

MORE THAN A STATEMENT

RACE AND REPRESENTATION IN BEXLEY'S
VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

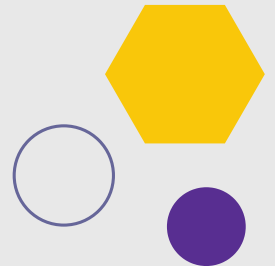


RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY
ANITA SANGHA FOR BEXLEY
VOLUNTARY SERVICE COUNCIL



A WORD FROM OUR CEO

**Vikki Wilkinson, CEO of Bexley Voluntary
Service Council**

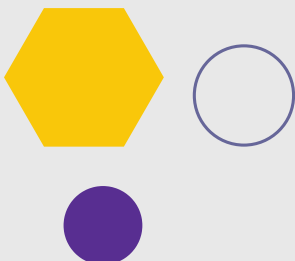


More than a statement.

This project was really important to BVSC and I. We cannot support the communities that will need our help in the coming months until we have some difficult conversations about racism and discrimination in our own sector. We have to challenge these issues within our sector and our organisations, so we can support those who will need us most in the months and years to come.

Please dip into the Executive Summary for an overview of the findings and recommendations from this project; Part One of the report for more detail, or the entire 70 page document. All I ask is that you choose actions in these pages that you can commit to, and which we can work together on going forward.

Finally, I would like to thank Anita Sangha, an amazing volunteer who committed her incredible skills, and substantial time, to undertake this research. I extend a special thank you to all those who participated in the project for your openness, generosity and commitment to a more equal society.



ABOUT BVSC



Bexley Voluntary Service Council serves as the co-ordinating body for voluntary activity in Bexley. We aim to ensure that there is a **strong, sustainable and influential** voluntary and community sector in Bexley that can have a real, positive impact on the lives of all residents here in the borough.

BVSC **trains, advises, and advocates** for all voluntary, community and faith organisations in the borough so their voice, and their impact, is amplified.

How do we do this? We are guided by five key outcomes in our efforts to amplify the voices of those working hard to make a positive impact on Bexley:

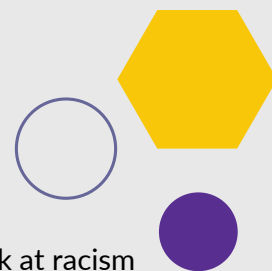
1. Recruiting and supporting volunteers in the borough via our **Volunteer Centre**
2. Building **supportive and influential relationships** within the sector and across the borough with key groups in public and private sectors
3. **Sharing, championing and celebrating** the sector's achievements
4. Continually supporting the development of a **thriving, resilient and sustainable** sector.

For more information about us, please head to bvsc.co.uk/about.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This piece of volunteer-led research was undertaken by Anita Sangha, on behalf of Bexley Voluntary Service Council. She has just completed her BA Politics, Sociology and Eastern European Studies at UCL, and will be pursuing postgraduate studies in 2021. For enquiries, please contact anita.sangha@live.co.uk

ABOUT THIS PROJECT



BVSC has undertaken this volunteer-led research project in order to take a closer look at racism and representation of ethnic groups in Bexley's Voluntary and Community Sector (VSC).

This research was undertaken following the first wave of COVID-19, whereby we saw clearly the disproportionate impact of the pandemic hit Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME) because of structural racism and discrimination in society that remains insufficiently challenged.

We cannot support the communities that will need our help in the coming months until we have some difficult conversations about racism and discrimination in our own sector. We have to challenge these issues within our sector and our organisations, so we can support those who will need us most in the months and years to come.

We hope this project helps to reinvigorate these conversations across the borough and help us see how we can promote equality, diversity and inclusion within our VCS, and better engage with our community who will no doubt need us more than ever.

USING THE TERM 'BAME'

BVSC recognises that the term 'BAME' can be considered a reductive term as it does not allow us to look carefully at the differences in the experiences between different ethnic groups. We used the term in this project because it is widely understood across the sector, and so is useful in discussions about racism and representation in Bexley's VCS.

BVSC wants to actively consider the differences and similarities between experiences of racial discrimination and injustice between different groups.

Through this project and wider work, we aim to develop our understanding of these differences and develop a more comprehensive vocabulary that allows us to discuss these issues in a more accurate and culturally sensitive way.



NAVIGATING THIS REPORT

We have split this report into three sections, so you can find the information you're most interested in as easily as possible.

Take a look through the **Executive Summary** for the main findings, read through **Part One** which goes into more detail about our research, and take a look through **Part Two** to learn more about how we captured our 'snapshot' and what we can do to improve future research projects like this one.

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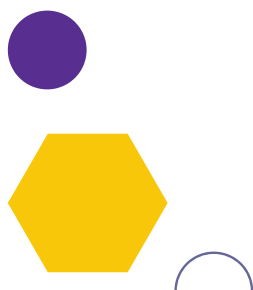
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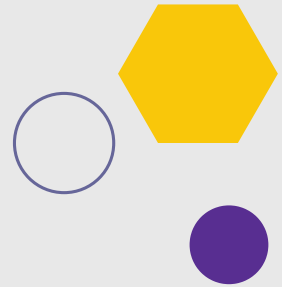
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



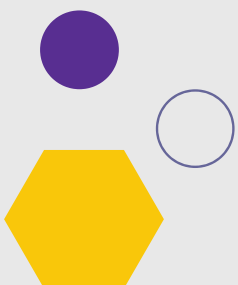
The purpose of the charity sector has always been to promote sustained, impactful change in society that meets public need, rather than create profit. Together, we have struggled through years of budget cuts, leadership changes and policy shifts, and much more. Yet, our mission has always stayed the same despite these challenges: **we serve the community, working to enhance the wellbeing of all people who require our support.**

In 2020, our sector is faced with another challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it dramatic social, political, and economic change, the ramifications of which we will feel for years to come. It has clearly exposed the inequalities in society and exacerbated them further, creating higher levels of need than ever.

Our VCS in Bexley has been able to work with the community to get through the pandemic, but as the impact of COVID-19 continues to reveal itself and increases the demand for our services over the coming months, we have to be ready to get through it.

In particular, we must ensure that the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 are able to engage with our sector and receive the support they need.

No matter an individuals' background, we need to make sure that our organisations are accessible to everyone who needs us. However, we know that the same structural inequalities and prejudice we see in society that has led to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on BAME communities also exists in our sector.



WE MUST DO MORE

The 'Home Truths' (2020) report defined the issue with racism and a lack of diversity in the charity sector effectively: this is not a problem endemic to *just* the sector. Racism remains an unresolved issue in sector *because* it remains an unresolved issue in society. ACEVO's research found:



- **68%** of people surveyed from BAME backgrounds had experienced, witnessed, or heard stories of racism within the sector (ACEVO 2019).
- A further **45%** of respondents had been subjected to ignorant or insensitive questioning about their culture.
- **30%** had been scrutinised more harshly for their work by their managers, and felt their direct experiences of racism within the sector had a negative impact on their mental wellbeing respectively.
- White leaders and 'system-shapers' had failed to promote a more representative VCO because of fears of '**getting it wrong**'.



"The fear about being victim to assault and racism among ethnic minority people is itself harmful, and undermines resilience, hope and motivation. People of visible migrant or ethnic minority heritage, who see themselves as targets of negative attitudes, are living in fear and this is a chronic stressor, which in turn can affect their children's mental health."
- SYNERGI 2018

If we are to continue to strive to support Bexley throughout the pandemic we must ensure that our organisations are accessible to all residents. To do this, we need to take a closer look at organisations and see where we could be doing more to more accurately represent our community in Bexley.

What does this community look like and how does our own VSC compare? We set out to create a 'snapshot' so we can compare the demographics of the VCS against those of the borough. Then, we can take the necessary steps to more deeply embed anti-racism and pro-representation within our own organisation and in the wider VCS in Bexley.



BEXLEY SNAPSHOT

WHAT DID WE FIND?

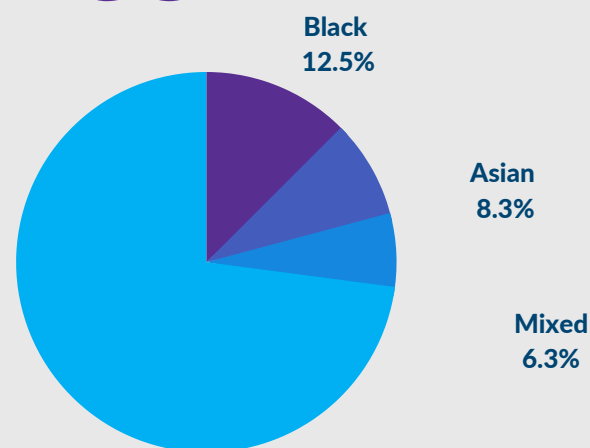
01 DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, we found **similar levels of representation** of BAME groups in the VCS in comparison to local population estimates. However, we cannot say that our VCS is truly representative of the population because of a **small survey sample size**.

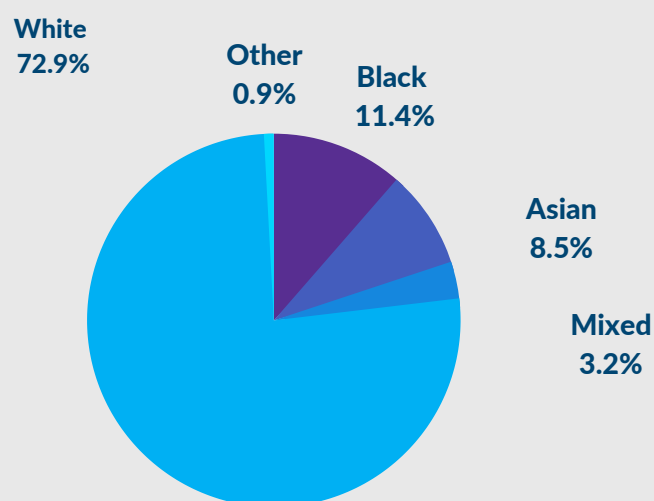
With 48 responses from a sector that is at least 800 organisations strong, we cannot say that the sector as a whole is representative of the population of Bexley - last estimated to be around 247,000 people in 2019 - based on these findings alone.

This research does still have value: the aim of this project was to capture a 'snapshot', and this initial image generated via the survey and interviews can continue to be developed in the future. Further, the qualitative feedback about experiences and views regarding the sector, racism, and representation has tremendous value to deepening our collective understanding of these complex issues.

Through survey responses and interviews, as well as desk-research, we have created a baseline to compare against going forward, and we would like to thank everyone who participated in this project for contributing to our 'snapshot'.

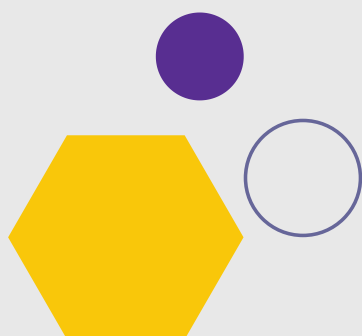


Ethnic Breakdown of Bexley's VSC



Ethnic Breakdown of Bexley

Figure 1. Demographics of Bexley's VCS in Comparison to Demographics of the Borough, Based on Estimates taken from London Borough of Bexley (2020)



- We had 48 responses, of which 72.9% of respondents identified as White, compared to around 27% identifying as Black, Asian, or Mixed/Multiple Ethnicities.
- This is *similar* to the latest census data for Bexley, where 76% of the population identified as White, and 24% as belonging to the BAME groups in total.
- 85% of respondents were **women**, and almost 60% were **over age 45**.
- 92% of respondents identified as **heterosexual**.
- 33% of respondents had an **undergraduate degree**, 14% had Masters' degrees, and 8% had Professional Degrees.
- Around 13% identified as having a **disability**.
- Around 21% of respondents had additional **caring responsibilities**, and 9/10 respondents in this group were women

02 ATTITUDES

There was a consensus that racism (73%) and the underrepresentation of different ethnic groups within the VCS (66.7%) **limits our ability to support** the communities we serve. However, most responses to statements were neutral. This could suggest:

- A **lack of awareness** of these issue because it does not directly impact a predominantly White sector;
- Respondents have no strong opinion because they do not view the issues to be **important**;
- Respondents do not feel able to give strong opinions because they do not think they are in a position to do so, as a predominantly White group, discussing '**BAME**' issues

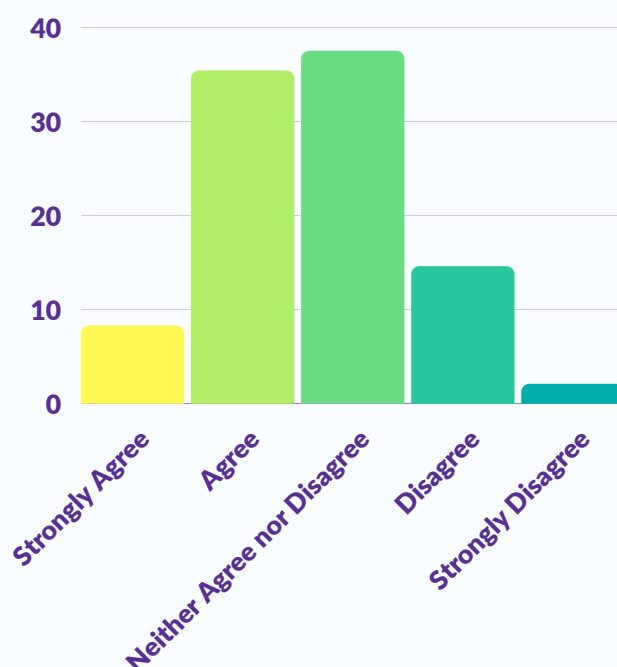


Figure 2. Responses to "My workplace is doing enough to tackle racism within it"



03 EXPERIENCE

In terms of experiences in the sector, respondents largely view the VCS as positive, with **42%** rating their time as **'Very Good'** overall.

However, in regards to experiences of racism, **25%** of respondents reported either knowing someone who had experienced racial discrimination, or had experienced this themselves within the VCS.

The most common forms of discrimination reported tended to be **micro-aggressions**:

- comments made about respondents ability to speak or write in English;
- jokes about ethnicity;
- and suspecting to be being treated less favourably because of ethnicity.

Few reported incidences to their manager, and when they did, **just 1 in 4 were satisfied with the response.**

This speaks to a larger issue: it appears the VCS in Bexley, like the rest of the country, struggles to identify and discuss the nature and impact of discrimination.

A single joke to one person is *yet another* to someone else, reminded again of their 'otherness' and perpetuates the idea that the sector is only for a specific type of person.

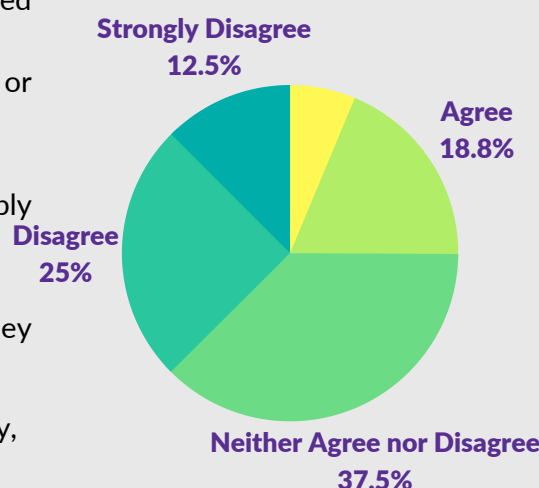


Figure 3. Responses to "Racism is a prominent issue within the charity sector"

04 MOVING FORWARD

Few respondents knew of effective schemes or policies to promote representation of BAME groups, but wanted going forward were keen to receive:

- Greater **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training** from BVSC to support anti-racism in the sector
- Additional EDI resources for **senior staff and leaders**
- Providing support directly or signposting to other groups who can support victims of racial discrimination

Feedback from interviews mirrored these ideas, and also suggested that the VCS as a whole should encourage **greater integration of BAME organisations** into the wider sector. Ultimately, it was frequently observed that racism in the sector is part of a wider cultural issue in the UK and Bexley specifically. Addressing these issues in the sector must occur simultaneously alongside cultural change in the community as a whole.



