

# IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE BAME COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR



Final report of the surveys conducted  
between 19 March and 4 April 2020

Karl Murray  
The Ubele Initiative  
April 2020



This report was first published in April 2020.

© The Ubele Initiative 2020

The Ubele Initiative  
Wolves Lane Horticultural Centre  
Wolves Lane  
London N22 5JD

Registered Private Limited Company by guarantee without share capital use of  
'Limited' exemption no. 09035399

The contents and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author only.

#### Download

This document is available to download as a free PDF and in other formats at:

<https://www.ubele.org/publications>

#### Citation

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is:

Murray K (2020) Impact of COVID-19 on the BAME community and voluntary sector: Final report of the research conducted between 19 March and 4 April 2020;

Ubele: <https://www.ubele.org/covid19-supporting-bame-communities>

## **ABOUT THE UBELE INITIATIVE**

The Ubele Initiative (Ubele), is a civil society organisation based in London, though works across the United Kingdom and Europe, working with disadvantaged communities, most notably black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

Ubele is taken from Swahili to mean 'The Future' and is an African Diaspora led intergenerational social enterprise founded in 2014. Our primary mission is to help build more sustainable communities across the UK.

Our primary mission is to help build more sustainable communities across the UK. Ubele has been developed through a bottom up, community-based approach and although African Diaspora led, we have a culturally diverse team and support a wide range of communities and community-based organisations and groups through social action, community enterprise development and next generation leadership initiatives.

[ubele.org](http://ubele.org)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the contribution and responses from those individuals and organisations who took the time to respond to our surveys and follow up structured interviews. It is indeed a challenging time globally and we therefore recognise the difficulties families, right across the United Kingdom and the world are facing, and we therefore thank you for taking time out to respond to our surveys. Given the level of response it is not possible to name you all.

Thanks also extended to the Directors and staff at Ubele for their support, critique and challenges. Those many sessions held to shape and focus the discourse around the implications of COVID-19 on those organisations that are part of the frontline support to those most affected; to dare to challenge some hidden disparity of deaths and cases as they affect communities. To step into this space at this time, was brave and insightful.

Thank you to Farah Elahi, from the Greater London Authority, whose flexibility and support enabled Ubele to be able to develop the thinking around understanding the impact of the virus on those Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) organisations delivering services in the community and voluntary sector.

In the final analysis, the sense made of the various contributions remain with the author.

SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**

# CONTENT

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary   | 6  |
| Introduction  | 10 |
| Section 1: Key characteristics of respondents                       | 12 |
| Section 2: The impact of COVID-19 on the individual                 | 18 |
| Section 3: Impact of COVID-19 on organization's delivery of service | 21 |
| Section 4: Support and development                                  | 30 |
| Section 5: Concluding commentaries: Where now the sector?           | 33 |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the results of two waves of surveys, which were conducted between 19 – 23 March (Wave 1) and between 27 March and 4 April (Wave 2). From these two phases, we received 182 responses from organisations and individuals, which represented 165 different organisations. The surveys focused particularly on the impact of COVID-19 on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) organisations who deliver services to the BAME communities and covered:

- Awareness and concerns of COVID-19
- Impact on the individual: initial and subsequent impact as the crisis worsened
- Financial impact on organisations
- Impact on service delivery and organisational preparedness
- Support and development needs

The survey confirmed some areas of general concerns within the charity, community and voluntary sector but also flagged up some areas of concerns that seem to be particular to BAME organisations.

## Particular concerns

- The spread of the virus is such that, more than half of those who responded, knows of a colleague who had been diagnosed and had to self-isolate (i.e. 63% of respondents indicated that they know someone – colleague and/or volunteer – who has been self-isolating due to a diagnosis of having COVID-19)
- Many of the organisations that responded to Wave 2 (n=86) have started to develop new ways of working that ensures continuity of support to those vulnerable beneficiaries of their services. As evidenced, the crisis has thrown up new sets of challenges for some organisations in terms of potential domestic violence and mental health support provisions, especially amongst young people, for example.



## General Findings

The crisis is affecting every single charitable organisation, and not just the BAME organisations, in terms of a decrease in income and in having to seek opportunities to plug those gaps.

Organisations have embraced the government's guidelines around social distancing and working from home, with over 80% indicating that they are practicing social distancing.

As no one can be sure how long the 'crisis', and therefore the 'lockdown', will last, there is a real understanding that the crisis will be with us for longer than a few weeks, and as such, organisations are having to look at new ways of working using 'digital platforms'.

- Without support, many organisations may not be able to adapt as quickly as others, and as such, may find that they are at a stage where their work cannot continue; and for those able to adapt, they may find that they are in ‘crisis management’ mode which becomes their new ‘normal’.
- Those organisations most affected are micro and small BAME organisations, that largely receive less than £10,000 and upwards to £100,000 per annum (87%).
- Due to the size of the majority of those organisations responding (micro and small organisations), it was not surprising that the majority did not therefore have any ‘reserves’ (68%) with only 19% having reserves covering 3 months. Taken together, if the crisis continues beyond the notional 3 months, given the level of reserves being held, then 87% (or 9 out of 10 organisations) could conceivably cease to operate after three months; and with it, a projected 15,000 to 20,000 users per week unable to access services.

## Recommendations arising from the survey

### RECOMMENDATION 1

That organisations should be focused on short-term and medium-term actions, reflected in following table:

| What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon immediately (short term)  | What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon in 6 months time (medium term)   | Where might they get the support?   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Seeking flexibility from existing funders as to possible repurposing of any grant they have received where work is not possible due to the shutdown, where it would benefit those impacted upon by the virus.</p> | <p>Developing new or creative ways of working to deliver the objectives of the organisation (i.e. review business and strategic plans).</p> | <p><b>Short term:</b><br/>Organisations to make contact with their funders to engage in dialogue as to proposed actions etc.</p> <p><b>Medium term:</b><br/>Regional or local support infrastructure bodies to help organisations rethink strategies and longer-term options (i.e. offer training and support possibilities).</p> |

| <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon immediately (short term)</b></p>   | <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon in 6 months time (medium term)</b></p>   | <p><b>Where might they get the support?</b></p>  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Consider greater collaborative working within and across sectors (the pandemic is showing to be impacting greatly on urban and more densely populated areas) in responding to the crisis as well as medium to longer-term possibilities.</p> | <p>Developing new or creative ways of supporting the crisis efforts (i.e. COVID-19 emergency priorities).</p>   | <p><b>Short term:</b><br/>Organisations to make contact with partners to determine collaborative possibilities in response to the crisis as well as strategically going forward.</p> <p><b>Medium term:</b><br/>Local BAME Forums, and similar organisations to broker 'collaborative partnerships' (e.g. Croydon BME Forum and Black South West Network offers examples).</p>   |
| <p>Deliver those aspects of the organisation's services that can be accessed via digital platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Hangouts (amongst others emerging on the market) or remote working.</p>   | <p>Fundraising opportunities using on-line platform such as Webinars, Crowdfunding and grant applications (especially in relation to core funding).</p> | <p><b>Short term:</b><br/>Organisations to make better use of Zoom and/or Skype (free use service aspects in the first instance). Training should be easily accessible via other 'users' or free infrastructure support webinars available (e.g. Ubele's roll out of weekly webinars, for example).</p> <p><b>Medium term:</b><br/>Local BAME Forums and similar organisations to provide updates and fundraising workshops, amongst other investment opportunities.</p> |



| <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon immediately (short term)</b></p> | <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon in 6 months time (medium term)</b></p>   | <p><b>Where might they get the support?</b></p>   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p>The establishment of a transformational sector wide 'National BAME Infrastructure' arrangement to provide the coordination, support and development of the sector.</p> | <p><b>Medium term:</b><br/>Regional BAME Forums and anchor organisations to explore what such a 'transformational' arrangement could look like.</p> |

## RECOMMENDATION 2

Further work is needed to better understand the support needs of the sector which should include 'deep dive' follow up with those micro and small organisations identified through the research as likely to close within 3 months.

All micro and small charitable organisations are in the same boat – by and large – and all grappling with multiple priorities and challenges - spinning plates if you will. They must take advantage afforded by the crisis to really review and revisit their main purpose in anticipation of the 'recovery' that will surely follow. For this, we will need a better understanding of the support and development needs of these organisations to be able to better support their existence. This would suggest, especially within this period of lockdown, that there may be the opportunity to support organisations to review and relook at their business plans and/or programme development as part of a 'recovery' phase support and to undertake further 'deep dive' follow up of those organisations that had responded to the survey. By so doing, we would be able to follow up on key themes, such as, for example, support and development needs, funding models and investment opportunities, programme designs and delivery, partnership and collaborative working and so on.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

There is an opportunity for the sector to think boldly about coordination, support and development, which will necessitate a radical re-imagining of how the sector can better support itself.

That is, the crisis has shown that the sector can no longer assume 'business as usual' and this might mean a leaner and more entrepreneurial sector speaking with a single voice; that is, the establishment of a 'National BAME Infrastructure' arrangement that would provide coordination, support and development of the sector.

