



# Impact on Urban Health Monitoring

12 month report, November 2023



Community  
Southwark

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## Foreword from the Chief Executive Officer

Impact on Urban Health (IoUH) has generously funded two full time equivalent (FTE) posts at Community Southwark for the past year. These have focused on supporting Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups which are ethnic minority-led and which have been historically under-represented in funding and decision making.

Tackling structural racism and historic injustice and working to make Southwark a more inclusive and equal borough is complex and challenging. The IoUH funding has helped us to listen, learn, support, and navigate through this complexity. It has done so much more than provide dedicated VCS Support Officers for ethnic minority-led groups, even though this itself is impactful. It has also given CS the capacity to effect change across our entire organisation, and the sector more widely. It has enabled us to develop a bespoke service for ethnic minority-led groups, and to ensure that this learning is applied across the wider work being done by Community Southwark and Healthwatch Southwark (HWS), and through our strong relationships with funders, the council, NHS, other statutory agencies, and corporate partners.

Halfway through the project, we are proud of the immediate impact we have had, set out in this report (for 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023). And we are optimistic that we will, in a year's time, have a tried and tested model to give ongoing tailored support to ethnic minority-led groups in Southwark, and to ensure these groups are being listened to at every level of decision making – a unique combination of support on the ground and system changing influence.

As well as thanking IoUH for their funding, we must also thank the staff, trustees, and volunteers involved in this project. The whole CS and HWS team has been actively engaged, and special thanks are for David Reid, Betty Efemini, Hugh Stultz, and Syeda Hussain who lead our work with ethnic minority-led groups tirelessly, and advocate for them at every possible opportunity.



# 1. Capacity building

At the heart of our work over the past 12 months is one-to-one support for ethnic minority-led groups delivered by the VCS Support Officers funded by IoUH. This is generally leadership and organisational development through coaching, action learning, and mentoring. This capacity building casework:

- gives direct support to groups – from 110 casework sessions to £440,000 in extra funding.
- identifies patterns for peer support and training.
- ensures 50% of all capacity building support at CS (included that not funded by IoUH) is targeted and appropriate for BAME-led groups.
- ensures that the whole CS team (and our partners) learn and implement what works best for BAME-led groups.

Indicator	Annual Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Completed 121 casework advice sessions	220	31	57	27	44	159
Completed casework sessions for BAME led groups	110	19	37	22	32	110
% of casework delivered for BAME led groups	50%	61%	65%	81%	73%	69%
Casework themes (across BAME-led casework)	% categorised (>100% if more than one theme per case)	Income generation 80%, Premises 19%, Governance 9%	Income generation 65%, Starting up 16%, Governance 11%, Finance/risk 5%	Income generation 58%, Finance Management 19%, CIC 19%, Governance 15%, Premises 7%	Income generation 53%, Governance 28%, Premises 19%	Income generation 63%, Governance, 16%, Premises 10%,
Outreach visits to BAME-led groups	40	NA	11	13	6	30
Additional funding for BAME-led groups	£200,000	£103,000	£22,000	£240,000	£75,000	£440,000

### **Case Study: Supporting a Start Up - Angels Breakfast and Afterschool Club**

Angels Breakfast Club run community based childcare services with a foodbank and hygiene bank. They came to CS for support around formalising certain aspects of their work, whilst wanting to maintain their grass roots organisation status. Through our sessions we discussed advantages and disadvantages of several organisational structures, including registered charities, CIOs, CIC etc. They decided to become a CIC. We then provided support with information and advice about company registration and filling out CIC36. This resulted in successfully becoming Angel's community service CIC.

They were appreciative of the support they received and felt more confident in applying for funding and becoming a more sustainable organisation. We then supported them with successfully applying for funding, and with their Evaluation and Impact Measurement. They are now growing their own impact and supporting other local groups to do so.

### **Case Study: Southwark Black Parents Forum**

We supported this group of volunteers to come together into a more formal structure with advice around their governance and support to become a CIC. They requested feedback on their end of year report, and we gave pointers on their Theory of Change, outcomes-based framework, and impact statements.

We assisted them to make successful funding applications which mean they are now in the transition from purely volunteer-led to having paid staff and we are continuing to support them with their longer-term strategy, business planning, and policies.

