community (page 7).

1.1.4 The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Forum carried out a consultation process for Working Together and spoke on behalf of the sector at the LSC regional consultation event in York.

1.1.5 In considering the VCS as a provider of learning the strategy acknowledges that “capacity among black and minority ethnic VCS organisations and infrastructure is particularly under-resourced”. The strategy commits the LSC to consulting with the sector “to explore ways of addressing problems as they affect the capacity of black-and minority ethnic-led VCS organisations...involved in post-16 learning.” A key action in Working Together commits the LSC to:

- Work with the VCS to develop a strategic approach to capacity building for sector providers, taking account of the particular needs of black-and minority ethnic-led VCS organisations (point 2.3.1)

1.1.6 In response to the above need the LSC made £2 million available to support capacity building in VCS organisations before the end of March 2005. The priority aim was to “seek new BME VCS providers and networks and build their capacity, including those which do not appear immediately formula fundable or who have not previously had access to any LSC funding” (LSC Operational Guidance for VCS Organisations 2004-05). Approximately £200,000 was to be available per region.

1.1.7 Through discussions between the LSC West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Forum the LSC West Yorkshire commissioned a BME Regional Skills Panel. The overall aim for the project was to:

- Develop the foundations of a strategic approach to capacity building the BME sector to support its engagement with Working Together and the learning and skills agenda.

Specific outcomes of the project were to be:

- A position paper for the capacity building needs of BME organisations to deliver learning and skills;
- Potential support models for panel members to become BME learning and skills champions covering the 4 sub regions;
- To develop a database of BME VCS organisations delivering or seeking to deliver learning and skills;
- A more informed BME VCS able to engage further in delivering learning and skills and the implementation of Working Together.

1.1.8 The Working Together Capacity Building Fund has also been directed towards developments in West Yorkshire and in the Humber. In West Yorkshire funds were made available for district implementation plans for Working Together and also district BME action plans. In the Humber, funds were focussed on developing a sub-regional BME network. In considering the work of the regional BME Skills Panel it is important to link district, sub-regional and regional developments.

## 1.2 Home Office Active Communities Unit ChangeUp Report

1.2.1 It is also essential to link developments through the LSC Working Together strategy to other significant strategy. Also issued in 2004 was ChangeUp, a national capacity building and infrastructure framework for the VCS. ChangeUp arose out of recommendations in the Treasury Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the VCS in Delivering Public Services. In Yorkshire and the Humber the Regional Forum hosted sector consultations on infrastructure, skills and performance improvement – all of which fed into the overall consultation process.

ChangeUp “sets out a bold but achievable aim – that by 2014 the needs of frontline VCS organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded” (ChangeUp page 3).

1.2.2 The key areas for investment under ChangeUp are workforce development, performance improvement, ICT, governance and financing VCS activity.

1.2.3 ChangeUp funds are administered via the Government Offices in the Regions (GORs) with a Regional Advisory Group assessing sub-regional Infrastructure Investment plans drawn up on the basis of an assessment of existing infrastructure and infrastructure needs. ChangeUp requires that “Local, sub-regional and regional Infrastructure Development Plans should detail how the needs of diverse organisations and communities are best met in a given area and recognise the need for independent and accountable structures to represent and advocate for communities of interest. This should be underpinned by the aim of strengthening community cohesion.” (ChangeUp page 12).

1.2.4 ChangeUp makes the point that “Many generalist infrastructure organisations have been slow to understand and respond to the particular needs of marginalised communities.”

1.2.5 At the regional level Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber (GOYH), supported by Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Assembly and the Regional Forum, commissioned the Social Business Company to develop options that could potentially support the development needs of the BME sector in the region.

1.2.6 Through a process of fieldwork, interviews, seminar, external reference group, project steering group and the dissemination of information the proposed way forwards for more effective BME engagement was that a BME VCS regional panel be established. As identified in the report Making A Difference this would create:

### *Effective BME advocacy at the regional level by*

- Offering a perspective on the delivery of policies and programmes at regional level;
- Engaging in policy development with regional partners and influencing policy development and delivery;
- Addressing the issues of potential exclusion of the BME VCS from partnership working and ultimately the decision making process;
- Acting as a think tank and developing the business case for cultural diversity.

*It would also help sub-regional and local BME and non-BME VCS organisations to fully engage and benefit from the wider VCS infrastructure support at district, sub-regional and regional levels by:*

- Providing a regional specialist forum for the exchange of ideas and good practice within the wider VCS on BME issues;
- Through wider VCS and specialist partners, ensuring that BME and non-BME VCS organisations gain the capacity to deliver on social and economic programmes;
- Acting as a catalyst for change.

1.2.7 The development of a BME Regional panel is currently (June 2005) out to tender. The project will last from the 1 July until the 31 March 2006.

1.2.8 It is clear that there could be similarities in structure and function between the GOYH panel and the Working Together Skills Panel – it should also be noted that the scale for each is vastly different. The BME Skills Panel was a much smaller project and operated within severe time constraints.

1.2.9 A further development is that GOYH, through ChangeUp, is commissioning the development of a Race Equality framework. This will be used to appraise the infrastructure investment plans of all VCS infrastructure bodies. This equality framework should be able to highlight:

- Where a plan strongly evidences that BME organisations have been actively engaged in its development and will be engaged in its delivery (so that this can be then be celebrated and shared between organisations)
- Where this inclusivity is not demonstrated (so that consortia can then be given access to further support)

The intention is to place race equality at the heart of the business of mainstream VCS infrastructure organisations.

1.2.10 In Yorkshire and the Humber Infrastructure Investment Plans (IIPs) from the sub-regional consortia of infrastructure organisations have been submitted.

1.2.11 In the Humber FOLDA (Federation of Local Development Agencies) has proposed the development of a sub-regional infrastructure body for BME groups – through the funding of salary and on-costs for one full-time development worker during 2005-06.

1.2.12 In South Yorkshire the IIP proposes supporting BBEMI (Barnsley Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure), REMA (Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance), DEMRP (Doncaster Ethnic Minority Resource Partnership) and BCF-Sheffield (Black Card Forum) to develop and sustain the infrastructure needed to connect with and respond to local, sub-regional, regional and national structures.

1.2.13 In West Yorkshire the proposal is to identify local BME VCS support needs in more detail than is currently available and to identify gaps not adequately met by generic and specialist services.

1.2.14 In March 2005 the follow up report *Developing Capacity: Next Steps for ChangeUp* was published. This posed several challenges which had arisen through the ChangeUp implementation process. One relevant issue to this paper was that “It is unclear how a general commitment to diversity will be turned into tangible results for the benefit of marginalised communities” (page 2). A Diversity Working Group has been formed to advise on and share developing plans and practice across the emerging national Hubs which correlate to the functions identified in point 1.2.1: workforce development, performance improvement, ICT, governance and financing VCS activity.

*Developing Capacity: Next Steps For ChangeUp* also makes the point that progress is being made at regional level “but there is a need to go further and to join up and drive forward work to promote diversity and address the lack of equal access to support. There is however currently no clear mechanism for owning and achieving this aim, or clearer integration with broader strategies to strengthen community action (such as the analysis of community capacity building at neighbourhood and parish level in *Firm Foundations*) (page 8).

1.2.15 *Firm Foundations: the Government’s Framework for Community Capacity Building* was published by the Home Office in 2004. This framework was the result of a review and consultation process focusing on Government support for community capacity building – programmes and activities which enable people to play a more active role in their communities and the policies that affect them. The framework emphasises that in order to reach some groups, particularly the most marginalised, will mean working with and supporting communities of interest and identity, rather than focusing on geographical communities.

1.2.16 Also of significance is the current consultation being carried out by the Active Communities Unit at the Home Office, *Strengthening Partnerships: Next Steps for Compact, The Relationship between the Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector*. This consultation proposes to strengthen the Compact between Government and the VCS and draws attention to the existing Compact and the series of Codes of Good Practice including the Code of Good Practice on BME VCS Organisations.

1.2.17 The Home Office Code of Good Practice BME Voluntary and Community Organisations presents various key points:

- It is vital that Government and the BME sector engage in a positive relationship for mutual benefit;
- Recognition of the important role of the BME VCS and the diverse communities it seeks to represent including faith groups and refugee and asylum seeker organisations;
- Commitment by both Government and the sector to taking forward Race Equality together;
- Ensure that BME organisations are an inherent part of consultation and policy processes through involvement from a large pool of individuals and organisations
- Invest in the BME VCS;
- Support the development of capacity and infrastructure within the BME sector at local, regional and national levels;
- Recognise the importance of local relations and partnership involvement
- Value and celebrate volunteering by BME people.