# INTRODUCTION



The first COVID-19 case was formally reported on 9 March 2020 and since then the number of COVID-19 cases has risen to 165, 221 as at 29 April, with over 26,000 deaths reported [1]. Over the last 3 weeks, there has been a considerable number of 'impact' analysis and surveys being conducted, the majority of which has been with a focus on the implications on the charity, community and voluntary sector [2].

Ubele was particularly concerned that none of the three nationally recognised sector-leading agencies considered the specific implications for marginalised communities within their approach to data capture (e.g. NCVO, London Plus and NFP Synergy). To plug this gap, Ubele undertook two waves of national surveys to specifically seek to better understand the extent to which marginalised black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community organisations were faring. The aim is to support the sector and to inform policymakers as to the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities and the organisations that support some of their more cultural and unique needs, that only they, through their rootedness within those communities, have been able to provide.

[1] <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/> [accessed 29 April 2020]

[2] See the Select Committee consultation: Coronavirus and the impact on people with protected characteristics: <https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/94/unequal-impact-coronavirus-covid19-and-the-impact-on-people-with-protected-characteristics/> [accessed 3 April 2020]

From the Wave 1 survey [3] (96 respondents) it became clear that BAME led organisations were coping just as well as most and had the same initial reservation as to how long the crisis would last. For many, this was most poignant as they were working with those who fell into the 'vulnerable' categories, especially those working with older people. This led us to undertake a follow up post-government announcement of a 'lockdown' (wave 2) to better understand the impact of the 'lockdown' on organisations and what sort of support they felt they might need ahead of any government possible support to the sector [4].

This report provides our feedback on the outcome from our two waves of surveys, which were conducted between 19 – 23 March (Wave 1) and between 27 March and 4 April (Wave 2).

The following areas of exploration formed the basis of the two surveys:

- Awareness and concerns of COVID-19
- Impact on the individual: initial and subsequent impact as the crisis worsened
- Financial impact on organisations
- Impact on service delivery and organisational preparedness
- Support and development needs

As Wave 1 considered the impact and implications with the first 3 areas above, Wave 2 focused very much on financial sustainability, service delivery and organisational support.

[3] See <https://tinyurl.com/tqsembs> for a copy of Wave 1 survey results

[4] At the time of writing the government announced a package of financial support to the charity sector on 8 April, with some notable lack of detail as to how the package would support the needs of marginalised communities (see <https://tinyurl.com/rm2n22g>)

# SECTION 1: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The survey sought to ascertain the impact that COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease) was having on charities and wider civil society generally, but specifically on the impact it may be having on BAME led organisations (i.e. those with 51% of their management board/committees from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities) across the UK.

The survey was carried out over two 'phases' or 'Waves', which enabled us to capture the views of 182 organisations and/or voices of individuals working with BAME communities:

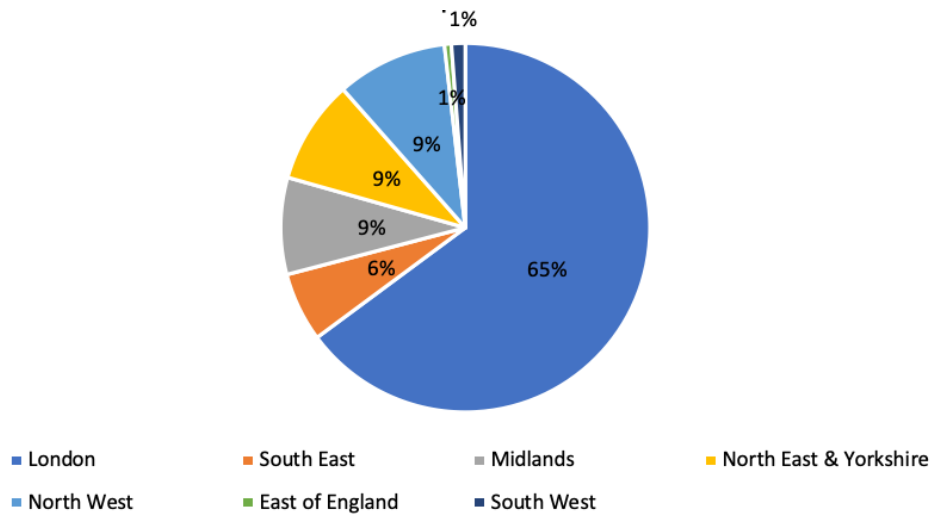
- Wave 1 was conducted between 19 and 23 March (n=96);
- Wave 2 between 27 March and 4 April 2020 (n=86).

From these two processes - after adjusting for those respondents who participated in Waves 1 and 2 - 165 different organisations were identified (to avoid confusion we term these 'unique organisations'). Where appropriate and relevant, we combined the two sets of responses to derive a 'single' voice response.

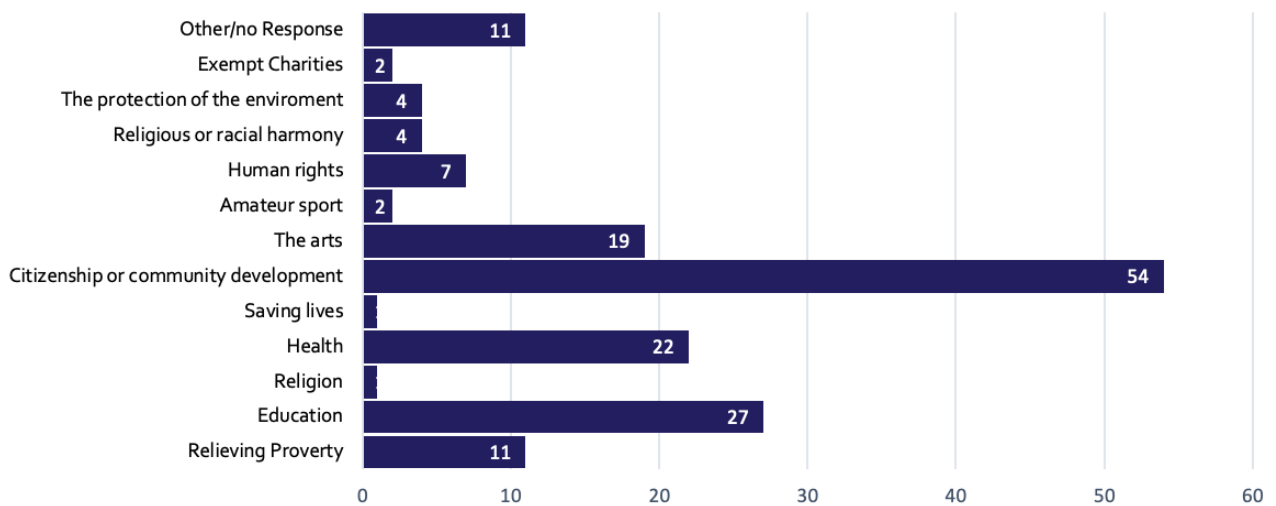
## **From the responses:**

- 137 organisations indicated that they were a BAME led organisation (i.e. having 51% of their management board/committees from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities). Those that were not classified as BAME led organisations included large charities and organisations such as Local Authority departments, Mind, Hospital Trusts, Esmee Fairbairn amongst others.
- Wave 2 was developed against some of the key themes arising from Wave 1, with a greater emphasis on qualitative response. From this approach we have been able to capture some recurring themes from those organisations that responded twice, which could form the basis of further deep dive follow up work. By so doing, we would be able to follow up on themes with a targeted cohort with whom deeper and systematic support could be developed.
- As Fig 1 shows, unique organisation respondents came from 7 regions across the UK, with 65% coming from London.
- As Fig 2 shows, the three most prevalent charitable purposes of responding organisations were: Citizenship or community development (54), Education (27) and Health (22).

