

Preparing to shape the voice and influence of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities of Bristol

Values are what you do. Everything else is just words (Anon)

This statement is supporting a consultation for a shared desire of BME-led organisations, the wider VCS and public sector organisations to forge a new way of developing the role of BME voice and influence to inform and be a part of the city's future.

Aspiration

To support Bristol's ambition to become a leading British and European city by ensuring the leadership and innovative abilities of all of its residents are fully realised. To this end we will:

- work with BME communities to strengthen their voices and influence to ensure they play a full part in decision making processes
- work with Bristol's institutions to improve openness and the ability to hear the voices of and be influenced by BME communities
- build coalitions that strengthen the voices and influence of any disadvantaged groups or individuals regardless of background.

Context

While there are pockets of innovation and practice where the city has been successful there are also divisions and inequalities that shape too many aspects of the city's life. The fact that the city is splintered and significant numbers of Bristol residents never reach their full potential means the leadership and innovative talent pool from which the city draws is, by definition, narrower and shallower than it should be. Bristol needs to actively harness the abilities that lie in the full breadth and depth of its citizens if it wishes to be an inclusive, leading European city. This is both a matter for social justice and good business and good democracy.

Our Philosophy

- Our approach to race equality includes an understanding of power, institutions and decision making processes which sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally excluded and disadvantage people on the basis of race and ethnicity
- We understand race equality in a way that takes race seriously whilst respecting the fact that other people and groups also have histories of marginalisation and poverty. We understand progress on race equality is integral to the progress of all equality and disadvantaged groups
- Our approach to race equality is one which says that it is fundamental to the city's success. Inequality is inefficient and drains the productivity of Bristol's economy in areas such as business, health, education, housing and criminal justice.

The Challenges

To BME communities: BME communities must determine to organise, engage and take up positions of influence and power. We must demand equality of access to services funded by taxpayers' money but we cannot rely on policies or strategies alone to change the imperfections, which currently exist. We need to take responsibility for driving change and supporting each other when we step up to the challenges.

To the city: The city leadership needs to own and prioritise race equality and ensure that BME communities are fully represented in all institutions, at all levels. There must be a political climate within which engagement and a wider range of voices can be heard and acted on. The city needs to develop a mature understanding of inequality and racism, which enables people to tackle the complex relationship between unintended consequences and "the way we do things." Whilst the responsibility to tackle the cause and effect of race inequalities is not limited to any one institution, we are looking to Bristol City Council to recognise its responsibility as a lead institution as it holds the city's political leadership and is a major employer.

We therefore ask all those who have a vested interest in Bristol to support this ethos which will contribute to this consultation exercise.