

**UNI**  
**South East Regional BME**  
**Network**

**A Regional Strategic Framework**  
**(2008 - 2011)**

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## **1 UNI Background/History**

In 2002 HM Treasury produced a Cross Cutting Review, which was a pivotal document and detailed the role of the Voluntary/Community Sector (VCS) in service delivery. The outcome of this was the acknowledgement and a commitment from the Government to strengthen the capacity of the VCS. In response to this came ChangeUp published by the Home Office in 2004. ChangeUp is a ten year vision of the Government to increase the support offered to VCOs to build their infrastructure.

The main support needs identified under ChangeUp included: performance, workforce development and leadership, ICT, Governance, recruiting and developing volunteers and funding. In addition diversity is a core component of all standards of performance improvement. The South East Region has a Regional Consortium and in turn 19 local consortia that have been set up to help deliver the ChangeUp programme.

The ChangeUp programme channelled through the local consortia aimed to map the infrastructure needs of VCOs to agree a local Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP). The Additional Support Programme (ASP) was funded through the ChangeUp programme. The ASP ran on exactly the same principles but was set up to acknowledge the gap in knowledge of the infrastructure needs of Black and Minority Ethnic front line VCOs and the wider community in delivering public services (A Review of Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure in the South East, July, 2004).

The South East region has identified 19 local ASP lead organisations i.e. BME infrastructure organisations, RECs, or other umbrella organisations that would act as a conduit of information and representation for all of the BME VCOs in that local area. In addition each of the 19 organisations/networks nominated an ASP lead who would act as a catalyst of information and representation for their local area; these 19 ASP leads have been meeting on a regular basis for the past 18 months. The majority of these local networks produced a detailed ASP report for their local area, and either this report was added as appendices or was fully integrated into their local Infrastructure Development Plan. RAISE have championed the ASP work through its development and implementation. With the demise of the ASP programme the network re-named itself UNI.

## **2 UNI**

“Uni” is the name chosen by the 19 organisations in the network from across the South East region.

### **3 Purpose of the Strategic Framework**

The strategic plan introduces UNIs mission, vision, values and strategic aims. The consultation on the Framework will be looking at the priorities and the outcomes that the network is striving to achieve. The Framework provides the background and information for developing work plans, funding, allocating resources, progress monitoring, impact assessment and accountability. It is also a tool for building relationships within the VCS and with statutory agencies and for stimulating dialogue.

UNIs role is to advocate on behalf of the BME VCS, strengthening the BME VCS's voice to ensure that it is heard when policies are being developed and throughout their delivery. UNI want to increase the impact that public and VCS policy has on the BME VCS and on delivering equalities outcomes.

The regional policy framework is a complex one. Through regional governance there are national policies that are managed regionally, over-arching regional policies, thematic policies, sub-regional policies and VCS policies. Similarly there are an increasing number of regional policy makers and policy making structures. UNI have to find a way to navigate this landscape and the starting point is engagement with the three key public sector agencies in the region: GOSE, SEEDA and SEERA.

There is a tremendous breadth of exciting and emerging policies within the region: including:-

- 1The Regional Economic Strategy
- 2Regional Strategic Framework for Public Health in the South East
- 3The publication in July 2007 of the Government's strategy for working with VCOs, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals: *The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration.*
- 4The publication in July 2007 of the Government's Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration.
- 5The Comprehensive Spending Review.

UNIs goal is to ensure that these policies recognise their responsibilities for promoting race equality and take on board a BME VCS perspective, thereby contributing to alleviating the social and economic exclusion for BME communities in the region and improving their quality of life.

### **4 UNI Mission Statement**

To develop 19 local Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) led networks to meet the support needs of their communities and enable a regional BME voice to significantly influence the South East Region.

## 5 UNI Vision

UNI champions the development of the South East region that actively pursues the equalities agenda by the participation and contribution of the BME Voluntary/Community Sector (VCS) and its communities in the social, economic, cultural life of the region.