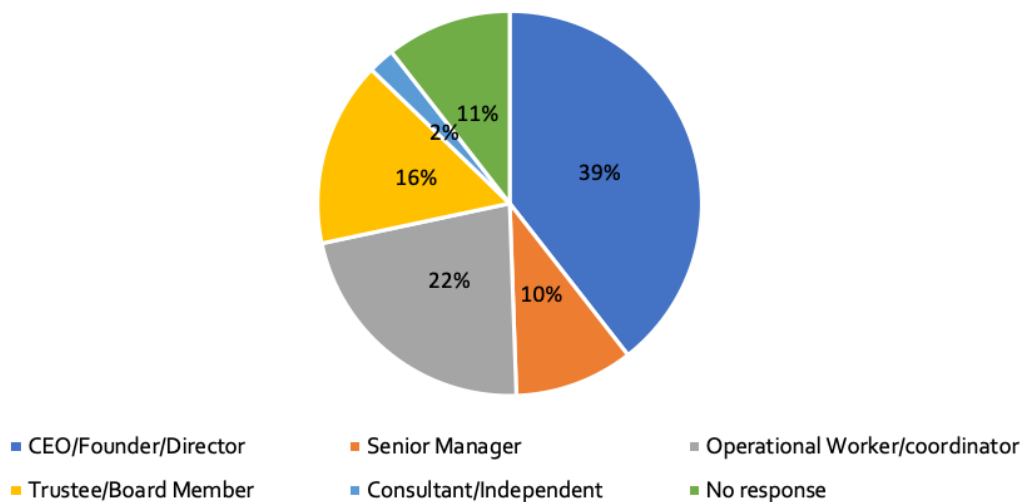
**Fig 1: Regions where respondents came from (n=165)**



**Fig 2: Charitable purpose of responding organisations (n=165)**



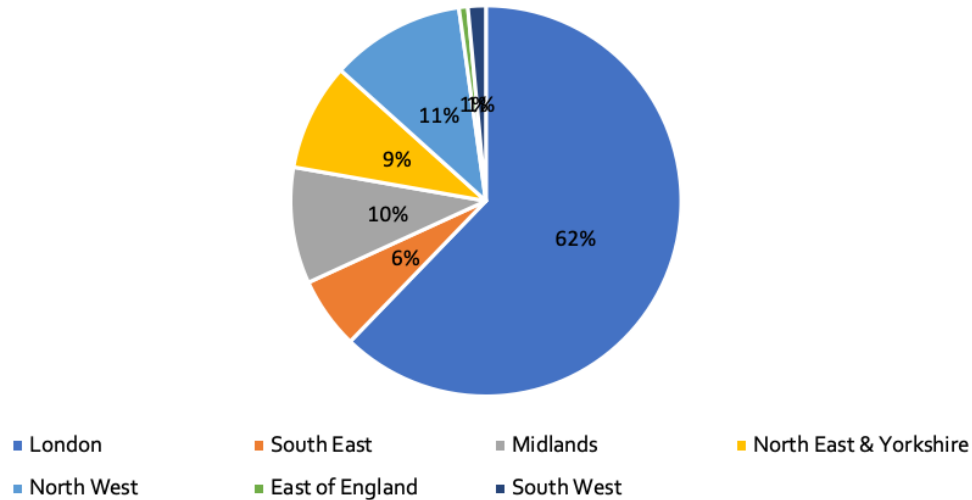
**Fig 3: Respondents by position in organisations (n=165)**



Of the 137 BAME led organisations identified:

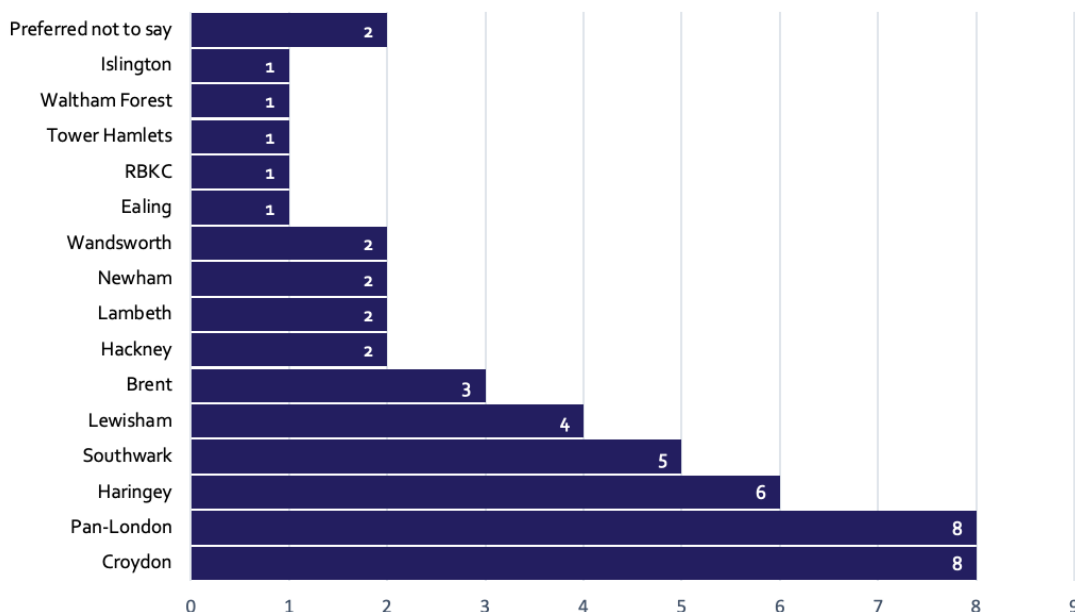
- 62% (84) were based in London and were by far the largest group of organisations represented; the North West reflected the next highest level of response with 11% (15) of respondents coming from this region (Fig 4).

**Fig 4: Breakdown of BAME organisations that responded to the surveys (%) n=137**

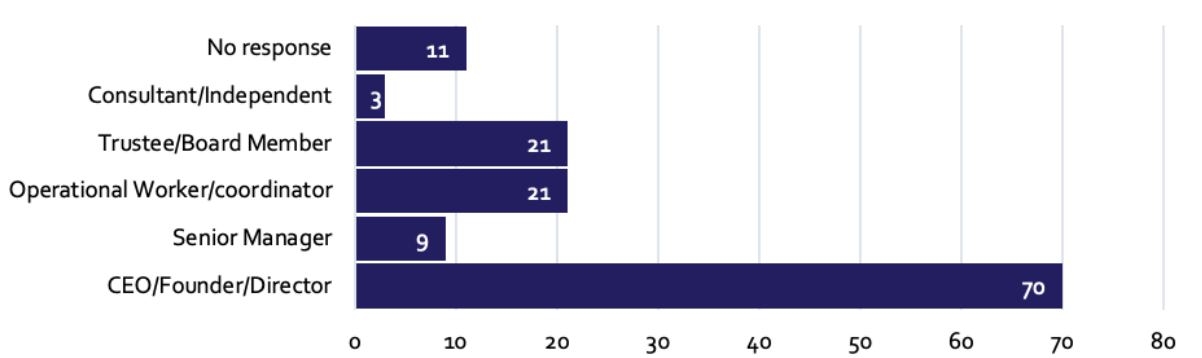


- Based on the responses to Wave 2, of those who were based in London (n=49), more organisations worked in the London Borough of Croydon (8) while a further eight (8) indicated that they worked 'Pan-London' (Fig 5).
- 58% (79) were either CEO/Director or Senior Manager within the organisation while 15% (21) were Board members/trustees and similarly the same for those who were operational workers (Fig 6).

**Fig 5: London Boroughs where organisations operate (n=49)**

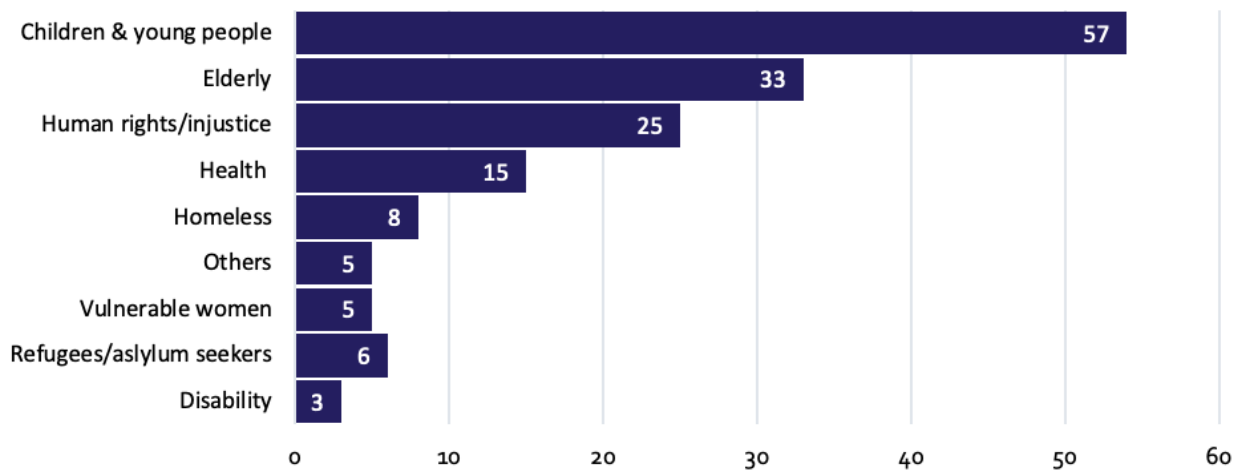


**Fig 6: Breakdown of respondents' role within BAME organisations across the two surveys (n=137)**



- Respondents were asked in Wave 2 to indicate the 'vulnerable groups' that they worked with. From the 70 BAME organisations that responded across all phases, the top three vulnerable groups worked with included: working with children and young people (57), working with the elderly (33) and working in the field of human rights/injustice (25) – see Fig 7.

