



NATIONAL  
EMERGENCIES  
TRUST



# GLOBAL MAJORITY COMMUNITY FUND

COMMUNITIES  
EXPERIENCING RACIAL  
INEQUALITY  
GRANT FUNDING  
REPORT

INCLUSIVE  NORTH

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lancashire BME Network (trading as Inclusive North) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO 1136057), established in 1996. We are a Lancashire based charity operating across the North West, dedicated to building the resilience of grassroots organisations and improving outcomes for racially minoritised and disadvantaged communities. We achieve this through capacity building, strategic partnership development, advocacy, and regional programmes spanning education, welfare, and health.

Grassroots Black and racially minoritised (BRM) organisations are consistently under resourced, yet they remain on the frontline of delivering vital services to meet complex community needs. We bridge this gap by providing capacity building and governance support to a membership of over 150 organisations, alongside racial literacy training and research. Our support equips these groups with the skills and resilience to navigate the sector and ensures they have a distinct voice in the decision making forums that affect them. Through strengthening our member organisations, we indirectly support over 20,000 people across the region each year.



## 1. FUNDING OVERVIEW

<b>Total value of Grants:</b>	<b>£230,349</b>
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### Grant Distribution Overview

The funding was allocated across two grant schemes:

- **Micro Grants:** A rolling programme with a maximum grant of £2,000
- **Small Grants:** A competitive programme delivered over four rounds, with a maximum grant of £5,000

### Application Outcomes

A total of **130** applications were received, requesting **£429,670** — exceeding the available funding by **£199,321**. Of these, 82 applications were successful, with grants totalling **£230,349** awarded to **61** organisations.

### Unsuccessful Applications

**48** applications were not approved. Reasons for rejection included:

- Organisation not BRM-led
- Conflict of interest
- Faith-led activity
- Costs excessive or insufficiently justified
- Incomplete applications
- Duplication of existing projects
- Failure to meet due diligence requirements
- Private or profit-making organisations
- Organisation based outside the eligible area
- Proposed activity outside the grant remit

### Delivery

The full grant allocation was successfully distributed to BRM-led organisations across Lancashire. The funding supported both existing projects and new, innovative work. For many micro and volunteer-led organisations, these grants were essential in covering core costs and maintaining service delivery.

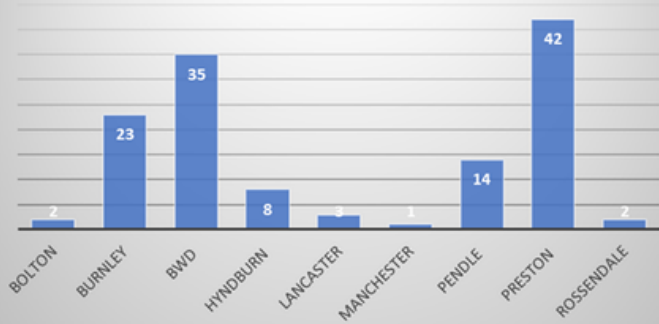
### Challenges and Lessons Learned

Some challenges arose during delivery, though none were unexpected. A number of grantees did not hold bank accounts, requiring LBN to retain funds until accounts were established or until expenditure could be evidenced and invoiced for payment.

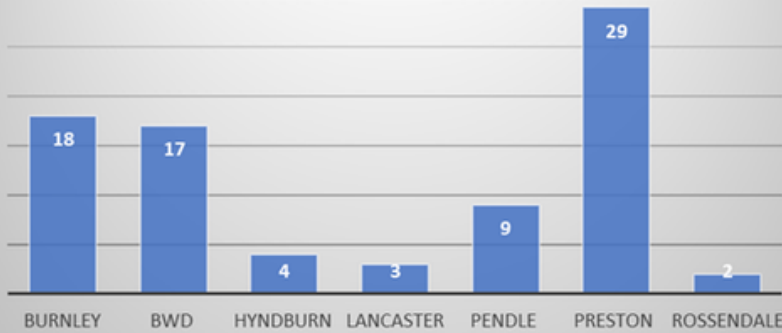
A significant issue for many applicants was a lack of experience in completing funding applications. This required substantial capacity-building support, delivered through online workshops, email guidance, advice, and one-to-one support.