The Code of Good Practice covers central Government departments, including GORs, and “Next Steps” executive agencies in England. The Government intends to encourage the extension to this code to other public bodies e.g. Non-Departmental Public Bodies (such as the LSC) and local Government.

In relation to public agencies in the Yorkshire and Humber region the Code covers GOYH and not the LSC, the RDA of the Regional Assembly. It is however useful as a set of guiding principles which agencies could adopt in their work with the BME VCS.

### **1.3 VCS and other national infrastructure**

1.3.1 BTEG, the Black Training and Enterprise Group operates at the national level and has an active role in promoting employment, economic regeneration, education and enterprise in black communities. BTEG is a member of key advisory groups and committees which relate to this project e.g. Connexions VCS Forum, LSC Equality and Diversity Advisory group, Minority Ethnic Group to the National Employment Panel and the Race Equality Steering Group for New Deal for Communities.

1.3.2 Through ChangeUp there is now the Workforce Development Hub – once the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation. The Workforce Development Hub has two key objectives:

- Voluntary and community organisations have easy access to information and resources to support a culture of learning and development, underpinned by good management and employment practice
- Voluntary and community organisations are able to recruit and retain a skilled workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities they work in

1.3.3 The ChangeUp programme will be advised nationally by the Infrastructure National Partnership. This will be inclusively structured, involve specialist infrastructure, encourage dialogue about the roles and relationship of specialist and generic infrastructure and report on progress on increasing the reach and impact of generalist infrastructure services in meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities and promoting good practice to represent and advocate for communities of interest.

1.3.4 NIACE (the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education) is a charity which promotes lifelong learning across all dimensions. One of NIACE's national networks is the Black Practitioner's Learning Network (BPLN) and NIACE publish research reports into the experience and participation of BME communities in learning.

The BPLN aims to connect BME group learners and potential learners and those working on behalf of BME groups across the regions to develop strategies for identifying staff and professional development needs in post 16 organisations, for identifying and using funds to support work in education with BME learners, for advocating on behalf of BME adult learners and young people through consultation to influence policy and service provision and for developing links with education providers, stakeholders and government organisations and other black networks at local, regional and national levels.

1.3.5 CEMVO (Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary organisations) or the EMF (Ethnic Minority Foundation) is a national VCS organisation with a regional presence. CEMVO work with the Millennium Commission to run an awards scheme to enable, empower and include within communities across diverse cultures. The principal objective of CEMVO is "the social regeneration of Britain's BME communities and voluntary sector." They play a role in capacity building BME organisations.

## **1.4 General VCS learning and skills infrastructure in Yorkshire and the Humber**

- 1.4.1 The issue of how well the generalist VCS learning and skills infrastructure supports the BME sector is an important one to consider – although a proper appraisal of this is beyond the scope of this paper. As already mentioned in point 1.2.8, GOYH is commissioning a Race Equality Framework in order to progress this work.
- 1.4.2 At the regional level the Regional Forum hosts the Workforce and Skills Development Co-ordinator. This role includes advocacy and representation on behalf of the VCS in relation to skills at the key regional skills structures e.g. the Assembly Education and Skills Commission, the Regional Employment and Skills Forum (which has had the role of overseeing the FRESA (the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action), and currently the joint regional VCS and LSC Working Together steering group.
- 1.4.3 The Regional Forum hosts a web page for the BME VCS and also supports a BME VCS email network.
- 1.4.4 NIACE (the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education) has a regional Development Worker. Nationally NIACE supports the Black Practitioner's Learning Network which holds meetings in Yorkshire and the Humber, supported by the NIACE national Development Worker.
- 1.4.5 Developing out of the network of regional and sub-regional learning and skills consortia/infrastructure there is the Yorkshire and the Humber Regional VCS Learning and Skills Group. This group will be seeking to develop a coherent, collaborative approach to learning and skills for the VCS in relation to policy, research, representation and development.
- 1.4.6 At the sub-regional level there are generalist VCS learning and skills consortia and agencies which seek to build the capacity of VCS organisations through skills and learning initiatives. These are:
- West Yorkshire – the West Yorkshire Learning Consortium which is currently the LSC VCS Broker. There is also the West and North Yorkshire Open College Network and the Community Work Training Company
  - In Humberside there is the Humberside Learning Consortium – also the LSC VCS Broker
  - In South Yorkshire there is the South Yorkshire Open Forum and VC Train
  - In North Yorkshire there is the North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary organisations which hosts the LSC VCS Broker and the York and North Yorkshire Learning Network

## **1.5 Existing regional and sub regional BME infrastructure**

1.5.1 The BME Regional Network for Yorkshire and the Humber was formed in 2002 with a remit to:

- Increase the effectiveness of the BME sector in the region
- Ensure the sector had an effective advocate at the regional level
- Unlock further funds for the sector

In 2004 the Home Office Active Communities Unit withdrew its funding for this network. Factors which had inhibited its growth were identified in the report VCS Capacity Building and Support – Early Investment Programme 2004 as being:

- Lack of funding
- Low staffing resources
- Insufficient geographical spread
- Lack of transparency

On an unfunded basis the BME Regional Network has continued to operate.

1.5.2 At a sub-regional level the only BME VCS infrastructure organisations appear to operate in South Yorkshire. Here there are the South Yorkshire Coalfields Initiative and the BME Cluster supported by VC Train as intermediary with the LSC. Through the Working Together Capacity Building Fund there has been development work in initiating a Humber BME network.

1.5.3 At the local level networks include the BME North Lincolnshire Forum in the Humber and the South Yorkshire BME infrastructure organisations funded through ESF Objective 1 funds: BBEMI (Barnsley Black Ethnic Minority Initiative, REMA (Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance) and DEMR (Doncaster Ethnic Minority Regeneration Partnership), BCF-Sheffield (Black Card Forum) and the Sheffield Cluster. These BME VCS organisations serve to facilitate the economic and social regeneration of their BME communities.

1.5.4 There are now BME Action plans for the five West Yorkshire districts – funded through the Working Together capacity Building Fund. At this point reports from Wakefield and Kirklees have been accessed. One significant finding from these two reports identifies a major barrier as the lack of an effective communications network. From the Kirklees report it is clear that there is support for a BME Learning Network – within the context of there being clear linkages to wider VCS networks and so there is a definite onus on the wider VCS to continue to work on this.

## 1.6 Conclusion

- 1.6.1 Two national strategies are coinciding to act as drivers in relation to the totality of VCS infrastructure – in order to facilitate more effective service delivery generally and increasingly of publicly funded services. ChangeUp strongly requires that infrastructure development is planned according to the need for generalist infrastructure to play a more active role in relation to the BME sector.

The LSC Working Together strategy also expresses concern about the disadvantaged position of BME VCS organisations. The strategy states that “Home Office research shows that BME VCS bodies experience a disproportionately large funding shortfall, a legacy of under-investment, greater reliance on grants covering delivery but not core costs, and less involvement with supporting umbrella bodies”.

It is important to note that the BME Regional network in Yorkshire and the Humber is operating at a clear disadvantage in relation to other BME regional networks. This can be seen when studying what is available through other BME regional network websites.

It is evident that there is scope for the BME VCS sector to be better supported both by the generalist VCS itself and its infrastructure and by policy makers, planners and funders in relation to service delivery. The BME Regional Skills Panel under consideration in this report offered an opportunity to examine ways in which both the VCS and the public sector could raise its game when working in partnership with the BME sector.

## **2 The Yorkshire and Humber BME Regional Skills Panel**

### **2.1 Methodology**

2.1.1 Having been commissioned by the LSC to establish a time limited Skills Panel, the Regional Forum set up a Steering Group composed of two trustee board members and members of the Regional Forum staff team. Given a very tight timescale whereby the project was to start work in January 2005 and be completed by 15<sup>th</sup> April, the Steering Group then commissioned the Gus John Partnership to work alongside the Regional Forum.