**Fig 7: Vulnerable groups worked with by BAME organisations (n=70)**



Of particular interest was the size of BAME organisations. Two proxies were used to try to get a sense of the size of organisations. The first related to the income bands as defined by the National Council for Voluntary Organisation (NCVO) [5], where voluntary organisations are divided into six groups based on their income. Using this approach, of the 70 BAME organisations who responded to Wave 2 (Fig 8), 87% (61) were classified as micro and small organisations (i.e. income of less than £10k and under £100k per annum) and 9% as 'medium' (i.e. income between £100,000 and £1m). There were no 'large' or 'major' BAME organisations in contrast to the general population who responded to this question – which included non-BAME led organisations - where 4 organisations indicated having income between £1m to £100m) [6].

The second proxy used was the level of 'reserves' held by organisations. For this we used the 'Charity Commission's' principle of charities holding at least 3 months reserves. From this, 68% of BAME organisations had 'no or only 1mth of reserves' while only 19% had the minimum of 3 months and only 9% up to 6 months (Fig 9). Taken together, not only are BAME organisations small, the overwhelming majority do not have reserves beyond one month (and that month is already upon us at the time of writing). This, therefore, places these BAME organisations at the greatest risk of closing at times as the current lockdown and pandemic continues.

Closures will have an impact on those vulnerable groups being supported. For example, as we had not asked organisations to indicate the level of beneficiaries served, a follow up interview questionnaire was provided to a sample of 12 (20%) micro and small organisations from 4 regions (London, Midlands, North East and Yorkshire and South East) to ascertain their reach within the communities they serve by way of gauging the numbers likely to be impacted upon were they to close. From this sample, we found that the 12 organisations were in contact with over 3000 users per week (3,100). If this level of reach is representative of the other 80% of the micro and small organisations, then we could be looking at something in the order of between 15,000 and 20,000 users being impacted across the seven regions where respondents came from (see Fig 4).

As the majority of BAME organisations were either micro or small organisations with nearly 70% not having any reserves, it was not surprising, therefore, to note that the majority of organisations were 'volunteer' led; that is, service delivery was almost totally dependent on high levels of volunteers. As Fig 10 shows, 44% (60) BAME organisations had no paid staff (part-time or full-time) and 31% (42) having no volunteers. 36% (50) organisations employed 1 – 5 paid staff while 42% (57) engaged 1 to 5 volunteers, with the numbers of organisations employing and engaging volunteers reducing the higher the range.

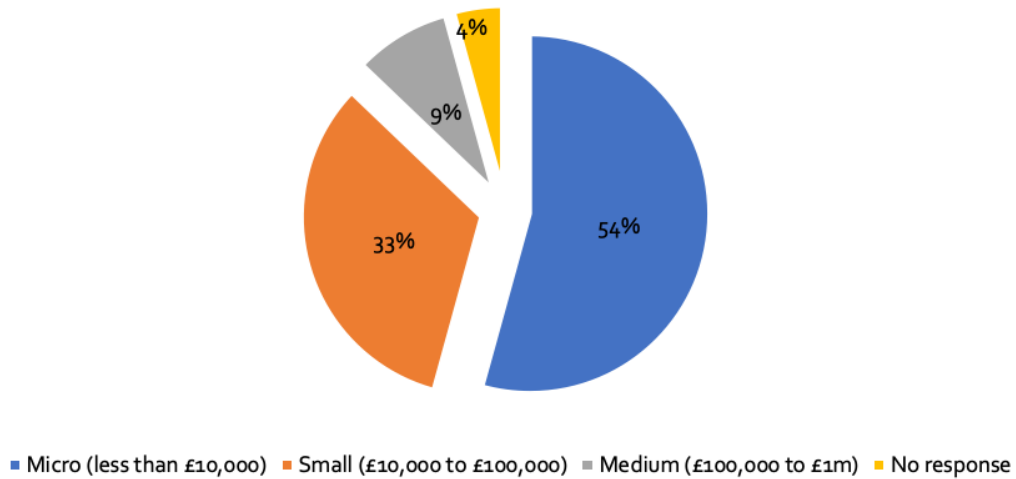
What we therefore see is a sector with many micro and small organisations that are almost exclusively dependent on volunteers or 'goodwill' to keep the organisation going. At moments such as this current crisis, those organisations are likely to be the first to cease operating, or as we have been told, they will "continue to offer a service through 'personal' sacrifices", if need be.

[5] See NCVO definitions: <https://almanac.fc.production.ncvocloud.net/profile/size-and-scope/>

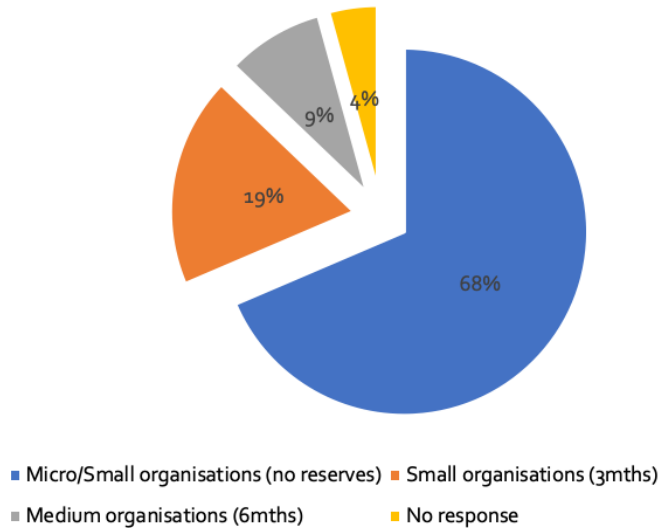
[6] The non-BAME organisations falling in this category included St Giles, South London & Maudsley, Refugee Council and one that 'Preferred not to say'.



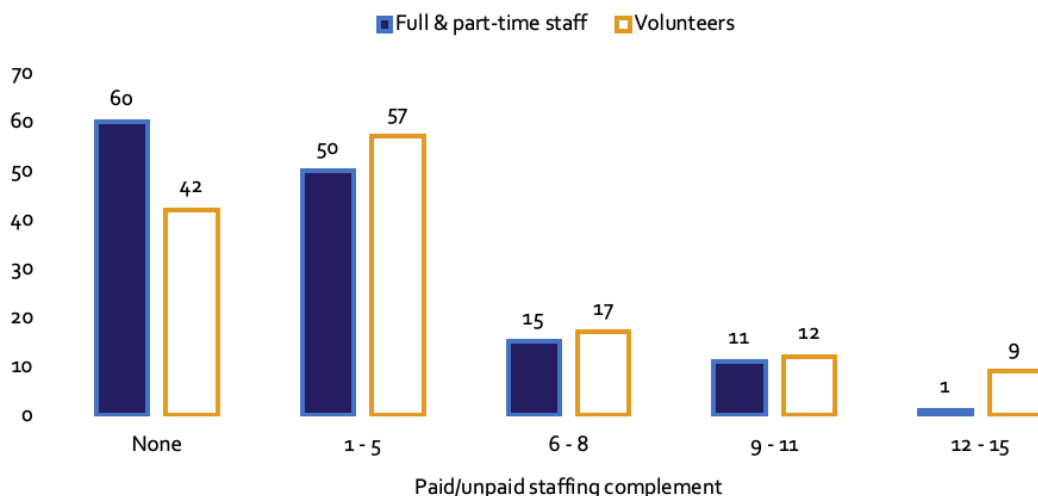
**Fig 8: Size of BAME organisations responding by income band (n=70)**



**Fig 9: Level of reserves held by BAME micro and small organisations (n=70)**



**Fig 10: Paid staffing and volunteer levels across BAME organisations (n=137)**



## SECTION 2: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE INDIVIDUAL

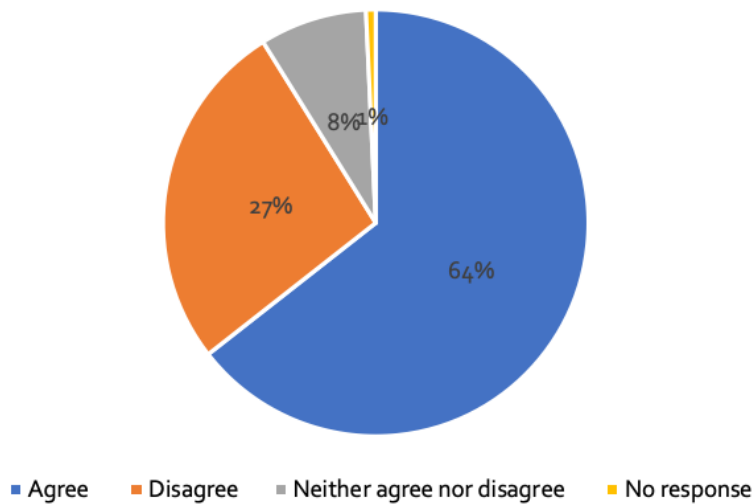


Respondent's anxiety level, as indicated in our first survey ahead of the government's shutdown announcement, had remained more or less the same in the second survey. In responding to the question of whether their anxiety had increased since the lockdown, 64% of BAME respondents agreed with the statement (that their anxiety level had increased; that is, they were worried about contracting the virus) while only 27% did not feel that their anxiety level had increased – and as some indicated, they "felt the same".