Data sets for regions across Lancashire

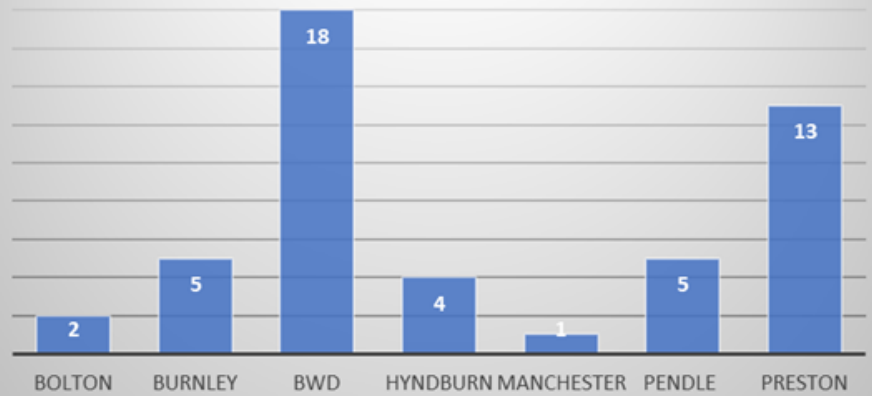
All applications recieved- by area



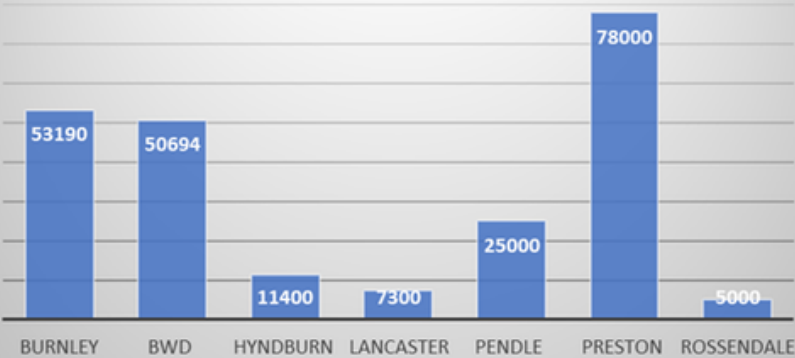
Successful Applications by Area



Unsuccessful Applications by Area



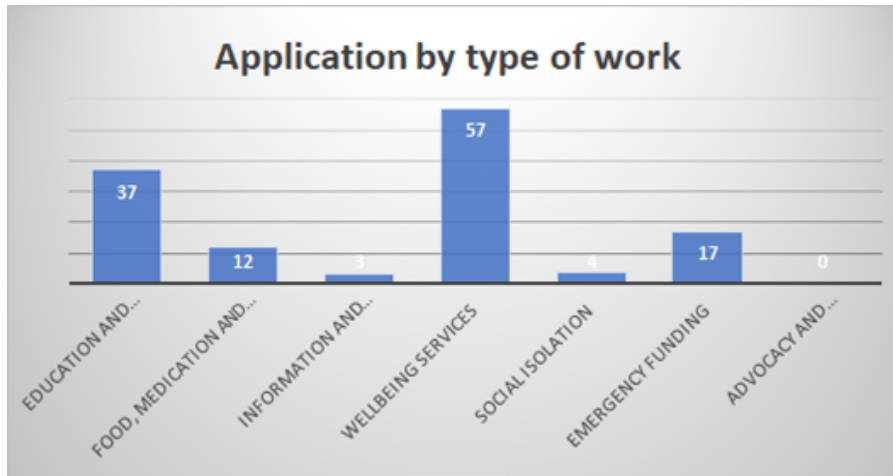
Amounts Distributed by Area



## Geographic Distribution

The majority of applications and grants awarded were to organisations based in Preston, followed by Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley. When considered against population size and relative positions on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the distribution of funding appeared proportionate.