2.1.2 Having recognised the issue of transparency and accessibility a set of criteria for panel membership was developed and agreed. These included geographical location (in an attempt to mirror the spread of BME populations in the region), a knowledge of the BME VCS, an understanding of the learning and skills needs of BME people, of the barriers to access, of the difficulties facing the BME sector as providers, of the role of the Information, Advice and Guidance service and skills in advocacy, analysis, debate and teamwork (Appendix One).

2.1.3 Applications to the Skills Panel from young people aged 16-25, Muslim women and BME people with disabilities were particularly encouraged – this was done due to the lower rates of participation in learning from these groups in society as a whole.

2.1.4 From 22 applications received by the closing date ten were selected, nine of whom eventually took up their places. Given the very short time between panel members being informed of selection and the actual dates set for the four panel sessions it was agreed that substitutes would be accepted if panel members were not able to attend all four sessions. That so many applications were received within such a tight deadline indicates the high level of interest shown by the BME community in this project.

2.1.5 Panel members were given the option to represent BME organisations and networks or to apply in a personal capacity. Organisations and networks represented included the BME North Lincs Forum, West Yorkshire Charities Information Bureau, Connected2, BBEMI, REMA and DEMRP from South Yorkshire and the regional BME Network.

2.1.6 At the same time as the selection process was being carried out a questionnaire was designed. This would serve to clarify the expectations and needs of key stakeholders both within the BME sector and the key partner organisations i.e. Yorkshire Forward, the LSC nationally and locally, the Regional Assembly, GOYH and a key provider organisation (Appendix Two).

2.1.7 Briefly, the questionnaire sought to clarify views from BME organisations in relation to:

- barriers to offering learning and skills;
- what the learning and skills needs of BME groups are;
- sources of capacity building support accessed;
- BME use of IAG;
- contact with mainstream providers;
- opportunity to contribute to planning processes;

- how well mainstream provision meets the needs of BME people;
- involvement with the LSC, and ideas as to what would support BME organisations to deliver learning.

2.1.8 The questionnaire sent to key partner organisations focussed on:

- involvement in delivering to the BME community;
- barriers experienced through this activity;
- the learning and skills needs of BME groups;
- proactive steps to plan in partnership with BME communities;
- any Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (RRAA) related activity targeted at the BME community;
- any consultation with BME communities;
- use made by BME communities of IAG services;
- organisational activity to support capacity building needs of BME organisations;
- assessment of the extent to which mainstream provision meets the needs of BME people;
- ideas for what would best help build the capacity of BME organisations to deliver learning;
- the roles that respondents saw for their organisations in this work.

2.1.9 It should be noted that there were very strong criticisms from BME organisations in relation to the tight timescale for the return of questionnaires. It was also pointed out that BME organisations had also been involved in the GOYH research into “Options for Effective BME VCS Engagement across Yorkshire and the Humber” and so felt the strains of consultation fatigue.

2.1.10 Approximately 200 questionnaires were sent to BME organisations with some involvement in delivering learning. It was not possible to maintain accurate records due to the mechanisms involved in distributing questionnaires. This included know contacts, the BME Regional email network and the BME Regional Network website. In future there will be the developing database of BME organisations involved in learning and skills which is one of the outputs of this project.

2.1.11 Completed questionnaires were received from 9 BME organisations and another 15 gave interviews over the telephone – making a total of 24 BME responses.

2.1.12 Stakeholder questionnaires were received from key organisations: Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Assembly, GOYH, the LSC nationally and locally and one major FE provider.

## **2.2 The BME Regional Skills Panel**

- 2.2.1 The panel, facilitated by the Gus John Partnership, met for four sessions between the middle of March and 1<sup>st</sup> April. Attendance was excellent and the decision to allow substitutes meant that good attendance could be sustained.
- 2.2.2 At sessions one and four presentations were received from Peter Coady (Senior Policy Manager at National LSC), Caryl Agard (consultant from Social Business Company who carried out the GOYH research) and Sofia Din (Equality and Diversity Manager Bradford College).

## 2.3 Key issues identified

Through the process of the questionnaire to BME organisations, to stakeholder organisations and the panel discussions a number of key issues have been identified in relation to BME organisations and communities both delivering and accessing learning and skills. Given the similarity between the survey results and the panel discussions the issues are amalgamated under themed headings.

### 2.3.1 *Policy and planning*

This section relates to the policy and planning carried out by both the key national and regional organisations and structures charged with developing skills nationally and in the region (the RDA, the Regional Skills Alliance, GOYH, the LSC, the Assembly) and also those educational institutions in FE and HE responsible for providing learning and skills.

Understandably policy and planning was a strong theme throughout the process. This is also an area which clearly overlaps with issues raised concerning partnership and the need to develop partnership practice. Key issues raised in relation to the public agencies were:

- The need for a more joined up approach by key planning and funding agencies in relation to supporting the development of the BME VCS e.g. the RDA, GOYH, LSC, the Regional Assembly;
- The desirability of links being established between the Regional Skills Alliance and the BME learning and skills sector;
- The question of how the BME sector could be involved in the setting of national targets for learning and skills programmes;
- There is a need for the LSC and mainstream providers to develop a holistic strategy for engaging with the BME sector.

It was also identified as an issue that when generic VCS infrastructure develops plans and policies there is not enough involvement of the BME sector. This was raised in relation to:

- Involving the BME sector more when general VCS infrastructure sets its objectives and delivers its services

### 2.3.2 *Support systems for accessing skills*

Issues were raised concerning the mechanisms or lack of mechanisms on the part of the support system for skills e.g. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), Connexions. This came up in relation to:

- Assessing the skills needs of new communities i.e. refugees and asylum seekers;
- Assessing the skills needs of specific client groups and their supporting staff e.g. people with learning difficulties, community users of mental health services, young offenders and BME people released from custody, young mothers;
- That IAG services should monitor both access and take up of their services in relation to BME organisations and communities.

### 2.3.3 *Funding*

As would be expected there were several issues raised in relation to funding:

- That the BME VCS is under funded when compared to the general VCS;
- There is a lack of sustainable funding and an over reliance on discretionary, short-term funding streams;
- That unreasonable expectations are placed upon BME organisations in relation to funding processes, reporting, risk management and contracting;
- The Yorkshire Forward sub-regional investment planning process does not take account of BME issues and needs;
- There was a consensus that local authorities had not been as supportive as they could be in developing BME organisations and services;
- BME organisations often had little or no funds for staff and volunteer development and training.

### 2.3.4 *Partnership*

Partnership is an area linking very closely to that of planning above. Partnership is rightly seen by Government as a way of ensuring that agencies join up their thinking and planning. The issues which arose were:

- The potential for the LSC and the BME sector to work in partnership to promote to BME employers the need for Work Based Learning and Modern Apprenticeships and to identify and promote BME business and employer champions.
- There is the potential for the BME sector to work with the Connexions service in relation to BME access and outreach.
- The potential also for the BME sector to work in partnership with both the LSC and the FE sector in relation to BME access, outreach, attainment and retention.

It was also identified that the BME sector itself could do more to work collaboratively within the sector.

### 2.3.5 *Representation*

The BME sector wishes to contribute in terms of views and opinions in relation to the learning and skills agenda. Representation is however patchy and often unsupported:

- There is a need to promote and develop BME representation on Learning Partnerships and other key skills structures.

### 2.3.6 *Recognition and attitudes*

From both questionnaires and Skills Panel discussions it can be seen that BME organisations and communities do not feel that they are given the respect that they deserve. Specifically:

- It was perceived that the positive contribution from the BME sector to the economy and to society was not recognised by public agencies.

- Also, it was felt that the role BME organisations play in empowering communities and combating social exclusion was not recognised enough.

### 2.3.7 *Race equality and institutional change*

In relation to the role of the mainstream institutions involved in learning and skills a strong theme that emerged was that of recent legislation and how much or how little institutions were doing to develop this work:

- The role that public agencies could play, but often don't, in promoting their own Equality and Diversity strategies e.g. the LSC strategy 2004 to 2007.
- Connected to this was the role agencies could play in promoting the relevant Equality and Diversity Impact Measures.
- The question was raised as to how contracting organisations such as the LSC ensured provider compliance with equality and diversity measures.
- BME service users felt that mainstream services were often inappropriate to their needs and were based on stereotypes and prejudice.

In relation to the generic VCS it was identified that:

- There is a role for the generic VCS to promote the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and to support activity to monitor and scrutinise compliance with this.