At the time of the Wave 2 survey – during a period where the number of cases in London had risen from 4637 on 27 March to 10,764 on 4th April [7] – only 10% of respondents indicated that either themselves or someone in their household had been diagnosed with COVID-19 but 63% indicated that colleagues and/or volunteers had to self-isolate due to suspicion of contracting COVID-19. This suggests that even at this early stage of the lockdown (1 week after the announcement had been made) there were signs that more people than not, were beginning to see colleagues around them being infected and therefore we estimate that as the cases and deaths increase, we are more than likely to see an increase in anxiety levels.

[7] See live dashboard:  
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/f94c3c90da5b4e9f9a0b19484dd4bb14>

**Fig 11: Respondent's level of anxiety and concern arising from COVID-19 (n=137)**



**Comments from respondents included:**

"I'm not sure I'm anxious. I believe I'm being as calm as can be under the circumstances; listening to news only 1-2 times a day so not overwhelmed yet."

"I'm trying to keep calm. I'm a healthcare professional and we are still working."

"It hasn't affected my thoughts on the virus, but I do think such measures were necessary to halt the spread."

"Personally, I'm not in the slightest bit concerned that COVID-19 will affect me in any significant way. However, I do believe that is important to adhere to the government guidelines relating to staying indoors as much as possible and keeping one's distance whilst in public."

"This is a worldwide crisis that we have no control over. We are intent on following all of the guidelines to help things get better. We can only do this by working together."



**However, there were those who believed that the crisis is not as serious as 'made out by the government'. They include comments such as:**

"They [government] have made us so paranoid of the cause and effect this supposed COVID-19 can have. They have it everywhere on social media, anywhere you go it's on the news or radio. It's made out to be bigger than it is and not telling the public the truth. Part of the Government's scheme for more money; they don't care about the health of the elderly or the general public just the size of their pockets and wages. This is the 'elite' at work. It makes me anxious not knowing what's going on; affecting my education, my family life, my child's life, my health and my business."

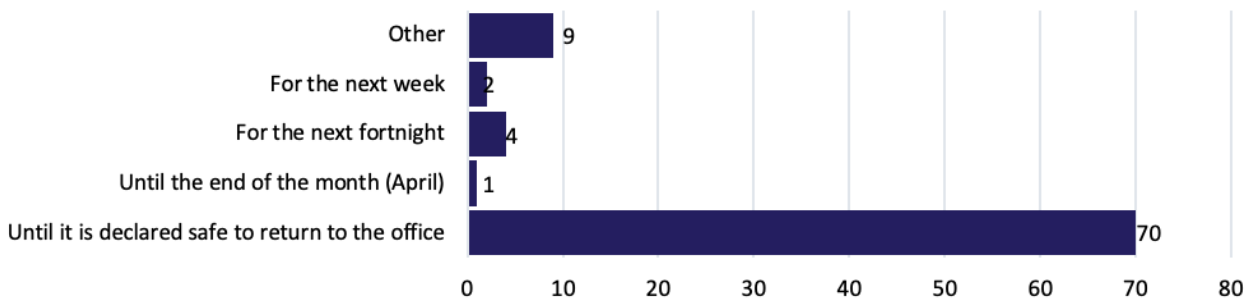
"I do not trust what the government is saying or doing is in the best interest of everyone, especially those in the creative sectors, freelancers or those who do not work for companies with large budgets and a history of supporting their employees. I believe that because of 10 years of austerity under the Tory government and the focus on Brexit that the current government was ill-prepared for this current pandemic."

# SECTION 3: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ORGANISATION'S SERVICE DELIVERY



The impact and implications for organisations varied in both perception and actual consequences. The overwhelming majority of respondents to the Wave 2 survey (Fig 12) reported that they foresaw being 'lockdown' for an indefinite period (81% or 70) though seven respondents indicated that they believed it would last between one week and one month (i.e. end of April). Looked at from the perspective of the BAME organisations who responded (Fig 13), 90% (55) of those who responded felt similarly, which showed that there was a general perception that the 'lockdown' was not likely to be temporary with work resuming after an 'indefinite' period.

**Fig 12: How long organisations saw themselves been 'lockdown' and working from home (n=86)**





### Comments from respondents begin to illustrate some of the fears:

“Most of our work is to bring together groups of people. We can’t do this in the current circumstances.”

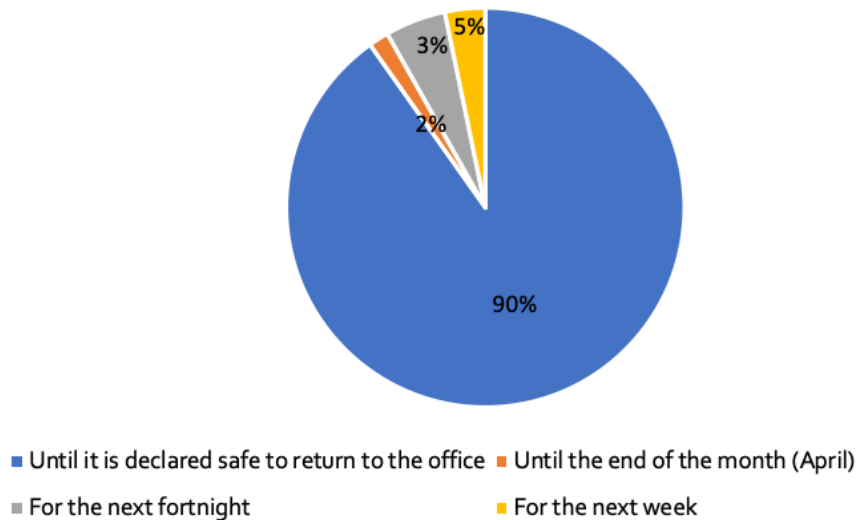
“Our group work has had to cease. We are also having a huge increase in call outs.”

“We have had to stop all service delivery and we have had to stop hiring out the facility for others to deliver services. Our strategy and business planning activities have been hindered as has our fundraising efforts.”

“We are attempting to go online to deliver our programmes.”

“We are not at all able to deliver our services and projects to the community.”

**Fig 13: How long BAME organisations felt the 'lockdown' would continue (n=61)**



## CAPACITY TO DELIVER SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES

Programme and service delivery has been significantly affected with major concerns over those services that catered for the most vulnerable.



**Respondents provided the following comments to illustrate the tensions, changes and challenges they are facing:**

“Most of our services are delivered in face to face groups. Social distancing prevents that from taking place. The online option helps but it is not ideal.”

“We are a training company delivering education and the majority of the training is face to face. We lost 60% of our income and we are still expected to pay the rent, although we are not entitled to the government rent relief as we are a social enterprise and don't pay rates.”

“We deliver face-to-face youth work. We have succeeded in moving some service delivery online, but it's impossible to transform all of it into online provisions.”

“We work directly with young people, although we may try to do it remotely, but I am not confident that will be as effective, however, until we try for a while we will not know for sure.”

For many organisations, it has become a period of uncertainties whereby for many of them there is the concern of perhaps having to dissolve or close down for a lengthy period. This was particularly marked for those who relied on public events and fundraising activities to support their fundraising efforts.



**Comments included:**

“We organise events and need to utilise public spaces. Because this requires that attendees and participants need to be within close proximity of each other this severely impacts are potential to carry out events.”

“We have cancelled a host of events as far ahead as July so far. Also, we can't deliver any face to face meetings.” “I work for a museum. The museum has closed. I also run my own social enterprise. And we have to change our delivery to an online format.”

“We have a furniture bank and drop-in and coffee morning which cannot carry on in the current situation.”

“We have lost a lot of donations from patrons and supporters, who have seen their own income disappear and have therefore had to re-prioritise their limited funds. This has severely affected our running costs and will affect our ability to reopen, after the crisis ends.”

“We have not closed our service but have had to significantly reduce face to face contact with our clients. Our service users live in a refuge with staff normally available on the premises for support, and while staff were not able to be in the office due to self-isolation, service users had to manage on their own. Guidance was provided via mobile phone contact, but this cannot be replaced with face to face support.

Some of the women have fled abuse and suffer from depression and anxiety already when they come to our service. Having to self-isolate and keep a social distance and not immediately work on face to face contact, which helps in building confidence and skills, has added to some of their anxiety and put their emotional well-being at risk.

We are doing our best to provide this but not being able to provide access to face to face training and skills building activities, this will make the service users vulnerable.”

Further impact on service delivery has been to deliver services in different ways for those where this is possible, while for those whose approach relies on face to face interaction, especially counselling and care services, this was not deemed possible in the short term. However, where this is possible, organisations have been able to move some aspects of their services on-line to digital platforms.



### **Respondents offered the following insights:**

“I have been moved to think about other ways to earn an income using the skills and experience I have. This has led to me considering delivering work online as well as collaborating with other organisations. I have had to also shift roles of staff and volunteers to focus more on online content creation than face to face delivery.”

“The vast majority of our service delivery is in person training, mentoring and support. We have shifted this to online support and pastoral care, but this is limited and doesn't have the same impact.”