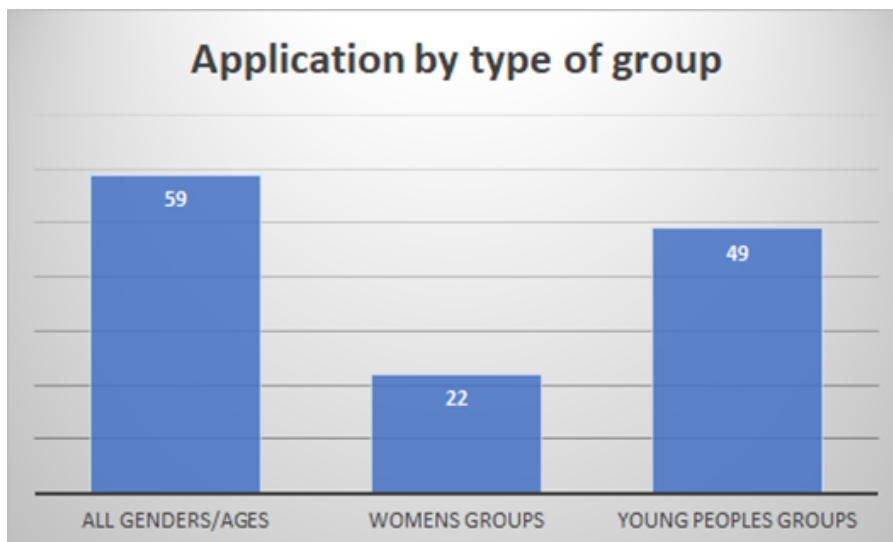
We had anticipated a higher level of funding being awarded to organisations in Pendle and Hyndburn; however, application success rates in these areas were lower than expected. The reasons for this are not yet fully understood.



## Key Areas of Work

A significant focus of the funded work has been on post-Covid services and provision, with health and wellbeing emerging as a central theme. This funding has enabled vital services to continue operating during a period of sustained pressure, at a time when demand from service users has been at unprecedented levels.

The grants have contributed towards addressing the historical underfunding of the BME VCFSE sector and have played a part in tackling the widening inequalities faced by racially minoritised communities.



What has this funding helped to achieve for the organisations supporting communities experiencing racial inequality (e.g. types of organisations supported, organisational needs it has addressed, what the funding has meant for them)

## Diversity of Organisations Supported

The grant scheme supported a diverse range of organisations, from those providing frontline advice and guidance to those delivering arts-based therapies to address mental health issues. Given the rise in poor mental and physical health following the pandemic, this funding was vital in enabling smaller organisations to continue operating at a time when their services were needed most.

In the wake of international events such as the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement, some organisations prioritised work to strengthen community cohesion and tackle discrimination and racism directly. Funding was used to deliver activities that brought communities together and celebrated diversity.

## Feedback from Grant Recipients

*"Closure of the group during the pandemic had a considerable impact on the ladies' mental health. Most were becoming very isolated and lonely at home, which raised concerns over their wellbeing. The organisation's funds were low as there had been no donations during the pandemic, and we could not support the group. The grant of £2,000 has been a great help not only to the group but to this organisation, for which we are very grateful."*

*"The grant has helped the Committee provide a much-needed resource for the community. The equipment will make it more encouraging for our women's group, children's group, and adult learning to take place in a more professional and constructive manner. We thank the Funders for helping us take the first steps in making this learning facility a reality."*

## Building Confidence and Capacity

The experience of applying to this grant scheme has given many micro-organisations the understanding and confidence to apply for future funding. Some have begun exploring how to become constituted organisations, with the possibility of applying for charity registration.