### 2.3.8 *Capacity building*

Issues raised through the questionnaire and the Skills Panel process refer broadly to the position of the BME VCS generally and to the position of BME organisations seeking to deliver learning and skills.

- That the BME sector does not have enough capacity for the following: identify gaps in provision, carry out training needs analysis, identify examples of good practice, develop the intersection between the BME sector and the mainstream, inform the sector of the roles of the key regional agencies and initiatives.
- There is a need to improve the BME sector's capacity in relation to quality assurance.
- BME providers need support to themselves support learners in progressing to higher levels of accreditation.
- Work needs to be done on developing BME progression routes for learners.
- The BME sector is in need of greater skills development in community development, neighbourhood/estates management and advocacy/representation.
- The potential was raised of the BME sector being able to access in-house training offered by mainstream providers and agencies.
- The lack of community ownership of assets e.g. community buildings was identified as a barrier for the BME sector.

### 2.3.9 *First steps, non accredited learning and learning for personal fulfilment*

The Skills Panel felt strongly as to the role of informal and non accredited learning within the lifelong learning agenda and that the BME VCS is active here:

- The BME sector plays a role in offering first steps learning, non accredited learning and learning for personal fulfilment, and it was identified that funding for these areas was difficult to achieve and that the LSC should be encouraged to support this vital form of learning.
- The BME sector could encourage more learners to accreditate their learning.

#### 2.3.10 *Overseas qualifications*

Much needed skills are being lost to the community as a whole when refugees and asylum seekers are unable to work at their proper level. Action here will result in a net gain to society in social and economic terms:

- Action is needed to convert and upgrade the qualifications brought in from overseas – in order to help refugees and asylum seekers integrate into both the economy and society.

## 2.4 Analysis

- 2.4.1 The issues identified through the survey and the Skills Panel discussions will not come as a surprise to many. For example, there is a large degree of similarity between the themes identified within the Skills Panel process and those identified within the consultation for the work on developing options for effective BME engagement.
- 2.4.2 What is encouraging about the BME Skills Panel is that it demonstrates that, given targeted resources, there is the will, experience, skill and commitment on the part of the BME sector to engage with the learning and skills agenda on a number of fronts. This is also a timely point at which to acknowledge the work of the BME Regional Network which has been operating without resources due to the commitment of member organisations.
- 2.4.3 The BME sector is disadvantaged in relation to issues such as lack of sustainable funding, reliance on discretionary and short-term funding streams. The implication for planning and funding agencies is that the imbalance around funding is one that needs to be addressed. The implication for the generic VCS infrastructure bodies is that at all levels they need to demonstrate a closer involvement and collaboration with the BME sector. VCS infrastructure, be this generic or BME, has a key role to play in developing capacity. In relation to progressing this it is clear that there does need to be specific funding for BME initiatives (e.g. the GOYH Regional Panel) and that this needs to tie in much more closely with the generic VCS infrastructure.
- 2.4.4 It is notable that partnerships are the vehicle through which many contemporary processes are organised and managed e.g. local strategic partnerships, learning partnerships, joint VCS/LSC steering groups for implementing Working Together, infrastructure partnerships to deliver ChangeUp. The VCS has found the sub-regional investment planning partnerships difficult to access and with a lack of transparency. At the regional level the VCS is not currently a member of the Regional Skills Alliance.

The ability to participate in partnership rests on resources. Because the BME sector is under funded it is thus disadvantaged in relation to accessing the opportunities to engage in planning and decision-making forums. If a strategic approach to capacity building the BME sector to deliver learning and skills is to be developed then there is a real need to develop the building blocks to form the foundations of such an approach.

These include research and labour market intelligence, a body of knowledge and informed opinion collated from projects such as the Skills Panel, BME networks at regional and sub-regional levels (which itself rests on the development of proper databases and chains of communication), models of good practice for BME learning and skills, BME focussed learning and skills events and seminars, BME representation on key learning and skills structures, specific partnerships to progress BME issues and clear leadership from within the BME sector, the VCS generic sector and the key public agencies operating at national, regional and sub-regional levels.

- 2.4.5 There is an overarching issue arising from this process and analysis. There needs to be accountable leadership in relation to moving this agenda forwards – leadership from within the BME sector, leadership from within the generic VCS and leadership from within the system of the key regional and sub-regional agencies. Where possible these sources of leadership will be identified in the section on recommendations to follow.

### **3 BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING THE BME VCS TO DELIVER LEARNING AND SKILLS**

These recommendations reflect the themed headings based on the total Skills Panel process. They are shown here with explanatory analysis. Following this section the paper concludes with a potential Development Plan.

#### **3.1 Representation and engagement**

In order for there to be a strategic approach to capacity building the BME sector the BME sector itself needs to be strongly linked to regional and sub-regional agencies and developments. There is a need for a clear focal point for the BME sector.

- It is recommended that the Regional Skills Panel be incorporated within the developing BME Regional panel commissioned by GOYH. The Skills Panel could operate according to the accountability and communication mechanisms offered through the Regional Panel and its secretariat.

It may be that a new recruitment process would be undergone. This would serve to strengthen accountability and should not pose too difficult in terms of resourcing as mechanisms for the recruitment for the main Regional Panel will need to be set up.

There would be a need for additional funds to those committed to the functioning of the Regional Panel. Given that promoting the BME sector as provider of learning has been agreed to be a priority by the joint VCS/LSC Working Together steering group it would be hoped that the LSC will be able to commit funding for this.

With the possibility of continuation a Regional Skills Panel, acting as a sub group of the main Panel, would be able to explore in more detail some of the issues and needs identified in outline through this Skills Panel process.

This would include developing links with the national VCS infrastructure organisations such as the Workforce Development Hub, BTEG and CEMVO. In order for a strategic approach to develop organisations at national, regional and sub-regional levels will need to join up more.

- It is recommended that where the LSC or other agencies call on the representation or skills or experience of the BME VCS the relevant BME organisations are offered “backfill” in order to compensate the organisations for the loss of staff time.

This is in accordance with the Working Together strategy as set out in section 3.9.

### **3.2 Models for supporting panel members to act as “BME Skills Champions” in the Yorkshire and Humber region**

The concept of BME Skills Champions was considered and agreed to be of merit. Such champions could operate as role models for the sector, as keynote speakers at learning and skills events, as presenters of awareness raising sessions for regional agencies and potentially as BME sector representatives on significant learning and skills structures. It has already happened in that the current Regional Assembly Skills Scrutiny panel has asked to meet with representatives of the BME Skills Panel. What is needed is a more systematic and resourced mechanism to be able to deliver this.

- It is recommended that BME Skills Champions be developed, with appropriate resourcing, through the structures that will be established in order to operate the main BME Panel.

LSC support for these linked developments (the continuation of the Skills Panel and the development of Skills Champions) would serve to create a key mechanism by which a strategic approach to capacity building the BME sector could be taken forwards.

It is also the case that many BME VCS representatives on planning and policy groups are there as volunteers which very often means a drain on their own resources. Given that the contribution of the BME sector to policy and planning is invited at times by key regional agencies it is thus important to support such representatives.

- It is recommended that volunteer representatives on planning and policy groups are reimbursed for travel, subsistence and child care expenses.

### **3.3 Communications and networks**

There is scope and need for developing the sharing of information so that it reaches many more BME VCS organisations and projects. There does appear to be support for the development of BME specific learning networks – with the caveat that these be closely linked to wider VCS networks. Where sub-regional or local networks are developed it is suggested that respondents are asked to join the regional BME Learning database as well. There is also the potential to work more closely with CEMVO who have a regional BME database containing approximately 1200 organisations.

- It is recommended that the regional BME learning and skills database developed as part of the Skills Panel project be further developed and promoted.

This is an area of work which the Regional Forum and the BME Regional network could lead on.

### 3.4 Policy and planning

The need for more joined up thinking would be enhanced by two straightforward actions to be undertaken by the Regional Skills Alliance:

- It is recommended that the Regional Skills Alliance be requested to put the issue of a joined up approach to the BME VCS sector on their agenda.
- It is also recommended that the Regional Skills Alliance be asked to nominate a lead organisation and staff member who would liaise at a regional level with the BME sector on issues relating to learning and skills.

This approach would enable the key regional agencies to develop a holistic strategy for engaging with the BME sector.

