



# Introducing the Black History Month 365 Fund

Communities and Housing Associations  
working together to celebrate black history

# Introduction

**Black History Month has played an increasingly important part in the British cultural calendar since its launch in October 1987. It is an annual celebration that champions and commemorates the enormous contribution of African and Caribbean communities to UK culture and society. Thirty-five years on from the first event in London to coincide with the African Jubilee Year Declaration, October 2022 saw thousands of events held across the country recognising the contributions of people from ethnic minority communities.<sup>1</sup>**

As well as celebrating what's come before, Black History Month also provides an important opportunity to reflect on the work still to be done in the pursuit of racial equity. Global events of the past few years have again brought this into stark focus. The brutal murder of George Floyd in the US in 2020 and the re-emergence and resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement as a global phenomenon that this sparked; the disproportionate number of black people affected by Covid-19<sup>2</sup>; and the ongoing impact of austerity, cost of living challenges and Brexit on many minority ethnic communities, have all highlighted that some of the injustices and structural racism faced by minority ethnic communities are not confined to history, but continue to persist today. The Racial Equality Group was convened by minority ethnic colleagues in the social housing sector and is supported by HACT. Formed in 2020 in the wake of these events, its purpose is to provide a space for

peer support with the aim of creating wider sector conversations about issues of racial equity in housing and across the communities in which social landlords operate. The group has run several events with prominent black British figures and signed a shared statement of commitment to do more to advance racial equity through their collective community investment activities. The Black History Month 365 Fund - the focus of this report - is an illustration of this shared commitment, with social landlords coming together to pool funding and support for residents and community groups to run events, activities and projects celebrating black history.

A key commitment of the Racial Equality Group is that essential conversations around race and equality should not be confined to a single month. To facilitate this, the Black History Month 365 Fund is administered throughout the year to support a wider range of causes, conversations, and activities. This report serves as an introduction to the fund, outlining how it operates and for whom, and sharing five examples of community groups doing incredible work across London and the South-East that the fund has supported in recent months.

The report closes with a call to action for more housing associations to join the partnership, and shares some ideas and inspiration from interviewees on other ways housing associations and community organisations can work together in the pursuit of racial equity.

<sup>1</sup> The authors of this report recognise there are differing views on terminology and how best to describe people and communities that experience racial inequality. In line with government guidance, we have used the terms 'ethnic minority' or 'minority ethnic' throughout the report to describe to refer to all ethnic groups except the white British group. (See: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity>). We do however recognise that 'minority ethnic' can be perceived as a 'catch-all' term, which greatly reduces complex ethnic, racial, cultural and religious differences. Along with the Racial Equality Group we will continue to explore ours and the sector's use of language when discussing racial equity to ensure it is as inclusive as possible.  
<sup>2</sup> Public Health England (2020) Beyond the data: understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/892376/COVID\\_stakeholder\\_engagement\\_synthesis\\_beyond\\_the\\_data.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf)



# The Black History Month 365 Fund

**To mark 12 months of working collectively as a Racial Equality Group, three UK social landlords (A2Dominion, Catalyst [now part of Peabody] and Metropolitan Thames Valley) came together in 2021 to launch the Black History Month 365 Fund. Since then, Clarion Futures, Sovereign and Network Homes have joined the partnership, which is continuing to grow. BHM 365 is a small-grants fund for community groups to support them to run community and cultural activities that celebrate, educate, and enlighten communities on black history and culture all year round.**

The fund was born out of a recognition that the history of social housing in the UK is entwined with the history of Britain's black communities and the lived experience of many black people. It was also a response to a growing body of research that highlighted minority ethnic community organisations were less likely to be in receipt of charitable funds due to systemic failings in the design and administration of grant funding.

The Ubele Initiative estimates that there are between 9,000 and 10,000 minority ethnic-led charities and community groups operating across the UK, of whom 65% have incomes less than £10,000 a year.<sup>3</sup> The pandemic, and the cost-of-living struggles that have intensified for so many since, have put enormous pressure on these organisations. A survey of 165 minority ethnic charities carried

out by Ubele in the early months of the pandemic highlighted a very real risk that a great proportion of these organisations (as many as 87%) would be forced to close within three months, due to their low reserves, if funders failed to respond and adapt.<sup>4</sup> If they were to close, a projected 15,000 to 20,000 users per week would lose their services.