### **Case Study: Supporting Lordship Lane Baptist Church (LLBC)**

Lordship Lane Baptist Church (LLBC) is a small church located in East Dulwich, South London. As part of their pastoral care and reaching out to the local community they run community projects at the church such as the Elder Citizen Luncheon Club and coffee mornings for refugees.

LLBC operates with a small team consisting of two senior Deacons, two part-time volunteers, a cook and a community project coordinator. They were keen to continue providing this much appreciated service to the community and were seeking financial assistance in the form of funding. Through our sessions we discussed the current needs of the project and opportunities for funding.

LLBC were keen to apply for a grant and decided to apply for the Southwark Equalities Grants programme. Community Southwark supported them to make the funding application. They were successful and received £20,000 to continue their much-needed community project. LLBC were very appreciative and grateful for the support they received, felt much more confident in applying for funding in the future, and happy that their community project had now become more sustainable.

## 2. Voice, representation, and policy

The VCS Support Officers for ethnic minority-led groups have given CS far greater capacity and credibility for collective representation. Statutory and other external partners are aware of the importance of these officer roles and the team bring the direct experiences of ethnic minority-led groups to conversations with the council, NHS, funders and others. In the last 12 months we have held the following meetings with decision makers.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Health and Wellbeing Board	1	1		1	3
Partnership Southwark/ ICS	4	6	8	7	25
Council (including Ch Exec, Cabinet Members, Commissioning group, 121s, Land Commission)	24	30	34	16	104
Funders (on behalf of the sector)	8	10	13	8	39

We have formally influenced policy on seven projects including:

- Working with Southwark Council to develop their **VCS Remuneration policy**. This has involved setting up focus groups with BAME-led VCS groups as they are disproportionately impacted by the lack of financial support to contribute time and expertise to policy making.
- Our Latin American Network worked with our Healthwatch team to produce our **Latin American experiences of Health and Social Care Services [report](#)** which is being presented with Latin American community representatives to NHS partners for formal responses. We continue to work with the network to analyse responses and hold partners to account, using the powers and position of Healthwatch.
- Advocating for more diversity in **Dementia Alliance** networks to develop a more proactive approach in identifying and building relationships with BAME-led groups.
- Securing BAME led group representation on **Windrush Grants Panel and Black History Month Grants Panel** and successfully argued for Black History Month to be ‘co-produced’ with BAME led VCS reps.
- Bringing together **VCS disability groups** to challenge the council’s Disability Hub procurement process.
- Supporting the **Southwark Planning Network** to involve more diverse residents and community groups in planning processes.
- Securing a package of support from the council for **VCS groups working with refugees** in response to the challenges they have been facing following Home Office rule changes. This has also helped to provide evidence for regional and national lobbying.

## State of the Sector

Our State of the Sector [report](#) has been at the core of our representation. The issues highlighted – funding, premises, and statutory relationships - are consistently and disproportionately bigger challenges for ethnic minority-led groups. The VCS Support Officers funded by IoUH have explored these issues with groups in constructive detail and led to co-produced solutions with VCS groups and decision-makers. Whilst these have not all gone perfectly, we are starting to see the impact of our evidence-based research on Southwark’s funders and statutory services.

## Funding

We have held two meetings of our Funding Working Group which brings together funders, VCS groups, and statutory partners. A full report from the first meeting is [here](#).

Listening to BAME-led groups through casework, Annual Members’ Survey, and the State of the Sector research has led us to review CS fundraising support to a more hands on approach.

We are working with funders to shape their funding processes, including feeding into Impact on Urban Health. We have directly worked on three pilots:

### Equalities Grant

We worked closely with ethnic minority-led groups to lobby Southwark Council for funding for BAME-led groups through ‘Southwark Stands Together’ and ‘We Are Not Going Back to Normal’. This led to a £400,000 Equalities Grant, with £200,000 ring-fenced for BAME-led groups. We successfully proposed that the grant assessors should be a mixture of Council officers and BAME community leaders and that the panel should be supported through unconscious bias training. This process was an opportunity for the Council to learn more about the infrastructure needs of the BAME community sector and led to more engagement with groups which are often excluded.