05 RECOMMENDATIONS

01 PROMOTING COMMUNITY COHESION IN BEXLEY

HOW DO WE SUPPORT SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN BEXLEY?

ISSUE

Lack of understanding and awareness of the nature, impact, and root causes of racial discrimination in society

Reduced cultural sensitivity and tolerance towards different ethnic and cultural groups, which perpetuates old-fashioned or traditional social attitudes, leading to a lack of cohesion between different groups in Bexley

AIMS

Need to promote cultural sensitivity and tolerance towards different cultural and ethnic groups

Raise awareness and educate the community about the history of, nature, and impact of racial discrimination in society

OUTPUT

Develop a community-based, volunteer-led, representative group with individuals from Bexley's VCS, BVSC, educational; health and social care; police and community watch groups; faith groups, and Bexley Council

Promote inclusion of different cultural and ethnic groups, providing a forum to raise prominent issues facing the community and establish collaborative solutions.

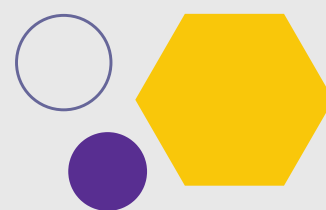
Engage in community-wide educational campaigns about the history, nature, and impact of racism. Work with young people where possible to promote tolerance and inclusion.

OUTCOMES

Develop a more tolerant and culturally sensitive attitudes, and a more inclusive and cohesive Bexley

Reduce exclusion and segregation of different cultural and ethnic groups in Bexley.

enforce that racial discrimination is unacceptable and increase understandings of the nature of discrimination and its impact on real people



05 RECOMMENDATIONS

02 PROMOTING ANTI-RACISM IN BEXLEY'S VCS

ISSUE

A lack of widespread awareness and understanding of what qualifies as racial discrimination and a lack of confidence amongst victims of racial discrimination to report or challenge it when it occurs,

Victims of discrimination do not know where to go for support, or perceive a lack of support available to them

Racial discrimination goes unidentified and/or unchallenged

Attitudes that perpetuate racial discrimination in all its forms are not challenged

AIMS

Promote anti-racism within the sector and greater cultural sensitivity & training for senior staff to better deal with reported incidences of racial discrimination.

Empowering those who face racial discrimination to come forward and report incident(s), and provide support or sign-post to organisations who can support them.

OUTPUT

BVSC facilitates and encourages widespread uptake of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and resources for Bexley's VSC

Specific training for senior staff and leaders to clarify what support they should offer to employees and volunteers

Creating clear guides for employees and volunteers on how to report and challenge racial discrimination at work and what they should expect

Signposting to anti-discrimination organisations and support groups for those who have experienced racism in the sector

OUTCOMES

Develop more tolerant and culturally sensitive attitudes in Bexley's VCS & encourage greater BAME engagement within the sector and in the community between different cultural and ethnic groups

Encourage people to develop the confidence to report incidences of racial discrimination by providing clear pathways to do so.

Tackle the view that the voluntary and community sector is 'not for' certain cultural and ethnic groups via clear commitment to the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion .

Reinforce that racial discrimination is unacceptable and increase understandings of the nature of discrimination and its impact on real people



05 RECOMMENDATIONS

03 MAKING REPRESENTATION A PRIORITY

ISSUE

A lack of data and general awareness of levels of representation of different ethnic and cultural groups within Bexley's VCS organisations and across the sector as a whole, and a lack of capacity to gather sector-wide demographic data regularly and within organisations

Inability to clearly see where representation of different cultural and ethnic groups needs to be increased in relation to borough-wide demographic statistics. Inability to determine where efforts to increase representation within organisations and across the sector have been effective, or need to be changed to meet this goal

AIMS

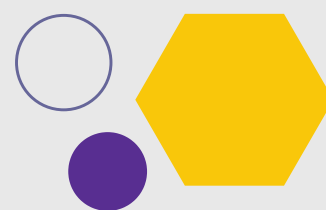
Collect demographic data on Bexley's VCS as a whole and encourage organisations to conduct similar checks internally at regular intervals. Develop a more detailed image of the demographics of the sector that can be compared against similar data for the borough as a whole . Make informed and targeted efforts to increase representation of underrepresented ethnic and cultural groups. Demonstrate that the sector and its services are accessible to all people in Bexley.

OUTPUT

Organisations within Bexley's VCS participate in sector-wide demographic survey, the results of which are shared and tracked longitudinally to observe trends overtime within the sector and in relation to demographic changes in the borough

OUTCOMES

Learn more about who works or volunteers in Bexley's VCS and determine whether pro-representation schemes have been effective or require reconsideration. Promote a more diverse and representative VCS and increase the sector's ability to engage with a more diverse range of cultural and ethnic groups in Bexley.



05 RECOMMENDATIONS

04 CONTINUING TO SUPPORT BAME-LED ORGANISATIONS IN BEXLEY'S VCS

ISSUE

BAME specific and/or BAME-led organisations, groups, and forums are not well integrated into the wider VCS.

Bexley's VCS and the sector as a whole perceived as 'not for' BAME communities to engage with as service users or consider as a viable career path.

Bexley's VCS struggles to engage with a more diverse range of cultural and ethnic groups in the borough who need support.

AIMS

Reach out to members of the BAME Network and collect feedback on:

- **Current needs and challenges in the face of COVID-19 in service provision and in BAME communities**
- **Thoughts on the effectiveness of the Network during the limited window**
- **Whether the Network can be adapted or better supported to help meet challenges created by the pandemic**

OUTPUT

Collaboration between BVSC, Bexley Council, and BAME groups to develop supplementary program to build on previous successes of BAME Network; and support the Network and their beneficiaries in the face of COVID-19

Consider how BVSC and Bexley Council can support BAME-led or specific organisations to support service users and encourage greater integration and collaboration with the wider VCS.

Promote the work of BAME organisations and groups to raise profile of their work and existence in the borough to potential service users; job seekers and volunteers; and other VCS groups.

OUTCOMES

Raise awareness of services on offer in Bexley, specifically amongst those likely to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic

Increases collaboration and coordination between former BAME Network organisations, and incorporation of new organisations and BAME-specific forums into the wider VCS

Raised profile of BAME-led or specific organisations in Bexley and show the VCS to be open to all people who believe in working for public benefit.

05 RECOMMENDATIONS

05 SETTING THE STANDARD

ISSUE

Lack of clear guidelines around promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles across Bexley's VCS specifically
 Lack of guidance on how to actively promote EDI internally in Bexley's VCS.
 Harder to tackle perceptions that the VCS is accessible to all people from all backgrounds .

AIMS

Design fair and attainable standards that promote and embed EDI principles in Bexley's VCS for the future.
 Encourage VCS organisations to share 'good practices' in support of EDI and representation to promote cross-sector integration and collaboration.

OUTPUT

Work with Bexley's VCS, BVSC and other relevant organisations to craft the content of EDI and representation standards and guidelines

- Cross sector forums to create guidelines involving employees at different levels of seniority and volunteers

Regular reviews for organisations to see how well they have met standards and where they require additional support to do so

- Celebrate successes publicly
- Encourage collaboration and exchange of ideas between groups and organisations on how to meet standards

OUTCOMES

Increased integration of separate VCS organisations & groups through consultation process and sharing of good practices within the sector

Greater ability to demonstrate that the sector is welcome to all people who share the same commitment to advancing public good, and accessible to all who need support.

Ability to observe longitudinally efforts to promote EDI principles.

Bexley's VCS becomes more culturally sensitive, representative and better able to engage with different communities within the borough



To promote the development of an anti-racist and representative VCS, that can engage with everyone who needs our help in Bexley, it will take coordination, collaboration, and hard work from us all who work to support Bexley residents.

BVSC, the wider VCS and bodies and groups in Bexley should try to work together where we can to make Bexley a stronger and more resilient community.

01 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BVSC

- Work with the VCS and wider community to promote greater awareness of the **nature and impact of racism** in society and encourage **tolerance and cultural sensitivity** in Bexley
- Facilitate **equality, diversity, and inclusion training** internally and across the sector for employees and volunteers to engage with in the future
- Facilitate **regular 'snapshots'** to determine the extent to which the sector is representative of the demographics of the borough, particularly as these change in the future
- Work with the VCS to promote **greater integration** between **BAME** organisations and the wider sector
- Develop **clear, attainable standards and guidelines** for the VCS to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion across the sector

02 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEXLEY'S VCS

- Work with BVSC to promote **greater awareness** of the **nature and impact of racism** in society and encourage **tolerance and cultural sensitivity** in Bexley
- Participate in **equality, diversity, and inclusion training** to ensure all employees and volunteers develop and continue to show **cultural sensitivity and tolerance** to all people, regardless of background
- Work with BVSC to develop **clear standards and guidelines** to promote equality, diversity and inclusion within organisations

03 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY BODIES AND GROUPS IN BEXLEY

- Work with BVSC and the VCS to promote **greater awareness** of the **nature and impact of racism** in society and encourage **tolerance and cultural sensitivity** in Bexley
- Collaborate with BVSC where appropriate to develop **resources** and **provide support for victims** of racial discrimination
- Collaborate with BVSC where appropriate to develop **clear standards and guidelines** to promote equality, diversity and inclusion within organisations



CONCLUSION

MAKING MORE THAN A STATEMENT AGAINST RACISM AND UNDERREPRESENTATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS

If we do not commit to making more than just statements, we risk our ability to engage with the BAME communities who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and perpetuate the idea that our sector is not welcome to all who need help or share our mission.

We risk losing out on the opportunity to create a more diverse, creative, and innovative workforce that represents our borough and collectively wants to work hard to make sure the needs of the people of Bexley are met.

Tackling racism, a lack of cultural sensitivity, and intolerance in the community must become a core party of our strategies as a VSC and as a community. BVSC, Bexley's VCS, and the wider community organisations and groups such as the police, health and social care bodies, and Bexley Council, must all work together to support this aim.

To ensure that all Bexley residents are able to access and receive support, and those who want to help can join us to do so, we need to continue to have these difficult conversations. More than this, we must follow them up with substantive action, creating long term sustained social change that will help us to engage with all who need us. We have done well so far, but there is room to improve and we look forward to tackling this challenge together.



PART ONE

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION IN 2020

RESPONDING TO AN INTERNATIONAL MOMENT

Bexley Voluntary Service Council issued a statement in June to mark Volunteers Week, acknowledging all the people who spent their time supporting their local communities. Our statement highlighted the movements globally supporting this aim:

- The **Black Lives Matter** movement, where people internationally protests against racial discrimination;
- The 36th anniversary of the **1984 anti-Sikh massacres**;
- The start of **Pride Month**, celebrating the LGBTQ+ community.

People globally were, and continue to, give their time and resources to supporting equality for people from all backgrounds as discrimination against different ethnic groups was propelled to the forefront of both international and national conversations.

This all occurred during an already tumultuous year, with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. **COVID-19** has brought with it dramatic social, political, and economic change, the ramifications of which we will feel for years to come. It has clearly exposed the inequalities in society and exacerbated them further, creating higher levels of need than ever.

During the first wave, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) stepped up across the country to help support the most vulnerable and at risk. In 2020 alone, we have seen over **10 million** people volunteer between March and May 2020, and **78%** of volunteers said they would continue, and **64%** believed volunteering strengthened their communities. Volunteer work in this period equated to **£357 million** in terms economic value. People everywhere rallied together to support one another, and clearly we will need to continue to do this to get through the future of the pandemic.



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

During the first wave however, we saw clearly that people from **Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME)** backgrounds were **disproportionately impacted** by the pandemic.

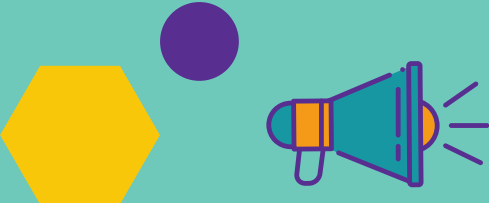
ONS data from the first wave of the pandemic clearly demonstrated:

- Black people are **1.9 times** as likely to die compared to White people
- Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are **1.8 times** as likely to die
- Indians are **1.5 times** as likely to die
- Making up 11% of those hospitalised with COVID-19, BAME people accounted for **36% of those admitted to critical care**
- Black and Asian ethnic groups overall demonstrated the **highest death rates** of COVID-19

There are several interlinking explanations behind these numbers, for example:

- BAME communities tend to live in **more overcrowded housing** in more **deprived areas**, posing clear obstacles to their ability to self isolate
- A higher increase in deaths was found in people born **outside of the UK** and Ireland, in particular for people born in C/W Africa, the Caribbean, South East Asia, the Middle East, and Southern and Eastern Africa
- **Language barriers** for those who did not speak English also posed a threat to accessing medical services
- Black and Asian populations have a higher risk of diabetes and heart disease, and other co-morbid disease
- BAME people tend to work in roles that were considered '**essential**' and/or involved frequent contact with people, such as those in health and social care, hospitality and catering, and transport

VOLUNTEERS DURING THE FIRST WAVE



Over 1000 volunteers came forward, helping with picking up prescriptions, delivering food shopping, telephone befriending for vulnerable and at-risk people in Bexley.
Volunteers we supported to get roles rated their experiences on average 4 stars, and 64% said they would volunteer again in the future.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BEXLEY?

Bexley is home to a diverse population: demographic changes over the last 10 years have seen a rise in the percentage of BAME Bexley residents. Census data found the BAME community made up **18%** of Bexley's population, and this is set to rise to **30% by 2045**.

A **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2016)** found that BAME communities were more concentrated in the north of the borough, where there are also higher levels of deprivation, unemployment, and lower life expectancy.

We acknowledged last year in our State of the Sector report that as the demographics of the borough change, we need to reconsider how we can develop a more *"culturally competent VCFS workforce that resonates with new communities and the need for support and services to pivot more to the north"*. The BAME community will continue to need support, and we have to make sure as a sector that we are doing as much as we can to ensure our services are accessible to as many people as possible as the borough prepares to get through the rest of the pandemic.