Those staff not 'furloughed' through the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - which only apply to those organisations with a staff force where staff and employers agree on furlough arrangements to enable continuity of the organisation – has found that they have had to take on additional 'duties':

“Admin staff have had to take on some support worker tasks. Support workers who have had to self-isolate at home have had to work on other tasks, such as funding. The Manager has had to take on tasks such as shopping for the project and also carrying out some support worker tasks in order to ensure the service is still able to do some of the important tasks needed to keep the project and organisation going.”



“Staff who become more available supported others who are busy or adjusting. Also, staff helped with emergency programme planned by line managers.”

“Those who are not isolated are now supporting with the collection of resources, completing the tasks of those who are in the risk group and providing regular health updates.”

Additionally, since the COVID-19 pandemic has escalated, organisations have found it hard to engage volunteers – whether ‘pandemic volunteers [8]’ or generally to support their core business. Indeed, as comments from respondents show, many of them are having to think creatively to ensure some aspects of their services continue:

“We have lost all of our student / adult volunteers who are now on lockdown. Consequently, management committee members have had to take on extra responsibilities to keep the organisation going.”

“All volunteers have stopped. We have over 300. So, 9 staff (only 2 f/t) are running 15 services by ourselves. This includes accommodation, support, campaigns and resources. All staff working extra hrs which we are not being compensated for financially. Only able to take toil which then means our work builds up again.”

From the responses, it is evident that the impact on service users is beginning to show. The closing down of services may have an unexpected consequence of some users possibly being exposed to greater harm. For example, from the two sets of surveys, the three most pronounced areas of work relate to citizenship or community development, education and health and the three highest ranked vulnerable groups that the organisations are working with include children and young people, elderly and human rights and injustices. The concerns reflected in their comments echoed very much concerns about how these vulnerable groups will fare as the crisis develops with the concomitant continuation of the lockdown.



#### **Comments include:**

“Advocacy on behalf of users with health-related concerns has had to be curtailed with some very serious cases.”

“We don’t yet know how the gang leaders are going to respond and rework during this crisis. They too are a business and pretty canny - so let’s see next steps.”

“Robust antenatal preparation is now absent/lacking.”

[8] Pandemic volunteers are volunteers that have emerged directly in response to immediate crisis, especially in areas of food banks, hospitals and supporting the elderly and most vulnerable unable to leave their homes. They are often referred to as ‘Mutual Aid Groups’. See <https://pandemicvolunteers.org/>

“We have some users with mental health issues, isolation has been particularly contributory factor to raised anxiety levels.”

“We have received emails that some will like refund for counselling sessions of their face to face session because they are at home in a non-private way and so cannot have telephone online counselling. This is sad because we know they are vulnerable emotionally and in other ways.”

“The elderly used to attend weekly senior citizens lunch club and activities day. Some will be isolated now, and all will certainly be housebound.”

“Many women and girls will now be living with the abusers and not feel they are able to go out and seek support. Also, women tend to learn about our support services from community women often those who have already used our service, this social contact will not be taking place anymore. Women will not want to report abusers as they’ll be afraid of what will happen to them if they have to leave the family home. More pressure from family not to say anything re abuse.”

“Some of the projects we provide reduce the impact of social isolation for the more valuable groups in Haringey. We can only speak with people by phone and providing them with updates as they arrive. Some have been referred to community connect.”

“We have a project on addressing mental health issues, but we have to stop it because of COVID19. No support is currently available to them.”

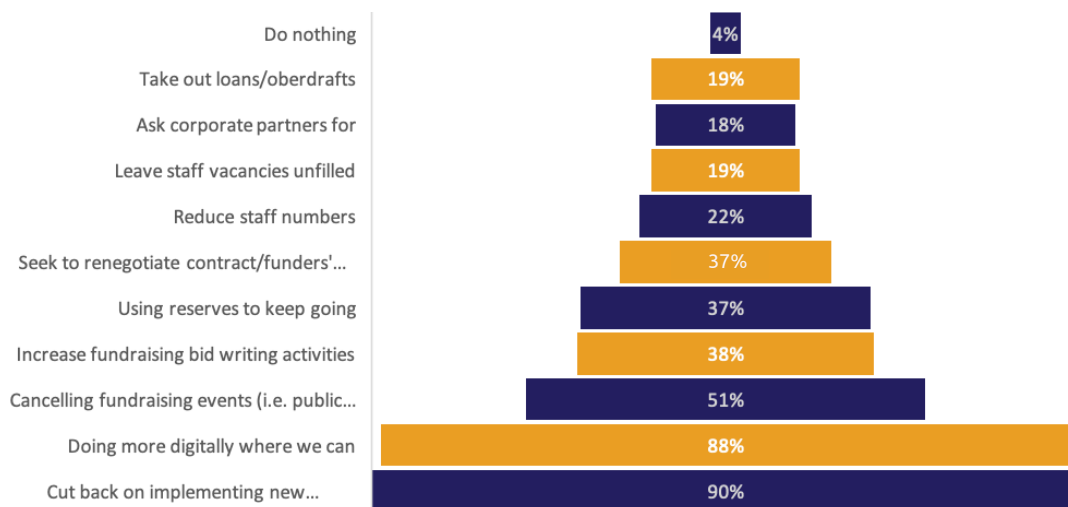
“Some of our groups are not self-isolating - however we are not in position to do detached youth work to change their behaviour.”

“Support can be done over the phone, but we are limited with what we can do for people. Can’t refer to other agencies as they are closed or only offer telephone support. We had to close our emergency night shelter so we have clients that are street homeless but as they have NRPF [no recourse to public fund], the Council is refusing to help them. We are stepping up our campaigning now to challenge the Council and working nationally as well to work with allies.”

## WHAT ACTIONS OR PLANS ARE ORGANISATIONS PUTTING IN PLACE OR CONSIDERING?

Organisations reported on the actions either under consideration or that they are actually engaged in. Based on the frequency of responses to this question, 90% of respondents indicated that they have had to cut back on implementing new pieces of work while 88% reported on transferring their work to digital platforms while half (51%) cancelled fundraising events or activities (Fig 14).

**Fig 14: Actions organisations are putting in place (n=86)**



**Specifically, respondents have offered some thoughts on actions being taken:**

“We have set up a volunteering project which provides practical support to vulnerable people in our community, front line nurses/carers who are self-isolating or have been infected by COVID, vulnerable elderly who could not go out, and those ill and self-isolating for various reasons. We are also providing phone line for people who have high level of anxiety due to loss of jobs, and illness in the family in the UK and back home to their country of origin.”

“We ensure that we remain in contact and provide a virtual service over the phone and Social media. We also ensure that they have access to essential items and deliver groceries and will also shop for them as well.”

“Considering our product is distributed and sold in shops, we now have to be doing everything online.”

“We rely on events and festivals for the core of our business. As this lockdown continues, we have no business. We were planning to launch a home delivery services in the summer based on revenue we would have received from private events.”

“We have changed how we deliver our service. We hold our services online, use our website and WhatsApp groups for support and information.”

“I was meant to start school base and community base workshop in April, which is now on pause; this will mean I deliver later in the year and will affect my income because the income is for April work. Now the work is suspended we don't know what to do.”

## HOW ARE ORGANISATIONS PLAYING THEIR PART IN RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS?

Despite the concerns and evident challenges being faced by BAME organisations, responses show that many of the organisations have been exploring ways to provide support beyond their immediate organisational target and client groups. Their contribution to the wider efforts may not be recognised more widely but at a local level, it would appear they are playing some not too insignificant role.

One example, drawn from a depth interview with one provider in Haringey, just before the government shutdown announcement, showed how a small group of local people came together to open a 'food and distributing centre' at the Tottenham Sports Centre, in the London Borough of Haringey. This service has been receiving referrals from the Council even though the 'mutual aid' group is not in receipt of any funding from the Council nor from anyone, given the immediacy of the concerns to respond to those most affected.



**The organisation offered the following example of how they are responding to the crisis:**

“We are gearing up to work with the North London Community Consortium and other local grassroots organisations and community networks to meet the needs of the vulnerable members of the community. This is being done in many ways including:

- Establishing our building as a central community support hub for Hornsey & Wood Green
- Supporting drop off of supplies, creating relief packages and supporting distribution
- Providing safe hot meal preparation, packaging and distribution facilities as we already do this for our senior citizens coming to the centre and now extending this to wider population
- Providing information, advice and guidance to the local community
- Providing community engagement and regular support especially individuals with diabetes, high blood pressure and dementia which is peculiar to the African Caribbean community
- Food drop off to those self-isolating and unable to shop
- Emotional support hotline and website
- Support local grassroots organisations to provide training on mental health and safeguarding and online support for groups to access child protection, safe guarding, mental health and well-being. This is to reduce pressure on NHS and other front line services.
- Establish first response teams that go door-to-door to relieve concerns and anxiety."



#### **Other organisations have reported similarly:**

"Many people are having to self-isolate and we are delivering home cooked food to them; which would be healthy and suited to their culture."