The capacity-building support provided by LBN alongside the grant scheme has been instrumental in building the confidence of the BRM VCFSE sector. The fact that a national funder has prioritised racially minoritised communities has instilled a sense of justice, fairness, and hope for the future.



## Organisational Capacity as a result of the funding.

### Use of Capacity Building Funding

A portion of the capacity building fund was allocated to staff costs, enabling us to provide dedicated support to groups and organisations that would otherwise have been unlikely to apply due to a lack of understanding or experience. This included back-office support such as access to meeting space for project planning and IT equipment.

We also used this capacity to assist groups and organisations where English is not their first language, providing holistic support with guidance notes and application forms. In addition, staff developed their skills, experience, and expertise in grant-making, strengthening our internal capacity for future funding programmes.

### Outreach and Engagement

We delivered a series of 'Meet the Funder' events, enabling groups and organisations less familiar with LBN to find out more about our work and the funding opportunities available. These sessions were instrumental in reaching new audiences and building relationships across the sector. They also allowed us to identify areas of the county where further capacity-building support is needed. While we have supported groups to develop key policies and procedures, this remains an ongoing area of work.

### Membership Growth

The programme has contributed to growth in LBN's membership, with a number of groups and organisations that applied for funding subsequently seeking membership. This has expanded our reach within communities and strengthened our network across the county.

### Strengthening Organisational Capacity

With our remaining funds, we intend to prioritise building the organisational capacity of LBN. Planned workstreams include:

- Training and workshops for members
- Review and renewal of the membership offer
- Review of internal policies and procedures
- Website development, including a members-only area with resources
- Review of social media platforms and increased content output
- Review of strategy and business plan, which is due for renewal
- Exploration of a change in governance structure to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Revisiting quality standards
- Staff training and development
- Trustee development

This work is essential to the ongoing success and sustainability of LBN.

## Experiences of volunteers

“ We know that the third sector is highly dependent on a volunteer workforce who are often essential for organisations - donating their time, money and other resources to ensure continuation of programmes and organisations. ”

### Volunteer-Led Delivery

Many of the projects funded through this programme are dependent on volunteers, and some are entirely volunteer-led with no paid staff. These organisations play a vital role in reaching communities that might otherwise go unsupported, and the grant scheme has been instrumental in sustaining their work.

### Case Study: Community Meals Project


One organisation funded through the programme provides hot meals for the community and is 100% volunteer-led. Grant funding was used to purchase ingredients, prepare meals, and distribute them to those in need.

The majority of service users accessing this project have been negatively impacted by Covid-19. Many are clinically vulnerable, and a significant proportion have been required to shield in order to protect themselves and their families. The project provided a lifeline during a period of acute isolation and hardship.

Volunteers were involved in all aspects of delivery, including practical tasks, preparation of the funding bid, and associated paperwork. Without their dedication, the project would not have achieved the level of impact it did. The funding enabled the organisation to extend its reach and provide support to more people.

### Beneficiary Feedback

Service users expressed considerable appreciation for the support provided during such challenging circumstances. The project demonstrated the essential role that small, volunteer-led organisations play in responding to community need, particularly during times of crisis.



“ we have never been in this for money or self-gain and just want to help people so that they can live better lives, we have day jobs but feel it's really important to give something ”



## Case Studies

### Case study 1:

GNG applied for a grant for their women's group, which has been running every Wednesday for many years. Volunteers take a group of about 12 women in a community bus who are elderly, frail, isolated and have medical and mental health problems to the centre. At the centre, they socialise and interact with each other. They also pray and share meals together before going back to their homes in the afternoon. The centre, with a small contribution from the service users, meets the cost of this activity. As the restrictions of Covid were lifted, they were able to plan to restart the group and plan more activities including a couple of trips to the seaside or any other place of service user's choice.