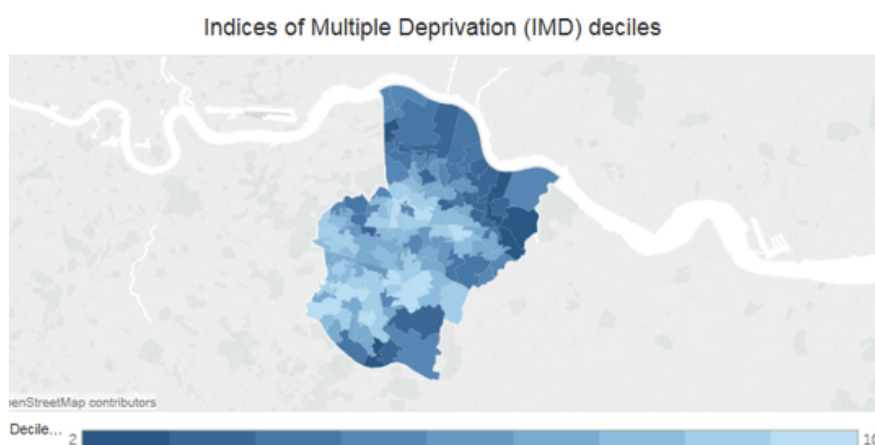


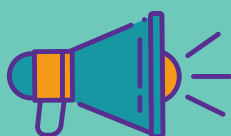
Figure 4. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016: Multiple indices of Deprivation, Bexley

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BEXLEY'S VCS?

If we aim to support all people in Bexley, we need to be able to understand the unique perspectives, challenges, and experiences of as many communities as possible. Racism and the underrepresentation of BAME communities must be addressed. However, this is a long-standing issue for the charity sector:

BEXLEY'S VCS DURING THE FIRST WAVE

Our sector supported at least 40,000 Bexley residents
98% of charities and community organisations adapted the way they provided services to the community, despite facing a 71% decrease in funds,
37% of us having had to take from our emergency funds



RACISM AND REPRESENTATION IN THE CHARITY SECTOR

- Just **9%** of the charity sector in 2017/18 came from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background.
- Even within the public and private sectors, BAME representation is higher, at **11%** respectively
- Only **3%** of CEOs in the sector came from BAME backgrounds
- **84%** of non-BAME specific charities found that board members/trustees were White, compared to just 16% for other ethnic groups.

We cannot talk about representation without addressing racism in the sector, and recent work by ACEVO found racism is still prevalent:

- 68% of respondents to an online survey for BAME charity employees had **experienced, witnessed, or heard about racism** in the sector
- 50% felt a need to **'tone down'** their behaviour to fit into the sector
- 222 people had been subject to **ignorant and insensitive questioning** about their culture or religion
- Around 25% said racism within the sector had **negatively impacted their career path**
- White charity leaders were found to be worried about saying or doing the **wrong thing** when it came to 'race'. This speaks to a larger lack of understanding and engagement with racism within the sector, and the only way to solve this is to have the difficult conversations we may have been putting off.

MAKING THE CASE FOR A DIVERSE VCS



- *Diverse organisations avoid the possibility of 'groupthink' as different people bring together different perspectives and experiences, promoting **creativity and innovation***
- *It is a legal requirement under the **Equality Act (2010)** that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of any of the 8 protected characteristics, including ethnicity*
- **Diverse and representative organisations attract more talent.** Research by recruitment organisation Glassdoor found that $\frac{2}{3}$ of job hunters indicated that diversity in the workplace was important to them

WHERE DO WE START?

By promoting representation and tackling racism within the sector, we actively work to dismantle the idea that the charity sector is 'not for' people who are not White, as employees or service users. We attract more talent, and increase our ability to develop a more sustainable sector workforce in the future.

The key question then, is where do we start?

We need to first assess the extent to which racism and the underrepresentation of BAME communities is an issue for our VCS today. At present, there is a lack of demographic data on the sector in Bexley, or research into the experience of volunteers and employees from BAME backgrounds in Bexley's VCS. Without this information, how do we know where we stand on these issues so far and what work needs to be done going forward?

We therefore aimed to capture a 'snapshot' as a baseline for future efforts to increase representation and promote anti-racism in Bexley's VCS.

METHODOLOGY

AIMS

This volunteer-led project was conducted between July and September 2020. We had three main aims for this research:

1. Learn more about the **people working or volunteering** in Bexley's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)
2. Learn more the **experience** of people who identify as BAME, and their views on representation and racism in Bexley's VCS
3. To make informed **recommendations** to BVSC and the wider VCS to support increased and sustainable representation of BAME groups and promote anti-racism in the sector



OUR APPROACH

01 RESEARCH

We aimed to learn more about our borough, the people living in it, and the challenges they face today. We took a closer look at our VCS, and racism and representation in the national charity sector.

02 Snapshot SNAPSHOT SURVEY



We launched our survey online to learn about the demographics of the VCS in Bexley today, our attitudes to racism and representation, potential experiences with racial discrimination in the VCS, and how we can promote anti-racism and representation as VSC and as a sector.

03 INTERVIEWS

We wanted to make sure we have people who identified as belonging to any of the BAME groups the opportunity to share their views and experiences with us. Survey respondents could sign up via the survey to talk to us in more depth about race, representation, and their experiences.

04 ANALYSIS



We took a step back to reflect on the findings of our survey and interviews to identify trends and key themes in responses.

05 RECOMMENDATIONS

With everything we learned about these issues and our own VCS, we have made some recommendations for how we can move forward as an organisation, a sector, and a community.



02 BEXLEY SNAPSHOT

2.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

RESPONDENTS


The survey received a total of **48 responses** between August 7th and 28th. This cannot be said to be truly representative of the demographics sector as a whole, but can offer some insight into who currently works or volunteers in Bexley's VCFS. Supplementing surveys with interviews as well as additional background research into Bexley and the sector was therefore essential to creating a more 'detailed' image of our VCFS.

The online survey invited respondents to answer questions about:

- Themselves;
- Their **organisation specialism and beneficiaries**;
- Their **attitudes** to race and representation in the sector nationally and locally
- Their views on the **barriers to BAME representation** at present
- What they would like to see from **BVSC** to support increased representation of BAME groups in the sector

Individuals who identified as BAME were able to sign up for an interview to discuss these topics in more detail. There were difficulties in contacting those who had signed up, and so we were only able to conduct three interviews in total. However, these were with a volunteer and two employees at different levels of seniority, and so still add substantial value to this project.

THE VCS AT A GLANCE

- **72.9% of respondents identified as White, compared to around 27% identifying as Black, Asian, or Mixed/Multiple Ethnicities.**
 - **85% of respondents were women, and almost 60% were over age 45.**
 - **92% of respondents identified as heterosexual.**
 - **33% of respondents had an undergraduate degree, 14% had Masters' degrees, and 8% had Professional Degrees.**
 - **Around 13% identified as having a disability.**
 - **Around 21% of respondents had additional caring responsibilities, and 9/10 respondents in this group were women**
- 

ORGANISATIONS AND SPECIALISMS

Whilst the White ethnic groups were represented in all types of VCFs organisations, the BAME groups were **not** represented in the following types at all:

- Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Science
- Environment and Conservation
- Human Rights and Equality- specific organisations

BAME respondents were represented in the following organisations:

- Charity Sector Development
- Health and Saving Lives
- Mental Health
- Education, Employment/Training
- Community Development

There was a slight variation in where organisations were based, with 36% of BAME respondents being based in the north of the borough. However, overall 65% of total respondents' organisations operated borough wide, with a small percentage operating nationally (6%), or worked in pan-London organisations (4%).

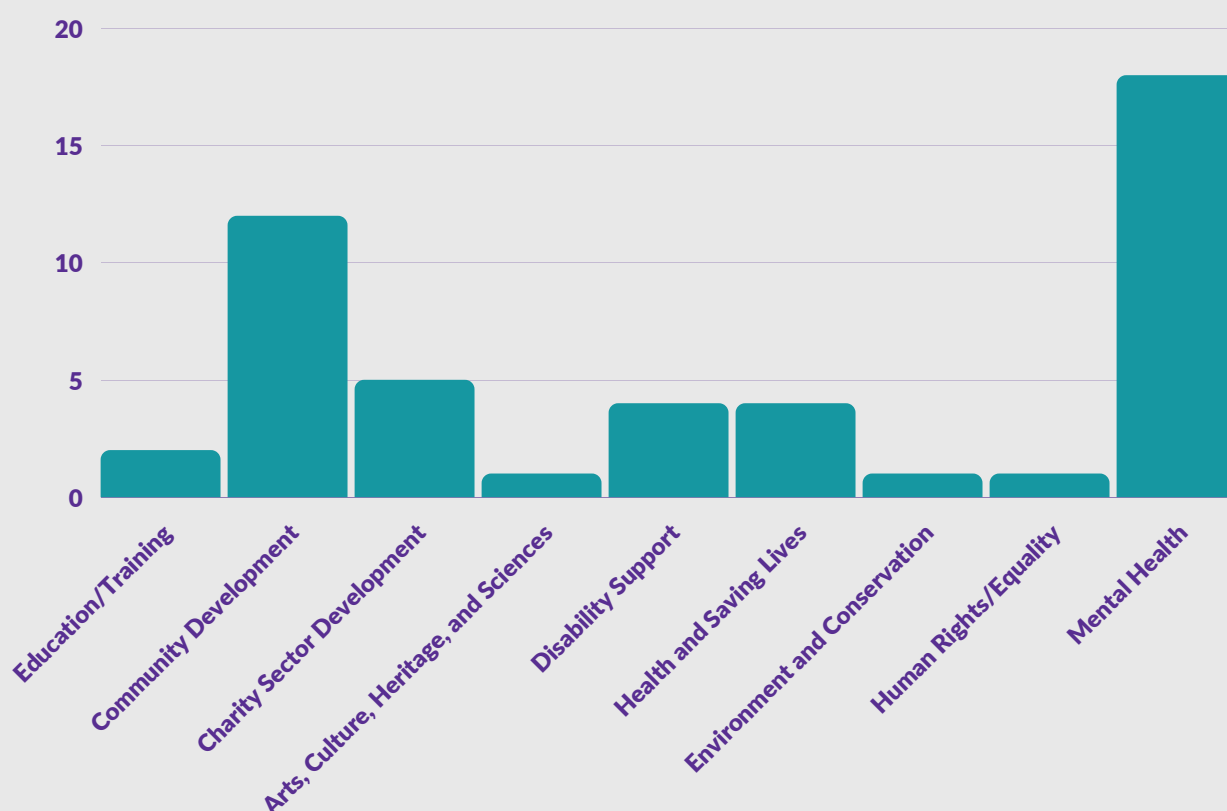


FIG. 5 RESPONDENTS BY ORGANISATION SPECIALISM



OCCUPATION

Of the 48 responses, the representation of different levels of seniority across the sector. One third of responses came from the Volunteer/Intern group, although it is not known in what capacity volunteers are working, e.g. as a 'volunteer' Treasurer, or 'volunteer' befriender.

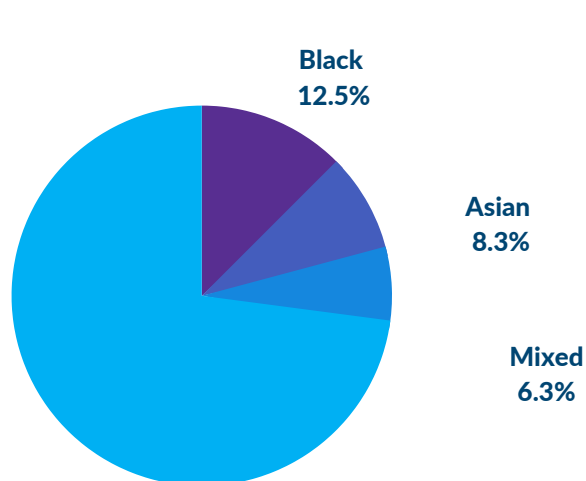
The second largest group represented in the survey were 'Coordinators' making up 21% of respondents. Heads of Departments and Trustees/Board Members made up 8% of the total responses each, followed by Senior Executives/Officers at 4%, and Assistants at 2%. An additional 10% of respondents identified as 'Other', listing more specialised occupations.

ETHNICITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH

Of the 48 respondents to the survey, 31 identified as White British - English, making up the most represented group. An additional 4 respondents identified as White Irish, White British Irish or Scottish in total, and the remaining identified as Irish. A further 5 respondents identified as Black African, 2 identified as Indian, 1 as Bangladeshi, and 3 as Mixed.

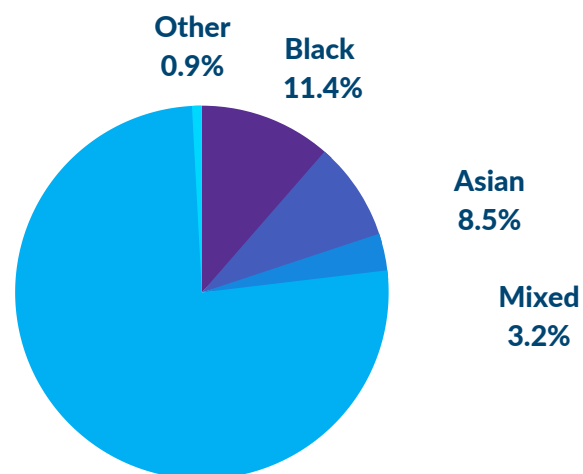
Overall, the 'White' group accounted for around **72.9%** of respondents, with the remaining **28%** coming from Black, Asian, or Mixed Ethnic backgrounds. Black respondents made up around 10% of the total, Asians 8%, and Mixed 6%. 42 respondents were **born in the UK**, compared to just 6 born outside of the UK.

Second, it is important to acknowledge that a substantial number of respondents were not UK-born. Within this group, 5% identified as BAME, making up roughly 12.5% of total respondents.



Ethnic Breakdown of Bexley's VSC

White
72.9%



Ethnic Breakdown of Bexley

White
76%

Demographics of Bexley's VSC in Comparison to Borough Estimates
taken from London Borough of Bexley (2020)



In relation to the wider population of Bexley, in 2019 the GLA estimated around 32,000 Bexley residents were not British-born out of a total 250,000. Interestingly, the percentage of British born VCFS employees and volunteers in our sample reflects the borough demographics.

However, these findings should not be taken as a strong indication that Bexley's VCFS is representative of the borough as a whole. At a glance, these statistics may mimic the estimated demographic breakdown in Bexley as a whole, but such a small sample size in a VCFS with over 800 voluntary or community organisations, and at least 1,200 small issue groups, 48 respondents cannot be said to provide a particularly clear image of the demographics of the sector in totality.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

41 out of a total 48 respondents identified as women, and the rest identified as male. Research shows that men are typically underrepresented in the charity sector workforce as a whole, but tend to work in senior positions such as Trustees or CEOs. In our sample, the male respondents were Trustees (2), Volunteers (3), CEOs (1), and Heads of Departments (1). This suggests that the tendency for men to work in more senior positions in the sector holds true for Bexley.

Only 1 male identified as BAME. No respondents identified as transgender or non-binary, which also suggests another area where greater efforts to represent the demographics of Bexley as a whole are needed. Further, 93% of respondents identified as heterosexual. This further suggests that there is more work to be done to increase the representation of the LGBTQ community in Bexley's VCFS alongside increasing the representation of BAME groups.

**85% Of Bexley's
Volunteers and
Employees are
Women***



Fig. 6. 85% of VCS employees and volunteers are women.



EDUCATION

Most participants had a Bachelors degree (33%), 7 had Masters' degrees, 4 had Professional degrees. An additional 7 respondents had other types of formal qualifications, and these were related to their field of work or other forms of higher studies, such as postgraduate diplomas. 5 respondents had taken on vocational training in place of mainstream higher education routes.

