



One North West Summary Response to the Regional Strategy (RS2010). Part One: High Level Strategic Framework Consultation

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1. About One North West

One North West is the regional Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Network designed to involve BME Third Sector organisations in the design, development and implementation of Regional strategies and policy that affect BME communities throughout the North West

2. Introduction

Between 13th February and 23rd February 2010, One North West (1NW) held seven consultation events on Part One of the Regional Strategy (RS2010) in order to ensure an input from the BME Third Sector in the development of RS2010. The consultation process involved the participation of 155 people and the representation of 93 BME Third Sector organisations from across the North West

1NW focused on Part 3 of RS2010, around plans to 'Release the potential of our people and tackle poverty'. During the session, participants discussed barriers to employment, skills and enterprise opportunities and what issues existed around access and gaps. Following this they were asked to think about potential solutions that could be recommended and then looked at 'Building on Our Strong Tradition of Social Enterprise' and 'Social Exclusion'.

The participation of these BME Third Sector Organisations provides a unique insight into RS2010 that is based on the expertise, knowledge and experience of people working within BME communities in the North West

There was also participation from individuals from within different communities, including Bangladeshi women in Lancashire and a new and emerging Nepalese community in Cumbria. This engagement provides an insight from the perspective of socially excluded individuals for whom RS2010 should be designed to benefit.

3. Common Areas of Access Issues, Gaps and Barriers

There were common themes that emerged around the perceived barriers, access issues and gaps that would need to be considered when improving employment opportunities, enterprise and skills in BME communities. If the 'potential of our people, is to be released, it is imperative that these areas are addressed.

There were common themes that were identified as barriers that existed around access to skills, employment and enterprise, which are::

- Discrimination
- Cultural Awareness
- Lack of Positive Engagement from Mainstream Agencies
- Language Barriers
- Childcare

3. Specific Areas of Access Issues, Gaps and Barriers

There were also specific issues identified when discussing each area:

- **Employment:** Lack of opportunities for career progression and valuing people's skills;
- **Enterprise:** Inaccessible business support; financial exclusion; and lack of mentors; and
- **Skills:** Information; narrow focus on skills agenda; timing of classes; low levels of BME teachers; Apprenticeships system; and transport.

4. Key Recommendations to release the potential of BME communities

In spite of barriers that exist, BME communities are still achieving a lot; however there needs more opportunities to reach the higher levels that they are capable of and compete on an equitable basis. It was felt that RS2010 needs to be more innovative about how to address the issues and choose priorities. Below is a series of recommendations below that have been put forward by participants from the consultation process.

- Maximise the Potential of BME Third Sector providers in the employability, enterprise and skills agenda;
- Investment in Specialist Business Support;
- Positive Engagement from Service Providers;
- Effective Monitoring;
- Regional Review of ESOL Provision;
- Investment in Mentors and BME Leadership;
- Releasing the Potential of Skilled Migrants and Refugees;
- Strategic Connections between Underemployed Communities and Economic Opportunities;
- Supporting Parents;
- Affordable and Accessible Childcare Campaign;
- Flexible Working;
- Increase Value of Volunteering in RS2010; and
- Career Development Opportunities

5. Building on Our Strong Tradition of Social Enterprise: Key Recommendations

The recommendations made below have developed from discussions throughout the consultation and a slight concern about the aim of a 'world class' Third Sector and what implications that this will have for a sector for which sustainability is a major concern.

- A world class and **diverse** Third Sector;
- Inclusion of BME Third Sector in Commissioning;
- Specialist BME Infrastructure Support;
- Development of BME Consortium;
- Involvement of BME Third Sector; and
- Separate recognition of Faith Sector.

6. Tackling the serious challenges raised by social exclusion, deprivation, ill health and inequality: Key Recommendations

There is a significant and well-documented relationship between ethnicity and poverty that is not mentioned within RS2010, which means that complex issues will not be adequately dealt with.

The previous sections have provided recommendations **that will be as** applicable to this area also, however, there is little point in repeating the information; below are specific recommendations that were made when the consultation explored the issue of social exclusion:

- Active Empowerment;
- Holistic Approach; and
- Recognise the role of the BME Third Sector.

7. Addressing the Implications of Demographic Change

It was felt that whilst celebrating diversity is welcome, it does not replace anti-racism and attempts to eradicate inequality. It is strongly recommended that a more explicit recognition of the need to tackle inequality and discrimination is included within this section.

8. Race and Gender in RS2010

It was felt that RS2010 is gender-neutral and that the overall strategy has to be based on an explicit understanding and stating of gender equality. In order to tackle this, RS2010 must first recognise and acknowledge this and then implement strategies to tackle it.