



BME LONDON LANDLORDS

A JOURNEY TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

A summary report on BMELL Strategic Planning Process to deliver more impact

Khalid Mair, May 2021

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BACKGROUND



In early 2016 twelve Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) associations identified and acted upon the opportunity to embark on a series of joint working projects.

They recognised that whilst they are closely in touch with their customers, and have distinctive voices and identities, that collaboration could bring many tangible benefits to their communities, such as increased capacity and better deployment of increasingly scarce resources. Ultimately, they felt that by joining forces, they could support the delivery of enhanced value for money by enabling their organisations to collectively do more for less.

Since forming, there are now fourteen BME housing providers known as BME London Landlords (BMELL) involved in delivering joint working projects, including:

- Apna Ghar Housing Association
- Arhag Housing Association
- Bangla Housing Association
- Ekaya Housing Association
- Odu-Dua Housing Association
- North London Muslim Housing Association
- Imani Housing Co-op
- Industrial Dwellings Society (IDS)
- Innisfree Housing Association
- Shian Housing Association
- Spitalfields Housing Association
- Tamil Housing Association
- Westway Housing Association

BMELL member organisations vary in size (from 185 homes up to 1,250 homes) and deliver a diverse range of services across London, aiming to ensure that the housing needs of their communities continue to be met.

INTRODUCTION

The challenges we have faced as a society since March 2020 have been without parallel. BME London Landlords collaborative group as part of the wider social housing sector found itself in a unique position as the unfolding real time drama of the Coronavirus global pandemic with the early signs of BME Communities impacted disproportionately in terms of deaths, which also uncovered the stark reality of the inequalities that BME communities face in their lives in the UK context.

The collaborative board group consisting of 14 Chief Executives of London based BME led registered housing associations also had to reconcile itself how it would respond to aftermath of the death of George Floyd at the hands of police officer Derek Chauvin in the US. The viral video imprinted on the consciousness on the global community an unforgettable image of his knee on George Floyd's neck that saw the protests of Black Lives Matters movement become the marker which demanded a reset in how important addressing racial discrimination must become. Representing BME social housing tenants and residents in London the collaborative group responded by publishing statements of solidarity and intent on addressing structural inequalities.

BMELL collaboration group formed in 2016 had achieved notable impact coming together as one the first successful collaborations for the benefit for its customers and communities; the circumstances of 2020 meant there was an urgent imperative for BMELL to effect a legacy change, setting the group on a course to work more diligently at what more it could do collectively to demonstrate leadership when it was clear not only the wider social housing sector would look to the group for their perspective to help shape solutions and new outcomes.

It became clear that now the oft-repeated data from the impact of the coronavirus and the Black Lives Matter discourses were facilitating honest discussions surrounding BME inequalities, there was a recognition that London's civil society, local authorities and the GLA would be interest in what BMELL offer given their proximity to BME communities and expertise in providing social housing.

With everyone experiencing the new realities as the UK experienced subsequent extended periods of enforced lockdowns meant that the BMELL collaborative group would need to hold itself to higher standards and set higher expectations of itself as there would be clear opportunities to leverage what had been learnt from the collaboration's journey to date.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A report reflecting on BMELL's strategic planning process

This report is a case study of that journey which provides a summary of BMELL collaborative groups strategic planning process, and activity during this period and gives an outline of its planned project programmes from April 2021 – March 2023.

Zoom Meetings and WhatsApp Groups

During the first lockdown between March 23rd 2020 and June 17th 2020 the collaboration started to meet fortnightly on the Zoom online conference platform, to reflect on how best to meet the needs of tenants, residents and support staff in fulfilling their roles in this new context. In the wake of the Black Lives Matters protests for George Floyd and the disproportional impact on BME communities of COVID19, BMELL supported a bid led by Bashir Uddin of Bangla HA to work with Spitalfields HA to deliver Bangla COVID19 Advice Project to the Bangladeshi community in Hackney and Towers Hamlets.

The sentiment in these meetings was that BMELL's role needed to become more impactful given the data being published about the implications that COVID19 would have on BME communities in the long term. The call for action amongst the Chief Exec's from BMELL was to evaluate our impact to date and look strategically at the emergent opportunities and how best to position the collaboration to support the BME community moving forward.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

5 Pillars Framework

5 PILLARS FRAMEWORK

1 INFLUENCE

2 EFFICIENCY

3 USER EXPERIENCE

4 LEADERSHIP

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In July/August 2020 BMELL embarked on two phases of strategic planning, reviewing and renewing its governing instruments, the constitution and memorandum of understanding, and agreed on the 5 strategic areas of impact, **Influence, Leadership, User Experience, Efficiency, and Community Engagement**, which the group described as the **5 pillars framework**.