"We are working across the sector to help other organisations prepare and develop."

"We offer practical tools for parents to home-school and organise themselves. We offer emotional support to all especially family who are now stuck together and offer weekly group Zoom counselling sessions where all can have their concerns and worried answered."

"Providing translation services by translating Covid-19 information and Government advice in community languages."

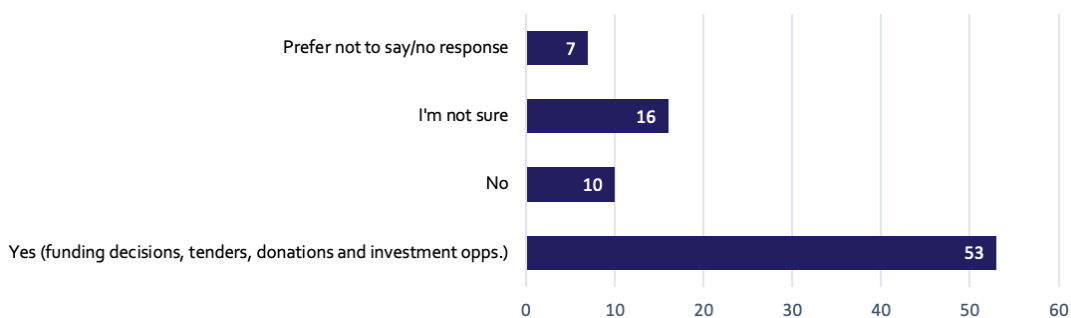
## SECTION 4: SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT



In an attempt to mitigate some of the concerns arising from the pandemic crisis as it affects businesses and the charitable sector, the announcement by the government to provide assistance and support has been largely welcomed by respondents [9]. However, as it is early days, it was clear that the support has not yet trickled through to the majority of the organisations, which is perhaps not too surprising or unexpected. For example, 91% of respondents indicated that they had not yet received any financial aid. Furthermore, for some of the organisations, this period has been one of trying to 'ensure services continue to be delivered' in the face of the immediate crisis and 'lockdown' situation.

53 (62%) organisations witnessed a significant decrease in financial support since the crisis began that has, or will have, an impact on their financial planning for 2020/21 (Fig 15). Respondents have indicated that fund raising events, for example, has had to be curtailed and that they have noticed a fall in general donations and that funders have deferred making decisions, thus putting back any chances they may have had in securing financial support for the start of 2020/21 financial year. As such, many organisations are hoping to be able to access any 'emergency' funding that there might be.

**Fig 15: Financial support decrease since crisis started (n= 86)**

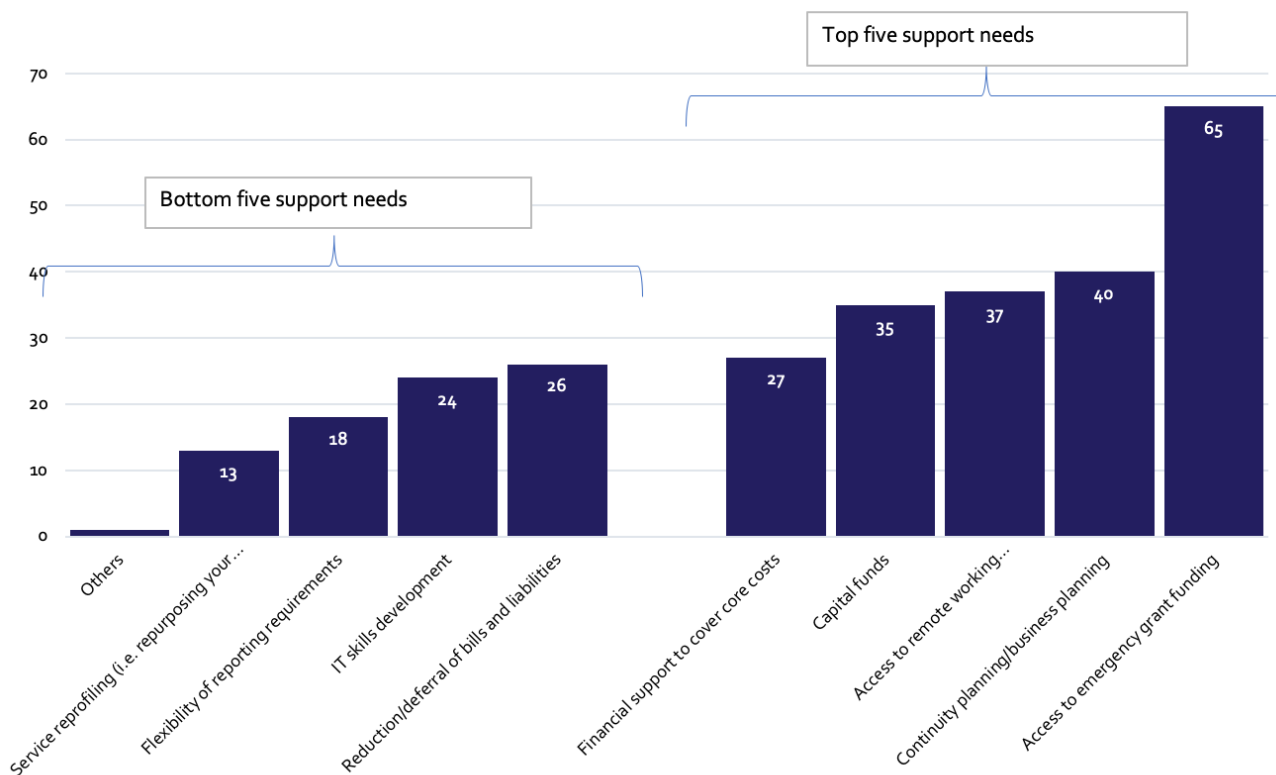


[9] See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

As Fig 16 shows, the top five areas of support reported included:

- Access to emergency grant funding (65)
- Continuity planning/business planning (40)
- Access to remote working equipment/facilities (37)
- Capital funds (35)
- Financial support to cover core costs (27)

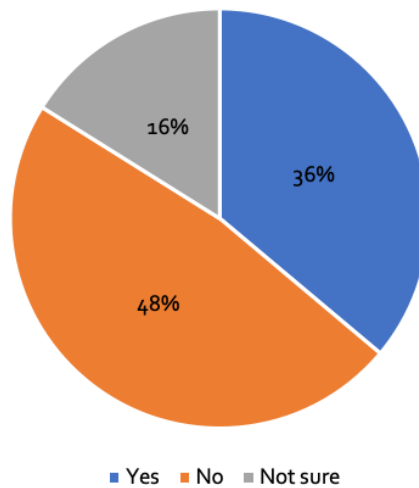
**Fig 16: Support needs of BAME organisations (n= 86)**



However, we also note that support from 'funders' to be more flexible and open to 'repurposing' possibilities was something that some of the organisations felt would be helpful. That, however, lagged behind the need to address immediate financial imperatives such as the paying of bills and IT skills development. As we did not ask, it could be surmised that, as many of the respondents were micro or small organisations, there was the likelihood that they were not in receipt of any major funding. This was an area of questioning that we did not undertake at this time as we wanted to better understand the immediate impact and implications for organisations. It was also flagged up by respondents in interviews that those who had already secured funding to start from April 2020, had received notification from funders as to 'flexible and repurposing' approaches they were taking (e.g. National Community Lottery Fund and BBC Children in Need, were two funders frequently cited). Those organisations did not therefore see this aspect as being such a high support need.

Another area of concern that had been flagged up in the first survey was that of 'continuity planning' and the extent to which organisations were ready or had planned for such eventualities. It was evident from the feedback in that survey that not many organisations had in place a 'continuity or succession plan' (55:57%). Following this line of enquiry, we sought to ascertain the extent to which this reflected a general trend that may give rise to further support and development needs. From the combined responses to the two surveys (n=165 unique organisations), only 36% of respondents reported that they had in place a continuity plan; this therefore meant that two-thirds were without or had not yet considered this within their business planning process (Fig 17). This would suggest, especially within this period of lockdown, that there may be the opportunity to support organisations to review and relook at their business plans and/or programme development as part of their 'recovery' phase.

**Fig 17: Does the organisation have in place risk management and/or continuity plan (n=165)**





## SECTION 5: CONCLUDING COMMENTARIES: WHERE NOW THE SECTOR?

The concerns raised by the recently published *Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre* [10] (ICNARC) - and reported on by FW Business Ltd in its Update 4 [11] - focuses attention on the impact the pandemic is having within BAME communities. The report suggests that BAME cases within intensive care units were disproportionately high for BAME groups, standing at 35% compared to their general population rate of 14%. The underlining concerns raised by the report reflected very much what had been suspected by BAME organisations based on 'on-the-ground' personal stories and tragedies that was rife across BAME communities. We therefore cannot ignore the sheer human loss that is being witnessed right across communities – of all persuasion. The survey – and follow up discussions within the sector – has demonstrated that there is a strong willingness to cooperate and meet the challenges head on and in a concerted and coordinated way. We have found that BAME organisations are up to the challenge of having to consider doing things differently – maybe even better [3].