### Race Equality and Cultural Heritage Alliance (REACH) and Latin American Network (LAN) Health Inequalities Panel

Partnership Southwark and South London and Maudsley have given these two CS facilitated networks a total of £103,000 to be decided by panel members. The panel has designed the fund which has meant shared learning with the VCS and opening up access to groups not normally eligible for funding. They have chosen to focus on the importance of collaboration and will be holding workshops for panellists and potential applicants. There has been significant learning around how long co-producing a fund takes, and the challenges of dealing with large scale statutory processes for relatively small grants.

### ‘Funding Differently’ Pilot

The team has also worked closely to support the £100,000 Thriving Communities funding from Partnership Southwark and with United St Saviour’s. This funding has been designed with VCS groups and completely focused on the State of the Sector principles – an easy application process, the VCS making the decisions, and light tough monitoring.



The key learning has been around the time needed for co-ordination and engagement, and how beneficial changing the process itself has been. So far, £55,000 has been awarded, 73% of this to BAME-led groups.

*“This pilot supports UStSC ambitions to challenge the power-dynamics surrounding grant-making processes and we’re learning so much from the programme about how to do this.”* Sarah Thurman, United St Saviour's Charity

*“I really enjoyed this refreshing approach to grant-making. The process is super easy and allowed me to focus more on our charity's mission rather than answering nitpicking questions. Thanks for giving us this opportunity to approach fundraising in a novel way.”* VCS group applicant

## Premises

### A joint project with the Ethical Property Foundation

Advocating the difficult and often miserable experiences BAME led groups have when dealing with landlords led to the Ethical Property Foundation wanting to know more about this. The accounts of seven BAME-led organisations were written up by Ethical Property Foundation and reproduced as a discussion paper to provide the basis for conversations with decision makers in Southwark about the experiences of BAME led groups, around suitability, condition, and affordability.

### VCS Premises Project

Our first Premises Working Group was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 and brought together VCS groups (some of whom have space), funders, the council, and businesses. Impact on Urban Health attended this meeting and gave helpful input from the perspectives of property and funding. The group identified the need for:

- short term activity to match space with need,
- medium term action to analyse supply and demand and create a matching process,
- longer term shaping of policy and practice e.g. the council's affordable workspace strategy, Land Commission recommendations, and the direction of the Property Department

Southwark Council and United St Saviour's have agreed to match fund a VCS Premises and Policy Officer at Community Southwark to progress these actions. The role will start in January 2024 and be part based at the council for approximately two days per week to be a voice for the VCS in Planning and Property.

The work the IoUH funded VCS Support Officers did in gathering and exploring the premises experiences of BAME-led groups has been invaluable and instrumental in progressing this project. It is essential that our IoUH funded VCS Support Officers work closely with the new Premises Officer to make sure that the voices of BAME-led groups continue to shape the direction of this project.

### Land Commission

Southwark council's [Land Commission](#) report was launched on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The Commission was made up of representatives from Community Southwark (our CEO and one of our trustees and REACH Alliance members), the NHS, the council, the church, TfL, academics, and others.

Agreeing to consider social purpose and to have greater community involvement in decisions about land is very much in line with the experiences which have frustrated and held back BAME-led groups and in line with our State of the Sector research. Community Southwark is keen to support making the Land Commission recommendations a reality and the new VCS Premises Officer post will assist with this.

## 3. Networks

Facilitating networks has been an area of learning across CS over the past year. All our networks (including mental health; disability providers; children, families, and young people; older people; volunteer managers) have relaunched in person meetings and we have moved the focus to VCS led agendas, as opposed to places where statutory partners talk 'at' the sector.

The two networks facilitated by our IoUH funded officer have had challenges requiring careful mediation. REACH reviewed its structure as their committee system was not working and the Annual Membership Survey showed it needed to be opened to a wider range of BAME-led VCS groups. The Latin American Network has had to build consensus on contentious topics and has worked to develop a clearer strategy to engage the wider community. With the help of our CS officer and corporate pro bono support, LAN recently held a successful strategy away day.

We are currently reviewing our CS guidelines for facilitating networks – what the role of the CS staff members is, the terms of reference for networks, and how we record membership and attendance on our Air Table CRM system.