## 6 Core Values

Equality and Inclusion	Promoting equality and inclusion across the region and at all levels. Fundamental to what we do.
Celebration of Diversity	sharing best practise celebrating success
Respect and Dignity for all	treat with respect members and regional partners.
Partnership and Collaboration	Enabling two-way flow of information Embed partnership working in network
Accountability and Transparency	Be accountable to VCS Be transparent in all decision making processes
Empowerment of Communities	Through dissemination of information and capacity building
Professionalism	Believe in UNI and its objectives Transparency and openness
Confidentiality	Respect of others
Seven Principles of Public life	Selflessness Integrity Objectivity Accountability Openness Honesty Leadership

## **7 Organisation and Management**

UNI's management is made up of the 19 Additional Support Programme lead bodies with their representatives all of whom are from the VCS. At present they meet every six weeks and the meeting is also open to GOSE, RAISE, SEEDA, Capacity Builders and other regional stakeholders who play an important role in the development of the UNI network. The group will meet quarterly in 2008/09. RAISE is currently the lead accountable body for the network.

Terms of reference exist for UNI but these will need to be reviewed in light of the production of the Strategic Framework and the successful application to Big Lottery Fund.

In looking at the delivery of the objectives and outcomes of the Framework task groups may need to be developed. These task groups will enable the objectives to be met.

## **8 Representation and Accountability**

UNI at present does not have formal accountability to the BME VCS however; this can be developed within the review of the wider membership of the network. At present the strength of the group rests upon their ability to demonstrate strong links with the VCS. Through the development of a robust communications strategy links can be built where ever possible and UNI will look to work with existing specialist infrastructure providers to engage their service users. Where specialist provision is weak UNI will lobby appropriate agencies to investigate why and consider how to address such weakness.

## **9 Membership**

The membership of the 'network' needs further discussion and input from the VCS in the South East and will form a part of the consultation process.

## **10 Monitoring and Evaluation**

UNI will monitor how efficiently it operates and how effectively it operates and delivers its objectives.

## 11 SWOT Analysis

During the consultation process we asked attendees to reflect upon UNI and produce a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). SWOT is a commonly used tool to facilitate a strategic review of a particular organisation/ forum/ network. It is reasonably high level, focusing on the key factors which are most pertinent to its achievement. Through the process of conducting a SWOT analysis it is possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of UNI and the opportunities and threats which (primarily) are impacting on it from outside.

A SWOT exercise in itself doesn't identify what should be done, but what it does do is provide a framework for identifying where strategic opportunities may exist, and how to avoid weaknesses inherent within the network or threats from outside, limiting future growth. It also offers a useful framework to revisit when strategic decisions are being taken. The table below lists a summary which will act as a guide for UNI.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced, diverse and committed</li> <li>• Unity- UNI is United in its aims</li> <li>• Good links with access to decision makers</li> <li>• Lacks baggage because it is new- doesn't yet have a significant history only a path from its inception</li> <li>• Open to learning, sharing and understanding</li> <li>• Represents diverse organisations and community service users</li> <li>• There is a real need for the network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New organisation- lots to achieve</li> <li>• Hasn't yet got an effective communications strategy</li> <li>• Will need to manage a diversity of views and opinions</li> <li>• Representation will be a key issue because it is such a large region</li> <li>• Lack of capacity</li> <li>• Front line groups will be looking to UNI for resources</li> <li>• Lack of funding/ resources may prevent participation</li> <li>• Lack of representation within the 19 from Gypsy and</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can bring communities together</li> <li>• Strength in diversity</li> <li>• Giving people, organisations and communities a voice</li> </ul>	<p>travellers communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No database yet to tap into</li> <li>• UNI is not known and needs a clear committee structure and marketing</li> <li>• Health- lots of health issues for communities -not being addressed</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop as the voice for the BME VCS in the SE</li> <li>• Share learning and best practice</li> <li>• UNI can support and inform</li> <li>• A bigger collective will have more of an impact</li> <li>• UNI can push BME issues up the Agenda</li> <li>• Opportunity for smaller groups to be empowered</li> <li>• Opportunity to pool resources</li> <li>• To be creative</li> <li>• UNI can strive for political power- to influence and be recognised as a key regional partner</li> <li>• New communities can be encouraged/ enabled to form new groups and participate in UNI</li> <li>• To educate people and break down stereotypes about different communities</li> <li>• Can train and help BME communities develop the necessary skills</li> <li>• Access communities that don't usually get involved</li> <li>• Advocate for funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing priorities - UNI will need to keep vigilant</li> <li>• The challenge of BME funding</li> <li>• Completing what is started</li> <li>• Access to UNI- UNI must be accessible</li> <li>• The region is large and diverse- many different areas to cover can UNI cover the entire region?</li> <li>• The different tensions between communities</li> <li>• Competition for funding and resources</li> <li>• Sustainability of UNI</li> </ul> <p>Can UNI be a specialist and meet the needs of different communities.</p>

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## 12 UNI Strategic Aims:

This plan provides the framework for UNI to develop its work plan, allocate resources, monitor progress, assess accountability and importantly see what impact UNI is having locally and regionally. This plan will also enable UNI to further relationships within the voluntary sector and also with statutory agencies.

