



## **Who we are**

With the support of the London Borough of Merton, the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Voice (BAME VOICE), a collective of some 10 BAME organisations, was formed in 2016 as an independent body to consolidate, unify and strengthen the rapidly declining local minority ethnic voluntary and community sector. Registered as a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 10 July 2017, we seek to coordinate the BAME communities' strategic voice, ensuring that we are actively involved in decision making in Merton and, that, local service providers recognise and meet our needs. We are a resource body for all organisations and communities in Merton and elsewhere. We are volunteer led and currently have no paid staff.

## **What we do**

We provide ongoing Capacity Building for our member organisations; appoint BAME representatives to strategic boards and forums; coordinate a range of BAME services and activities; promote, organise and facilitate co-operation and partnership working to advance equality of opportunity. We coordinate events which foster greater understanding and cohesion among people from Merton's diverse backgrounds.

## **Why we do it**

The borough's growing diversity is complex and interesting but brings challenges. Statistics show that Merton is relatively wealthy, however, these statistics hide pockets of deprivation which can lead to social exclusion, particularly in the east of the borough where most BAME residents live.

Poverty and social inequality are two key factors in preventing social integration and presents particular challenges for incomers. Combined with feelings of being powerless to change their situation, these factors can all contribute to poor health outcomes. Over the long term this can lead to increased infections, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, COPD. With the projected increase in Merton's BAME population, at a time when finances are becoming more scarce, community relations could become stressed with increased health risks.

BAME VOICE will ensure that supporting BAME organisations and communities are a part of the conversations which influence policy and strategies and which affect the lives of Merton residents especially in East Merton.

## **What more needs to be done**

In our presentation, we will demonstrate why our services are needed; what we have achieved so far; current issues facing BAME organisations & their communities and what more needs to be done.

