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# Cohesion Guidance for Funders

May 2008

**Voice EM: Response**

## Methodology

These responses to the Cohesion Guidance for Funders consultation have been collated by Voice East Midlands and the East Midlands Single Platform through Consultation Programmes held in the Midlands (on behalf of the National Empowerment Partnership), e-consultations and interviews with members of the VCS.

They answer the following questions:

- 1) Should there be cohesion guidance for funders? If the answer is yes, what principles should the guidance be based on? If the answer is no, what are the reasons behind it?
- 2) What impact will the guidance have on the organisations and communities specialist organisations work for?

## Analysis of the document

- 1) Should there be cohesion guidance for funders? If the answer is yes, what principles should the guidance be based on? If the answer is no, what are the reasons behind it?**

A majority of the participants were against having a Cohesion Guidance for Funders, for the following reasons:

- It is difficult to define community cohesion or social capital, let alone draft related rules for funders. Definitions vary: *pride in community, citizenship, public perceptions (the Local Area Agreement criteria), local economics (the "New Economics Foundation" philosophy)*

Asking bidders to prove that their activities are cohesive is, therefore, unrealistic. Instead, funders should insist on one critical qualifying requirement: *services must be open to all.*

- The proposed guiding principles (improving equality, integration, relationships and so on) are superfluous. They

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are common to all group funding so long as *services are open to all*.

- The Mainstreaming argument is weak. Gaps in provision, where there are no mainstream services, or where they're not equally accessible, should be funded. Single group projects are, often an alternative to (non-existent or inaccessible) mainstream provision
- Looking after and strengthening groups such as new-arrivals, etc is essential in terms of community cohesion. People tend to go to organizations that have people with similar backgrounds. However, association with one's own community is questioned.
- Research/ Funding has always been disproportionate, there has been no strategic support. Smaller BME and specialist organizations are now in the danger of becoming mere appendices of large mainstream organizations, from a leadership level to subservient. They will be approached to do specialist work, without the benefits of funding. BME groups rely more heavily on core funding and funders will use this as evidence to remove their funding.
- BME communities work with other communities on an issue based level. For instance, they look at social-care issues that are not touched by the mainstream. These issues will be sidelined though mainstreaming.
- The funding recommends that when single group funding is awarded, the reason behind those awards should be publicised in order to counteract the view that certain organizations or groups are receiving preferential treatment over other. Publicising funding awards may be more divisive. Further, this may draw attention to groups not seeking publicity.

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One participant felt that the general idea of having a guidance for funders may be good, however, cohesion should not be the only criteria.

## **2) What impact will the guidance have on the organisations and communities you work for?**

- The fear is that this policy will be used by local authorities to readjust budgets and for efficiency savings. This policy will provide justifications to reduce funding.
- Examples of this happening in Buckinghamshire County Council and Leicester. Both have said that cohesion is the priority and that diversity is no longer being funded. Funders may misinterpret this guidance.
- Local authorities will determine the local need rather than communities determining what the needs are.
- Commissioning one organisation for all services because it is easier to do that than find the most appropriate service provisions. This weakens the services offered and fails everyone
- Refugee Action stated that they work with all nationalities. Work with clients to make mainstream services more accessible to their clients. They have specific needs and our organisation enables them to support themselves. They work to meet individual needs.
- Refugee Action is working with the most marginalised communities. The Home Office has now cut all funding for community development this financial year. There is not funding for refugee integration – a private organisations has received the contract in the East Midlands.
- Shama's Womens Centre offer training and education for women. Their funding from the city council has been reduced. This excludes women (in particular BME women).

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## **Recommendations**

Funders should insist on one critical qualifying requirement:  
*services must be open to all.*

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## **Voice EM**

Voice EM is a registered charity that works with BME organisations throughout the East Midlands...

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