National and global philanthropic funders responded to this call, significantly increasing emergency funding to the minority ethnic voluntary sector. This was much needed and a positive step forward for the UK funding sector; however, as recent research carried out by Ubele, Future Foundations UK and The Funders for Race Equality Alliance has shown there is more work and action needed to continue to develop impactful partnerships with the minority ethnic VCS, which prior to Covid-19 were underfunded and under-recognised.<sup>5</sup>

Acknowledging the integral role of minority ethnic VCS organisations in the lives of so many in the UK, Ubele, along with others call on funders to adopt ongoing and longer-term investments to minority ethnic-led charities; to move from transactional relationships to longer-standing relational arrangements; to be intersectional in the design and administration of funds; and to share insights, networks and learning generously with and across funded partners.<sup>6</sup> The Black History Month 365 Fund draws inspiration from these recommendations

and serves to highlight the participating housing associations' shared commitments to being anti-racist, anti-discriminatory organisations.<sup>7</sup>

The fund, currently administered by A2Dominion, offers small grants of £500 to enable community celebrations of black history to take place. The aim of the fund is to support local voluntary and community organisations to deliver small projects within the neighbourhoods the housing associations serve, not just for October but throughout the year, with frequent funding opportunities. Alongside this financial support, members of the BHM 365 Fund also commit to helping funded organisations grow the reach and impact of their activities in recognition of the vital role they play in the many communities in which participating housing associations are active.

The fund is open to any organisation that is looking for support to carry out events that do any or all of the following:

- Bring communities together to mark and celebrate our shared history
- Promote the awareness and knowledge of black history
- Celebrate the achievements and contributions from individuals of African and Caribbean heritage
- Take place in areas where the funding housing associations are active

Efforts have been made to make the funding application process as straightforward as possible. Staff from the participating organisations are on hand to guide applicants through the process. Funding decisions are made by a panel of diverse housing association staff.

To date, £13,935 awards have been made to 29 organisations and projects, supporting a wide range of activities, including: JoJay's Lunch Club which runs an event for elderly African and Caribbean communities in Westminster; funding for a Domestic Abuse Service (ADAS) event on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women; African drumming classes at West Thames College; and Black History Month events delivered by the African and Caribbean Heritage Association which provides a service to the hard-to-reach older and often isolated members of the African and Caribbean community in south London.

The following case studies further highlight some of the fantastic projects and events the fund has helped to support so far.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, K. (2020) Impact of COVID-19 on the BAME Community and Voluntary Sector, London: The Ubele Initiative <https://www.ubele.org/news/2020/4/30/9-out-of-10-bame-micro-and-small-organisations-set-to-close-if-the-crisis-continues-beyond-3-months-following-the-lockdown>

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3

<sup>5</sup> See The Funders for Race Equality Alliance (2021), A Quantitative Analysis of the Emergency Funding to the UK Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary Sector during Covid-19. <https://www.equallyours.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/QUANTITATIVE-ANALYSIS-BAME-31-03-21-2M.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Armitage, N., Celal, R. Z., Field, Y., Raymond-William, R. and Sinantha, N. (2021) Booska Paper: Exposing Structural Racism in the Third Sector (The Ubele Initiative) <https://www.ubele.org/assets/documents/Booska-Paper-2021.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> For further reading on how funders can adapt their practices to better support racial justice see: Manderson Evans, E., Akinrete, C.J., and Shah, A. (2022) Racial Justice and Social Transformation: How Funders Can Act (Ten Years' Time) <https://tenyearstime.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Racial-Justice-and-Social-Transformation-2.pdf>

Case Studies

# Jellot Promotions CIC – Sharing stories across generations



## Background

Jellot Promotions is a charitable community organisation that has a mission to support and empower young people to achieve their aspirations through education, sports and the arts. Operating for over ten years across north and east London, they run youth clubs, football, boxing and basketball sessions, cooking classes and provide opportunities for young people to build their skills through the creative arts. Mentoring and supporting young people taking part (aged 10-25) is an important element running through Jellot's provision.