The framework would serve to provide the strategic lens through which the collaboration could measure its impact and inform how it could create more value and opportunities for the groups BME tenants and residents. This new strategic thinking would also enable the collaboration to frame its differentiation and its leadership role in delivering socially innovative community investment work already being delivered by members of the group and the new partnership work that seeks to strip back the systemic and structural inequalities that currently exist and has yet to be challenged.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Strategic Planning Frames Priority Projects

5 PILLARS

PILLAR	Area	Method To Address COVID/BLM/DATA/Digital	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	9 MONTHS	1YR
INFLUENCE	DEPUTY MAYORS - LONDON MP'S - EQUALITY ADVISOR - LA CLLR's and LA DECISION MAKERS	Round Tables/Events/Webinars/Comms				
LEADERSHIP	COMMISSION HOUSING MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE - DIVERSITY AT BOARD LEVEL/LEADING ON ANTI-RACISM/LEADERSHIP 2025	White Paper/Campaign/Project Programme/Comms				
USER EXPERIENCE	EMPOWER BME TENANTS VOICE/BOROUGHES	Tenant Scrutiny Panel/BMELL Tenant Forums/Social Value Survey/Reports				
EFFICIENCY	SHARING RESOURCES/SERVICES/IDEAS/ EXPERTISE	BLP/HALA/ POOLED TRAINING/MORE Collaborative Working Cascaded Down Orgs/Social Value/Digital				
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	NARRATIVES OF BMELL WORK/BANGLA COVID19 ADVICE PROJECT/TAMAL COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING	Community Enabling Model/Capacity Building/Digital Inclusion/Kickstart				

In two strategic online sessions Chief Execs from the BMELL Collaborative group came together to take part in facilitated by DWC Global consultants and reflected on the collaborations journey thus far, and considered the future within the context of the challenges now facing their residents, BME communities, the social housing sector and how best to position the group moving forward.

Early action resulting from the groups focus on the 5 Pillars areas to underpin the collaborations activities has seen a number emergent partnership opportunities develop into exciting project programme activity with each BMELL member organisation now seeking to incorporate The 5 Pillar Framework into their corporate strategies.

The initial outcome of this strategic process was a review of the groups governance, where succession planning had been identified as an area that needed to be addressed within the group. At BMELL's September AGM amendments to the groups constitution and memorandum of understanding included a review of the length of tenure for the Chair's role which saw previous Chair of BMELL Gina Amoh of Inquilab HA step down and Ben Laryea of Ekaya HA elected as the new chair.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

PRIORITY PROJECT PLANS

- 1 ANTI RACISM INITIATIVE**
Roadmap, Draft Outline Plan, Task List & Progress
- 2 BMELL TENANTS FORUM**
Roadmap, Draft Outline Plan, Task List & Progress
- 3 HOUSING MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE**
Roadmap, Draft Outline Plan, Task List & Progress
- 4 ESTABLISH SOCIAL VALUE**
Roadmap, Draft Outline Plan, Task List & Progress
- 5 BUILD HOMES**
75 New Homes in 21/22
- 6 STAFF CONFERENCE**
Engage BMELL staff to review collaborations achievements date, challenges, potential and future opportunities

BMELL unanimously agreed the adoption of its 5 Pillars strategic framework and in a subsequent planning session in October, the group reviewed the initiatives it was already working on and areas of further work that needed to be developed.

The group decided upon 6 priority project areas that it would commit to delivering as its project programme for the following 2 years beginning April 2021. A further distilling of impact objectives resulted in the following agreed projects:-

1. Anti Racism Initiative – (AR)

- Challenge the social housing sector to action on Anti Racism
- Promote actions and targets that RSLs should be held accountable for
- Drive engagement with Registered Providers around Anti-Racism

2. BMELL Tenants Forum – (TF)

- Empower BMELL Tenants to champion their voices so that they are heard separately to influence policy and shape service delivery
- Dialogue National Housing Federation
- Provide a direct audience with Deputy Mayor of London for Housing

- Provide a direct audience with Council Leaders
- Contribute to co-production of Housing Manifesto for London

3. Housing Manifesto For Change – (HM)

- Produce a well researched White Paper concerning the disparities faced by BME tenants and BME Communities in social housing, with findings and recommendations to influence and shape social housing sector policy

4. Establish Social Value – (SV)

- Establish Social Value of Social Impact created jointly and individually from BMELL member organisations

5. Build Homes

- Build 75 Homes in 2021/2022

6. Staff Conference

- Seek to inspire BMELL staff reviewing its achievements date, challenges, potential and future opportunities

IMPACT QUESTIONS, IMPACT MANAGEMENT AND THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Impact planning

Reflecting further on the groups strategic process to optimise impact the group took on board the concept of impact planning and impact management by answering 10 Impact Questions and developing a Theory of Change for the collaboration moving forward.