We are also considering the potential for a 'Grass Roots Network' as our research has identified that these smaller groups find relationships and funding more difficult, and they are more likely to be BAME-led. We will survey our 1,041 members to identify these groups and to explore with them the type of support they may find helpful. Based on our learning over the last 12 months, this may be around peer support and action learning, but we are keen to design this with them.



Indicator	Annual Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Facilitate REACH and Latin American (LAN) networks	4 meetings per year with	3 LAN, 1 REACH (with cost of living theme)	2 LAN	1 LAN with 7 organisations attending focused on Latin American Cultural Centre	1 LAN, away day, cultural centre working group. 1 REACH planned for 29 <sup>th</sup> Nov
Networking events	4 per year	SE21 networking event with 100% 'found it useful' feedback	March BAME networking event, Funding conference (crowdfunding focus)	SE16 networking event	SE15 networking event

### Case Study – Networking event for BAME-led groups, March 2023

Based on casework patterns and survey feedback, an in-person training session about ‘storytelling for funding applications’ for BAME-led groups was held in March 2023. This demystified the funding application process with practical exercises to strengthen learning. Storytelling was used as a metaphor for bid writing to explain to groups that is what they are doing when fundraising.

The presentation was designed and delivered with examples of stories and pitches so groups could understand the core components of a story for typical funding applications. Participants wrote about their organisation’s core purpose and described the challenges and aspirations of their service users. Typical grant application questions were also discussed. There were 42 attendees, 90% said they were more knowledgeable about applying for funding after the event.

In the afternoon the session focused on challenges to accessing funding. Panel members from the VCS shared their experiences and held a Q&A. Funders from United St Saviour’s, Peter Minet, and Impact on Urban Health also attended to hear directly about these challenges. The day finished off with Southwark Council sharing information about the upcoming ‘Equalities Grant.

*“Thank you very much for organizing this wonderful conference, it was impressive and left me a a very good memory. I meet many people I found new friends from different organisations or community charities”.*

### Case Study: Latin American Network

The Latin American Network meeting takes place monthly. Over the past 12 months they have organised a workshop on ‘Race Latin American History and Heritage’. They looked at their history to present to address race and ethnicity disparity (both in UK and their country of origin). This was a successful pilot, and they are now working on a report to be used to share as good practice, and as a tool to develop further workshops to share with the wider community.

The Latin American Network would like to evolve to increase representation, and to make a stronger impact. As such they have been working on their strategy with pro bono corporate support

Latin American Network members continue to represent the network on various bodies including the health inequalities grants programme panel. The panel members are all BAME community sector leaders and have been given the power and responsibility to manage the £103,000 fund. Their main responsibilities are designing the grants programme, making decisions on who gets funded and help build long-term relationships with mainstream health and social care providers.

The network has also welcomed guest speakers including the Assistant Director of Engagement NHS Southeast London who spoke to the network about the 5 priorities for the new Southeast London Integrated Care System and its importance to the Latin American Community.

## 4. Learning and Development

The IoUH funded roles have given us a unique opportunity to create a model for BAME-led group support, with training closely dovetailing one-to-one casework. We continue to trial different types of training session in terms of topic and format, working closely with other organisations to signpost and avoid duplication. It is clear to us that Community Southwark's unique position is the combination of trusted one-to-one mentoring relationships with the ability to scale up the support into wider training or networking opportunities.

In response to feedback from groups and our State of the Sector work we have started to deliver more direct fundraising support. This has included two workshops with follow up one-to-ones to submit funding applications to the National Lottery's Cost of Living Fund. 20 groups attended the workshops and nine applications have been submitted.

We have also been working with a livery company, Merchant Taylors, on a project to make their application processes more accessible and to support groups with making applications. The first workshop took place in November.

We will be using December to plan our training package for 2024, based on the learning from 2023. We will be exploring whether a 'cohort' of groups undertaking a course of key sessions may be more effective for their sustained development and for peer learning.