Most of Jellot's work is delivered by volunteers, and their Board includes young people who have taken part in their projects. As a black-led charity supporting some of north and east London's most diverse communities, Jellot have run several events and projects celebrating Black History Month and black culture in recent years.

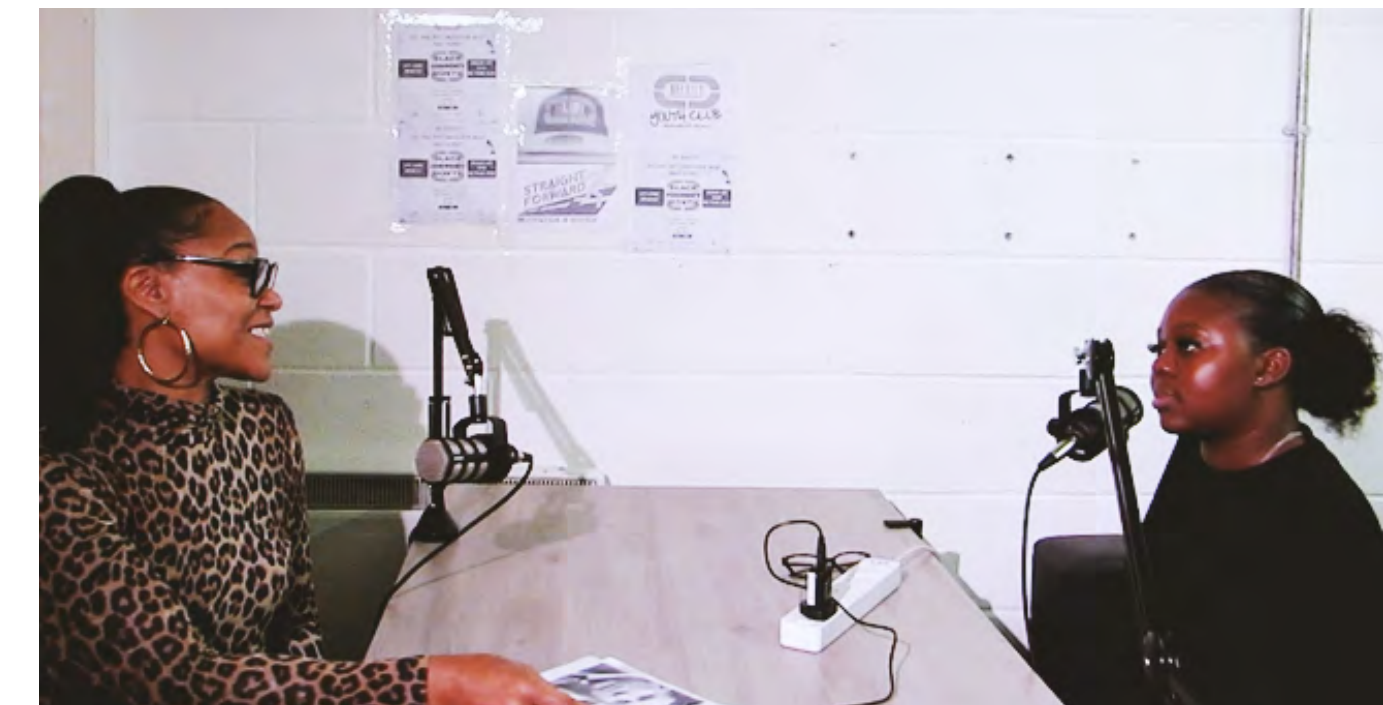


Ex-footballer Andy Clarke, Jayden, Musa and Muniz

## The Project

Jellot's founder Errol Grant is a big believer in the "power of stories" to "inspire and build understanding" and to "bring different generations together." With this in mind, Jellot applied to the BHM 365 Fund for a contribution to a new podcast series that would bring Jellot's young people together with notable black local figures who broke down cultural barriers in years gone by – capturing stories under the theme of Motivation in Motion. As Errol described it, "bringing younger people and older people together around their shared history – not just focusing on the present".