- **WHAT PROBLEM ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?**

Structural Inequality from a BME led organisations social housing perspective

- **WHAT IS OUR PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM?**

5 Pillars of Action Framework

- **WHO EXPERIENCES CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES AS A RESULT OF WHAT YOU DO?**

Tenants/residents, wider BME community, pan London, sector colleagues/organisations, local authority partners, community groups, local, regional and national politicians

- **WHAT CHANGES ARE (OR LIKELY TO BE) EXPERIENCED?**

Awareness of Challenges, Confidence, Independence, More Connected, More informed, Happiness

- **HOW CAN WE MEASURE THESE CHANGES?**

Survey, Interviews, Engagement, Asking Relevant Questions, Comms to seek engagement, Response to campaigns, Groups formed as a result of interventions, Measuring outcomes, SROI/Social Value

- **HOW MUCH OF EACH CHANGE HAS HAPPENED (OR IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN)?**

Short term 0.5/1-3years, to 700 tenants, 50 Colleagues, 10 Orgs, 20 Community Groups, 15 Local Politicians, 5 local authority partners, 3 MP's

- **HOW MUCH OF EACH CHANGE IS CAUSED BY OUR ACTIVITIES?**

A measurement to be decided about what is proportionate relating to what decision we are trying to influence by what audience is targeted

- **HOW LONG DO WE NEED TO MEASURE THE CHANGES FOR?**

Over a 3 mth, 6mth, 9mth, 1yr, 3 year period

- **WHAT IS THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE DIFFERENT CHANGES?**

Demonstrable change from baseline set that maximises improvement providing guidance that relates to the importance of social impact outcomes

- **WHICH CHANGES MATTER AND ARE IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR US TO MANAGE?**

To be determined from the scope of the problem identified and the priorities determined as manageable by the executive group

By seeking to embrace Impact Management thinking the collaboration is able to become more intentional and informed in mapping the impact of its activity as a group, therefore be in a better position to make decisions to improve impact as a collective and individual organisations.

Impact Measurement vs. Management

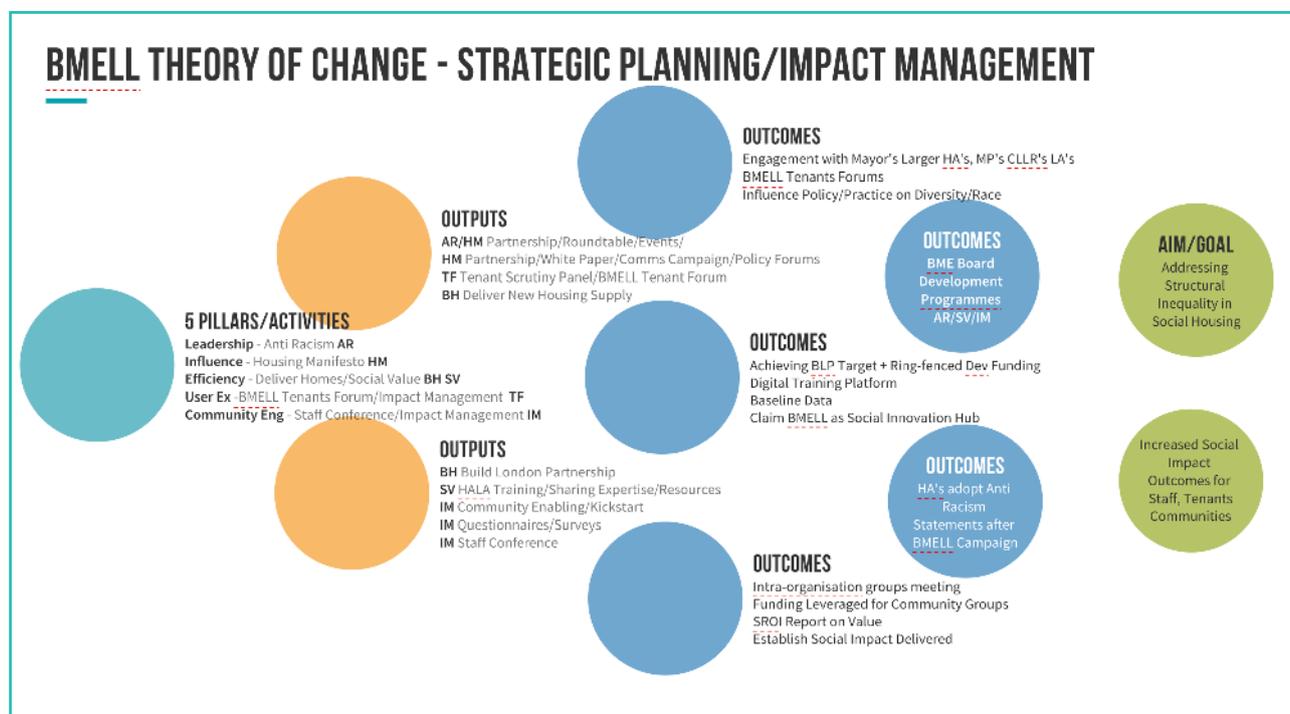
- ✗ Impact measurement (measurement and evaluation) is typically done after a project is complete
- ✗ Impact management is an ongoing practice designed to inform decision-making for improvement

