

Building Power, Strengthening Communities

Supporting Black and Minoritised Ethnic
Change Makers and Infrastructure

Impact Report

Race Equality & Infrastructure Flexible Fund (REIFF)
Delivered by Voice4Change England
Funded by the Comic Relief Global Majority Fund
April 2025–March 2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Race Equality & Infrastructure Flexible Fund (REIFF) invested £283,000 over twelve months through seven established, locally-rooted racial minority-led infrastructure organisations working across five regions of England. These are trusted, culturally grounded bridges between communities and the systems that shape their lives — organisations that already hold deep relationships with the grassroots groups they serve, and that provide support mainstream infrastructure bodies are often unable to deliver.

Capacity building was the foundation of the programme. Every one of the seven partners delivered workshops, one-to-one mentoring and organisational development support that strengthened governance, funding readiness and confidence across hundreds of grassroots groups. And where that support was paired with structured routes into local forums, community leaders moved into real decision-making roles — from a non-executive directorship at a teaching hospital to seats on hate-crime scrutiny panels and NHS steering groups.

The programme has produced significant and wide-ranging outcomes across its seven funded projects:

Strengthened organisational capacity and governance

Stronger networks and cross-sector collaboration

Improved financial resilience and funding access

Sustainable resources and infrastructure

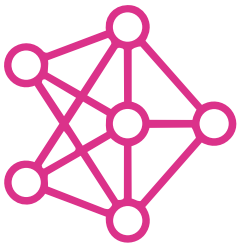
Greater policy influence and community voice



This report sets out what was delivered across all seven partners, the communities REIFF reached, and — drawing on the programme's own lessons — where the work needs to go next to place more community leaders in the rooms where decisions are made.

THE PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE:

REIFF reached communities among the most underserved by mainstream support — including Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Roma, Rohingya, Afghan, Sudanese, Kurdish, Eritrean, Tamil, Yemeni, Latin American, Arab, African and Caribbean communities, among others.



20+

Communities served
across England



700+

Organisations &
individuals engaged



91

One-to-one mentoring
relationships



29

Networking
events held



£37,990+

In new funding secured by groups



5

Standing policy
forums established



17

Emerging leaders
trained



44

Capacity-building
workshops delivered

“More confident approaching funders and
recognising the value of our work.”
— Workshop participant, BME Community
Partnership (BMECP), Brighton & Hove

CAPACITY BUILDING DELIVERED ACROSS ALL SEVEN PARTNERS

Capacity building ran through every project, built on each partner's established local relationships. The table below summarises what was delivered, and the outcomes for the groups they support.

Partner (region)	Capacity building delivered	Outcomes for groups
The Race Equality Centre (TREC)	7 workshops (61 people, 42 orgs) on governance, strategy, finance, leadership, enterprise and impact; 2 webinars; 1-to-1 support for 19 organisations; 10 community advisers trained; online Knowledge Hub; funding fair with 75+ organisations.	Stronger governance and clearer strategy; increased trustee and leader confidence; improved funding readiness and financial resilience.
Race Equality Network (REN) Yorkshire & the Humber	6-day anti-racist leadership programme for 17 emerging leaders (15 orgs), each matched with a mentor; 5 thematic policy forums; 5 networking events.	Confidence applied immediately in strategic meetings; leaders into NHS, hospital and youth forums; a non-executive director appointment; a pipeline of emerging leaders.
Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA) Yorkshire & the Humber	7 workshops (plus 4 via V4CE) on fundraising, bookkeeping, monitoring, strategy, governance and digital/AI; intensive 1-to-1 mentoring for 21+ organisations; 5+ cultural events (423 people).	Improved governance, safeguarding, financial and strategic capability; £37,990+ in new funding, several first-time awards; policy influence in maternity, mental health and housing.
Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum (CECF) East of England	3 meet-the-funder meetings; 26 funding and capacity-building meetings with groups; 2 learning sessions; funding and policy information shared with 12+ groups; introductions to agencies and cultural institutions.	100% of groups more confident in grant applications; 80% more confident in organisational structure; first-ever applications submitted; venue funding secured.

Table continued



Partner (region)	Capacity building delivered	Outcomes for groups
Northamptonshire Black Communities Together (NBCT) / Support Northamptonshire East Midlands	20 organisational development plans; 8 training sessions; support for 25 member organisations; steering-group election; new website, members' portal and volunteer platform; Aspire Conference (100+).	Five support-need areas mapped across the network; increased confidence, trust and collaboration; Integrated Care Board partnerships on Age Well and Dementia.
Compact for Race Equality in South Tyneside (CREST) North East	Region-wide advocacy training; 1-to-1 support for 35 groups; networking events; community members mentored to co-deliver training to social work students; 2 resource packs.	Secured four distinct advocacy opportunities for refugee-led groups; collaborated with the North East Migration Partnership to directly influence regional and national asylum policy; 85% will apply new advocacy knowledge; three groups saved from closure and four new established; seats secured on Teesside Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels.
Black and Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP) South East	12 workshops (169 participants, 102 orgs) on fundraising, planning, governance, leadership and social media/AI; database of BME organisations and trainers; new partnerships; improved digital access.	Increased confidence, knowledge and capability; new peer connections and joint initiatives; stronger infrastructure beyond the grant.



WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES WHO EXPERIENCE POVERTY, DISADVANTAGE AND DISCRIMINATION

REIFF was designed around organisations that are of, and trusted by, the communities they serve. Between them, **the seven partners engaged more than twenty distinct ethnic communities** — among the most marginalised and underrepresented in England — across Cambridge, Leicester, Nottingham, Northamptonshire, South Tyneside, Brighton & Hove, Bradford and Rotherham.

That reach was possible because the partners work at a local level, in places where structural barriers and racial inequality are most acutely felt. REMA supported Sudanese, Afghan, Kurdish, Eritrean, Tamil, Yemeni, Arab, African and Latin American organisations, and enabled these communities to shape service design in maternity, mental health and homelessness prevention. CREST created a judgment-free space for refugee-led groups — free of language barriers and cultural bias — and helped shape regional and national asylum policy. BMECP reached African and Caribbean communities (46%) alongside Arab and Asian communities (23%), ensuring support reached those most affected by racial inequality. NBCT's Age Well and Dementia partnerships directly addressed racial health inequalities for Black older people. In Cambridge, CECF supported diverse BME groups — including the African Caribbean Research Group — while TREC worked with organisations such as Adventurers CIC, supporting women from racial minority communities, and REN's emerging leaders were drawn from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Roma, African, Rohingya and Afghan backgrounds.

“The establishment of five sustainable policy forums created real entry points into systems that had historically excluded grassroots voices.”— Race Equality Network, Bradford

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LEADERS AND OPENING ROUTES INTO DECISION-MAKING

The programme has deep experience developing community leaders. REN delivered leadership training to 17 emerging global majority leaders within an explicit anti-racist framework and matched every one with a mentor. TREC trained 10 community capacity-building advisers; CREST mentored community members to co-deliver university training; and NBCT strengthened governance through a steering-group election and leadership sessions.

Crucially, where that leadership support was paired with a structured route into local forums, leaders took up real decision-making roles. Daniel, from Connecting Roma, secured a position as a **Non-Executive Director at Bradford Teaching Hospital**, bringing lived experience of health inequality into senior decision-making. REN established five standing policy forums and placed leaders in NHS steering groups and hospital engagement meetings. CREST members helped shape the **Cleveland Hate Crime Strategy** and won seats on the Teesside Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels. REMA enabled communities to influence maternity, mental health and neighbourhood planning; NBCT brought community voice into health planning through the Integrated Care Board; and CECF opened doors into local cultural institutions and the city council. BMECP, in turn, built participants' confidence to engage larger institutions such as local authorities and the NHS.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED AND WHERE THE WORK GOES NEXT

REIFF proved the model works, and it also showed clearly where more is needed to turn one-off engagement into sustained representation. These lessons, drawn from the programme itself, directly inform how the work should develop.

Pair leadership training with paid, structured policy engagement.

The clearest routes into decision-making came where training was matched with resourced places in forums and panels — REN pairing anti-racist leadership training with standing policy forums, and CREST pairing region-wide advocacy training with real advocacy opportunities that put members onto hate-crime scrutiny panels and into asylum-policy influence with the North East Migration Partnership. Extending this model across all partner areas is the most direct path to placing more community leaders in local forums.

Fund the routes so they hold.

REN's forums now continue through partnership and voluntary mentoring, and REMA warned that without dedicated funding support becomes reactive rather than proactive. CREST is testing ways to sustain its advocacy work — charging a training fee to cover staff time and partnering with the Refugee Forum NE — but seats won on boards and panels still need ongoing backing to hold.

Resource relationship-first, phased delivery.

Many grassroots groups are led by sole workers or volunteers with very limited capacity, which affected engagement. REMA's phased model worked best; TREC saw lower one-to-one uptake during Ramadan and the summer and used its funding fair to keep momentum; and NBCT found some organisations hard to engage at first. Foundational one-to-one support before group activity is what enables more leaders to reach the point of stepping forward.

Design proportionate follow-up and monitoring.

CECF found that meet-the-funder meetings convert into lasting relationships only with structured follow-up, and that informal, unprompted feedback often evidenced impact better than formal forms. Planning follow-up and light-touch monitoring from the outset sustains both relationships and representation.

Invest in networks and shared infrastructure.

BMECP shows how durable value is built between the workshops: it brokered new connections across Sussex — including linking a Crawley youth group with a Brighton organisation — and left behind a database of BME organisations and trainers and stronger digital systems. Peer networks and shared infrastructure reduce isolation and give the sector something to build on beyond any single grant.

This experience shapes our approach directly: embedding the leadership-plus-paid-policy-engagement model proven by REN and CREST, resourcing the relationship-first capacity building that grassroots groups depend on, investing in the peer networks and shared infrastructure that outlast any single grant, and designing follow-up and sustainability in from the outset so that the community leaders REIFF has supported can hold their place in decision-making for the long term.

A catalyst to accelerate the programmes of support to Black-led organisations in Northamptonshire.” — Northamptonshire Black Communities Together, on the REIFF programme Race Equality & Infrastructure Flexible Fund