The first interviews were with two inspiring professional footballers: Paul Canoville, the first black player to represent Chelsea in the Premier League and Andrew Clarke who was born in Tottenham and went on to play over 400 games in the English Football League, including time with Wimbledon and Peterborough football clubs. Working closely with SkyWay Charity who operate a community recording studio in Hackney, young people were trained to conduct and to record the interviews (both on film and audio) and the results were shared across social media and podcast platforms. The conversations were wide ranging, covering the interviewees' early lives; living in the same places as the young people involved; their sporting careers and the prejudices they encountered; along with wider reflections on community and life as a notable local black figure.



Anthea Greenaway and law graduate, Olivia Jonson

As a resident of A2Dominion, Errol was made aware of the funds by members of their Community Investment Team and funding went towards the studio and technician costs for recording the podcasts.

The recordings have been well received and Jellot have ambitions to do more, if further funding can be found. Errol's aspiration is to capture interviews and oral histories of a wide range of figures with roots in the boroughs Jellot works across – telling the stories of black artists, businesspeople, and other sporting figures – as well as sharing the incredible stories and experiences of other local people who may not be as prominent but have led equally amazing lives.



Case Studies

# Sunshine of Hounslow – A disability-led group growing community connections



## Background

Sunshine of Hounslow is a local, non-profit, community interest organisation, serving residents living in the London Borough of Hounslow. The group was formed in 2012 by a few residents who wanted to support isolated Asian men and women in the community through health and wellbeing activities and advice services.

Humbly, founder Sharnjeet Bhalla describes Sunshine of Hounslow as a “disability-led organisation, run by retired and disabled residents, who want to be useful and make a difference”. The group now connects with hundreds of local people and is “looking forward to engaging more”. Today, their activities are wide ranging and include running a community orchard; community days out; providing fruit, vegetables and cooked meals to local people struggling with health conditions; supporting people with household and hygiene products; bereavement counselling; mental health support sessions; and language interpretation services for local people for whom English is not their first language. Incredibly important and impactful work that the word ‘useful’ does not do justice to.



## The Project

Funding from the Black History Month 365 Fund went towards holding community events at Sunshine of Hounslow’s flagship project, a disability-friendly community allotment that brings together volunteers and community members throughout the year, growing produce that is distributed back into the community. Not only does the community allotment provide nutritional support at a time when food prices are rising, it’s also an inclusive space that brings different parts of the community together, nurturing connections, connecting local people with nature and green skills, and providing a trusted space where local people can come together to get support and support others.

Black History Month 365 funds have allowed the group to host events to mark Black History Month over the past two years, bringing local people together with food, guest speakers and activities, to share stories and experiences with one another in an inclusive and welcoming space. For Sharnjeet these events have helped people to see that Sunshine of Hounslow is “more than an allotment, and a space where people of all ages and backgrounds are welcome”.

The events have also acted as a spark for conversations about other events and activities the group can run. This included an inaugural seaside trip to Little Hampton for members last summer, and aspirations to take on more community spaces to increase growing projects, improve their

existing space to make it even more accessible, and to offer other local services such as digital skills and advice services tailored to Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati and Swahili speakers who make up a large proportion of Sunshine’s participants.

The ease of applying for the BHM 365 Fund was appreciated by Sharnjeet and colleagues, who felt many other funding applications were too complicated, or beyond reach of themselves as a small volunteer-run charity. The breadth of activities it could support, and opportunities to access further funding were also valued, as was the support from the team running the fund at A2Dominion.

The group behind Sunshine of Hounslow are ambitious to do more for their community and are keen to work with housing associations to run more activities for local people; to create an oral history project for the area; to upskill and reward their volunteers; and to provide culturally-tailored housing advice services.