Indicator	Annual Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Targeted training sessions for BAME led groups	6 per year with 80% positive feedback		1: 95% positive feedback- Fundraising storytelling)	1: Governance training for 12 BAME led groups	2: Governance (online), Mission, Vision and Values (in person)
Other Training sessions	6 per year with 80% positive feedback	2	1	2: Funder Q&A with Easyfundraising	3: Cost of Living x 2, Merchant Taylors funding
Targeted Evaluation and Impact training for BAME led groups	50% of workshops and one-to-one for BAME-led groups	52% BAME: 16 organisations on workshops, 11x121 support Av 85% positive feedback	75% BAME: 11 organisations on workshops, 10x121 support	50% BAME: 4 workshops reaching 13 organisation, Av satisfaction 92%, 1 training session, 8x121 support	53% BAME: 4 workshops reaching 10 organisations, 3 training sessions. Av satisfaction 93%, 8x121 support
Targeted Volunteer support for BAME led groups	50% to BAME led groups	50% (of 10 groups)	60% (of 10 groups)	50% (of 8 groups)	66% (of 9 groups)

### Case Study: Make Your Mark Feedback

*“The dedication and expertise that you and your team brought to each session were evident, making the learning experience both enriching and enjoyable. The diverse range of topics covered, coupled with the interactive nature of the workshops, provided me with valuable insights and practical skills. Your commitment to fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment did not go unnoticed. The networking opportunities, collaborative activities, and open discussions truly added to the value of the workshops. The effort put into tailoring the content to meet the needs of participants was evident and greatly appreciated.”* Hussain Takheroubt BA (Hons.) MA, Director Southwark Bahdja Academy

### Case Study: Merchant Taylors Workshop Feedback

*Clear breakdown of each question, useful to hear answers to other people’s questions. And really useful to have a workshop that relates to a specific funding, thank you!*

## 5. Promoting good practice on policies and procedures that impact on race equality

As set out in section 2, this project has influenced a variety of policies and practices so they should not be repeated here. In addition:

- The VCS in Southwark has an Equalities and Human Rights Panel and an Equalities and Human Rights Forum and we have supported members on these groups to challenge the council's Equality Impact Assessments in their budget making process, including making representations to the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- We sat on the interview panel for the council's new Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- We have engaged with the Public Health toolkit to reduce systemic bias in commissioning. We remain concerned that commissioning is a process which is inherently biased against smaller grass roots groups, many of which in Southwark are BAME-led. This is an area where we wish to give further focus in 2024.
- We also reviewed our own CS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which led to us introducing 'blind' recruitment processes, and work experience placements for young people from local schools.

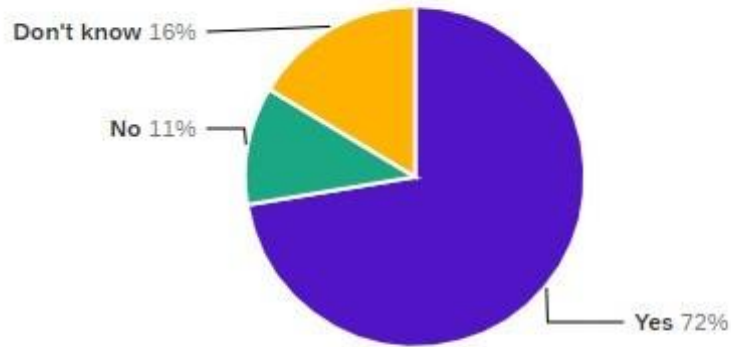
## 6. Membership survey

Much of our impact is measured by listening to our members. Our [Annual Members Survey](#) was carried out in March 2023, 6 months into this IoUH project. This gave us a good understanding of progress so far, and the areas of focus for the VCS Support Officers working with ethnic minority-led groups.

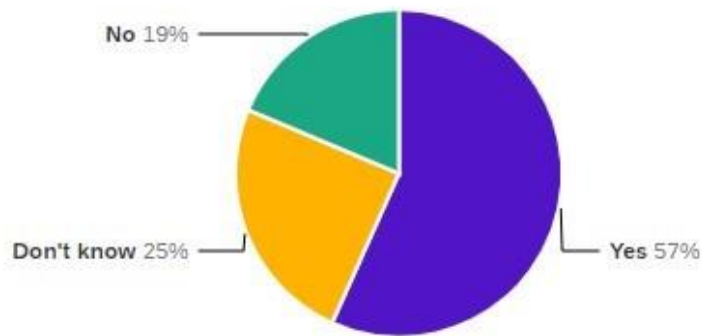
The full survey analysis can be viewed at the link above, and the key indicators and learnings for this project are set out below.