Concerning the generic VCS infrastructure and the BME sector:

- It is recommended that the Regional Forum continue to play a support role in promoting the development of the BME sector in relation to learning and skills and that this work link closely to that of the BME Regional Panel/Regional Skills Panel.
- It is recommended that the BME VCS be invited to join the VCS Regional Learning and Skills Group.

The Regional Forum already has a dedicated workforce development and skills co-ordinator who represents the VCS at key learning and skills bodies. This work would clearly be seen as part of this role at the regional level. It would be carried out in close collaboration with a continuing BME Regional Skills Panel. Expansion of this work would require the generation of additional funds.

### 3.5 Support systems for accessing skills

The BME VCS is in the same situation as the generic VCS in relation to the network of sector skills councils (SSC) – the new network following the system of national training organisations. There is no generic SSC for the VCS. There are approximately 12 SSCs who have VCS staff and volunteers within their “footprint”. Currently, the Regional Forum is exploring with the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) how to go about developing a coherent framework to cater for the skills needs of the VCS workforce – those covered by SSCs and those left without cover.

- It is recommended that the Regional Forum discuss with the SSDA specific questions which relate to the learning and skills and capacity building needs of BME organisations.

Social Enterprise East Midlands exists to ensure that social enterprise flourishes and grows. SEEM published Barriers to Ethnic Minority Social Enterprise in 2004. One of its findings reflects the situation in Yorkshire and the Humber – that no reliable data for ethnic minority social enterprise is available. This is still the case in Yorkshire and the Humber though not in the South East where they have carried out work on mapping BME social enterprise.

- It is recommended that Business Links and VCS social enterprise bodies are supported in strengthening their networks with ethnic minority communities.

This could lead to a number of possible courses of action: setting aside specific funds to support BME social enterprise, establishing social enterprise centres in areas where there is a high concentration of ethnic minority communities, mapping existing BME social enterprise activity etc.

There is also a need to map regionally the capacity building initiatives already operating and to draw on the lessons learned from these. These would include programmes such as the ATL (Asian Trades Link) BME capacity building programme in West Yorkshire and any activity carried out by the existing LSC VCS Broker schemes.

- It is recommended that existing capacity building schemes for the BME VCS are mapped for the Yorkshire and Humber region and that lessons learned from these schemes are identified so that good practice can be replicated across the region.

As regards the assessing of the skills needs of new communities e.g. refugees and asylum seekers and of specific client groups and their supporting staff (e.g. people with learning difficulties, community users of mental health services, young offenders and BME people released from custody and young mothers), there is the LSC led European Social Fund (ESF) Measure 2.2 Research Group which has funds available for this kind of work.

- It is recommended that ideas and proposals for research into the above skills needs of BME groups are put to the LSC ESF Measure 2.2 Steering Group.

As a member of this steering group the Regional Forum is proposed to take this forwards in partnership with the BME Regional Network.

### 3.6 Funding

Both ChangeUp and Working Together acknowledge that the BME sector suffers from under-funding in relation to the generic VCS. It is not known if there is any relevant research at the Yorkshire and Humber regional level.

- It is recommended that the national Hub for Financing VCS Activity be asked what steps it is able to take in order to redress the situation in relation to the under funding of the BME VCS.
- It is recommended that the LSC be asked at national level what steps it, as a major funder of learning and skills provision, is able to take to redress the situation of under funding to the BME VCS.

The Regional Forum and the BME Regional network are proposed to take these actions forward.

Regarding the issue of investing in the development of BME social enterprise:

- It is recommended that the sub-regional social enterprise bodies are asked how the investment in BME social enterprise might be promoted through their activity.

As one of the Regional Forum's key activities is promoting social enterprise it is proposed that the Regional Forum takes responsibility for taking this forwards, in partnership with the BME Regional network, with the sub-regional social enterprise bodies.

On the issues of the lack of sustainable funding and reliance on short-term discretionary funding streams this issue has been raised through the joint LSC/VCS steering group for the regional implementation of Working Together. The LSC have been asked to provide models of the route towards mainstream funding.

It has also been raised as a priority issue as to whether the onerous processes of contracting, funding and reporting could be streamlined regionally and this is being explored through the joint LSC/VCS steering group.

### 3.7 Partnership

The BME Skills Panel process has highlighted the need for developing partnerships – with the LSC, the FE sector and the Connexions service. This partnership work would be to progress the situation regarding BME access to learning, provider outreach, retention, attainment and qualifications. The question arises as to whether the initiative for developing such partnership work is to be expected from the LSC or Connexions or learning providers or whether it is to be expected from the BME VCS.

As has been demonstrated throughout this paper there is clear recognition that the BME sector is under funded and has little capacity to undertake this kind of partnership work. This leads back to the need for the continuation of the Regional Skills Panel which would itself need appropriate levels of support from staff.

- It is recommended that the LSC nominate one of its staff to act as lead person in developing a partnership approach to BME learning and skills issues and organisations.

Such a link person could also work with the BME VCS to develop schemes through which the need for BME employers to take up Work Based Learning and Modern Apprenticeships is promoted.

In relation to developing a relationship between the BME VCS and the FE sector and with Connexions again the issue of capacity arises. The Association of Colleges (AOC) operates regionally and would be one way to move this forwards and Connexions also have links to the VCS.

- It is recommended that a regional BME VCS learning and skills event focussing on developing partnership and related issues be explored.

Such an event at the regional level could bring together several of the key players identified by the BME Skills Panel and the Regional Forum: the LSC, the Association of Colleges (AOC), Connexions, NIACE and the Black Practitioners Network and other relevant agencies.

- It is recommended that relationships be developed with Yorkshire Universities and the Association of Colleges

Given the capacity building role that CEMVO play regionally and the existence of a regional BME database there is a need to develop a partnership at the regional level:

- It is recommended that closer links are developed with CEMVO

### **3.8 Consultation**

In line with the Working Together strategy the Pilot BME Skills Panel can be seen as an example of the LSC consulting with the sector in order to explore solutions to the problems of funding shortfalls, under investment, greater reliance on grants covering delivery but not core costs and lesser involvement with umbrella bodies.

- It is recommended that the LSC continue to consult with the BME VCS through a range of methods and that certain of these are identified within this report e.g. the continuation of the Skills Panel, nominating a regional LSC staff member to lead on this work, annual BME learning and skills regional events etc.

### 3.9 Race equality and institutional change

The BME Skills Panel was concerned about the responsibilities of the LSC, the RDA and provider organisations in relation to their duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (RRAA 2000). This linked to the issue of how robust were organisational Equality and Diversity Impact Measures. There are positive examples of such activity e.g. the South East Development Agency (SEEDA) published a document in 2001 setting out how it would practically meet the duties under the RRAA 2000. SEEDA is also presenting its new Race Equality Scheme 2005-2008 to its board for approval.

- It is recommended that the LSC, the RDA and provider organisations actively promote and disseminate their activity in relation to such responsibilities, how they discharge them and how this serves to improve the situation of BME communities in relation to access to learning, retention, attainment and qualification.
- It is recommended that a joint advisory group be established. Such a group could be made up of planning, funding, provider organisations in partnership with the BME sector and the VCS generally. The group would support agencies in developing their approach to the RRAA 2000.
- In relation to both LSC staff and staff from other key agencies it is recommended that the appropriate training and development in Race Equality is undertaken.

Such promotion and dissemination could take place in a variety of ways – through the developing networks of BME organisations regionally and sub-regionally, through the LSC website and through BME VCS focused learning and skills events detailed in section 3.5.

The Skills Panel emphasised the positive importance of the message sent out by agencies when they *reach out* to the “hard to reach”.

Given the work of NIACE and the Black Practitioner’s Learning Network in initiatives to explore and tackle institutional racism it is important that a relationship be developed between the BME VCS and the BPLN regionally. It is proposed that the Regional VCS Learning and Skills Group lead on this action.

As outlined in point 1.2.8 GOYH is to commission the development of a Race Equality Framework through which ChangeUp Infrastructure Plans and VCS infrastructure is appraised in relation to whether or not the BME VCS has been involved in its development.

- It is recommended that the Regional Forum actively promote the ChangeUp Race Equality framework to the VCS and the BME VCS as and when available.