Case Studies

# Sporting Inspirations – Bringing black history courtside



## Background

Sporting Inspirations are a Community Interest Company that believes passionately in the power of sport and physical activity to transform young people's lives. By offering a wide range of sporting activities to young people aged 5-25+ in neighbourhood locations across London and the East of England, Sporting Inspirations' projects aim to improve more than the physical health of the young people involved. Their objective is to build community connections; offer employability services; provide spaces to discuss mental health and other issues; and to inspire the young people involved to follow their passions; to "work closely with young people in their local environment, encouraging greater participation in positive activities to create safer and healthier communities". In addition to a range of sports sessions and activities, Sporting Inspirations also run projects for people experiencing homelessness. These include mentoring, music, cooking projects and school sports, school holiday activities provision, including overcoming holiday hunger, all are culturally tailored to the communities within which they are working.

Operating for over 15 years, Sporting Inspirations has a proven track record of bringing about a reduction in the incidence of youth and alcohol-related crime in neighbourhoods in which they operate locally, increasing participation in healthy activities and encouraging healthy eating amongst those taking part in their activities along the way. Key to their success is designing each local activity alongside local young people and volunteers and

close working with key partner agencies such as UK Youth, London Youth, local authorities, housing associations and sports partnerships. As founder and CEO, John Manitaro, a sports coach, mentor and youth worker himself, says "we're led by what the young people want to happen in their communities - we don't talk down to them, instead we look up to them as equals to transform their lives and the communities they live in."



## The Project

Sporting Inspirations run activities for young people across the UK. A contribution of £500 from the BHM 365 Fund allowed them to extend a basketball project running in Luton, which attracted over 30 young people aged 16-25 each week, 90% of them from African/Caribbean heritage. This project was particularly impactful as it has acted as a route to building connections between young people who have been affiliated with rival gangs within the area and previously involved in county lines issues.

Sessions included skills training and basketball matches with fun competitive basketball-related challenges, as well as opportunities for other young people to meet, socialise and chill out, with some taking on DJ duties "to ensure the best music is played while they play!"

Linking these sessions to a celebration of black history, session leaders used training sessions and breakouts to "encourage our young people to be proud and to celebrate the achievements and contributions of individuals from African and Caribbean heritage. Especially some that they were familiar with, such as basketball greats like Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson, plus the current amazing young talent of Giannis Antetokounmpo of Greek-Nigerian descent." They also used the sessions to raise awareness of black UK figures who broke down boundaries, such as Walter Tull who was "the first black officer to command white troops in the British Army and one of English football's first black players".

The sessions were very well received by the young people taking part with quotes captured afterwards including: "I look forward to it every week", "It means everything to me", "The coaches are a great help and someone to talk to", "Instead of being divided like before, this project has united us", and "It's the only thing me and my mates look forward to". The young people also reflected that it had given them a better understanding of black British sporting history and the challenges sports people they looked up to had overcome.

*"Our three ambassadors are from a Black Caribbean background, namely the Willock brothers Matty, Chris and Joe, who are professional footballers. They are a great inspiration for all of our young people, and share the Sporting Inspirations ethos, 'Anything is possible if you dream big!'"*

The links with housing associations were seen as extremely valuable for Sporting Inspirations' CEO John: "They are key partners that have a shared commitment to supporting young people and communities, and as a 'route in' to connecting with the young people Sporting Inspirations strives to support." It was a connection at Peabody/Catalyst Housing Association that had linked them to the BHM 365 funding opportunity, and this proactive approach of sharing funding opportunities was highly appreciated - as was the streamlined application and reporting processes. Having a single point of contact within the funding team was also appreciated.

Like all the other organisations featured, Sporting Inspirations aspires to connect with more young people across even more communities. They are particularly keen to expand their offer to include mixed media production and editing equipment and training, to equip young people with these skills for their careers and to support Sporting Inspirations to share more stories of their work and of the inspirational figures who have broken down sporting and cultural barriers.

## Case Studies

# Full Circle @ Docklands Community Centre – Exhibiting the power of community



## Background

Docklands Community Centre is based in St Pauls, Bristol, and has been serving its communities since 1927. Compared to the rest of Bristol, the St Paul's area has disproportionately high levels of unemployment and risks of young people being affected by violence. It is also one of the most ethnically diverse areas of Bristol.