87% of respondents said 'Yes' to the question: '**Do your interactions with Community Southwark made you feel welcome and included?**' 10% were unsure and 4% said 'No.' Although this is broadly positive, we contacted those who responded 'No' to understand their perspectives and improve our services.

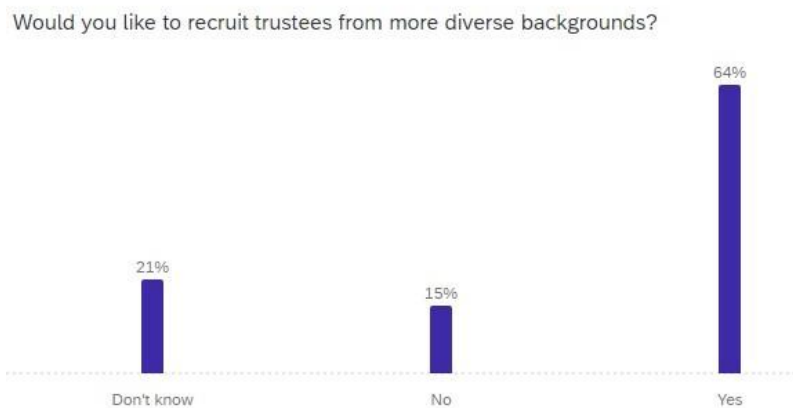
To the question '**Do you feel your staff and volunteers represent a diverse range of communities in Southwark?**', respondents answered:



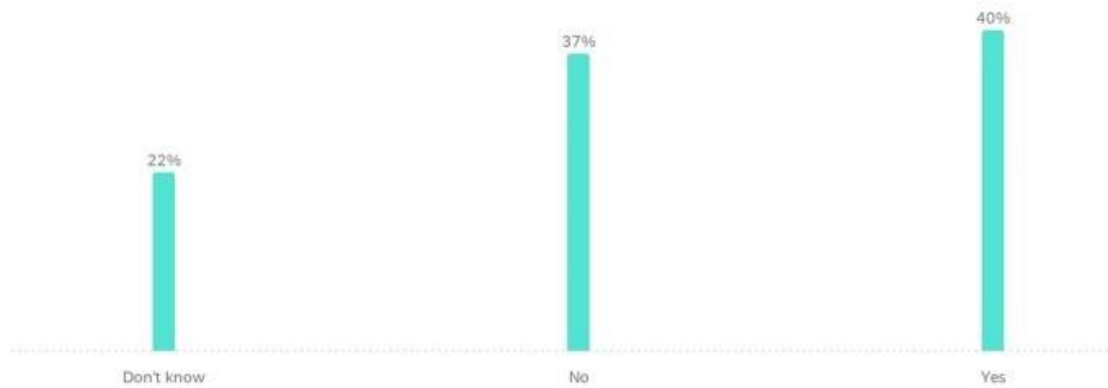
To the question **'Do you feel your trustee board represent a diverse range of communities in Southwark?'**, respondents answered:



Although most members feel they have diverse boards, two thirds would like to recruit more trustees from diverse backgrounds:



Would you like any support with improving equity, diversity and inclusion in your organisation?