AGE

The majority of respondents identified as belonging to the 55-65 age group (25%), with a similar number identifying as belonging to the 35-44 and 45-55 age groups, at 23% and 21% respectively. An additional 12.5% identified as over 65. Overall, 59% of respondents identified as age 45 or higher. Just one respondent identified as belonging to the 18-24 range, and 40% as belonging to the 25-34 and 35-44 age ranges.

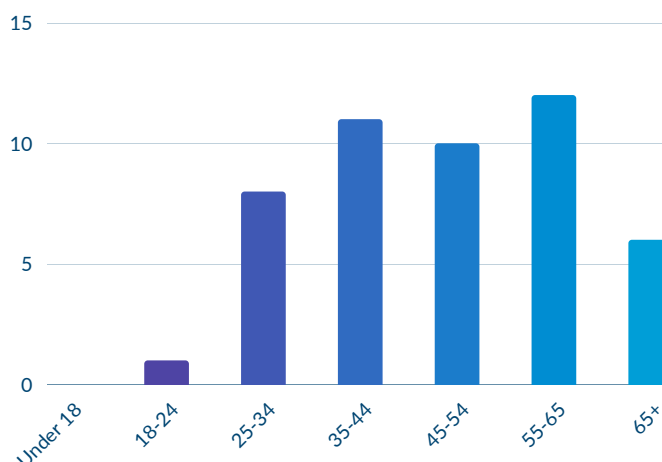


Fig. 7. Age Range of Respondents

DISABILITY

Only 12.5% respondents identified as either having a long term illness or disability, compared to 40 respondents with no disabilities or illnesses. Of those who answered 'Yes', mobility issues, learning difficulties, and mental health issues were identified, with respondents identifying more than one issue in most cases.

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

10 out of 47 respondents self-identified as having caring responsibilities according to the definition provided in the survey. Of these 10, 8 identified as White, and 9 were female. Respondents held a mixture of roles, from volunteer to CEOs.

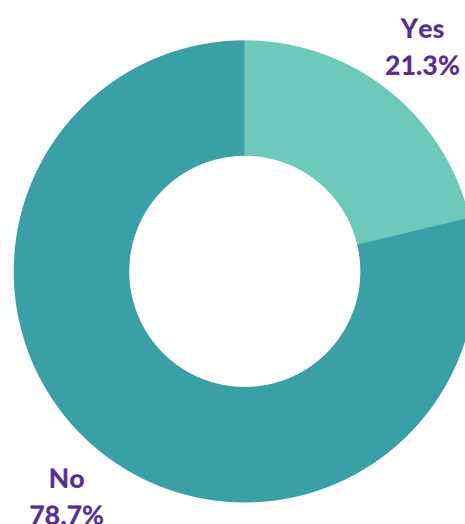


Fig 8. Percentage of Respondents With/Without Caring Responsibilities



DID YOU KNOW

NCVO found that 52% of VSO employees were educated to at least degree level in 2019. This is higher than in the private sector, which found 3 in 10 were educated to at least degree level in comparison.

2.2 ATTITUDES

Survey respondents were presented with eight statements on:

- Racism as a prominent issue within the sector as whole;
- Whether attitudes towards racism in the sector were changing;
- Whether racism and representation impact service delivery;
- Their perception of Bexley's charity sector;
- Their views on their organisation's representation and anti-racism stance

Respondents were then asked to rate the extent to which they agree with the statements on a Likert scale, from 'Strongly Disagree' to Strongly Agree.

Section One: Racism and Representation in the Sector

STATEMENT ONE: RACISM IS A PROMINENT ISSUE IN THE CHARITY SECTOR

When asked whether they believed racism was a 'prominent' issue within the charity sector as a whole, the most common answer across all responses was 'Neither Agree nor Disagree' (18), followed by 'Disagree' (11), and Agree (9). Only 9 respondents either Strongly Agreed (3) or Disagreed (6).

This could suggest that the issue of racism within the sector is not considered to be important to the average volunteer or employee in our sample, as 37.5% of respondents had no strong view on the issue, and only a combined total 20% agreed that it was a prominent issue at all. It could also speak to a wider lack of awareness about the issue, or alternatively, that it is not considered to be an issue for Bexley's VCFs and so attitudes to the racism in the sector.

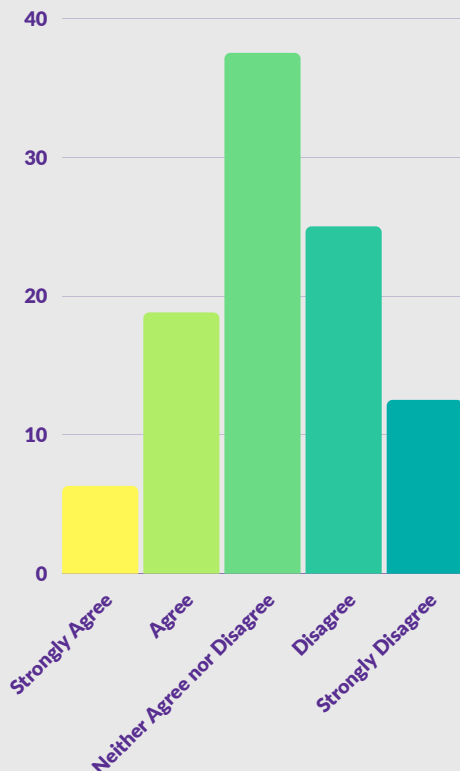


Fig 9 Responses to Statement One

If we breakdown the responses by ethnicity however, we see that no respondents who identified as Black, Asian, or Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups 'Strongly Disagreed' with the statement, compared to 6 White participants. Comparatively, the White group remained mostly neutral (14), Strongly Disagreed (6) or Disagreed (9). Of the 35 total White participants, 6 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that Racism was a prominent issue. The differences in the responses are difficult to ascertain with such a small sample size.

However, it is clear that BAME respondents tended to agree overall that Racism was a prominent issue in the charity sector when asked. Over a third of the BAME group gave neutral responses, and just 3 disagreed overall. No respondent in the BAME group Strongly Disagreed.



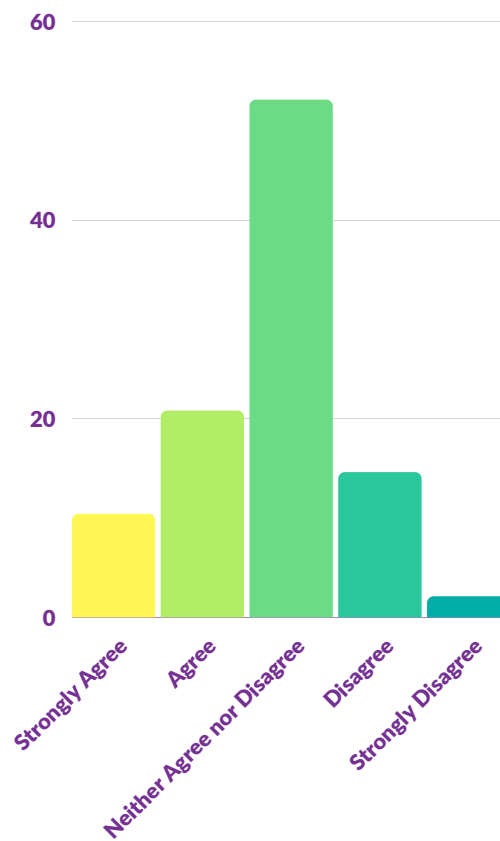
STATEMENT TWO: THE SECTOR IS TAKING THE NECESSARY STEPS TO REDUCE AND OVERCOME INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Responses to this statement were more varied, although again overall most participants remained neutral.

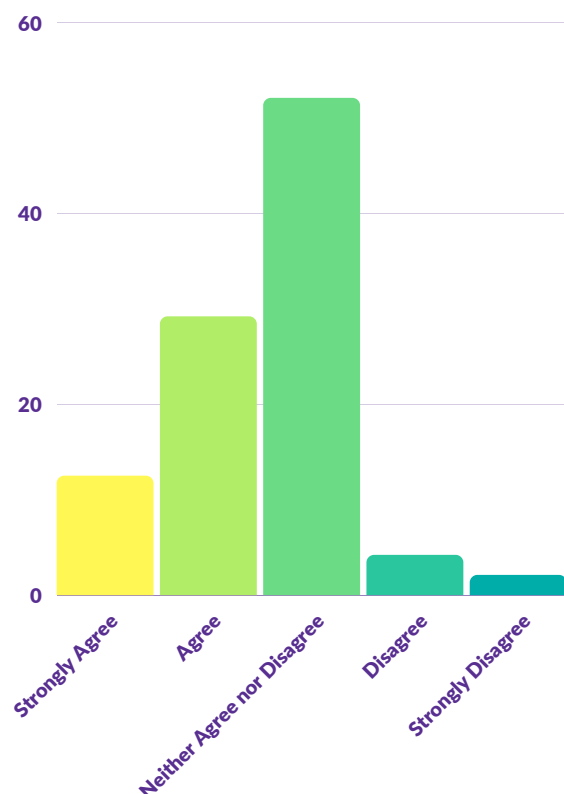
Just 10 Agreed that the sector as a whole was taking the necessary steps to address racism, and 5 Strongly Agreed. 20% of all participants Strongly Disagreed/Disagreed (8,1) that the sector was taking the necessary steps to combat racism.

Breaking this down further by ethnicity, BAME respondents were more neutral about this - with 8 out of 13 neither agreeing or disagreeing, and just 2 Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing. 3 BAME participants Strongly Disagreed/Disagreed in total, compared to 5 White participants who Disagreed.

Fig 10 Responses to Statement Two



STATEMENT THREE: ATTITUDES TOWARDS RACISM ARE CHANGING FOR THE BETTER IN THE CHARITY SECTOR



Responses to this statement were more positive, although still largely neutral. 25 respondents answered 'Neither Agree Nor Disagree', 17 of which came from the White group. 14 respondents Agreed that attitudes were improving, and an additional 6 Strongly Agreed. However, only 3 of the Strongly Agree/Agree responses came from BAME participants.

Fig 11 Responses to Statement Three



Section Two: Racism and Representation as Barriers to Service Provision

STATEMENT FOUR: RACISM WITHIN ORGANISATIONS LIMITS HOW EFFECTIVELY ORGANISATIONS CAN PROMOTE THEIR SERVICES AND SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

Most participants saw racism within organisations as limiting to their ability to promote services and support communities.

- 40% Agreed with the statement, and an additional 33% Strongly Agreed. Fewer respondents answered neutrally (9), and just 1 participant Strongly Disagreed, and 3 Disagreed overall.

The BAME group as a whole tended to Agree or Strongly Agree (2,7) with the statement, as did the White group. This would suggest that most participants (73%) agree that organisations need to be inclusive towards all ethnic groups in order to support the wider community more effectively.

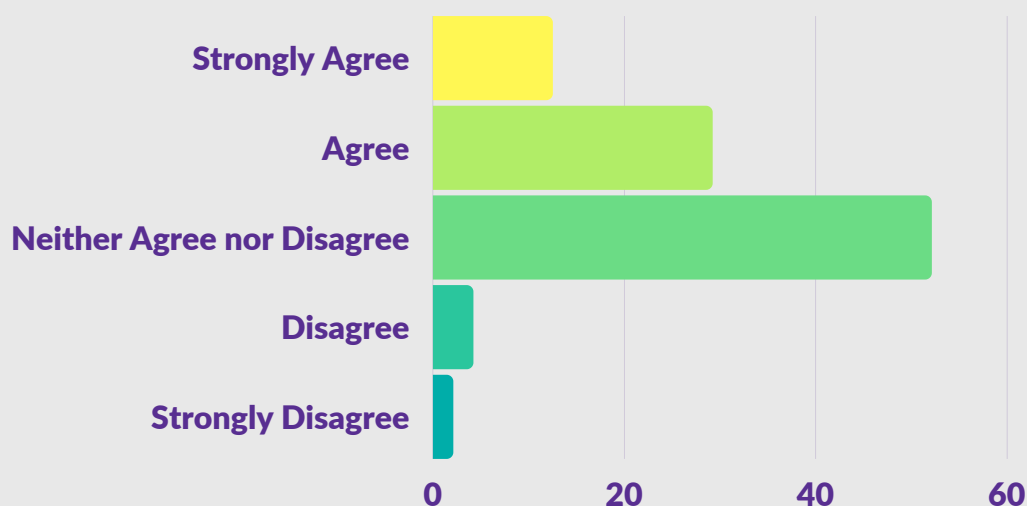


Fig 12 Responses to Statement Four



STATEMENT FIVE: THE REPRESENTATION OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS IS NOT NECESSARILY IMPORTANT TO SUPPORTING ALL COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS

A total 75% of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that representation of ethnic groups is not important to an organisations' ability to support communities, inferring overall positive support for the concept of a representative sector. Only 1 participant Strongly Agreed, and 3 Agreed. Fewer participants provided neutral answers (12). The BAME groups and White Group both demonstrated clear support for a representative charity workforce.

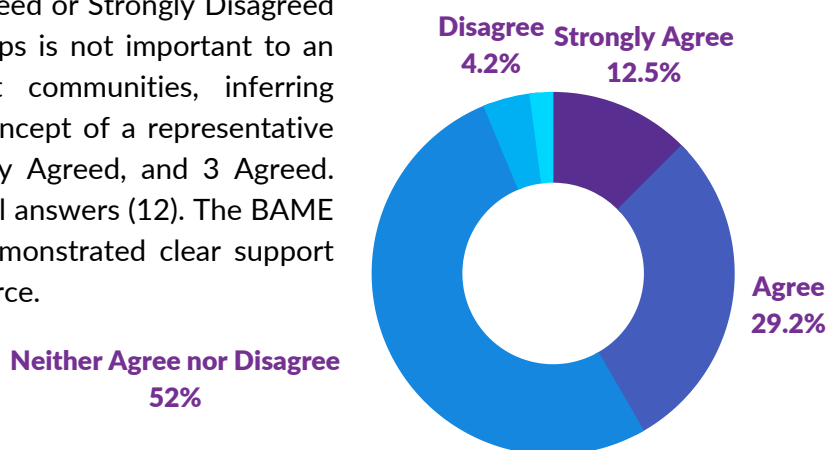


Fig 13 Responses to Statement Five

Section Three: Bexley's Voluntary and Community Sector

STATEMENT SIX: BEXLEY'S CHARITY SECTOR IS DIVERSE AND REPRESENTS A RANGE OF DIFFERENT GROUPS AND PERSPECTIVES

When questioned about Bexley's charity sector, overall trends suggest a stronger division in attitudes, and this is consistent between different ethnic groups.

- Overall, 11 participants Disagreed, with an additional 4 Strongly Disagreeing.
- Contrastingly, 14 Agreed and 3 Strongly Agreed: roughly one third of respondents agree, another disagree, and the remaining third are neutral.