### 3.10 Capacity building

A range of capacity needs were identified by the Skills Panel process: training needs analysis, developing examples of good practice, quality assurance, navigating progression through qualification levels, community development, estates management and advocacy.

- It is recommended that where the LSC already funds capacity building to the VCS it builds into contracts the expectation that this service is delivered to an appropriate proportion of BME VCS organisations.
- It is recommended that the LSC draw on the lessons learned from existing capacity building programmes delivered to BME VCS organisations and that these lessons are promoted as good practice and replicated through further LSC investment.

The issue of the BME VCS gaining access to relevant in-house training and development offered by the LSC and other agencies was raised. This could be in a number of areas e.g. project management, management, financial management, partnership work etc.

- It is recommended that the LSC be asked if there are opportunities for the BME VCS to access any relevant in-house training and opportunities for mentoring and work shadowing.

The issue of the lack of ownership of community assets such as community buildings is reflected strongly in the Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building. This is linked to what the Framework calls "community anchor organisations" – "strong, sustainable community-based organisations *which* can provide a crucial focus and support for community development and change in their neighbourhood or community" (page 19). The possibility of the transfer of assets from the public or private sector is outlined and the Government will be promoting this transfer where appropriate to community anchor organisations.

- It is recommended that the progress of actions from Firm Foundations is followed closely with a view to promoting this opportunity to the BME sector.

The Home Office Civil renewal Unit will be developing practical guidance for civil servants on the delivery of community capacity building. The Regional Forum is proposed to lead on this.

### 3.11 First steps, non accredited learning and learning for personal fulfilment

The Skills Panel echoes the many voices of the VCS in general through which the value of first steps into learning, non accredited learning and learning for personal fulfilment are presented as worthy of proper funding streams.

- It is recommended that the LSC safeguard adequate resources in order to fund BME VCS activity in these areas of great contribution to civil, social and economic renewal.

**3.12 Overseas qualifications**

Much needed skills are being lost to the regional economy:

- It is recommended that work is undertaken to devise programmes whereby refugees and asylum seekers with overseas qualifications are supported in converting these or upgrading them in order to access appropriate employment.

**4 PROVISIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

It is clear from the above recommendations that there is no “quick fix” available. What is needed is a phased approach through which a genuinely strategic approach can be developed. It is suggested that this can be approached through developing short-term “Quick Wins” which would not be onerous for the bodies associated with these recommendations.

Following on from this a later development phase is identified – this phase will depend on the achievement of the first stage of “Quick Wins” and the progress achieved through these steps. It will also depend on the levering in of additional funding as is surely due to a BME sector widely recognised as suffering from under funding.

<b>BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS: Short-term quick wins – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006</b>	<b>Action by</b>
<p><i>Representation and engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the Regional Skills Panel be incorporated within the developing BME Regional panel commissioned by GOYH. The Skills Panel could operate according to the accountability and communication mechanisms offered through the Regional Panel and its secretariat.</li> <li>• Develop the Regional Skills panel, with additional appropriate resourcing, through the structures that will be established in order to operate the main BME Panel.</li> <li>• Where the LSC or other agencies call on the representation or skills or experience of the</li> </ul>	<p>The successful bidder for this contract</p> <p>Delivery organisation in collaboration with LSC</p> <p>LSC and other agencies</p>

<p>BME VCS the relevant BME organisations are offered “backfill” in order to compensate the organisations for the loss of staff time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where volunteer representatives sit on planning and policy groups they are reimbursed for travel, subsistence and child care expenses.</li> </ul>	<p>All public agencies</p>
<p><i>BME Skills Champions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that BME Skills Champions be developed, with appropriate resourcing, through the structures that will be established in order to operate the main BME Panel.</li> </ul>	<p>LSC</p>
<p><i>Communications and networks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that the regional BME learning and skills database developed as part of the Skills Panel project be further developed and promoted.</li> </ul>	<p>Regional Forum and the BME Regional Network</p>
<p><i>Policy and planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Regional Skills Alliance be requested to put the issue of a joined up approach to the BME VCS sector on their agenda and that this also form part of the developing Regional Skills Plan.</li> <li>• The Regional Skills Alliance be asked to nominate a lead organisation and staff member who would liaise at a regional level with the BME sector on issues relating to learning and skills.</li> <li>• The BME VCS should be invited to join the VCS Regional learning and Skills Group.</li> </ul>	<p>Regional Forum and the BME Regional Network</p> <p>Regional Forum and the BME Regional network</p> <p>VCS Regional learning and Skills Group</p>
<p><i>Support systems for accessing skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Regional Forum discuss with the SSDA specific questions which relate to the learning and skills and capacity building needs of BME organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>Regional Forum</p>

<p><i>Partnership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that the LSC nominate one of its staff to act as lead person in developing a partnership approach to BME learning and skills issues and organisations.</li> <li>• The Regional Forum continues to play a support role in promoting the development of the BME sector in relation to learning and skills and that this work link closely to that of the BME Regional Panel/Regional Skills Panel.</li> <li>• It is recommended that the Yorkshire and Humber BME VCS develop relationships with Yorkshire Universities, the Association of Colleges, Black Practitioners Network and Connexions</li> <li>• It is recommended that closer links are developed with CEMVO</li> </ul>	<p>LSC</p> <p>Regional Forum</p> <p>Regional Forum/BME Regional network</p> <p>Regional Forum</p>
<p><i>Capacity building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LSC be asked if there are opportunities for the BME VCS to access any relevant in-house training and opportunities for mentoring and work shadowing.</li> <li>• Development work to be undertaken to devise programmes whereby refugees and asylum seekers with overseas qualifications are supported in converting these or upgrading them in order to access appropriate employment.</li> </ul>	<p>LSC</p> <p>Regional Forum/BME Regional network – LSC Measure 2.2 Group</p>

<b>BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS: Medium-term development – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007</b>	<b>Action by</b>
<p><i>Support Systems for Accessing Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That Business Links and VCS social enterprise bodies are supported in strengthening their networks with ethnic minority communities.</li> <li>• Existing capacity building schemes for the BME VCS are mapped for the Yorkshire and Humber region and that lessons learned from these schemes are identified so that good practice can be replicated across the region.</li> <li>• Ideas and proposals for research into the skills needs of BME groups are put to the LSC ESF Measure 2.2 Steering Group.</li> </ul>	<p>Regional Forum/BME Regional Network</p> <p>Regional Forum and the BME Regional network – LSC Measure 2.2 Group</p> <p>Regional forum/BME Regional network – LSC Measure 2.2 Group</p>
<p><i>Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national Hub for Financing VCS Activity be asked what steps it is able to take in order to redress the situation in relation to the under funding of the BME VCS.</li> <li>• The LSC be asked at national level what steps it, as a major funder of learning and skills provision, is able to take to redress the situation of under funding to the BME VCS.</li> <li>• The sub-regional social enterprise bodies are asked how the investment in BME social enterprise might be promoted through their activity.</li> </ul>	<p>Regional Forum/BME Regional network</p> <p>Regional Forum/BME Regional Network</p> <p>Regional Forum/BME Regional Network</p>
<p><i>Partnership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A regional BME VCS learning and skills event focussing on developing partnership and related issues be explored.</li> </ul>	<p>LSC/BME Regional network/VCS</p>

<p><i>Consultation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LSC continue to consult with the BME VCS through a range of methods and that certain of these are identified within this report e.g. the continuation of the Skills Panel, nominating a regional LSC staff member to lead on this work, annual BME learning and skills regional events etc.</li> </ul>	<p>LSC/provider organisations</p>
<p><i>Race equality and institutional change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LSC, the RDA and provider organisations actively promote and disseminate their activity in relation to such responsibilities, how they discharge them and how this serves to improve the situation of BME communities in relation to access to learning, retention, attainment and qualification.</li> <li>• A joint advisory group be established. Such a group could be made up of planning, funding, provider organisations in partnership with the BME sector and the VCS generally. The group would support agencies in developing their approach to the RRAA 2000.</li> <li>• In relation to both LSC staff and staff from other key agencies it is recommended that the appropriate training and development in Race Equality is undertaken.</li> <li>• The Regional Forum and the sub-regional consortia to actively promote the ChangeUp Race Equality framework to the VCS and the BME VCS as and when available.</li> </ul>	<p>LSC/provider organisations/Regional Forum/BME Regional network</p> <p>LSC and other public agencies</p> <p>LSC</p> <p>Regional Forum/Sub-regional consortia</p>