Given the everchanging pandemic landscape, we may not be able to look too far ahead, but we can focus on the immediate needs of those affected and those supporting those affected or at greatest risk having been affected. The response to the surveys shows that many of the BAME charitable organisations have been, or, are in a state of flux. Some are pivoting around changes to their business model and new ways of working, while others are struggling with shutting down and risking never to re-open.

[10] <https://www.icnarc.org/> (accessed 4 April 2020)

[11] <https://tinyurl.com/vxct2tn>

[12] As this report was being finalised, a number of petitions and 'open letters' have been produced buoyed by the interim headline results from the two surveys and conversations that they have generated (see in particular: <https://www.ubele.org/covid19-supporting-bame-communities>; and <https://mailchi.mp/3be35f1d905a/ubele-weekly-bulletincovid-19-supporting-bame-communities>)



## From the surveys we have found that:

The crisis is affecting every single charitable organisation, and not just the BAME organisations, in terms of a drop in income and in having to seek opportunities to plug those gaps.

The spread of the virus is such that, more than half of those who responded, knows of a colleague who had been diagnosed and had to self-isolate (i.e. 63% of respondents indicated that they know someone – colleague and/or volunteer – who had been self-isolating due to a diagnosis of having COVID-19).

Organisations have embraced the government's guidelines around social distancing and working from home, with over 80% indicating that they are practicing social distancing.

Many of the organisations that responded to Wave 2 have started to develop new ways of working that ensures continuity of support to those vulnerable beneficiaries of their services. As we have seen, the crisis is throwing up new sets of challenges for some in terms of potential domestic violence and mental health support provisions, especially amongst young people.

As no one can be sure how long the 'crisis', and therefore the 'lockdown', will last, there is a real understanding that the crisis will be with us for longer than a few weeks - as some had optimistically indicated in their response – and as such, organisations are having to look at new ways of working using 'digital platforms'. This will have limitations for some organisations as their work involves face to face contact and, as those organisations who work with the elderly have commented, access to digital skills may be problematic for that generation and as such, may push them even further away from the emergent 'digital communities' that is developing and so increase their vulnerability and isolation (see Section 3).

Without support, many of these organisations may not be able to adapt as quickly as others, and as such, may find that they are at a stage where their work cannot continue; and for those adapting, they may find that they are in 'crisis management' mode which becomes their new 'normal'.

Those organisations most affected are micro and small BAME organisations, that largely receive less than £10,000 and £100,000 per annum (87% - see Section 2) who largely depend on volunteers.

Due to the size of the majority of those organisations responding (micro and small organisations), it was not surprising that the majority did not therefore have any 'reserves' (68%) with only 19% having reserves covering 3 months. Taken together, if the crisis continues beyond the notional 3 months, given the level of reserves being held, then 87% (or 9 out of 10 organisations) could conceivably cease to operate after three months; and with it, a projected 15,000 to 20,000 users per week unable to access services.



**As one respondent to the follow-up questionnaire remarked:**

"...the core reasons why some of the organisations like us - The Youth Learning Network - is unable to have reserves is because the community we work with are either unemployed or are parents whose income is so inadequate for them to pay the required monthly fees which we have to accept as a charity. Over the years, our volunteers continue to deliver a service while the small grants we receive are used to cover our travel and subsistence, pay for our hall hiring facilities, stationery etc and programme materials and workshop facilitation. There is, therefore, no way we will be able to accumulate funds out of these grants to serve as reserves.

Over our 12yrs of existence, we have supported thousands of children and young people in meeting their educational needs, delivered youth development training and above all, delivered culturally relevant educational trips within the UK and abroad, to enable our students to better understand the world and most importantly, to help them compare and contrast educational systems and opportunities. These have been made possible through support from British Airways' Community Development Unit through 'ticket' donations. These are not always possible, but we make do with whatever support and assistance we can get."

There is, amongst the sadness and heart felt losses, the opportunity for BAME organisations not to slip into knee-jerk reactions that pushes them further away from those they are established to support. As the saying goes 'as day follows night', the crisis will pass but returning to a status quo – as if somehow it did not happen – might just leave BAME organisations even more vulnerable to the next crisis – amongst other missed-opportunities.

Whether we wish to see the glass half-full or half-empty, Covid-19 has created a chance for the sector to regroup, rethink and to make a 'fresh start' (or re-boot in today's digital parlance); it has perhaps given us all a renewed chance to work together in different ways: funders and fundees; beneficiaries and providers; government and civil society.

Finally, the crisis affords the many micro and small BAME organisation the opportunity to rethink not only how they deliver on their charitable purpose – for whom over 50% were engaged in work related to citizenship and community development – but, coming out the other side of the crisis (i.e. the recovery phase), being braver, more agile with a clearer focus on strategic planning, delivery and risk management. In short, thriving organisations.

# Recommendations

## RECOMMENDATION 1

Emerging themes from the survey suggest that organisations would benefit from responding, over the short-term and medium term, to the following key questions:

- What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon immediately?
- What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon in 6 months time?
- Where might they get the support?

BAME organisations are recommended to start work in developing actions based on the questions set above as outlined in the table below:

| <b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon immediately (short term)</b>  | <b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon in 6 months time (medium term)</b>   | <b>Where might they get the support?</b>   |
|---|--|--|
| Seeking flexibility from existing funders as to possible repurposing of any grant they have received where work is not possible due to the shutdown, where it would benefit those impacted upon by the virus. | Developing new or creative ways of working to deliver the objectives of the organisation (i.e. review business and strategic plans). | <b>Short term:</b><br>Organisations to make contact with their funders to engage in dialogue as to proposed actions etc.<br><br><b>Medium term:</b><br>Regional or local support infrastructure bodies to help organisations rethink strategies and longer-term options (i.e. offer training and support possibilities). |

| <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon immediately (short term)</b></p>   | <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon in 6 months time (medium term)</b></p>   | <p><b>Where might they get the support?</b></p>  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Consider greater collaborative working within and across sectors (the pandemic is showing to be impacting greatly on urban and more densely populated areas) in responding to the crisis as well as medium to longer-term possibilities.</p> | <p>Developing new or creative ways of supporting the crisis efforts (i.e. COVID-19 emergency priorities).</p>   | <p><b>Short term:</b><br/>Organisations to make contact with partners to determine collaborative possibilities in response to the crisis as well as strategically going forward.</p> <p><b>Medium term:</b><br/>Local BAME Forums, and similar organisations to broker 'collaborative partnerships' (e.g. Croydon BME Forum and Black South West Network offers examples).</p>   |
| <p>Deliver those aspects of the organisation's services that can be accessed via digital platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Hangouts (amongst others emerging on the market) or remote working.</p>   | <p>Fundraising opportunities using on-line platform such as Webinars, Crowdfunding and grant applications (especially in relation to core funding).</p> | <p><b>Short term:</b><br/>Organisations to make better use of Zoom and/or Skype (free use service aspects in the first instance). Training should be easily accessible via other 'users' or free infrastructure support webinars available (e.g. Ubele's roll out of weekly webinars, for example).</p> <p><b>Medium term:</b><br/>Local BAME Forums and similar organisations to provide updates and fundraising workshops, amongst other investment opportunities.</p> |

| <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon immediately (short term)</b></p> | <p><b>What needs to change or improve that can be acted upon in 6 months time (medium term)</b></p>   | <p><b>Where might they get the support?</b></p>   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p>The establishment of a transformational sector wide 'National BAME Infrastructure' arrangement to provide the coordination, support and development of the sector.</p> | <p><b>Medium term:</b><br/>Regional BAME Forums and anchor organisations to explore what such a 'transformational' arrangement could look like.</p> |

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

Further work is needed to better understand the support needs of the sector which should include 'deep dive' follow up with those micro and small organisations identified through the research as likely to close within 3 months.

All micro and small charitable organisations are in the same boat – by and large – and all grappling with multiple priorities and challenges - spinning plates if you will. They must take advantage afforded by the crisis to really review and revisit their main purpose in anticipation of the 'recovery' that will surely follow. For this, we will need a better understanding of the support and development needs of these organisations to be able to better support their existence. This would suggest, especially within this period of lockdown, that there may be the opportunity to support organisations to review and relook at their business plans and/or programme development as part of a 'recovery' phase support and to undertake further 'deep dive' follow up of those organisations that had responded to the survey. By so doing, we would be able to follow up on key themes, such as, for example, support and development needs, funding models and investment opportunities, programme designs and delivery, partnership and collaborative working and so on.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

There is an opportunity for the sector to think boldly about coordination, support and development, which will necessitate a radical re-envisioning of how the sector can better support itself. That is, the crisis has shown that the sector can no longer assume 'business as usual' and this might mean a leaner and more entrepreneurial sector speaking with a single voice; that is, the establishment of a 'National BAME Infrastructure' arrangement that would provide coordination, support and development of the sector.







© The Ubele Initiative 2020