Perspectives are clearly quite mixed between and within different ethnic groups, and perhaps relates also to individual experience

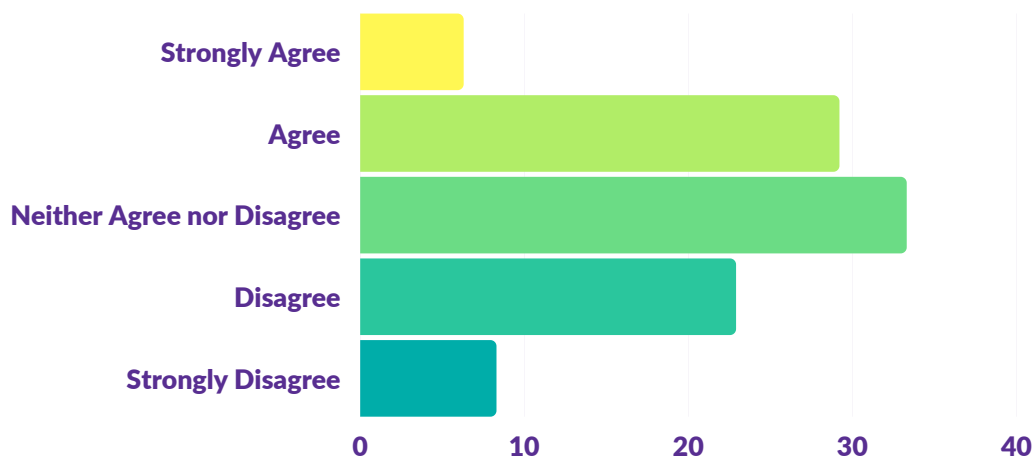


Fig 14 Responses to Statement Six

STATEMENT SEVEN: MY WORKPLACE IS DOING ENOUGH TO TACKLE RACISM WITHIN IT

Overall, respondents Neither Agreed nor Disagreed that their workplaces were working hard enough to tackle racism, with 48% answering this way.

- Only 25% Agreed with the statement in total.
- Only 3 respondents from the BAME groups Agreed, and a further 3 Strongly Agreed that their employers did enough to tackle racism internally. Only 1 respondent Strongly Disagreed, and a further 7 Disagreed.
- White respondents largely Disagreed that their employers were doing enough to tackle racism internally.

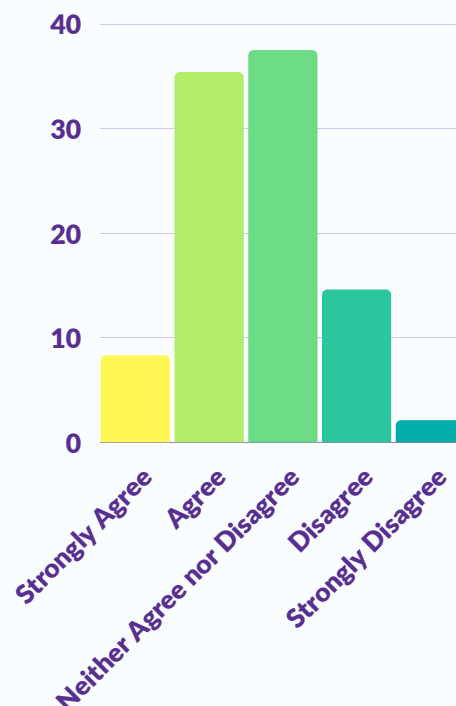


Fig 15 Responses to Statement Seven

STATEMENT EIGHT: MY WORKPLACE IS DOING ENOUGH TO INCREASE REPRESENTATION OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS

Finally, when asked whether they perceived their employers to be doing enough to increase representation of different ethnic groups, a roughly equal number of respondents Agreed and were neutral about this issue, at 35% and 37.5% respectively.

- A total 14% Disagreed, and a further 4% Strongly Disagreed that their employers were doing enough to increase representation.
- In the BAME groups, participants tended to Agree or were Neutral, making up 12.5% and 8% of total responses in each category respectively.
- Again, only White respondents Strongly Disagreed that their workplaces are doing enough to increase representation internally.

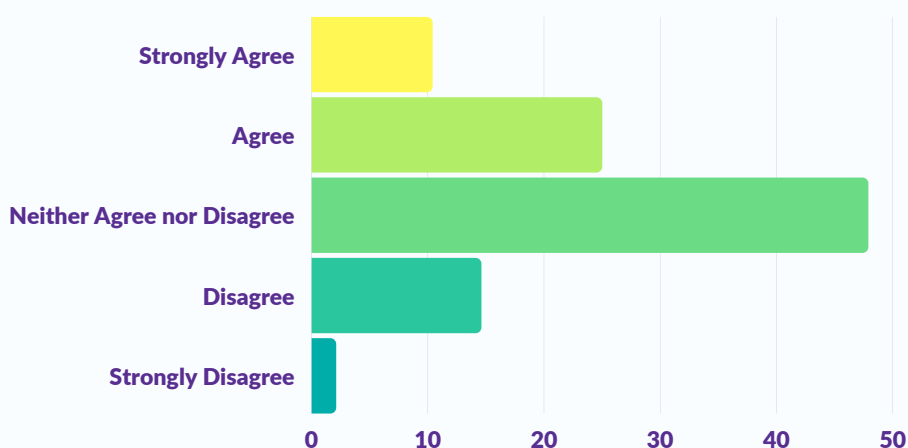


Fig 16 Responses to Statement Eight



2.3 EXPERIENCES IN THE SECTOR

Next, we asked respondents to share their views about their experiences in the sector, both overall and with specific reference to potential experiences of racism, and how they managed to deal with this in the workplace.

Section One: Overall Experience of Working or Volunteering in Bexley's VCS

OVERALL EXPERIENCES IN THE SECTOR

Respondents were then asked to rate their overall experience working in Bexley's charity sector. Overall, participants rated their experience as 'Good' or 'Very Good':

- 23 participants rated their experience as 'Good', and 20 as 'Very Good', meaning 96% of all respondents had a positive experience working in Bexley's charity sector.
- Just 1% answered 'Neither Good Nor Bad', and 1 as 'Unsatisfactory'.

No one viewed rated their experience as 'Poor', overall suggesting that most people have enjoyed their experience working or volunteering in Bexley's VCS.



Breaking this down by ethnicity, the neutral and negative responses came equally from the BAME and White groups, although given the smaller population size of the BAME group in comparison to the White group, this should not be interpreted as insignificant.

In addition, taking a look at the potential differences between the experiences between men and women, we see a slight variation in responses: women were overall more positive, whilst men gave more neutral responses. Overall however, it is difficult to determine whether gender impacted experience.

Fig 17. Respondents Rating of Their Experience in Bexley's VCS



CARE TO ELABORATE?

The following question asked participants to explain their previous answer if they wish. For those who rated their experience as **Good or Very Good**, justifications related to the positive attributes of the working environment, rather than to the type of work or volunteering carried out. Respondents identified the following as key to their positive experiences:

- Good communication
- Appreciation for work carried out
- Supportive team
- Strong connections between the sector and local authorities



"I feel that I have been treated fairly and with care and compassion and I also feel that I have been listened to when raising queries following support sessions with my clients".

Two respondents mentioned that they would like to give a higher rating, i.e. Very Good, but **could not** because of:

- A lack of collaboration between organisations
- 'Old fashioned' social attitudes in the borough as a whole that perpetuate racist attitudes
- Low staff turnover



For participants who regarded their experience as **Unsatisfactory or Neither Good Nor Bad**, justifications included:

- A lack of representative workforce
- Not enough being done to 'integrate' people from the BAME community and their perspectives into the charity sector
- Too much emphasis on gaining funding to the detriment of effective service delivery

"Charities need to represent what Bexley looks like"



DID YOU KNOW: CHARITY SECTOR EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

- The Voluntary sector in 2019 had a higher percentage of part-time staff than both public and private sector, with 63% of the total VSO workforce having full time contracts.
- Less than 1% of of charities in the UK employ staff earning more than £60,000 per annum

2.4 EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Section One: Experiences of Racial Discrimination in Bexley's VCS

Following this, participants were asked specifically about their experiences of racism in the sector.

- 66.7% of total respondents had not experienced racism themselves, or knew someone else who had
- 18.8% had not personally experienced racial discrimination but knew someone who did, and
- a total 6.3% had experienced discrimination themselves and/or knew someone else who had also suffered from racism in the sector.

Breaking this down by ethnicity, we see that the BAME group as a whole knew more people that had experienced racial discrimination whilst working in the sector, compared to the White group. However, more people in the White group reported incidents of racism directed at themselves.

WHAT HAPPENED?

When asked about the nature of the discrimination, the most common forms of discrimination was 'Jokes made about ethnicity'(6) , comments made about respondents' ability to speak/write English (6) , and suspecting to have been treated unfairly on the basis of race. Less common forms of discrimination that were reported included feeling unwelcome at work, being ridiculed after speaking up about other racist incidents, being subject to verbal abuse, and suspecting unfair recruitment practices.

Participants were asked to add any additional comments in regards to potential incidences of discrimination. Responses shared common themes, with accent and ability to speak English appearing the most frequently. Further, one participant wrote that they had not experienced racial discrimination themselves, but had witnessed '*jokey comments or assumptions*' made towards others on the basis of ethnicity. Another highlighted that ethnicity and race had posed substantial barriers to opportunities, as these generated '*concerns that someone wouldn't be tolerated very well specifically because of ethnic background rather than skill set*'. In addition, one participant claimed that they had been '*singled out*' in meetings unless discussions were on BAME-specific issues.



NEED TO TALK?

If you've faced racial discrimination and need support, here are some organisations you can speak to:

Samaritans - +44 116 123 - [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)

Victim Support - + 08 08 16 89 111 - [victimsupport.org.uk](https://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

Or head to <https://www.stophateuk.org/help-in-the-uk-national-organisations/> for more information about organisations you can reach out to now.

Section Two: Dealing with Racial Discrimination

Of the total 12 participants that had either experienced racism themselves or knew someone else who had, only 4 reported this to their manager, and of this small group, just 1 was happy with the response.

For those who did not report incidences of discrimination, explanations behind their not doing so included:

- Not wanting to be **stigmatised** or ruin their relationship with their employer
- Their employer was the one discriminating against them
- Did not believe in their **managers' ability** to effectively address the citation
- Did not believe discrimination was intentional, but evidence of a more general set of **values and attitudes** in the borough.
- Reporting the incident would **not** have changed these attitudes

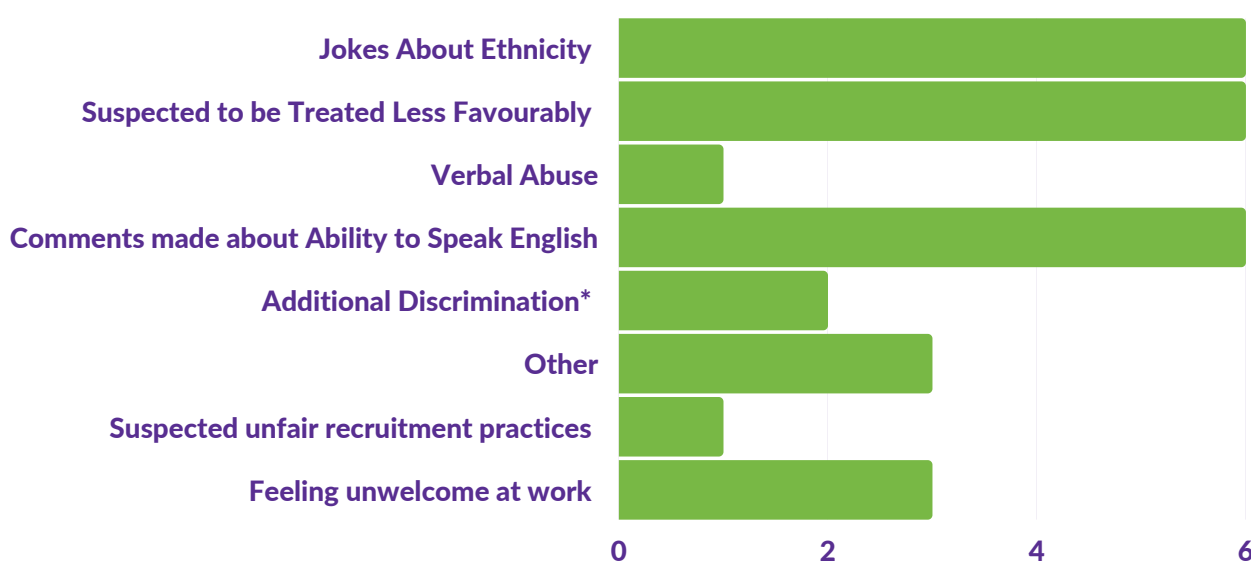


Fig.18 Types of Racial Discrimination Reported by Respondents



HOME TRUTHS: DIRECT EXPERIENCES OF RACISM (2020)

- Online survey results found 50% BAME charity staff felt they had to 'tone down' behaviour or behave in a certain way in order to fit in with colleagues and wider sector
- A further 45% had been insensitively questioned about their culture or religion
- A third had been treated as intellectual inferiors, and subject to excessive surveillance and scrutiny by colleagues
- Over a third reported that these experiences had a Negative or Very Negative impact on their health and wellbeing

2.5 BARRIERS TO REPRESENTATION

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS TO GREATER ETHNIC REPRESENTATION IN OUR VCS?

Respondents were asked what they perceived to be the main barriers to improving representation of BAME groups in the charity sector, selecting as many answers as they saw necessary from a given list. The most common barrier identified by participants were:

- Difficulties with **recruitment** of different ethnic groups
- A lack of data on sector **demographics**
- A lack of **Equality and Diversity training** for staff
- Lack of support within organisations to **implement** policies that would support representation

Some respondents identified racism within the sector and attitudes of management as barriers. A 'lack of will' to recruit from BAME groups was also identified as a key barrier to increasing representation.

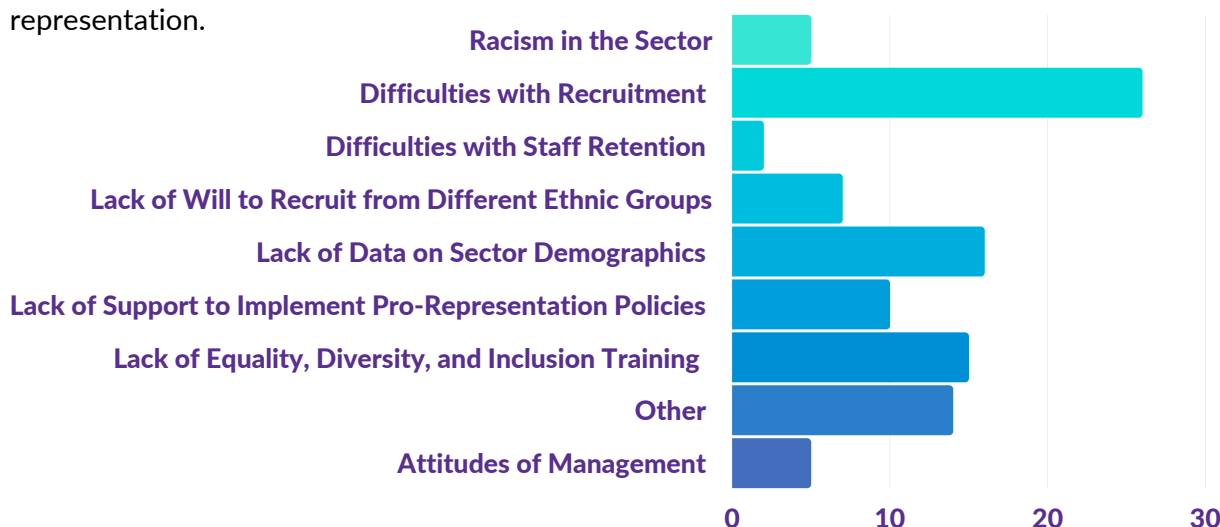


Fig.19 Barriers to Representation Identified by Respondents

CARE TO ELBORATE?