Strategic aims 1 and 2 are taken from the successful BASIS bid and will be delivered using the resources from this source of funding.

***AIM 1. To be the established informed regional voice of the BME VCS representing, promoting and advocating on its behalf in all the key regional statutory agencies.***

### Objectives

- 1Securing the financial resources to meet and fulfil its mission.
- 2Engaging in policy development with regional partners and influencing public and other key sectors policy and practice.
- 3Promoting and supporting effective VCS participation in strategic partnerships and any other regional collaborative ventures.
- 4Developing and managing communication mechanisms and marketing resources to engage with the sector.
- 5To be the think tank by undertaking research, publishing reports, organising events thus improving regional and local intelligence to develop the business case for the BME sector.
- 6Working in partnership with health, education, criminal justice and other key agencies addressing gaps in service and barriers to access by being part of the decision making process.
- 7Working in partnership with the Equality and Diversity Network, and EHRC to address issues of inequalities, social exclusion and diversity.

***AIM 2. To actively build the capacity of sub-regional and local BME***

***VCS organisations to ensure they can influence policy and service developments, are sustainable, and deliver effective services that meet identified needs.***

## Objectives

- 1 Promoting and supporting the provision and funding and other resources for the BME VCS.
- 2 Supporting the development of skills and knowledge in the BME VCS through high quality training projects and programmes.
- 3 Integrating the ASP plans with the 10 year LIDP's.
- 4 Communicating and providing information services for those working in and with the BME VCS.
- 5 Increasing opportunities for BME VCS to deliver public services.
- 6 Promoting opportunities for volunteering and good practice in the use and management of volunteers.
- 7 Supporting the development of individuals and BME VCS working with marginalised communities particularly in rural areas.
- 8 Promoting and supporting networks and collaborative working within the BME VCS.
- 9 Ensuring that community development work is carried out for the marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

The agreed outcomes are:

- To provide the 19 BME networks an effective coordinated regional BME voice heard and understood by stakeholders.
- To develop local capacity building activities and increase local services for BME frontline organisations to better service their communities.
- To develop the 19 local BME networks through the implementation of ASP plans within integrated LIDP's.
- To influence significantly local development policy and implementation by local networks and to increase BME representation on local stakeholder structures.
- To contribute effectively to the wider equality and diversity network and get the voice of the BME heard locally and regionally.
- To improve intelligence regionally and locally relating to BME needs and engagement both from an infrastructure and community level.

However there are other key sectors and policy initiatives, important to the South East that are of strategic significance to the BME community. In order to decide what further strategic priorities UNI should adopt; UNI hosted a series of sub regional events. The purpose of these event was to provide further information of the history of the ASP programme and of the local UNI partners and to provide the background and purpose of UNI. UNI will build ownership and support for UNI and its programmes and to make effective use of the information gathered

from the sub regional events to inform the final strategic plan.

### **THE CONSULTATION PROCESS:-**

During January UNI; currently supported by RAISE, hosted a series of four sub regional consultation events. These four events took place in Portsmouth, Crawley, Gravesend and Reading. Each event was hosted by members of the UNI network who presented the history of UNI, its emergence from the Additional Support Programme (ASP), and UNI's recent successful BASIS application.

The events were aimed at introducing UNI to local BME VCOs and community groups. The events gave local people the opportunity to see how local level operations will feed into UNI at a regional level. People were also given the opportunity to participate in workshops aimed at promoting discussions on UNI's strategic direction as a regional BME network for the South East.

Priorities were discussed and debated from a local community's perspective and the role that UNI could play and where UNI could exert some influence. In total over 170 people attended the four events. The feedback has been studied and incorporated into this strategic plan.