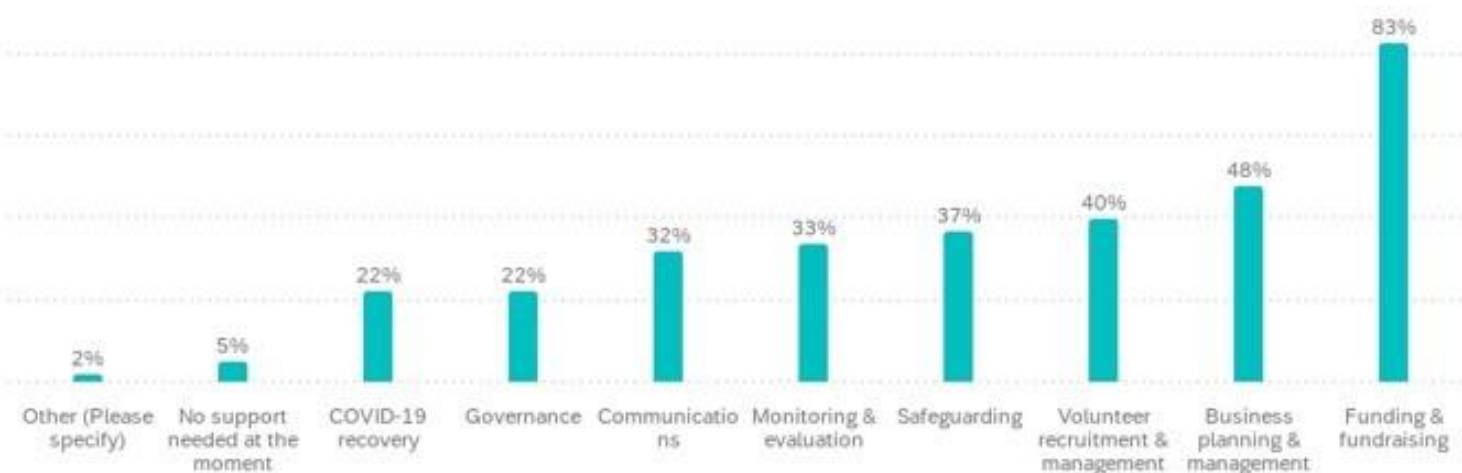
This shows a mixed picture of the desire for support with equity, diversity and inclusion and suggests that support should be given in a bespoke, case by case way, as opposed to blanket training or events.

## Answers from BAME-led groups

47% of the annual survey's respondents were from ethnic minority-led organisations, i.e. 63 organisations in total. Of these, 24% engage with either or both of the Southwark R.E.A.C.H. (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) Alliance and Latin American Network. This shows that Community Southwark can do more to reach out to BAME-led groups that would benefit from these networks but are not currently part of one.

In line with findings for all groups, 'funding & fundraising' is the issue for which they require most support:

Do you need more support with any of the following:

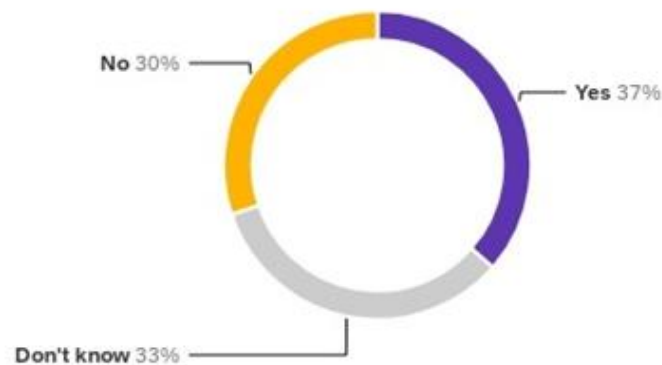


Most answers from BAME-led groups were positive, and the survey indicated improvement areas:

- 92% of BAME-led groups were satisfied or very satisfied with the **training/workshops** received from CS (vs. 8% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ don't know).
- 90% of BAME-led groups were satisfied or very satisfied with the **one-to-one support** received from CS (vs. 7% very dissatisfied, and 3% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).
- Through working with Community Southwark, 71% of BAME-led groups feel **'better equipped to develop their organisation,'**
- 68% feel **'informed of issues surrounding the ethnic minority community,'**
- 63% feel **'represented and heard within Southwark,'**
- 60% feel **'supported in accessing funding opportunities,'** once again underscoring funding as an area in need of further support.

*"CS can better support ethnic minority-led groups by] giving more opportunities and support in terms of accessing projects and support with securing funding."* BAME-led group respondent.

While these findings are generally encouraging, there is a more mixed picture regarding the question, **'Do you feel that ethnic minority-led groups have stronger, more open relations with those in power and money than they did two years ago?'**:



This highlights the importance of our State of the Sector work in supporting the VCS to have more positive relationships with funders and statutory partners.