Impact measurement without management is often fruitless; but impact measurement within management changes the world.

IMPACT QUESTIONS, IMPACT MANAGEMENT AND THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of change

BMELL's Theory of Change diagrammatically deconstructs the collaborations planned activities into outputs and desired outcomes to achieve the ultimate impact goals and outcomes set.



BUILDING ON THE COLLABORATIVE AND PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Mayoral Engagement - Seeking to Influence and Shape Policy

Significantly Deputy Mayor of London for Housing - Tom Copley presented to BMELL members in its September roundtable meeting the Greater London Authority's commitment to supporting BME Communities and that the 2021/2026 Affordable Housing Programme and informed the group that it was likely that all investment partners would be contractually required to meet as a minimum a number of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion standards as well as encouraging bids that include BME housing associations.

This has now been confirmed and is a significant step change in housing funding policy in linking receipt of public funding to build homes to improvement of performance on EDI standards. At this meeting with BMELL members Deputy Mayor - Tom Copley committed to meeting BMELL Collaboration members on a quarterly basis to bring the group to the centre of the Greater London Authority's strategic thinking.

Deputy Mayor of London for Housing Tom Copley also facilitated a subsequent meeting with Deputy Mayor of London for Communities and Social Justice Debbie Weekes-Barnard, who also identified that BMELL has a key role to play to the recovery plan for London as it comes out of the enforced lockdowns due to COVID19 and are keen for BMELL to be involved in GLA recovery plans moving forward.

This Deputy Mayoral engagement as well as the BMELL Chair sitting on the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan's Homes for Londoners board came soon after the group agreeing Mayoral engagement as a desired outcome within the BMELL strategy going forward.



Tom Copley
Deputy Mayor of London
for Housing



Debbie Weekes-Barnard
Deputy Mayor of London
for Communities and
Social Justice

BUILDING ON THE COLLABORATIVE AND PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Bangla COVID19 Advice Project

Engaging at Mayoral level BMELL have been able to enlist GLA support for the Bangla COVID19 Advice Project who were awarded £50k from the National lottery fund from a bid sponsored by BMELL.

The Bangla COVID19 Advice Project successfully delivered on a 6 month project giving COVID advice and support with Bengali/Sylehti speaking project workers to the Bangladeshi community in the London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, and became central to the community response to the disproportional fatalities in that community as a result of the impact COVID19.

Bangla HA adopted an impact management approach involving key stakeholders within the Bangladeshi community in shaping the delivery of the project, and are now seeking to build upon the connections made with volunteers, community partners, both Hackney and Tower Hamlet's local authorities to do more in its community.

Bangla HA having received much recognition from within it's community from the positive impact of the work, are now bidding for funding to extend the work over a two year period focusing on Health and Wellbeing, Financial Support and Employment and Training. Bangla HA's project has become a model example of how smaller BME HA's can respond to local needs robustly, where they are already established and are trusted by their community. As a BMELL flagship community investment project, the group are now looking at how this project model can be emulated to meet the needs of other BME Communities.