The notorious St Paul's riots in 1980 were a result of widespread frustration around the social inequality and lack of community cohesion within the area and were the inspiration behind the formation of Full Circle - St Paul's Youth and Family Project - which now operates from Docklands following a successful community asset transfer application in 2015.

Today, Full Circle provide a youth and community hub serving young people and their families with over 30 activities and services spanning sports and arts-based activities to peer support groups, advisory services, youth clubs and stay and play groups, and a foodbank, as well as offering hire space for other community groups, events, and celebrations. Full Circle "strives to promote inclusion to a diverse community to enhance life opportunities and to provide essential support" and to "inspire young people to raise their aspirations by providing specialist services, activities and advice delivered in a holistic way".

## The Project

Full Circle were drawn to the Black History Month 365 Fund because of its mission to support celebrations of black history and identity all year round, rather than only during the month of October. With this in mind and having been linked to the fund by contacts at Sovereign Housing Association, Full Circle applied for funding to initiate a Local Heroes project that would celebrate the lives, work and artistic outputs of people who have lived and worked around their area.

With £500 funding from the Black History Month 365 Fund, Full Circle launched this series with a posthumous exhibition of the music, words and art of local resident Donovan Lawrence, alongside works from other local artists. There was also a screening of a short film documenting the history of the Docklands Centre, which had been made with young people and captured the memories and stories of people associated with the Centre when it started, connecting today's communities and centre users with those that came before.



For Savita Ayling, Director of Development at Docklands Community Centre, this project is essential for capturing stories of Docklands' early days and the history of the area, to preserve these for generations to come, and to "spark conversations" about where the Centre and the community can go next. Indeed, for Savita one of the most memorable parts of the launch event was a conversation around mental health that was inspired by the paintings and stories displayed. These encouraged a few attendees to open up about their own experiences with mental health and highlighted how events like these can be so powerful.

The funding also allowed Full Circle to provide culturally appropriate food for the event, working with local Somali and black African caterers to tailor the menu to their community. This was cited as another big draw and talking point for the event, which was one of Full Circle's best attended. Going forwards Full Circle plan to embed local food provision in more of their community events and have hopes of securing funding to run more Local Heroes events given the success of the first. Attendees have already suggested other local people to celebrate.

Like other projects profiled here, Full Circle value their relationships with Bristol's housing associations and saw much alignment in their shared commitments to supporting local families. Alongside the Black History Month 365 Fund, Sovereign



Housing Association had also provided Docklands with £5,000 in match funding towards an extension of the Centre following a successful crowdfunding campaign; and Places for People, another housing association operating in the area has been funding a warm space and food club project for older local people within the Centre. For Savita, these types of partnerships are "so valuable" and "make sense as we're all trying to support the same people" – the funding also serves to raise the profile of Full Circle "showing other partners that we're serious".

Looking ahead, Full Circle are keen to do more to support families through the cost-of-living crisis and have been exploring opportunities to work with the Bristol Energy Network – something they'd be keen to join forces on. They also have funding from local councillors to run a Community Connectors programme and would welcome the opportunity to connect housing officers to these roles to provide residents with further pathways into support available within Docklands; for example, support services provided by mental health charity Rethink who have a base within the Centre.

Case Studies

# Queens Park Community Council – Bringing art to life

## Background

Queen’s Park Community Council is London’s first Community (or parish) Council based in Queen’s Park, Westminster. Led by residents, their aim is to promote a strong sense of community and increase the quality of life for all residents, and visitors, of Queen’s Park. Promoting community cohesion is one of their key objectives and they regularly support local events celebrating the rich diversity of the neighbourhood in which they reside.



## The Project

To mark Black History Month this year, Queen’s Park Community Council (QPCC) facilitated two performances of the play, *Out of the Picture*, written by local resident and art history enthusiast Angela Bolger. The funding provided an opportunity for Angela to produce her first play for a young actor of African descent to star in a one-woman cast and for a black director to develop a play for the community. *Out of the Picture*, tells a semi-historical

story of the life of Fanny Eaton, a former slave who moved to London during the Victorian era. In London, Fanny worked as a domestic worker and seamstress, and became a popular model to many of the leading pre-Raphaelite artists of the time.