<p><i>Capacity building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the LSC already funds capacity building to the VCS that it build into contracts the expectation that this service is delivered to an appropriate proportion of BME VCS organisations.</li> <li>• The LSC draw on the lessons learned from existing capacity building programmes delivered to BME VCS organisations and that these lessons are promoted in partnership between the LSC and the BME VCS as good practice and replicated where needed through further LSC investment.</li> <li>• That the progress of actions from Firm Foundations is followed closely with a view to promoting this opportunity to the BME sector.</li> <li>• The LSC be encouraged to safeguard adequate resources in order to fund BME VCS activity in the areas of first steps, non-accredited learning and learning for personal fulfilment.</li> </ul>	<p>LSC</p> <p>LSC</p> <p>Regional Forum</p> <p>LSC</p>
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## **5 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Communication and networks**

- It is recommended that the regional BME learning and skills database developed as part of the Skills Panel project be further developed and promoted

### **5.2 Representation and engagement**

- It is recommended that the Regional Skills Panel be incorporated within the developing BME Regional panel commissioned by GOYH. The Skills Panel could operate according to the accountability and communication mechanisms offered through the Regional Panel and its secretariat – a bid for the additional funds required would go to the LSC.

### **5.3 Models for supporting panel members to act as “BME Skills Champions” in the Yorkshire and Humber Region**

- It is recommended that this initiative be developed, with appropriate resourcing, through the structures that will be established in order to operate the main BME Panel.
- It is recommended that volunteer representatives on planning and policy groups are reimbursed for travel, subsistence and child care expenses.

### **5.4 Policy and planning**

- It is recommended that the Regional Skills Alliance be requested to put the issue of a joined up approach to the BME VCS sector on their agenda and that this also form part of the developing Regional Skills Plan.
- It is also recommended that the Regional Skills Alliance be asked to nominate a lead organisation and staff member who would liaise at a regional level with the BME sector on issues relating to learning and skills.
- It is recommended that the Regional Forum continue to play a support role in promoting the development of the BME sector in relation to learning and skills and that this work link closely to that of the BME Regional Panel/Regional Skills Panel.

### **5.5 Support systems for accessing skills**

- It is recommended that the Regional Forum include within these discussions specific questions which relate to the learning and skills and capacity building needs of BME organisations.
- It is recommended that Business Links and VCS social enterprise bodies are asked to strengthen their networks with ethnic minority communities.
- It is recommended that existing capacity building schemes for the BME VCS are mapped for the Yorkshire and Humber region and that lessons learned from these schemes are identified so that good practice can be replicated across the region.
- It is recommended that ideas and proposals for research into the skills needs of refugees and asylum seekers and of specific client groups and their supporting staff

e.g. people with learning difficulties, community users of mental health services, young offenders and BME people released from custody and young mothers are put to the ESF Measure 2.2 Steering Group.

## **5.6 Funding**

- It is recommended that the national Hub for Financing VCS Activity be asked what steps it is able to take in order to redress this situation.
- It is recommended that the LSC be asked at national level what steps it, as a major funder of learning and skills provision, is able to take to redress this situation.
- It is recommended that the network Social Enterprise Yorkshire and the Humber (SEYH) be asked how investing in the development of BME social enterprise might be promoted through their activity.

## **5.7 Partnership**

- It is recommended that the LSC nominate one of its staff to act as lead person in developing a partnership approach to BME learning and skills issues and organisations.
- It is recommended that a regional BME VCS learning and skills event focussing on developing partnership and related issues be explored.
- It is recommended that relationships be developed with Yorkshire Universities and the Association of Colleges
- It is recommended that closer links are developed with CEMVO

## **5.8 Consultation**

- It is recommended that the LSC continue to consult with the BME VCS through a range of methods and that certain of these are identified within this report e.g. the continuation of the Skills Panel, nominating a regional LSC staff member to lead on this work, annual BME learning and skills regional events etc.

## **5.9 Race equality and institutional change**

- It is recommended that the LSC, the RDA and provider organisations actively promote and disseminate their responsibilities in relation to their duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (RRAA 2000) and also the monitoring of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures, how they discharge them and how this serves to improve the situation of BME communities in relation to access to learning, retention, attainment and qualification.
- It is recommended that a joint advisory group be established. Such a group could be made up of planning, funding, provider organisations in partnership with the BME sector and the VCS generally. The group would support agencies in developing their approach to the RRAA 2000.
- In relation to both LSC staff and staff from other key agencies it is recommended that the appropriate training and development in Race Equality is undertaken.

- It is recommended that the Regional Forum actively promote the Race Equality framework to the VCS and the BME VCS as and when available.

#### **5.10 Capacity building**

- It is recommended that where the LSC already funds capacity building to the VCS it builds into contracts the expectation that this service is delivered to an appropriate proportion of BME VCS organisations.
- It is also recommended that the LSC draw on the lessons learned from existing capacity building programmes delivered to BME VCS organisations and that these lessons are promoted as good practice and replicated where needed through further LSC investment.
- It is recommended that the LSC be asked if there are opportunities for the BME VCS to access any relevant in-house training.
- It is recommended that the progress of actions from Firm Foundations: the Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building is followed closely with a view to promoting the opportunity of asset transfer to the BME VCS.

#### **5.11 First steps, non accredited learning and learning for personal fulfilment**

- It is recommended that the LSC safeguard adequate resources in order to fund BME VCS activity in the areas of first steps into learning, non accredited learning and learning for personal fulfilment due to their great contribution to civil, social and economic renewal.

#### **5.12 Overseas qualifications**

- It is recommended that work is undertaken to devise programmes whereby refugees and asylum seekers with overseas qualifications are supported in converting these or upgrading them in order to access appropriate employment.

## **Documents and Resources**

Barriers to Ethnic Minority Social Enterprise, SEEM, Nizam Chowdhury, 2004

BME Learning Organisations, Voluntary Action Kirklees, 2005

BME Sector Mapping Report, Wakefield District Learning Partnership, 2005

BME Voluntary and Community organisations: Compact Code of Good Practice, the Home Office

ChangeUp – Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the VCS, Active Communities Unit at the Home Office, 2004

Developing Capacity: Next Steps for ChangeUp – Developing Excellence in the VCS, Active Communities Unit at the Home Office, 2005

Firm Foundations – The Government’s Framework for Community Capacity Building, the Home Office 2004

Making A Difference: Proposing Options for Effective BME VCS Engagement across Yorkshire and the Humber, the Social Business Company, 2005

Race Equality Scheme, South East Development Agency, 2002

Working Together, Learning & Skills Council, 2004

## APPENDIX ONE

### **Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum**

Dear Colleague

The Gus John Partnership (GJP) Limited has been commissioned by the Regional Forum to help develop a regional BME Skills Panel. Attached are:

- Selection Criteria for choosing the 10 panel members
- the Application Form to be used by those wishing to be considered for membership of the panel
- a Questionnaire for Black and Ethnic Minority organisations in the voluntary and community sector
- a Questionnaire for other stakeholders, especially mainstream providers

I should be grateful if you would:

- a) kindly pass on the application form and selection criteria to any individuals whom you consider eligible for membership of the panel and encourage them to apply
- b) kindly provide the questionnaire to BME organisations in the voluntary and community sector and ask them to complete it and return it to GJP
- c) complete the Stakeholders Questionnaire yourself and return it to us.

Your assistance with this project is hugely appreciated.

Yours sincerely - Professor Gus John

The Gus John Partnership Limited  
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Manchester M21 0TE  
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# Recruitment of up to 10 members for a Regional BME Skills Panel

## Criteria for recruitment and selection:

### 1. Geographical Location

- At least 3 members from North Yorkshire and the Humber
- Members from the South Yorkshire sub region would be chosen in order to represent the key areas of Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield
- Members from West Yorkshire would be chosen to represent Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees

### 2. Required Knowledge, Understanding and Skills

- knowledge of the black and ethnic minority voluntary sector and of:
  - a. activities within the sector to promote the take up of learning and skills by black and minority ethnic people
  - b. learning and skills provision made by the sector itself
  - c. the extent to which mainstream provision is catering for the needs of black and minority ethnic people
- understanding:
  - of the learning and skills development needs of black and minority ethnic people post-16
  - of the barriers to access to learning and skills development provision that might operate for different groups within the BME community
- understanding of the difficulties facing the BME voluntary sector in making provision for learning and skills
- understanding of the role of the Adult Information, Advice and Guidance service
- skills:
  - in putting forward the views of people in the sector, i.e., of workers, volunteers, learners and members of management committees
  - in sifting and making sense of a wide range of information
  - in listening to other points of view and engaging in democratic debate
  - in working as a member of a team and contributing to a collective effort

### 3. Evidence of engagement with the particular black and ethnic minority community's activities in the area of learning and skills development

#### Note:

Applications from young people aged 16-25, Muslim women and BME people with disabilities are particularly welcome in order that the Panel could be as representative as possible.