A community COVID19 response initiative targeting Bangladeshi communities in London boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets

Submitted to:
The National Lottery Community Fund, Board of Bangla Housing Association,
and BME London Landlords Collaboration

Evaluation author:
Khalid Mair, FSRA



BUILDING ON THE COLLABORATIVE AND PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Leadership 2025

Since inception the collaboration has developed a unique model of working in partnership. In 2018, BMELL birthed the successful Leadership 2025 the intensive 9-month leadership development programme, that supports and empowers BME senior professionals to become sector leaders of the future, supported by L&Q, Optivo, Roffey Park and Altair Ltd. Of the 18 BME alumni on this programme, all 18 have become Senior Leaders now hold Senior Executive Positions.

Leadership 2025 is continuing its work as an independent charity and is seeking to work with local authorities and the private sector to extend the programme in other sectors. BMELL Collaboration is very proud of this achievement and are now developing other initiatives to bring more opportunities for those from BME Communities to thrive in the social housing sector.

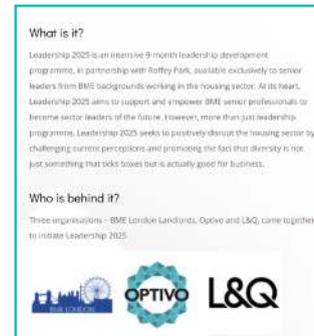
Build London Partnership

Continuing in its 3rd year the flagship development partnership project with BMELL supported by L&Q, which kickstarted the ambitious Build London Partnership with BMELL members, committing to provide over 200 new homes led the way for L&Q to work with other smaller housing associations seeking to meet the demand for the supply of more affordable homes in London.

Both the Leadership 2025 and the Build London Partnership are now recognised as social innovation at its best, bringing together a group of diverse partner organisations to overcome challenging circumstances to provide positive outcomes for Londoners.

G15 Organisations Approach BMELL to work in partnership

BMELL since the beginning of 2021 has met with Network Housing and Hyde Housing members of the larger g15 mainstream HA's. Both organisations approached BMELL with partnership offers looking at where they could support covering development, building safety and decarbonisation. With the Greater London Authority's policy development on meeting minimum standards on Equality Diversity and Inclusion, larger mainstream organisations are taking seriously their responsibility to affect change. BMELL with its experience are negotiating; exploring how best to develop these opportunities through the lens of its 5 pillars.



BUILDING ON THE COLLABORATIVE AND PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Kickstart Housing Partnership

BMELL members have signed up with Clarion Futures Kickstart Housing Partnership securing 20 work placements for 16–24 year old via The Government funded scheme managed by the Department for Work and Pensions. With the first placements due start in May 2021, placements will work a minimum of 25 hours per week with a specified career development training being provided by Clarion Futures support the placements to leverage the experience gained. It is hoped that this scheme provides a gateway to full time employment with the organisations.

Stonewall Housing

Steven McIntyre, Chief Exec of LGBTQ housing support organisation met with BMELL looking for referral pathways for housing, with an offer to provide training supporting BMELL members orgs' collect data on gender and sexuality. BMELL are working with Stonewall to explore partner work and options for training for the wider group.

Other Emergent partnership opportunities

BMELL are currently working with HACT, BTEG, Brent Council, London Metropolitan University and Commonweal Housing to explore other emergent partnership opportunities underpinned by its priority projects, theory of change and impact management approach.

Creating a charitable entity

Where BMELL members have been able to support member led initiatives creating additional value for its residents and BME communities, the collective experience gained in the collaboration delivering in these partnership arrangements has placed the BMELL collaboration as an established collective with an attractive social value offer that is now receiving regular approaches from organisations with offers to do joint work. This has created the appetite and aspiration for the group to leverage influence to attract funding.

During BMELL strategy planning process the group agreed to explore how the collaboration could bring charitable funds to the work of BME communities that needed funding support. The group commissioned DWC to do an options appraisal for the collaboration to look at the best independent charitable structure to create capacity for the group to raise much needed funding for community investment programmes for BME communities in London.

The success of Bangla HA's bid supported by BMELL being awarded £50k for its COVID19 Advice Project work was central to this thinking.

Leveraging the partnership and collaborative model

HACT a BMELL partner in their report Places after the pandemic, on research they conducted with Placeshapers, identified that partnership working has improved during the crisis, with organisations focused on the imperative to immediately get on with the activities needed to keep residents and communities safe and secure seems to have created the impetus to overcome many of the barriers that often prevent different organisations working together.

This has been a theme of the partnership initiatives BMELL have nurtured to positive effect, but now realise that with this experience there is an implicit duty to take this to the next level and become more intentional, more incisive by planning for, managing and measuring impact for improvement.

BMELL's journey now continues with a new phase of leveraging the partnership and collaborative model using the experience gained through its collaborations journey so far and execute on a refreshed co-produced plan.



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