### **13 FURTHER AIMS**

**A series of eight further strategic aims were put forward for discussion and debate at the UNI sub regional consultation events; these are listed below:**

1. Health – lobby for a seat on the regional task group to influence the health policy and ensure the health agenda includes issues relevant to BME communities.
2. Workforce Development – To improve BME VCS workforce development, skills and knowledge and raise awareness of workforce development opportunities and resources, ensuring that the right training and development programmes are open to all.
3. Database – to develop a regional information resource base and a comprehensive BME VCS database.
4. Publicity – Develop and implement a marketing and publicity strategy to promote the BME VCS as a reputable provider of services that contribute to the social and economic development of the region.
5. Membership – To develop a sustained, strong membership of small and medium sized VCS organisations, that will be actively engaged in speaking up for BME communities and in influencing regional policy.

6. Compact - To develop mechanisms to improve the partnership working between BME VCS and the public/private sector at a regional level.
7. Funding – To explore how UNI can become financially sustainable.
8. Campaigning - To actively campaign on behalf of BME communities in specific areas (would need to prioritise a number of specific areas:- transport, Regional Economic Strategy, Integrated Regional Framework, Olympics, funding, Sub National Review, Health, community cohesion).

**Additional strategic priorities:**

In addition to these eight priorities there were additional priorities debated these included: most notably social enterprise and education.

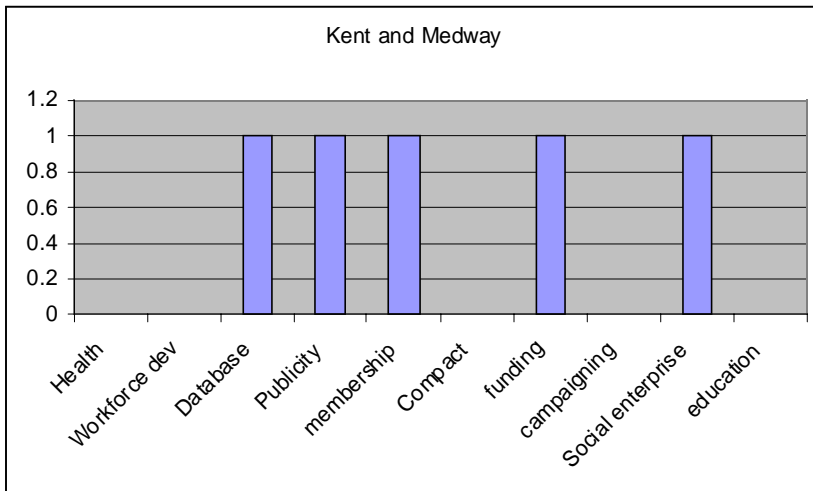
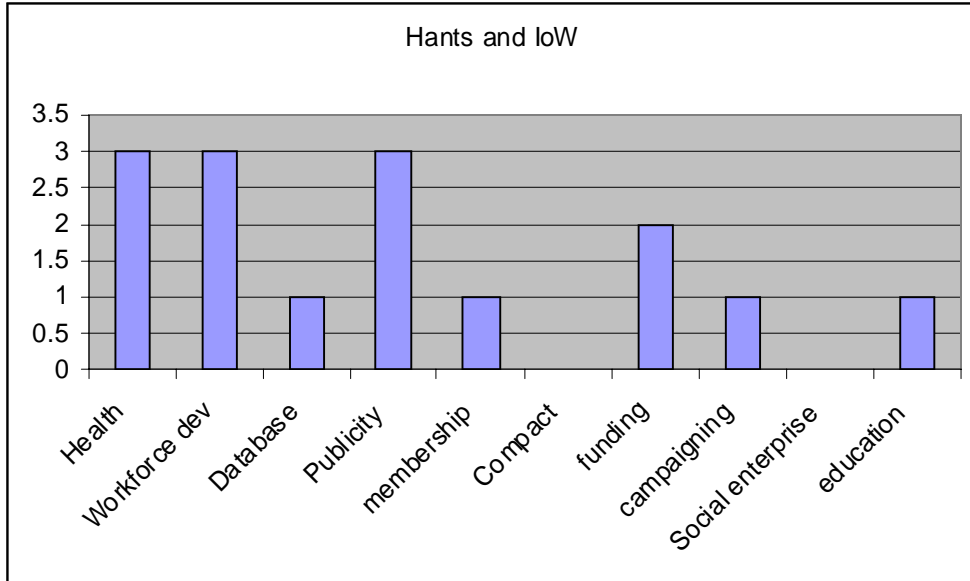
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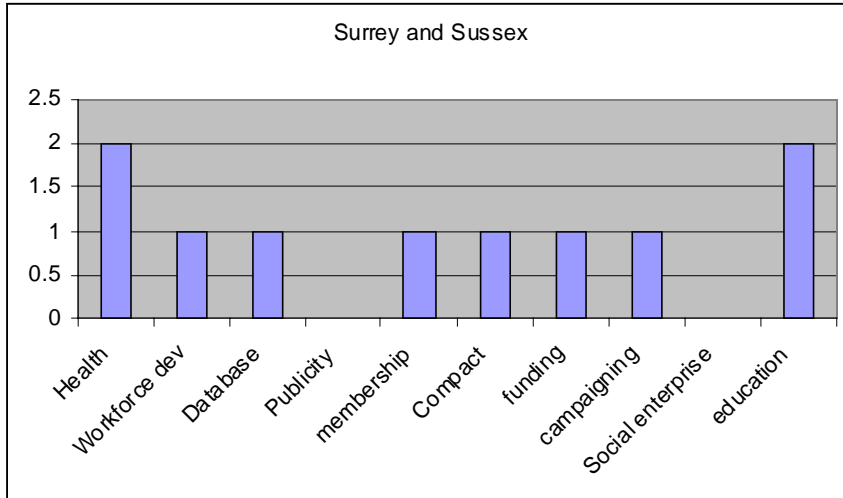
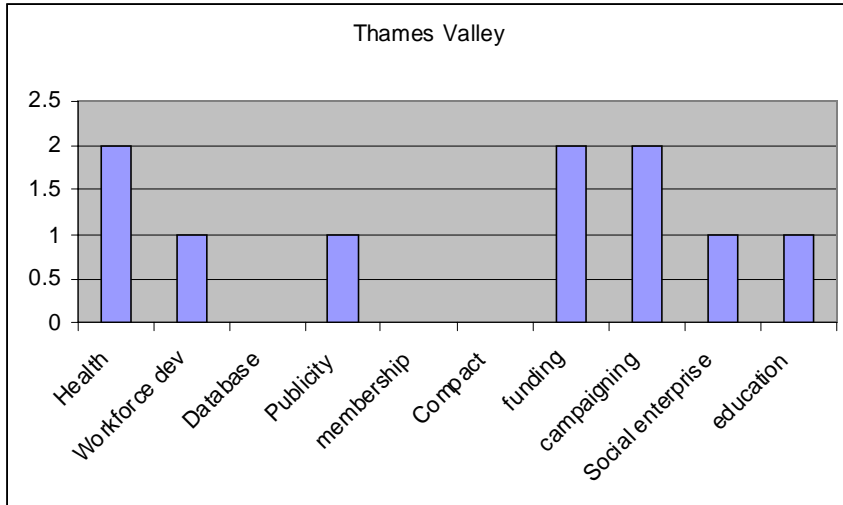
- housing
- employment
- racism/ discrimination
- young people
- elderly
- rural/ urban divide