### Quotes from the Members' Survey

*"CS are a great organisation with a fantastic variety and wealth of support."* - Support4You

*"I have just begun to contact Community Southwark and it has already been helpful."* - The Well Community Church

*"Support provided with premises at the moment is much appreciated and is an area that more and more groups will need support with as energy, office, salary and administrative costs increase."* – Southwark Travellers Action Group

*"Community Southwark is an amazing organisation that I am grateful exists to support us in our journey."* – Generation Success



## 7. Key learning for the next 12 months

The capacity, expertise, and advocacy of the VCS Support Officers funded by IoUH to support ethnic minority-led groups has made a transformative difference to the way Community Southwark works. From how we deliver our casework and training to how we work with statutory partners and funders. The experiences of ethnic minority-led groups now sit at the core of our work around funding and premises, they shape how we facilitate and develop our VCS networks, and they inform every conversation we have with external partners.

We are keen to build on the past year's learning and feedback about what has worked and what hasn't to develop a very clear model for the future, backed by a clear Theory of Change. The complexity and challenge for a more inclusive and equal borough will not go away over the next 12 months, but we are determined to use the remainder of this project to establish an evidence-based model for long term capacity building, advocacy, and systemic change.

### **Continuing one to one casework sessions**

The feedback from these sessions is overwhelmingly positive, and a mentoring relationship-based and bespoke approach is essential.

We will also continue to monitor and target our other CS support for evaluation and impact measurement and volunteer management for BAME-led groups.

### **A clear package of training and events for groups at different stages**

We will continue to deliver targeted grass BAME-led training sessions and events, based on what our members tell us they need, and in different parts of the borough.

We will create a more structured set of training modules, exploring the possibility of supporting 'cohorts of groups' through action learning and peer support.

We will deliver more direct support with fundraising, with workshops and one-to-one work focused on making specific funding applications.

### **Additional training for CS staff**

Our staff team is experienced working and volunteering for charities and community groups, and rooted in the local area. We will build on these strengths with further training in EDI, fundraising, and coaching skills.

### **A VCS Premises Advice Service, targeted for BAME-led groups**

Whilst this project (starting in January 2024) is being funded outside of IoUH, it has been informed by and will work closely with our VCS Support Officers for ethnic minority-led groups. It must tackle the historic injustice around premises and connections to and for buildings and space.



### **Reviewed and improved networks**

We will review our networks' terms of reference, the roles and responsibilities of VCS chairs and CS staff. We are clear that they should be places for collaboration, and for groups to effect change. We need to monitor that this is the case.

We also need to ensure that more of our BAME-led groups are accessing our REACH and LAN networks and that we are recording membership and attendance, and reaching out to groups who are not engaging to support them to do so.

Our State of the Sector research showed that grass roots groups (not formally constituted, mainly volunteer-led, and often BAME-led) find funding, premises, and statutory partnerships disproportionately challenging. We are exploring, with VCS members, a grass roots network to share challenges and to explore what different types of support would be helpful.

### **Bringing corporate skills and resources to BAME-led groups**

The National Lottery is funding a new corporate volunteering project with CS for three years to build relationships between businesses and the VCS to share skills and resources. This started in September 2023 and has already given three BAME-led VCS groups corporate support with business planning at an Impact-a-thon. An accountancy workshop for two BAME-led groups is taking place on 21st November and a Business brunch event involving seven BAME-led groups and the Team London Bridge Business Improvement District is to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Commissioning**

The State of the Sector research recognised that the current commissioning system excludes smaller VCS groups and does not feel open or transparent. The VCS South East London ICS Charter also recognises this. There are several live examples of where commissioning is failing the VCS and the communities it serves. However, we also acknowledge that the VCS itself needs to review how commissioning works and how it could work better. This is an ongoing piece of work which we hope can be done with South East London colleagues.

### **Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) for the VCS in Southwark**

More support for EDI across the VCS in Southwark is required, but in a sensitive and respectful way. It would not be appropriate for CS to assume it knows what's best for Southwark's diverse VCS. However, it will look to support groups in a bespoke way, particularly for trustee recruitment.

### **An even closer relationship with Healthwatch Southwark and Health Ambassadors**

Our VCS Support Officers for ethnic minority-led groups have impacted the work which Healthwatch Southwark does, reshaping its purpose to one which begins with building relationships with historically under-represented communities. This work needs to continue so we can use these connections and the powers and position of Healthwatch to tackle deep-rooted health inequalities in the borough.

