

MUM United & Uplift BAMER Women Entrepreneurship Network (BWEN)

Evidence Submission

To

Sheffield's Independent Race Equality Commission

MUM United is completing this report for the purpose of providing written evidence to the Independent Race Equality Commission regarding the following area's where we feel that Mums United has been subject to discrimination and inequality. Indeed, evidence provided within this document depends on the experiences of both organisations with the work with the BAMER and other organisations. Suggestions for future development are provided to give you an insight as to how we see the future and what we are aiming to achieve for the community.

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Community support and opportunities for organisations lead by BAMER women

Mums United and Uplift BAMER Women Entrepreneurship Network (BWEN) are both main contributors to the growth of COVID 19 Action Group. Both organisations responded immediately to the need to act to the grassroots' communities by delivering to their houses, education, mental and psychological support.

Unfortunately, as BAMER community organisations which are recently started to build up their credibility, the willing to support community has been always present but the equal opportunity to access what older organisations in the community can access is very limited. It is important to give equal opportunity and trust to community organisations that do not have a long history and strong account to share and proof themselves

Suggestions for future

We suggest that special channel of support and fund should be opened to new- start organisations and charity to be able proof themselves. Specific projects can be allocated to such organisations to help them compete and improve their credibility history

Mums Development

Mums United and BWEN are sisters' organisations that are working closely and collectively to support the struggle of mums in their daily duties including building up their understanding of serious issues such as drugs' dealing and knife crimes. Both organisations were involved in activities that involve mums wanting to learn new skills. However, the ability to access to mums were always challenge because of the policies of the city council as there is no programme specifically prepared – upon the understanding of the BAMER' mums' struggles – to culturally educate the mums. Course provided are usually focus on food and learning languages. however, there is no evidence that BAMER mums were invited to contribute to public speech about racism or sexism or employability challenges.

Suggestion for the future

We suggest that a conference lead and organised by BAMER mums should be carried out annually to debate the hot and important issues related to BAMER mums and women development. MUM United and Uplift BWEN are both pleased to take the lead. However, we are expecting full support and engagement from the council and the universities in the city

Training and Professional

Reports about the skills of Muslim and BAMER women declared that women of the BAMER and Muslim community lacking skills that allow them to compete in the workplace. During our close work with the grassroots women we identified many weaknesses related to the training available for women who would like to start their career after 40. Mums after 40 grow their children up and would like at such age to start their professional or recall some professional job they left behind to raise their children. Such women need a specific type of counselling, support and training

Suggestion for the future

We suggest that organisations working with mums and BMER women should have specific channel to access the university and college short and long courses to give women who are 40+ an opportunity to train, education and build professional profiles. In addition, special training schemes should be allocated to this group of women to encourage them engage and come forward to build up their confidence. Events to network with other women in the community from different backgrounds should be organised by BAMER women organisations to invite business and organisations in the city to offer their internship and training programmes

Women's leadership and employability

Being female directors in the BAMER community has created a series of challenges to us where both sexism and racism have been experienced. It has and continues to be a struggle for us as there is a deep underlying unconscious sexism which needs to be addressed. The council must recognise the challenges that the women from the BAMER community face as they not only fight for their voice to be heard in their homes, but they must also fight for their voice to be heard when they are in a leadership position. Mums United has not only faced a battle with the criminal gang's culture but also from gang culture that exists within the council. We have and continue to face misogyny from every corners of the community and the council and this behaviour cannot be and should not be tolerated. Women are isolated and their characters are stained and are subjected to gossip and slander, if you do not fit the make-up of the group then you fall foul to this behaviour.

Irrespective of this both Mums United and BWEN continue to fight for equality opportunity, we continue to empower mothers, young women to have the confidence to step forward as leaders. because our ideals and visions for a safer community for our children, a community

where we have strong black women leading is a vision that is beyond our name and will be a legacy that the next generation will take forward.

Mums United and BWEN have created many platforms for our mothers and young women, for example the Power in Me workshops is about mothers finding resilience by speaking their truth.

The Joy Bank is a mums united initiative that has been created to ensure a safe place is created for mothers and young people to go to

BWEN has created a safe environment for women to come and pursue their ambitions which we nurture and facilitate, we want to create opportunities for BAMER women to enterprise and create their own platforms, many awareness and training sessions have been carried out encouraging women to be at the forefront of business enterprise.

Muslims and new Muslims women are under high risk of poverty because employability and skills have not been built and there is a big gap. No statistic or research have been carried out to examine their struggle and needs for development

Suggestion for future

We suggest that further support should be given to BAMER women organisations to lead in the community by allowing them to organise cultural and leadership festival, this will allow BAMER women a chance to lead in large organisations with in the BAMER community such as ISRACC, SADACA, PMC and ACT.