When invited to make any additional comments about increasing representation of BAME groups in the sector, we again see varied responses. Feedback can be broken down into four key themes:



ISSUES WITHIN THE SECTOR

- Smaller charities may lack the capacity to take up representation policies/schemes as they are already stretched when carrying out their basic activities or services
- Perception of low job security for roles in the charity sector, making the charity sector seem 'unattractive' to BAME groups
- Lack of attractive salaries and opportunities available
- Not enough services exist in Bexley offered to BAME groups, leading to potential underrepresentation. For example, if services are offered in English only, they remain inaccessible to groups who may need support but struggle with English

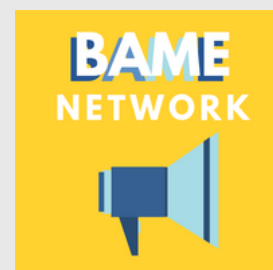


PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECTOR BY BAME COMMUNITIES

- Seen as largely 'White' and 'middle class', and BAME groups do not fit within this image
- The charity sector does not offer roles with a higher level of job security (e.g. lack of attractive salaries, lack of career progression)

FAILURES OF CURENT INCLUSION SCHEMES/POLICIES

- Failures of current inclusion policies and schemes
- Efforts to create BAME specific groups, forums, or roles can be viewed as examples of 'tokenism', and work more to segregate White and BAME communities
- Lack of effective integrative schemes and policies that promote multi-faith and ethnic teams



SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ATTITUDES IN BEXLEY

- Removal of the Bexley Council for Equality and Diversity in 2011
- 'Old fashioned' or 'traditional' social attitudes in Bexley as a whole
- Racism from service users directed at BAME volunteers/employees
- Lack of understanding and sensitivity towards others' cultures and religions, leading to racist remarks, even if unintentionally discriminatory



2.6 INCREASING REPRESENTATION

AWARENESS OF PRO-REPRESENTATION SCHEMES

Participants were asked directly if they were aware of any schemes, policies, or initiatives to support BAME representation in their own organisation, Bexley, or the wider charity sector. 81% of respondents were not aware of any schemes that supported representation in the sector, Bexley, or at their place of work. Just 12% were aware of positive representation schemes, and a third of this group did not believe they worked well. Most schemes mentioned by participants who were aware of such schemes or policies were generally unspecific or described in any detail, suggesting a substantial lack of awareness across the majority of respondents.

Other efforts to increase representation identified by respondents included equal opportunities forms, national awareness campaigns, and receiving internal communications about equality. One respondent identified their organisation's successful representation strategy in more detail: they had established a diverse committee with representatives from different religious groups to promote dialogue between them when addressing community issues.



THE BAME NETWORK

Schemes mentioned in more detail included the BAME network. The potential for the network to develop was acknowledged, but owing to a lack of funding, the network was left underdeveloped. While the network promoted greater collaboration between BAME groups themselves, they were still somewhat segregated from the rest of the sector. The loss of funding meant that the further progress in building the capacity of BAME-led organisations thus stalled, and would overall inhibit these organisations' ability to engage more with the rest of the sector, and remain 'segregated'. The BAME Network will be discussed in more detail in the next section of the report.

JUST 12% OF RESPONDENTS WERE AWARE OF SCHEMES OR POLICIES THAT AIMED TO INCREASE BAME REPRESENTATION



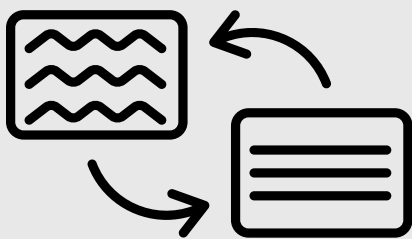
2.7 MOVING FORWARD

WHAT CAN BVSC DO?

Participants were then asked what they would like to see from Bexley Volunteering Service Council to help promote representation and tackle racial discrimination within Bexley's charity sector. Participants were able to select more than one option.

The most popular demand from volunteers and employees was the establishment of Equality and Diversity training workshops within the sector, followed by offering either direct support to those being racially discriminated against, or signposting to other organisations or groups that can support those affected.

Additional guidance on how to report racism within the workplace, and creating online equality and diversity modules for senior management were also popular.



Other suggestions from participants included:

- Promote more **opportunities** for residents to meet with BAME organisations and/or the BAME communities directly to ensure organisations can directly communicate with and support a wider section of Bexley
- Support the **Bexley BAME Network**
- Provide services in **different languages** in order to make them more accessible and known-to to non-English speaking Bexley residents
- Ensure **unconscious bias** training is a key part of **Equality and Diversity workshops/modules**
- Gather **more specific data** on which communities are unable to or need additional support from Bexley's charity sector
- Supporting **broader social change** in the borough by facilitating greater communication between different ethnic and/or religious groups

FINAL COMMENTS

Participants were given the opportunity to make any final comments regarding race and representation in Bexley's voluntary sector. Remarks made by respondents suggested that racism is **systemic** in the charity sector, and we must work harder to **raise awareness** and discuss it more **openly**.

Additionally, we should strive to **disaggregate the 'BAME' group** and acknowledge biases within and between these groups, rather solely seeing all Black, Asian, and other ethnic groups as one conglomerate group. More work should also be done to support those of **Mixed/Multiple** ethnic backgrounds, as they are often left out of these discussions and do have their own unique set of challenges and experiences like other ethnic groups.

03 INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

Interviews were held with three individuals who identified as belonging to any of the BAME groups, working or volunteering at different levels of seniority within the sector and in different organisations with vastly different focuses. Feedback reflected their unique experiences working and volunteering in Bexley's charity sector, each having been involved in it from 1 to 10 years. All interviewees were women.

3.1 MAKING REPRESENTATION A PRIORITY

Across all three interviews, the importance of representation was identified. Participants agreed that the charity sector **should reflect the communities** in which they operate, and failure to do so was thought to prevent certain groups from accessing services for a number of reasons:

- Without a workforce that a broader, diverse group of people could identify with, non-represented communities perceive these organisations as **not 'for them'**
- Failure to offer services in multiple languages means they remain **inaccessible** to residents whose first language is not English or struggle with English as a second language
- Failure to have more representative workforces prevents organisations' ability to **understand** unique challenges facing different groups, who then struggle to **engage** with services

Increasing the representation of the BAME community in Bexley's charity sector was viewed as important, but required much **more research** in order for it to be effective. All three interviewees suggested that more information was needed on the demographics of the borough as a whole. It was recognised that we need more up-to-date information on the demographics of Bexley as it stands today, and then conversations about increasing representation will be more informed and lead to more effective, sustainable policies overall as they can be tailored in relation to local demographics.



NEED TO TALK?

If you've faced racial discrimination and need support, here are some organisations you can speak to:
Samaritans - +44 116 123 - [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)

Victim Support - + 08 08 16 89 111 - [victimsupport.org.uk](https://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

Or head to <https://www.stophateuk.org/help-in-the-uk-national-organisations/> for more information about organisations you can reach out to now.

PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO ADDRESS REPRESENTATION

Second, discussions also covered current or previous efforts to promote multi-ethnic representation either in Bexley as a whole or within specific organisations. Feedback on the BAME network in two interviews reflected similar sentiments: while the network was beneficial in encouraging greater dialogue between BAME-led organisations, it was ultimately undermined because funding for the role to support its development was only provided for 18 months. At the end of the 18 months, the network was left without a designated coordinator, and left individuals groups to try and work together.

According to one interviewee, organisations wanted to work together, but given that most small BAME-led organisations lack full time paid staff and are run by volunteers who balance their positions alongside other paid work and responsibilities, this inhibits their ability to coordinate. Staff or volunteers therefore struggle with the organisation, attendance and engagement in forums or meetings organised by those in the network.

Additionally, the network itself was perceived as somewhat flawed: whilst cooperation between BAME-led organisations is undoubtedly important, cooperation and collaboration between these groups and the wider sector is the larger goal. All interviewees stressed the need to create multi-faith and multi-ethnic workforces overall, rather than just having BAME-specific groups. This would prevent the 'segregation' of the sector, and work more towards integrating BAME communities and groups into the sector.



EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

Third, when asked about experiences of racism whilst working or volunteering in the sector, interviewees identified wider attitudes in the borough as the driver of racism. One interviewee noted that while she had not faced racial discrimination in the sector, they had increasingly suffered racist abuse in the community over the last five years. This was argued to be the result of the combined impact of demographic changes, austerity cuts, and rising social tension overall.

Further, another interviewee mentioned facing substantial racist online abuse following efforts to discuss openly the issues facing young BAME people in the borough. Undeterred, abuse was recorded and shared with young people and turned into a teaching moment: the interviewee felt it necessary to demonstrate to young BAME people using their services what attitudes existed in the borough, but gave them the tools to recognise, report, or challenge it in the future. One interviewee pointed out that racism isn't always intentional but rather the result of unconscious biases, leading different ethnic groups amongst service users to 'stick together', and exclude service users from other ethnic groups.



3.2 HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

Interviewees made the following recommendations to address racism and the underrepresentation of ethnic groups in the charity sector:

01 Addressing Racism

- Supporting greater **integration** of organisations led by people from different cultures and communities to promote greater understanding and appreciation of differences between them
- Increase general understandings of what constitutes 'racist' remarks, attitudes, or behaviours to prevent unintentional racism
- Work to increase **confidence** across the sector in discussing issues relating to race and representation.
- Support **anti-racism projects** or campaigns to promote wider attitudinal changes in the borough as a whole, encouraging social change in the workforce and amongst potential service users

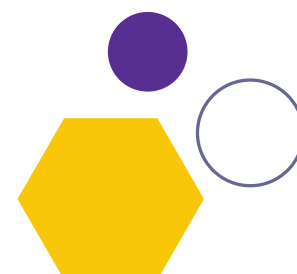


"UNLESS PEOPLE FEEL COMFORTABLE DISCUSSING ISSUES RELATING TO RACISM, ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, AND REPRESENTATION, THEN THESE CONVERSATIONS DO NOT OCCUR AND PROGRESS FUNDAMENTALLY CANNOT BE ACHIEVED"

02 Addressing Representation

- Continue to collect **more data** on the demographics of the charity sector and compare against up-to-date data on borough demographics
- Introducing **Equality and Diversity training** for organisations, with an emphasis on understanding cultural differences between communities in Bexley and being more sensitive towards these
- Encourage all organisations, specifically BAME-led groups, to **collaborate** on relevant areas of service provision where there is an overlap in service users, promoting stronger integration of organisations into the sector

"UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMMUNITIES IN BEXLEY AND BEING MORE SENSITIVE TO THESE"



USING THE TERM 'BAME'

Participants were also asked about their thoughts on the use of the term 'BAME' in conversations about ethnicity, racism, and representation and whether they approve or disapprove of its use.

Responses were similar, with participants stating that they accepted the use of the term because:

- It has utility in conversations about ethnicity and addressing inequalities between different cultural and ethnic groups.
- There is a **lack of vocabulary** around ethnicity and racism nationally, so BAME is the most appropriate term that we have as a society so far

However, the term 'BAME' was also criticised:

- It is **too broad** to acknowledge the individual experiences and challenges facing different ethnic and cultural groups
- It lumps different ethnic and cultural groups together as if one **homogeneous** ethnic group and essentially used as a placeholder for 'non-White'

Interestingly, all participants agreed that the term 'BAME' itself didn't necessarily matter - what is often more important is the context in which the term is used. If 'BAME' is used in discussions to tackle inequalities between different ethnic groups and led to substantive action to this effect, this is better than having no conversation at all.

This however does speak to a larger concern: BAME as a descriptive term is accepted because Black, Asian, Mixed and other ethnic and cultural groups feel that they *have to do so*. Discussions around ethnic and cultural differences; racism; and systemic inequality do not happen enough. As a result of this historic failure, we have yet to develop a stronger, more expansive vocabulary around these issues that is more acceptable to the people at the centre of them.

FINAL REMARKS

Overall, interviewees had a positive perception of Bexley's charity sector because they recognised the importance of the work being done to support people in the community. They did not report intentional racial discrimination from others working in the community, but rather acknowledged more systemic issues that perpetuate inequality, discrimination, and the underrepresentation of BAME groups. These issues were not identified as emanating from the sector in isolation, but **wider society**, and so efforts to challenge these must work in the sector and Bexley as a whole. The challenges to supporting anti-racism and increasing representation of different ethnic and cultural groups hinges on continuing to learn more about who works in the sector and how this compares with the demographics of the population.

"...lumps different ethnic and cultural groups together as if one homogeneous ethnic group and essentially used as a placeholder for 'non-White'



04 MAKING MORE THAN A STATEMENT

Now that we have captured this preliminary 'snapshot' of Bexley's VCS, we aim to be do use the findings from this research to create sustainable, long term initiatives to support the continuous development of a more representative, actively anti-racist sector. There is an appetite for change within our sector, so let us not let this moment pass us by, and consider how we can work together across the VCS and Bexley to make this change.

Addressing racism and the underrepresentation of ethnic groups in the borough has to become an embedded part of all of our strategies, no matter the focus of our organisations or our beneficiaries. Making our organisations more accessible to a wider group of people in Bexley, who will no doubt increasingly need our help as the impact of COVID-19 deepens, should be fundamental to our operational strategies going forward.

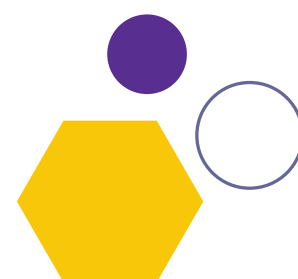
Bexley's VCS and BVSC should work together, and with other community based organisations and groups such as health and social care bodies, Bexley Council, schools, police and community watch groups, and faith groups. All of us want to support the people of Bexley, and face similar challenges: the pandemic, a lack of funding, difficulties engaging with different groups in the borough, and more. Working together to support each other to overcome these common barriers must become a more deeply embedded part of our collective strategies going forward. While this will by no means be an easy task, we should not be put off by its difficulty.

Progress is possible, and we can definitely work together more as a community to make sure that we support its development in Bexley as we get through the pandemic and beyond.



DID YOU KNOW:

Research by the Charity Commission found that 92% of all charity trustees were white, and just 9.6% of the largest 100 charities had BAME CEOs.



4.1 Promoting Community Cohesion in Bexley

Based on the feedback from the survey and interviews, **we need to tackle racism in the community as well as the sector if we are to address the problem adequately.**

Racial discrimination within the sector, whether intentional or unintentional, was frequently linked to the culture and social attitudes in the borough as a whole. This agrees with ACEVO's Home Truths report: racism in the sector is part of a larger societal problem that collectively we have yet to address.

Nationally, we have long put off the difficult conversations around racial discrimination, and so have not collectively developed a strong or expansive vocabulary, both as a society and within the sector, to have the open and honest discussions about the nature, impact, and root causes of racism.

Changing attitudes in the community will not by any means be an easy or quick process, but it is possible and actively requires work. BVSC can support social and cultural change by supporting and developing both on and offline awareness and educational campaigns to engage with as many groups as Bexley as possible.

Such campaigns should not be guided by a single group, but require active participation and contribution from people from **all backgrounds** in the borough, representing our community as a whole, and involve:

- Local healthcare services
- Schools, sixth forms, and colleges
- Bexley Council
- The VCS in Bexley and BVSC
- Police and Social Services
- Other community groups and businesses

DID YOU KNOW:

According to our 2019 State of the Sector Report, there were just 29 VCFS organisations that specialised in Human Rights/Equality and Diversity/ Religious or Racial Harmony.