Panel members will be paid £150 per day, plus up to £25 travel and must be able and willing to attend all four sessions of the panel.

Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Forum

**Recruitment of up to 10 members for a Regional Black and Ethnic Minority Skills Panel**

Application Form

1. Name: -
2. Male/Female: Age:
3. Address:
  
4. Name of organisation/community group with which involved:
  
5. Are you applying in a personal capacity...? Yes/No
6. On behalf of a BME organisation? Yes/No
7. Name of organisation if different from (4) above?
  
8. In which geographical area do you/does your organisation operate?
  
9. What are your reasons for wishing to become a member of the Regional BME Skills Panel?
  
10. Are you able to commit yourself to attending all four meetings of the Panel?
11. The criteria for selecting Panel members are attached. Please demonstrate how you meet those criteria:  
  
(continue on separate sheet as necessary, marking your name and address at the top)
  
12. Is there any other information, relevant to this application, you wish to share with us?

## **APPENDIX TWO**

### Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum **Black and Minority Ethnic Learning and Skills Panel**

#### **Questionnaire**

Clarifying the Expectations and Needs of Key Stakeholders in the BME Voluntary and Community Sector

#### **Background**

The Regional Forum has commissioned work on a project to develop a regional BME learning and skills panel, which it is managing on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The project is part of the LSC's engagement with the voluntary and community sector through the 'Working Together' strategy.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To develop a database of BME voluntary and community sector organisations delivering or seeking to deliver learning and skills
- To clarify the needs and expectations of key stakeholders involved in raising the capacity of the BME voluntary and community sector to deliver learning and skills
- To organise a pilot regional BME learning and skills panel
- To gather knowledge about the issues and barriers facing BME organisations wanting to deliver skills projects
- To discuss stakeholder views and to test ideas for how to support the BME sector to deliver skills projects

#### **We need to hear from you**

This project is aimed at strengthening the capacity of the BME voluntary and community sector to deliver learning and skills. The Gus John Partnership Limited (GJP) has been engaged to help develop this project and the work is being led by Professor Gus John.

We are interested in hearing from BME organisations that promote learning and skills development through a range of activities, including, for example:

- through opportunities for volunteering
- through providing support
- through development of advocacy and representation skills and
- through community involvement.

Please assist us by answering the questions that follow:

1. What is the name of your organisation?
2. Address:
3. How long have you been in existence?
4. What are your main activities?
5. What is or has been your involvement in delivering learning and skills provision?
6. What barriers have you experienced in doing so?
7. Are there issues you could identify from your experience of delivering learning and skills provision?
8. Have you been prevented by any of the following factors from offering learning and skills development opportunities (e.g., space; absence of qualified tutors; money to pay tutors; difficulties in using shared premises; problems with accreditation; take up of planned provision; any others)? Please state which:
9. What do you see as the main learning and skills development needs of the black and ethnic minority groups in your area?
10. Have you received any form of support in building your capacity to deliver learning and skills – from any source?
11. Do you know what use is made by the BME community of Adult Information and Guidance Services in your area?
12. Have you any contact with mainstream learning and skills providers?
13. Have you had any opportunity to work in partnership with such providers in planning provision for the BME community?

14. Was that provision then made by your organisation or by the college/Connexions Service/Adult Education Service, etc., or jointly?
15. What is your organisation's assessment of the extent to which mainstream provision is meeting the needs of BME people in your area?
16. Do you have any involvement with the Learning and Skills Council?
17. If 'yes', could you describe the form such involvement has taken and for how long?
18. What in your view would best help to build the capacity of BME organisations in the voluntary and community sector to deliver learning and skills?
19. Are you willing for your details to be included in a database of regional BME organisations involved in delivering or wanting to deliver learning?
20. Are you willing for your name and location to be published in the list of organisations/individuals completing this questionnaire?

*GJP thanks you for filling in this questionnaire. Your answers will be of enormous help in strengthening the role of the BME voluntary and community sector in delivering learning and skills*

**Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum  
Black and Minority Ethnic Learning and Skills Panel**

**Stakeholders Questionnaire**

Clarifying the Issues, Expectations and Needs of Key Stakeholders involved with the BME Voluntary and Community Sector

Background

The Regional Forum has commissioned work on a project to develop a regional BME learning and skills panel, which it is managing on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The project is part of the LSC's engagement with the voluntary and community sector through the 'Working Together' strategy.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To develop a database of BME voluntary and community sector organisations delivering or seeking to deliver learning and skills
- To clarify the needs and expectations of key stakeholders involved in raising the capacity of the BME voluntary and community sector to deliver learning and skills
- To organise a pilot regional BME learning and skills panel
- To gather knowledge about the issues and barriers facing BME organisations wanting to deliver skills projects
- To discuss stakeholder views and to test ideas for how to support the BME sector to deliver skills projects

**We need to hear from you**

This project is aimed at strengthening the capacity of the BME voluntary and community sector to deliver learning and skills. The Gus John Partnership Limited (GJP) has been engaged to help develop this project and the work is being led by Professor Gus John.

We are interested in hearing from Post-16 providers as well as organisations that promote learning and skills development through a range of activities, including, for example:

- through opportunities for volunteering
- through providing support
- through development of advocacy and representation skills and
- through community involvement.

Please assist us by answering the questions that follow:

1. What is the name of your organisation?
  
2. Address:

3. How long have you been in existence?

4. What are your main activities?

What is or has been your involvement in delivering learning and skills provision to the black and ethnic minority communities in your area?

5. What barriers have you experienced in doing so?

6. Are there issues you could identify from your experience of targeting your learning and skills provision to BME communities?

7. What do you see as the main learning and skills development needs of the black and ethnic minority groups in your area?

8. Have you taken any proactive steps to plan the delivery of learning and skills development opportunities in partnership with BME communities?

9. Are there any specific activities within your various 'functions' (within the meaning of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000) that are targeted at the BME communities in your area?

10. Do you engage in any form of consultation and communication with those communities as part of your implementation of the RRAA 2000?

11. Do you know what use is made by BME communities of Adult Information and Guidance Services in your area?

12. Do you have any monitoring information on the impact of such usage on BME take up of your provision?

13. Have you been involved in any way in supporting the development of capacity within BME communities to deliver learning and skills?

15. What is your assessment of the extent to which mainstream provision is meeting the needs of BME people in your area?

16. What in your view would best help to build the capacity of BME organisations in the voluntary and community sector to deliver learning and skills?

17. Do you see a role for your organisation in this?

18. Are you willing for your name and location to be published in the list of organisations/individuals completing this questionnaire?

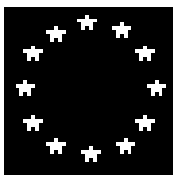
***GJP thanks you for filling in this questionnaire. Your answers will be of enormous help in strengthening the role of the BME voluntary and community sector in delivering learning and skills.***

### APPENDIX THREE

#### REGIONAL SKILLS PANEL MEMBERS

<b>PANEL MEMBER</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
<b>Sajda Shah</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>North Lincolnshire</b>
<b>Waseem Mirza</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Bradford</b>
<b>Irshad Akbar</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Sheffield</b>
<b>Peter Singh</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Doncaster</b>
<b>Trenton Wiggan</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Barnsley</b>
<b>Mahroof Hussain</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Rotherham</b>
<b>Christine Ventour</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Wakefield</b>
<b>Kevin Nurse</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Kirklees</b>
<b>Lilian Ahmed Rose</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Humber</b>
<b>Saroj Verma</b>	<b>Female</b>	
<b>Denzil Nurse</b>	<b>Male</b>	
<b>Lloyd Pusey</b>	<b>Male</b>	

Supported by



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