Our suggestions to link with the universities around the city to develop the skills of the new Muslim and Muslim women skill

Youth and Young people scheme

Mums United has for the past 3 years been providing a voice for the mothers and the young people. Youth violence has increased rapidly over last few years, at the beginning of 2020 there were a dozen knife attacks, Covid hasn't stopped the youth disengagement that we are seeing, all it has done has made it go under cover. Child drug exploitation continues to rise. We have over the years spoken to the council about our fears and concerns and have offered solutions that have never been followed up. When meetings have taken place, the premise has been to replicate the model does not listen and give us ownership. The violence reduction unit

needs to work with us and our voice need to be heard. Young people continue to be exploited and are criminalised. Grass root organisations need to be listened to rather than be dismissed.

In addition, many young females in the marketplace are subject to sexism especially when they work in the black market where they are paid cash in hand. We came across many cases where young girls reported that they have not been protected and have been trained on how to report.

Suggestion for future

The council needs to listen and needs to take our concerns seriously, more provisions should be made for the young people, the council needs to provide support to ALL organisations who are battling the rise of youth violence, by working in collaboration we will see a difference.

there is a great concern that our work is replicated and used by the certain organisations and that cannot and should not be allowed. Funding must be allocated to organisations like ourselves so that sustainable programmes can be implemented

We also suggest that the council should investigate how the young girls are operating in the market and workplace. Also, what challenges the young girls are facing when they go at early age to workplace

Health and wellbeing

One of the areas that Mums United and BWEN focus on is the well-being of our mothers /women and our children, we look at the influence of ACES (Adverse childhood experiences) and how this impacts the well-being of a young person and the impact it has on the decisions that they make.

The council must help us create a platform to reach families, especially as COVID 19 is impacting the well-being of all communities. The council must work with community organisations to ensure that families are aware of the impact of social media and the role it plays in shaping behaviour. We have been working with SYEDA looking at eating disorders and how dangerous the impact of the 'perfect' body or face is on young people.

Politics and Media

BAMER women relations with politics and media has been always critical due to the position given to the BAMER women in the community. Although MUMs United and BWEN have tried through their programmes and media engagement to develop women's awareness to such important aspects of life, we miserably failed due to the following factors

- 1- The domination of the white man concept of politics and media and who could access what
- 2- The domination of the BAMER men power over politics and media
- 3- Lacking the fund and support to BAMER women to open the doors from women talk in politics and their present in media and TV
- 4- The absence of the community and grassroots 'women voice as the voice has been always given to BAMER women who are either been in the system for a long time as councillor or BAMER women representer or to female who has a good connection with the universities

Suggestions for future

We believe that the first step is to call for a local conference to raise awareness about the need for BAMER women in politics and media. Subsequently a national conference can be formed to take the debate nationally, this will link BAMER women's organisations together. Links can be created with the universities to complete research studies that examine the BAMER women engagement with politics and media.

The council can open a specific fund for BAMER women to create projects and events that involve other women in politics and media. In addition, it is in the mission of BWEN to open a TV channel creating a platform for BAMER women in particular.

Transparency and quality control

MUMs United and BWEN work closely with the BAMER COVID 19 Action group. We have ensured and promoted the importance of transparency; the quality of our services is controlled not only theoretically but also practically. Indeed, through the evaluation form and the monitoring system that are currently applied we do not feel that organisations are equally assessed and in turn quality is not always as it is claimed to be.

The council has for many years allocated small pockets of money which grass root organisations have taken but none of the projects have been sustainable, Mums United have faced many barriers when seeking funding.

As grass root organisations seek to survive the council have manipulated organisations by allocating money disproportionately to those who are in their favour. What this has created is a toxic culture where many established community organisations have learnt to play the political game of funding.

The political game itself is built upon inequality and lacking transparency. Some charity organisations have developed their ticking boxes skills while in reality we are looking for quality of the services provided to the community.

We are living in an era where resources and controlling the quality are two vital factors of sustainability. Indeed, in MUMs united and BWEN, the management as well as the trustees are always in regular reflection to what have been achieved,

Suggestions for future

We think that the matters of quality control and transparency in BAMER charities have not receive special attention as it is related to the matter of equality. The council must be transparent and open to change when allocating funding, there has to be an equality at the very basic level in assessing funding, however when funding is determined by those who are in favour then we lose all objective. There must be an open a dialogue between the council and all community organisations. Equality but be practised not just spoken.