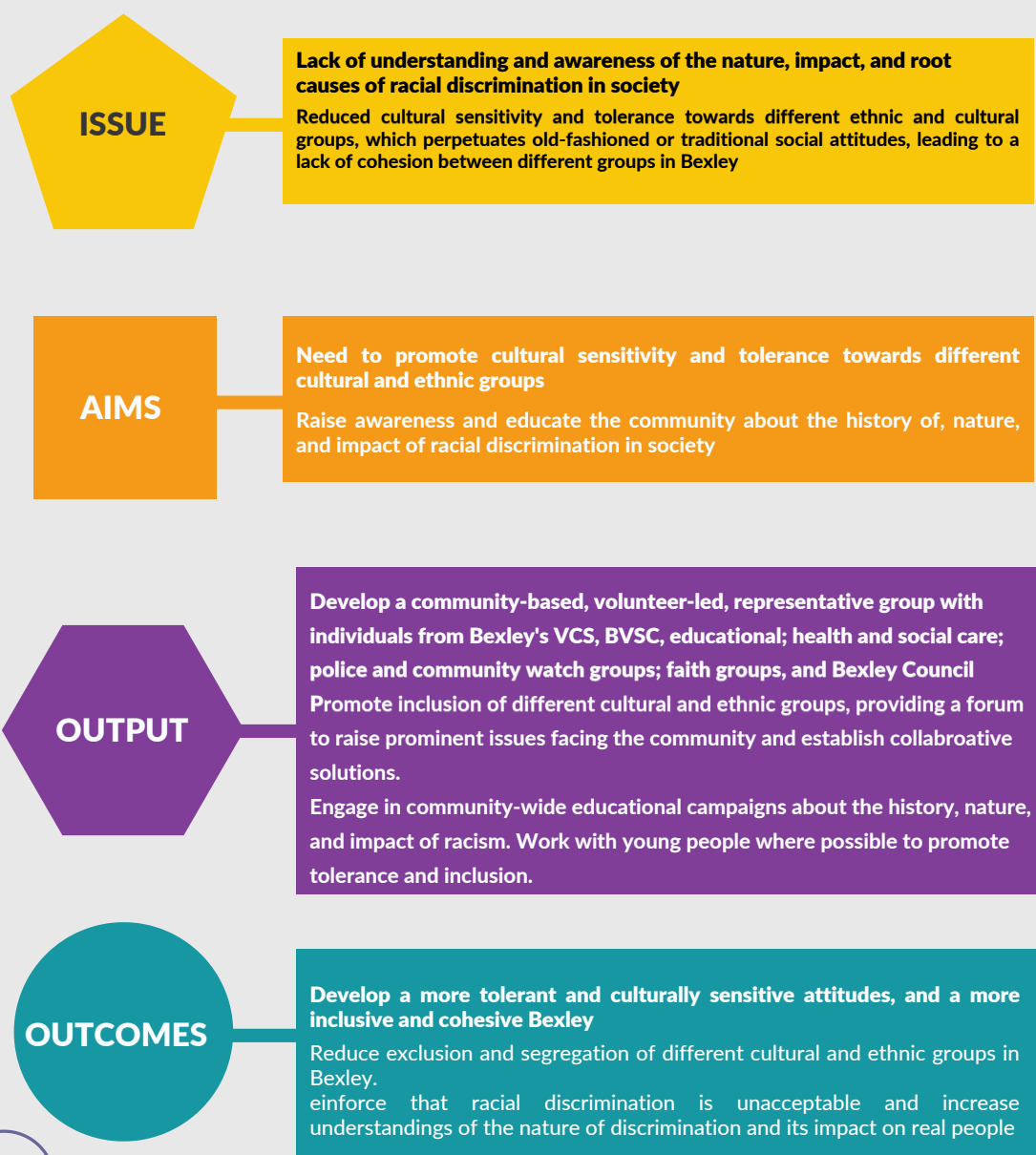


This leads to **misunderstandings about what 'racism' is**: one person's joke about ethnicity may seem small to the speaker, but to the receiver, this can become one of many small micro-aggressions they experience, adding up and amounting to larger problems. Racism therefore does not only exist in the form of violent hate crimes, which have been shown to be on the rise in the borough, but also in several smaller, and still harmful variations.

Based on feedback from our colleagues in the sector, we need to therefore engage in these difficult conversations in our own community more frequently, and then bring this understanding into the office with us, and ultimately, back to our clients.

01 PROMOTING COMMUNITY COHESION IN BEXLEY

HOW DO WE SUPPORT SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN BEXLEY?



4.2 Promoting Anti-Racism in Bexley's VCS

While this project took a 'snapshot' of the demographics of the sector today, we need to continue to build up this 'image' and see how it develops in the long term, alongside the changing demographics of the borough as a whole.

To remedy this, it is logical therefore to continue to collect this information in the long term and share the findings at regular intervals. BVSC and the wider sector can then compare trends year-to-year, and see where more work needs to be done to promote engagement and recruitment from different ethnic backgrounds - which was also identified as a key barrier to representation by interviewees and survey respondents.

It could also be possible for BVSC as an infrastructure organisation to encourage the VCS to adopt pro-representation schemes or policies. For example,

- Actively encouraging organisations and community groups to **participate in these annual reviews**;
- Publicly highlighting their own efforts to increase representation
- **Celebrating** the work of other groups to increase representation



02 PROMOTING ANTI-RACISM IN OUR VCS

ISSUE

A lack of widespread awareness and understanding of what qualifies as racial discrimination and a lack of confidence amongst victims of racial discrimination to report or challenge it when it occurs,

Victims of discrimination do not know where to go for support, or perceive a lack of support available to them

Racial discrimination goes unidentified and/or unchallenged

Attitudes that perpetuate racial discrimination in all its forms are not challenged

AIMS

Promote anti-racism within the sector and greater cultural sensitivity & training for senior staff to better deal with reported incidences of racial discrimination.

Empowering those who face racial discrimination to come forward and report incident(s), and provide support or sign-post to organisations who can support them.

OUTPUT

BVSC facilitates and encourages widespread uptake of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and resources for Bexley's VSC

Specific training for senior staff and leaders to clarify what support they should offer to employees and volunteers

Creating clear guides for employees and volunteers on how to report and challenge racial discrimination at work and what they should expect

Signposting to anti-discrimination organisations and support groups for those who have experienced racism in the sector

OUTCOMES

Develop more tolerant and culturally sensitive attitudes in Bexley's VCS & encourage greater BAME engagement within the sector and in the community between different cultural and ethnic groups

Encourage people to develop the confidence to report incidences of racial discrimination by providing clear pathways to do so.

Tackle the view that the voluntary and community sector is 'not for' certain cultural and ethnic groups via clear commitment to the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion .

Reinforce that racial discrimination is unacceptable and increase understandings of the nature of discrimination and its impact on real people

4.3 Making Representation a Priority

Respondents to surveys and interviews demonstrated that they believed that **racism within organisations limits their ability to support the communities** we ultimately aim to serve, and were mostly **unconvinced that their workplaces were doing enough to promote anti-racism internally**.

With **25% of respondents having experienced racial discrimination** personally and/or knowing someone who has in total, there is clear scope to more assertively promote anti-racism in our local sector. We all need to ensure that anti-racism is embedded within our organisations. No one should feel alienated at work, particularly in a sector that aims to break down divisive social barriers to enhanced community and individual wellbeing.

It is up to us then to continue to reinforce the message that racism cannot be tolerated in any form within our own organisations and networks. Some of us are already doing this, but there is still room for improvement. Given that a very small number of people actually reported incidences of discrimination, and an even smaller number were satisfied with the response, we need to act.

How can we promote anti-racism and tolerance at work, and make sure that for those who do face discrimination, they are aware of the pathways to reporting and accessing support ?



03 MAKING REPRESENTATION A PRIORITY

ISSUE

A lack of data and general awareness of levels of representation of different ethnic and cultural groups within Bexley's VCS organisations and across the sector as a whole, and a lack of capacity to gather sector-wide demographic data regularly and within organisations

Inability to clearly see where representation of different cultural and ethnic groups needs to be increased in relation to borough-wide demographic statistics. Inability to determine where efforts to increase representation within organisations and across the sector have been effective, or need to be changed to meet this goal

AIMS

Collect demographic data on Bexley's VCS as a whole and encourage organisations to conduct similar checks internally at regular intervals. Develop a more detailed image of the demographics of the sector that can be compared against similar data for the borough as a whole . Make informed and targeted efforts to increase representation of underrepresented ethnic and cultural groups. Demonstrate that the sector and its services are accessible to all people in Bexley.

OUTPUT

Organisations within Bexley's VCS participate in sector-wide demographic survey, the results of which are shared and tracked longitudinally to observe trends overtime within the sector and in relation to demographic changes in the borough

OUTCOMES

Learn more about who works or volunteers in Bexley's VCS and determine whether pro-representation schemes have been effective or require reconsideration.

Promote a more diverse and representative VCS and increase the sector's ability to engage with a more diverse range of cultural and ethnic groups in Bexley.



4.4 Continuing to Support BAME-led Organisations in Bexley's VCS

Next, our strategy to promote anti-racism and increase the representation of ethnic groups to more accurately must consider how we can better support the BAME-led and/or specific organisations already doing amazing work in the borough.

This was a common concern across interview and survey feedback, and for good reason: BAME-led and specific organisations will be pivotal to our ability to engage with and support the BAME communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The BAME Network was noted to have potential, but due to the loss of funding, the Network was left without enough support to continue to develop and consolidate the progress made. For example, the network was praised for bringing groups together; encouraging members to work together; and raising awareness of funding opportunities.

The network was thought to have been an effective way of bringing a diverse group of organisations in the borough together, but required for more development. Given the project was only funded for 18 months, the loss of the BVSC coordinator had a significant detrimental impact on the Network:

- BAME-led organisations and groups tended to be run by volunteers, rather than paid staff, so it was difficult to organise their own groups and engage in the Network without additional support
- Difficulties coordinating potential collaboration and team working on common issues because of a lack of capacity
- Misunderstandings around what working together entailed, compounded by lack of capacity to coordinate more efficiently



While there must be more effort made to promote a more representative and diverse VCS workforce across all organisations, we also need to ensure that the organisations that can already engage with different cultural and ethnic groups in Bexley are supported in doing so going forward. This is critical to the response of our VCS to COVID-19. With a second wave, we should ensure that BAME organisations in Bexley's VCS are well integrated and connected between themselves and with the rest of the VCS in Bexley, promoting their ability to all work together to support different ethnic and cultural groups in the borough.

By further investing in the BAME organisations in Bexley's VCS and their ability to engage with the wider sector, this will combat the perception amongst BAME communities that the sector is 'not for' them. In interviews, it was evident that the sector is perceived as predominantly White and this was discouraging for BAME communities who then do not engage with the sector. This was compounded by the creation of BAME specific groups or forums within organisations. Organisations were seen to create a separate space for BAME service users, rather than encouraging greater integration with all service users. Going forward, it will be necessary to consider how we can promote integration of services and service users into the wider VCS in Bexley.

By encouraging this integration, we can help tackle the third issue: a lack of BAME staff in the sector. If people in the community can see themselves within organisations, they will be more likely to engage and develop a different perspective of the VCS - promoting BAME communities to engage with the sector as potential employees or volunteers.



04 SUPPORTING OUR BAME-LED ORGANISATIONS

ISSUE

BAME specific and/or BAME-led organisations, groups, and forums are not well integrated into the wider VCS.

Bexley's VCS and the sector as a whole perceived as 'not for' BAME communities to engage with as service users or consider as a viable career path.

Bexley's VCS struggles to engage with a more diverse range of cultural and ethnic groups in the borough who need support.

AIMS

Reach out to members of the BAME Network and collect feedback on:

- Current needs and challenges in the face of COVID-19 in service provision and in BAME communities
- Thoughts on the effectiveness of the Network during the limited window
- Whether the Network can be adapted or better supported to help meet challenges created by the pandemic

OUTPUT

Collaboration between BVSC, Bexley Council, and BAME groups to develop supplementary program to build on previous successes of BAME Network; and support the Network and their beneficiaries in the face of COVID-19

Consider how BVSC and Bexley Council can support BAME-led or specific organisations to support service users and encourage greater integration and collaboration with the wider VCS.

Promote the work of BAME organisations and groups to raise profile of their work and existence in the borough to potential service users; job seekers and volunteers; and other VCS groups.

OUTCOMES

Raise awareness of services on offer in Bexley, specifically amongst those likely to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic

Increases collaboration and coordination between former BAME Network organisations, and incorporation of new organisations and BAME-specific forums into the wider VCS

Raised profile of BAME-led or specific organisations in Bexley and show the VCS to be open to all people who believe in working for public benefit.

4.5 Setting the Standard

Finally, survey and interview feedback suggested that in order to move forward, we need to know what we are aiming for. While engaging in conversations about progress is an important first step, we need to know where we would like to end up, and how we can determine if we're moving in the right direction as a sector and as a community? In terms of representation, it is not enough to merely say 'we should promote BAME recruitment and engagement', or in regards to racial discrimination that we should 'try to be more culturally sensitive'.

We need clearly defined guidelines for the sector to clarify how exactly we can support anti-racism and the development of a representative VCS. This way, we know what we are aiming for, and introduce greater accountability if we do not meet the guidelines for doing so.

The exact form and nature of these standards can be devised in collaboration between BVSC and our VCS, and other national and local groups with relevant expertise in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion. These guidelines should demonstrate:

1. How to actively create a **more representative, diverse and culturally sensitive** sector
2. How organisations can tangibly **promote change** within their own organisations and in the community

To do this, guidelines should encourage:

-
- Adherence to the Equality Act (2010)
- Participation in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training
- Where necessary, reconsider recruitment practices so they are more inclusive
- Assessing whether they are posing barriers to the development of a representative workforce
- Providing guidance on how to update recruitment practices to ensure opportunities are accessible to all people, regardless of background

BVSC could facilitate a sector-wide review, celebrating clear efforts to uphold guidelines and explicit commitment to promoting anti-racism and increasing representation, and consider how to support groups to meet them where they may otherwise struggle. Standards should not chastise VCS organisations, but help them to consider how they can improve their ability to support Bexley's diverse communities by tackling these barriers to engagement.



05 SETTING THE STANDARD FOR AN ANTI-RACIST AND REPRESENTATIVE VCS IN BEXLEY

ISSUE

Lack of clear guidelines around promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles across Bexley's VCS specifically

Lack of guidance on how to actively promote EDI internally in Bexley's VCS.

Harder to tackle perceptions that the VCS is accessible to all people from all backgrounds .

AIMS

Design fair and attainable standards that promote and embed EDI principles in Bexley's VCS for the future.

Encourage VCS organisations to share 'good practices' in support of EDI and representation to promote cross-sector integration and collaboration.

OUTPUT

Work with Bexley's VCS, BVSC and other relevant organisations to craft the content of EDI and representation standards and guidelines

- Cross sector forums to create guidelines involving employees at different levels of seniority and volunteers

Regular reviews for organisations to see how well they have met standards and where they require additional support to do so

- Celebrate successes publicly
- Encourage collaboration and exchange of ideas between groups and organisations on how to meet standards

OUTCOMES

Increased integration of separate VCS organisations & groups through consultation process and sharing of good practices within the sector

Greater ability to demonstrate that the sector is welcome to all people who share the same commitment to advancing public good, and accessible to all who need support.