When Angela approached QPCC with the play, they were very excited to support the production as it formed part of their mission to promote opportunities for residents to engage in public and community arts as part of their wider vision of promoting wellbeing and improving the quality of life for local people.

Unfortunately, after lockdown the Council’s public and community arts working group had dissipated and many of the volunteers were no longer able to contribute to the production of local arts projects. For Queens Park Community Council putting on this production was the perfect way to revitalise local interests and engagement in community arts projects and to raise their profile as a provider and supporter of arts-based projects locally. At the two performances there were standing ovations from the audience lasting more than a minute, testament to the positive impact of the play. Audience members were asked to give written feedback after the performances and the responses were also overwhelmingly positive:

One resident commented, “It was lovely to see an outstanding show in my local community - more please.” Another said, “Start a writing group for local residents”, showing QPCC that there

is interest among their residents for theatre productions; this has increased QPCC’s ambitions to produce more projects like this in the future.

Audiences spoke very highly about the play and the learning it provided. For many the play sparked interest in an area of art history they had not explored before and were interesting in learning more about:

*“Absolutely fascinating focus for a play. It has piqued an interest in a subject I didn’t know anything about.”*

The play “fleshes out well the greater reality of the life of both artists’ models and those who are also black.”

In their feedback, many residents also felt the story of Fanny Eaton and the production was so impactful it needed to be something accessible to wider audiences. One resident commented, “As a woman, I found this story empowering. It’s made me want to do more research on other Victorian Afro-Caribbean women. We were never really taught about Afro-Caribbean Victorians growing up. I was proud to hear about Fanny and it’s time her story and other stories like hers, take centre stage.”

QPCC told us that putting on this particular production made a difference in the individual lives of residents who learned more about history and took away messages they could apply in their own lives, whilst for others the difference



Angela Bolger; Faith Tingel Bartoli, co-director; and actor, Samya De Meo

made was recognising the value that local people can bring to the community when they come together to co-produce opportunities.

The Black History Month 365 grant scheme has funded QPCC on two occasions, both “helped up to improve our engagement with the Community and our black and black mixed residents in particular. The application, processing and monitoring systems are easy to follow and engage with (thanks to the co-ordinators) which is an added benefit for organisation such as ours with limited capacity.”

Going forward, QPCC believes that if the amount of funding could be increased, this would go even further in helping organisations put on impactful offers to recognise Black History across the year and help organisations to offer more free/ subsidised activities to keep engaging with people hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis.



# Looking ahead: Opportunities to broaden the reach and impact of the Black History Month 365 Fund

The Black History Month 365 Fund is not only an illustration of housing associations taking positive steps to support minority ethnic-led charities and to create more opportunities to celebrate and discuss black history; it is also a powerful illustration of the power and potential of collaboration between housing associations pooling time, money, and ideas to support groups doing incredible things in their communities. By combining funding, participants have been able to expand awareness and reach of the BHM 365 Fund and to support more events and projects to take place. The collaboration is also allowing housing associations to share good practice in grant making between participating members and more widely through events run by the Racial Equality Group. Perhaps, most excitingly, this collaboration is providing a springboard for conversations promoting more collaborative activity around community investment and racial equity.

In light of this, interviewees were also asked for their suggestions on other ways housing associations could play a supporting role to their organisations and other minority ethnic-led charities across the UK. Common suggestions included:

**Use the fund as a springboard for longer term collaboration.** As highlighted, all of the interviewees had ideas and aspirations to do even more with and for the communities they serve. All felt housing associations would be ideal partners with whom to work together towards these goals. Funders were encouraged to think about committing to multi-year partnerships with funding recipients so that they could produce an ongoing series of events and respond jointly

to other opportunities or issues. There were some examples of this starting to happen.