You can see from the table below the areas that were prioritised at the events the number of times each item was prioritised in which sub region. These areas were highlighted in different ways and with differing emphasis in different areas.

**Strategic Aims chosen by sub region**

The charts below illustrate the number of votes each aim received by delegates at each of the sub regional events.

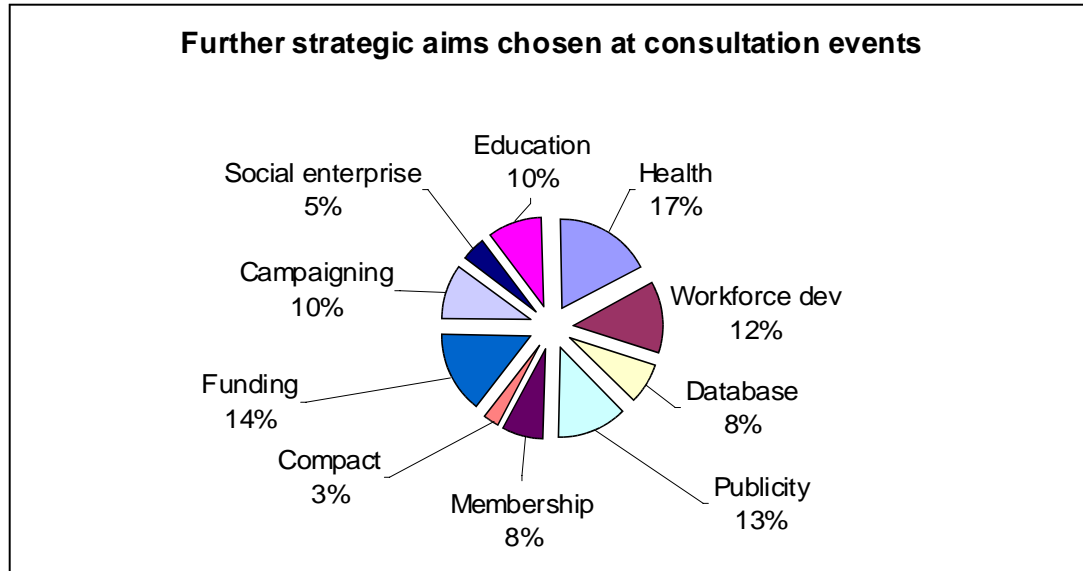




#### 14 Overall results of the Consultation Process:

The areas that got the most votes/ discussion and listed as key priorities include health, funding and publicity/ workforce development. However it is vital that UNI adopts aims that are manageable and that can be delivered upon. That is why Aim 5 is an amalgamation of a general need for UNI in terms of publicity and membership which has been amalgamated to encompass 'communications' in general.

#### Results of the Consultation Process:



**On this basis three further aims for UNI are as follows**

***AIM 3. To highlight the importance of health issues within BME communities and provide awareness and education to regional agencies on health inequalities in order to influence and shape policy and delivery***

Objectives:

- 1 Influencing policy to ensure that BME needs including identification/awareness of health inequalities are considered in service development and delivery. There is a need for education and awareness raising and campaigning
- 2 Mental Health: there is a need to understand culture – misunderstanding leads to mistakes. A need to encourage practitioners to develop culturally sensitive services e.g. mental health – Can deter people from seeking help or getting treated inappropriately.  
Support communities – To break-down taboos about mental health issues.
- 3 UNI should lobby for a seat on the Strategic Health Authority (SHA).
- 4 Campaign for the development of and use of inclusive and robust monitoring forms.

***Aim 4. Funding: Look at making UNI sustainable with the exploration of***

***social enterprise and provide support to the BME sector to access and unlock funding where appropriate***

Objectives:

- 1 Bring to the attention of relevant bodies/ funders when closures of vital services are threatened by loss of funding.
- 2 Act as a hub to signpost/ identify sources of funding and potential funding partners to BME VCS.
- 3 Provide appraisal support for grant organisations i.e. assist funding organisation by providing up to date, grass roots, intelligence about local needs; assist in identifying the merits of applications, avoid duplication etc.
- 4 Ensure that UNI has a robust financial strategy for its own sustainability and explore the benefits of social enterprise for UNI and consider having a social enterprise arm further down the line in year two or three.

***Aim 5. Communications- Internally UNI will develop its membership, and have an up to date accessible database that can be shared with the sector and produce some publicity to promote the existence of UNI***

Objectives:

- 1 **Database:** build up a reliable, accurate and easily maintainable database which could act as a useful resource to other BME groups as well as statutory bodies.
- 2 **Membership:** ensure that the UNI membership base is built up to produce a stronger, representative and credible voice.
- 3 **Publicity:** All frontline BME Organisations/groups know about UNI including – how can UNI assist /help – partnership involvement. It was felt strongly that the work of UNI be promoted and that the name of UNI becomes a well known organisation at the regional level.

**UNI Strategic Summary**

What's good about UNI is that it does have a breadth of passion, skills and diversity to draw upon. What is also strength is that this approach at reaching out to communities has been from grass roots, bottom up approach. There is

significant scope and opportunity for UNI to push BME issues up the agenda and influence on matters of importance.

What is a weakness and challenge for UNI is ensuring that there is adequate representation: the region is large and diverse as is the term 'BME' and all of the groups this encompasses. UNI needs to ensure that its membership and structure adequately reflects these issues.

UNI needs to make sure that it is aware of any threats internally and externally, and that it can deliver, and be a sustainable body for the future.

**Summary of the aims:**

AIM 1. To be the established informed regional voice of the BME VCS.

AIM 2. To actively build the capacity of sub-regional and local BME VCS.

AIM 3. To highlight the importance of health issues within BME communities and provide awareness and education to regional agencies on health inequalities.

Aim 4. Funding: Make UNI sustainable with the exploration of social enterprise and provide support to the BME sector to access and unlock funding.

Aim 5. Communications: develop membership, database and the relevant publicity.