Ability to observe longitudinally efforts to promote EDI principles.

Bexley's VCS becomes more culturally sensitive, representative and better able to engage with different communities within the borough



A Community Approach to Community Issues

Add a subheading

By developing such standards and celebrating successes with the community and other organisation, this could also work to restore public trust in the sector which has been in decline even after the national sector demonstrated their commitment to public good and resilience in the face of the pandemic.

The guidelines could provide an opportunity to demonstrate the VCS in Bexley is committed to supporting all residents, no matter their background. This could help Bexley's VCS to raise their profile in the eyes of the community and encourage people to get involved in the future.

These processes, in tandem with the wider efforts to promote cultural change in the borough in relation to our attitudes to ethnic and cultural difference; cultural sensitivity; and promoting greater engagement with BAME organisations and communities in Bexley, should help us to develop a more interconnected and resilient VCS that is more ready to face a potential second wave of the pandemic and whatever lies ahead as we continue to feel the impact of the first.

These recommendations should be considered as recommendations: they are based on the feedback from a small sample of Bexley's VCS employees and volunteers, but nonetheless still reflect common challenges we are seeing in the wider sector. They should serve as useful starting points in the wider conversation about how the sector, nationally and locally, can make more than just statements about the need for change, but actively take steps forward and seek out progress.

We have seen what happens when we let systemic inequality and discrimination go unchallenged. A potential second wave of the pandemic threatens to exacerbate this impact, particularly for the BAME communities. As a sector, we strive to support all communities and so if we can reconsider how we do this - what's working, what's not working, and where we need to adapt- then we can better support Bexley through this next chapter.



05 CONCLUSION

This project was undertaken to demonstrate BVSC's commitment to making more than a statement against racism and the underrepresentation of ethnic groups in the voluntary and community sector. It aimed to take a closer look at the demographics of Bexley's VCS today, attitudes to racism and representation, and learn more about views and experiences of volunteers and employees in the sector on these issues. BVSC wanted to engage directly with the BAME communities that are subjected to racism and are underrepresented in the sector, and have their next steps guided in part by the feedback from the BAME community.

Survey and interview feedback found that Bexley's charity sector as a whole can do more to increase BAME representation and promote anti-racism. In terms of demographics, respondents to the survey were predominantly:

- White
- Over 45 years old
- Female
- Heterosexual
- Did not identify as having disabilities
- Did not have caring responsibilities
- Had an undergraduate degree or equivalent
- Most respondents worked in community development or mental-health focused charities, supported the general public, and were spread across the borough

In comparison to borough demographics for ethnicity, the survey does suggest that the sector is somewhat representative of the population in regards to the percentage of White to BAME volunteers or employees. However, the low response rate (48) prevents us from stating this clearly, and far more work is needed to prove this in full.



Second, the **BAME group should not be treated as a conglomerate ethnic group** in its own right and more work should be done to recruit from Black, Asian, Mixed, and other ethnic groups overall. The sector in Bexley is still predominantly White, and few young, disabled, LGTBQ+ identifying people are represented in our sector according to these results.

Survey responses suggest that whilst people were largely unsure or did not have strong views about whether their workplaces were doing enough to tackle racism and promote greater representation of BAME groups internally, these are important to the future of service delivery in Bexley's charity sector.

Additionally, for those who have or will experience racial discrimination, there is not enough support within organisations to challenge this effectively. Respondents were generally unaware of schemes or initiatives to support representation and anti-racism in the sector, and so more work is needed to embed these into organisations across the borough. Those who reported experiences of racial discrimination also require **more support** than is currently available to them, and should be empowered to challenge and report discrimination.

Racial discrimination in Bexley's VCS, like anywhere else, is part of a much larger systemic issue. It will require continuous, sustained work to overcome. BVSC can support anti-racism in the sector by helping to support and coordinate anti-racism projects in the **community** alongside **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training** and resources for the VCS. **Regular 'snapshots'** of the demographics of the sector in relation to the population of Bexley should be captured in order to track how representative the sector is of the diverse communities within the borough.

This research has only managed to scratch the surface on all of these issues. Even the discussion of 'BAME' representation can be broken down further to engage with different ethnic and cultural groups individually. We must continue to delve into attitudes towards ethnicity, racism, and representation in Bexley in the future, exploring the unique challenges and experiences facing different groups. This project is a first step in a longer march towards progress for Bexley and our VCS.

Hopefully the insights from this report and recommendations set out in this report can help us navigate this journey forward. BVSC is committed to amplifying the voice of the VCS in Bexley, and will continue to work hard to ensure all communities are represented and able to have their voice heard.



PART TWO

06

METHODOLOGY

To determine the extent to which racism and underrepresentation of ethnic groups is an issue for our VCS in Bexley, we aimed to:

- Capture a 'snapshot' of the demographics of the sector at present and compare against local demographic data to assess how representative the sector is of the community
- Engage directly with attitudes to racism and representation as issues in the sector at national and local levels
- Listen to the views and perspectives of BAME people on these issues and their overall experience working or volunteering in Bexley's VCS
- Reflect on the views of the sector as a whole on how we can move forward and what changes we can make together and individually to support representation and anti-racism

We aimed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the above issues. This approach allowed us to clearly demonstrate our current position in terms of representation and explore the barriers and possible solutions in a more indepth, real way, as told by our sector colleagues. Second, this allowed us to set a 'baseline' for future research on racism and representation in Bexley's charity sector, as both sources of data can be compared against findings in potential future studies.

Snapshot Survey

To capture our 'snapshot' on representation and racism in the sector, we launched our Snapshot Survey, which was available online from August 7th - 28th 2020. It was distributed via newsletters, direct emails, and across social media platforms. As the project was volunteer-led, the time-frame was restricted to this window, which coincided with the quieter summer period. The survey covered five main areas, which are explained below.



01 ABOUT YOU

- Occupation/Role
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Ethnicity
- UK-Born
- Disability or Long-term Illness
- Caring Responsibilities

We aimed to learn as much as we could about the people in our sector, asking about ethnicity alongside the other protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act (2010). This allowed for further exploration about potential overlapping issues in representation, and discrimination, and how these may relate to an individuals' experience in Bexley's charity sector. We also wanted to acknowledge the contributions of non-UK born residents in Bexley to the community, and so included this question in the survey.

Finally, by inquiring about potential caring responsibilities that Bexley's VCS colleagues may have in addition to their community work, this is useful to know how this may have impacted experience in the sector overall alongside the other protected characteristics, and whether additional support for employees or volunteers is needed.

02 ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION

This section of the survey aimed to gauge briefly which organisations were supporting different or multiple groups of Bexley residents. This information also allowed for an exploration of whether BAME people were represented in different types of organisations compared to the White group.

Finally, we asked whether the organisations that respondents worked or volunteered with were based in order to elucidate a potential North/South divide even in the charity sector, where BAME groups would tend to work more in the north of the borough compared to the White counterparts.

03 ASSESSING ATTITUDES TO RACE AND REPRESENTATION

Survey respondents were presented with eight statements on:

- Racism as a prominent issue within the sector as whole;
- Whether attitudes towards racism in the sector were changing;
- Whether racism and representation impact service delivery;
- Their perception of Bexley's charity sector;
- Their views on their organisation's representation and anti-racism policy.

Respondents were then asked to rate the extent to which they agree with the statements on a Likert scale, from 'Strongly Disagree' to Strongly Agree.

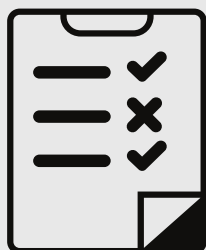


OUR APPROACH

01 RESEARCH

We aimed to learn more about our borough, the people living in it, and the challenges they face today. We took a closer look at our VCS, and racism and representation in the national charity sector.

02 Snapshot SNAPSHOT SURVEY



We launched our survey online to learn about the demographics of the VCS in Bexley today, our attitudes to racism and representation, potential experiences with racial discrimination in the VCS, and how we can promote anti-racism and representation as VSC and as a sector.

03 INTERVIEWS

We wanted to make sure we have people who identified as belonging to any of the BAME groups the opportunity to share their views and experiences with us. Survey respondents could sign up via the survey to talk to us in more depth about race, representation, and their experiences.

04 ANALYSIS



We took a step back to reflect on the findings of our survey and interviews to identify trends and key themes in responses.

05 RECOMMENDATIONS

With everything we learned about these issues and our own VCS, we have made some recommendations for how we can move forward as an organisation, a sector, and a community.



04 EXPERIENCES OF BEXLEY'S VCS WORKFORCE

Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience working or volunteering in the charity sector in Bexley so that this could be correlated against ethnicity and follow up questions on potential experiences of racial discrimination at work. Respondents were asked about having either experienced racial discrimination personally or knowing someone else in the sector who had, and were able to choose from 5 possible options:

- Yes, I have experienced racism whilst working in the charity sector and know others who have also experienced this
- Yes, I have experienced racism whilst working in the charity sector, but do not know anyone else who has experienced this
- No, I have not personally experienced racial discrimination whilst working in the charity sector, but I know someone who has
- No, I have not experienced racial discrimination and do not know anyone else who has experienced this either
- Prefer Not to Say

For those who answered 'yes' to the first three options, they were then asked about the nature of the discrimination and whether they reported this to management. If they did not report the incident(s), they were asked to identify why so that future efforts to tackle racism in the sector can take these barriers into consideration and try to encourage people to come forward and seek support.

05 MOVING FORWARD

Finally, respondents were asked:

- What they perceived to be the main barriers to representation of different ethnic groups in Bexley's charity sector
- Their awareness of any policies or schemes to support anti-racism and/or representation in their own organisations, Bexley, and the wider sector.
- What they would like to see from BVSC to support anti-racism and promote ethnic representation in Bexley's charity sector.



INTERVIEWS

We wanted to engage directly with the people at the heart of this conversation: the BAME communities that are historically underrepresented in the sector and facing racial discrimination. If we are to address the barriers that affect the BAME community in terms of engaging with and working in the sector, we need to hear first hand how these barriers are working against them.

We invited respondents who identified as BAME to take part in semi-structured interviews with our research volunteer. Interviews were to take place over Zoom or over the phone depending on the preference of the interviewee, and would cover the following topics:

- Overall views and experience of working or volunteering in Bexley
- Potential experiences and perceptions of racism as an issue in Bexley's voluntary and community sector
- Barriers to representation and anti-racism in their organisation and/or specific field within the sector
- What changes they would like to see going forward from their organisation, in the community and wider sector, and from BVSC

Findings from interviews and the survey have been included in this report anonymously and all feedback remains confidential, and cannot be traced back to participants or any organisation operating in Bexley.



07 EVALUTATION

This project was volunteer-led, and so while every effort was made to work to a high standard, there is clearly room for improvement should a similar project be undertaken again - whether by BVSC or another organisation. Starting with what worked however, there are a number of points to make:

- First, the BVSC team was incredibly supportive of the project, with team members including the volunteers in relevant discussions and forums; helping to fill in gaps in their knowledge; signposting to relevant pieces of research and engaging with the project overall.
- Second, the volunteer had a good amount of freedom in designing the project and was able to discuss ideas with the BVSC team. The volunteer found it easy to ask for help when needed.
- Third, the volunteer undoubtedly benefited from gaining hands-on research, communications, and project management experience.

Beyond this, the volunteer learned a great deal about the borough and the impact of public and social policy on Bexley specifically as a community. Further insight into racism and the value of representation in the charity sector was also gained, as was exposure to the realities of supporting social change.

Should BVSC take on another volunteer to carry out a similar project, they will definitely benefit from the experience. If BVSC were to carry out a similar project again or repeat this project regularly as recommended, there are a few improvements to the research design that can be made to improve the quality of the research produced.

RESPONSE RATES AND ENGAGEMENT

BVSC's previous State of the Sector report (2019) found to be home to at least 800 voluntary, community and faith organisations, with at least 407 registered charities, and an additional 1,200 small issue organisations. With the impact of COVID-19 on small charities and groups however, these numbers may have dwindled, although not drastically enough to qualify the small number of respondents overall. There are several possible reasons for the low response rate.

First, the survey was launched during August, when more people are out of the 'office' or taking time off from work at home. Fewer people may have seen the survey as a result, and by the time they have returned to work, the survey has closed. Due to constraints, the survey could not be extended at this time.



Second, and by no means less importantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has left the sector even more stretched in terms of funding and workforce. The survey, understandably, may not have been a key priority for any organisation in Bexley in the face of increased demand for services and minimal resources to meet the challenge. Regardless of how important organisations and the individuals within them may actually perceive racism and representation to be to the future of the local sector, they may not have had the time on top of their already high workload to engage with the project.

Third, despite numerous efforts to clearly state the survey was aimed at people working or volunteering in Bexley's voluntary sector at all levels, the fact that it came from BVSC rather than smaller bodies or a specific team within BVSC targeting a smaller sample of individuals working in the sector, may have been confusing for some. This may have encouraged the perception that the survey was for senior staff or management, rather than for volunteers, people working not working in more senior positions within organisations, or part-time staff members.

EXPANDING OUTREACH

Given the complications caused by COVID-19 and the fact that the research was largely conducted by a volunteer, albeit with support from BVSC, there are limits in what a volunteer can do in terms of contacting relevant bodies, groups, or individuals. Future projects would benefit from more involvement from someone directly in BVSC's team, who can contact people more freely.

As mentioned, the surveys were all disseminated online. For those not in the office over the summer or following BVSC's social media accounts, the project did not reach as wide a net of people as possible, contributing to a lower response rate. Future projects would benefit from a more diverse approach to engagement, which could include:

- Paper surveys
- Face to face interviews or focus groups
- Telephone surveys and interviews instead of purely online
- Offering more accessible formats of the survey for people with learning difficulties to engage with more easily
- Contacting a wider group of organisations in the borough and nationally



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APPENDIX

Figure 1. Demographics of Bexley's VCS in Comparison to Demographics of the Borough, Based on Estimates taken from London Borough of Bexley (2020)

Figure 2. Responses to 'My workplace is doing enough to tackle racism within it'

Figure 3. Responses to 'Racism is a prominent issue within the charity sector'

Figure 4. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016, Indices of Multiple Deprivation

Figure 5. Respondents by Organisation Specialism

Figure 6. 85% of VCS employees and volunteers are women.

Figure 7. Age Range of Respondents

Figure 8. Percentage of Respondents With or Without Caring Responsibilities

Figure 9. Responses to Statement One

Figure 10. Responses to Statement Two

Figure 11. Responses to Statement Three

Figure 12. Responses to Statement Four

Figure 13. Responses to Statement Five

Figure 14. Responses to Statement Six

Figure 15. Responses to Statement Seven

Figure 16. Responses to Statement Eight

Figure 17. Respondents Rating of their Experience in Bexley's VCS

Figure 18. Types of Racial Discrimination Reported by Respondents

Figure 19. Barriers to Representation Identified by Respondents



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NCVO - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/>

ACEVO - <https://www.acevo.org.uk/>

UBELE INITIATIVE - <https://www.ubele.org/>

VICTIM SUPPORT - <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/>

STOP HATE UK - <https://www.stophateuk.org/help-in-the-uk-national-organisations/>

SAMARITANS - <https://www.samaritans.org/>

VOICE4CHANGE - <https://voice4change-england.com/>

BVSC - <https://bvsc.co.uk/>