**Recognise the role of minority ethnic-led VCSE organisations as key local infrastructure organisations.** All of the groups featured had long term relationships with many of the local people participating in their events or services. For a number of them, that charity or group was their most trusted institution within their community. Several of the organisations provided informal advice and translation services for community members for whom English was a second language. Issues brought to the groups regularly overlap with housing. Given the journey the sector is going on to improve resident and community engagement there is a powerful opportunity to work with minority ethnic-led VCSE organisations as sources of trust and legitimacy within their communities, to build connections and to discuss issues relating to housing and the wider community with residents and other stakeholders. In line with the recommendations of Ubele and others cited in the introduction, this should be embarked on as a formalised partnership, part of a mutually beneficial arrangement, rather than purely signposting to community organisations.

**More money, along with wider capacity-building support would help.** Whilst there has been an increase in funding programmes and sums being distributed to minority ethnic-led charities over the past three years, research highlights there continues to be an unequitable distribution of funding, particularly to smaller charities and groups like some of those featured here. Having demonstrated what the groups have achieved

with a £500 contribution from the Black History Month 365 Fund, all of the interviewees encouraged the funders to consider larger grants to explore longer-term programmes and collaborations, echoing the recommendations of The Funders for Race Equality Alliance and Ten Years' Time.

It should be noted that all organisations were extremely grateful for the Black History Month 365 funding and the relationships they have built with the funders. One recipient noted that the initial £500 had been instrumental in the group receiving further contributions for their year-long black history events. It is from this strong foundation and shared commitment to local communities that they see more opportunities to continue to work together on issues of shared importance.

Other forms of **in-kind support** were also suggested alongside funding. These included providing **advice or capacity building** to charities to help them identify the best legal/charitable status for their groups; jointly running **drop-in advice sessions** for local residents to cover issues of housing; support to **write funding applications**; assistance in **interpreting legal documents** (with some interviewees noting English was also a second language for them as founders, not only service users); **linking them to other groups and volunteers** within the community; to potentially **cover costs or recognise the contributions of volunteers**; and exploring opportunities to provide **free or low-cost space in local offices or community centres** run by participating housing associations. We encourage these housing associations to consider

how the Black History Month 365 Fund might be a route in for support like this and other asks.

And finally, **help to raise the profile of funded groups.** All the groups featured do a lot on very modest budgets and rely heavily on the time and skills of local volunteers to deliver and promote their services. In all the interviews, participants highlighted a desire to do more to raise the profile of their organisations and to tell the stories of their funded events and their wider activities. Funding recipients would value support to build an online presence and to capture and produce high quality videos and photographs that can bring their work to a wider audience. The hope is that this report contributes to the sharing of the vital work and achievements of the five groups featured, as well as raising awareness of many other fantastic organisations being recognised and supported through the Black History Month 365 Fund. As organisations with considerable communications expertise and reach, the funding partners may also wish to consider how this resource can ensure the stories being told and made by the organisations featured are captured and shared with an even wider audience.

## Get in touch

The founding partners of the Black History Month 365 Fund have exciting plans to grow the scope and reach of this fund and are inviting other housing associations to join them in their mission to celebrate black history all year round.

If you are representing an organisation that wants to get involved and contribute to the Black History Month 365 Fund, please contact [Marisa Fletcher-Patrick](#) or [Caroline Wolff](#).

For community groups seeking funding, calls for funding proposals are made four times a year. For details of upcoming dates and how to apply, please also contact [Marisa Fletcher-Patrick](#) or [Caroline Wolff](#). They can also help to connect you to community investment leads within other funding partners to discuss local opportunities.

The social housing Racial Equality Group, which is supported by HACT and the Centre for Excellence in Community Investment runs a series of events throughout the year and convenes a monthly steering group. For more information on how your housing association can be part of this group please contact [Adam Chester](#).

### A note of thanks

A big thank you to the following for giving up your valuable time to contribute to this report and for the incredible work you, your teams and volunteers do and for the enormous difference you make to so many. You are an inspiration to all involved in running and reporting on the Black History Month 365 Fund.

Errol Grant  
Founder/Director, Jellot Promotions CIC

Sharnjeet Bhalla  
Founder, Sunshine of Hounslow

Savita Ayling  
Director of Development, Docklands  
Community Centre

John Manitaro  
CEO/Founder, Sporting Inspirations CIC

Shuwanna Aaron  
Director, Queen's Park Community Council