GNG's main aim was to reach out to new members in the community who may have developed health care needs/problems during the pandemic and encourages them to join the group and take part in community activities. Throughout the pandemic, the centre had kept in close contact with the women by phone ensuring their welfare.

The grant of £2,000 has been a great help not only to the group but also to this organisation for which they are very grateful. With the funding, the group now has weekly transport hired from Preston Community Transport services including escorts provided to help the disabled get in and out of the minibus. The women now sit upstairs as there is a security system in place now.

The closure of the group during the pandemic has had a considerable impact on women's mental health. Most of them were getting very isolated and lonely in their homes causing concerns over their wellbeing. The organisation's funds were getting low as there had been no donations during the pandemic and could not support the group with transport costs.

### Case study 2:

WRU is a group for widows, without the support of the micro-grant, they would not have been able to realise the ambition of setting up as a CIC. This group is now able to reach other women, who have ambition but experience inequality in different areas of life. The widow's group has been the most successful as it has been easy to lift this group off and provide some basic activities. The group already has 13 widows who are still in the early stages of grief wanting to engage in further activities on a regular basis. This group has reached out to over 150 women following the funding.

There have already been benefits to the third sector development organisations that have supported this group in setting up as a CIC and going through the process of registration as they have signed up for support with the local CVS.

They will be able to claim the target of having reached BAME women in the provision of their service. They have been able to engage the forgotten members of the community especially those that have lost loved ones during covid.

The funding has supported communities having access to their future project activities, as they will invite specialist services to deliver briefing sessions to BAME women, who are a hard-to-reach group for most service providers. They have also been signposting women to existing services delivered by organisations that support communities.

## Reflections & Recommendations

### What Worked Well

The grant scheme succeeded in reaching and supporting BRM-led organisations across Lancashire, many of which had limited experience of applying for funding. The capacity building support provided alongside the grant programme was instrumental in enabling groups to submit strong applications, particularly those where English is not a first language or where organisations are newly established.

The two-tier grant structure micro grants and small grants allowed for flexibility and ensured that smaller, volunteer-led organisations could access funding appropriate to their capacity and needs. The 'Meet the Funder' events were particularly successful in engaging community groups and building new relationships across the county.

Due diligence processes, whilst challenging in some instances, were robust and have provided a model that can be applied to future projects. The declaration of conflicts of interest by panel members contributed to a transparent and credible decision-making process.

### Working with Comic Relief

Communication from Comic Relief was regular and thorough. At times, due to competing priorities, it was difficult to engage at the level we would have liked. However, we were never made to feel under pressure, and the support provided was consistent and relevant.

The funding updates were useful and enabled us to circulate information to our networks and members, who reported that this was helpful. When we required support, Comic Relief staff were extremely responsive and knowledgeable. The number of meetings did at times feel excessive; however, we understand the reasons why they were necessary. The offer of training and the opportunity to meet other intermediary funders was very useful.

### Recommendations for the Future

- Streamlined meeting schedules: While regular communication is valuable, consideration should be given to consolidating meetings where possible to reduce the burden on intermediary funders with competing priorities.
- Continued capacity-building investment: The need for hands-on support with applications particularly for groups with limited experience or English language barriers was significant. Future programmes should continue to resource this element adequately.
- Geographic targeting: Further work is needed to understand why some areas, such as Pendle and Hyndburn, had lower application success rates. Targeted outreach in these areas could ensure more equitable distribution in future funding rounds.
- Flexible funding in response to emerging needs: As community needs shift for example, from post-Covid recovery to cost-of-living pressures funders should consider building flexibility into criteria to allow organisations to respond to current priorities.
- Recognition of volunteer-led organisations: The success of volunteer-led projects demonstrates the value of small grants. Future programmes should continue to recognise and support organisations without paid staff.
- Partnership and collaboration: The opportunity to link organisations working in similar areas or on similar themes proved valuable. Future programmes could build in mechanisms to actively facilitate partnership working.

**If you have any queries, please  
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