

ACH PART OF NATIONAL RESEARCH WITH HCI & BMENATIONAL

Think-tank Human City Institute (HCI) has recently undertaken a major research project with BMENational, the representative body for black and minority ethnic (BME) housing organisations in England, entitled 'Deep Roots, Diverse Communities, Dedicated Service', which Ashley Community Housing (ACH) was proudly a part of. ACH is an award-winning housing and training provider, based in Bristol and Birmingham, specialising in services for newly arrived members of the BME community.

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Housing Crisis

The BME population in Bristol has doubled over the past 10 years and in Birmingham the BME population accounts for 42% of the city's total population. BME communities still to this day experience disproportionate housing needs – one third of homeless acceptances are from a BME background. There are nearly 15,000 households on Bristol City Council's waiting list and in Birmingham the average wait for a council property is 6 years.

An Innovative Solution ACH provides accommodation to vulnerable-homeless refugees (around 700 each year) and provides ongoing specialist support (including help claiming benefits, advice about immigration, and translation services) and training (such as employability skills and English courses). In turn, the organisation creates significant social value - £7.66 for every £1 invested. 85% of tenants go immediately onto work or further study and 50% improve their mental health during their time with ACH.



Culturally Responsive

In line with recommendations from the report, ACH believe the BM housing sector should expand and engage with meeting the needs of new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. We believe this can be achieved through the provision of culturally responsive services, such as supported accommodation, translation facilities and specialised employability support.

There is lack of research available on new arrived communities and as a result little is known of them by mainstream service providers. This invisibility has inevitably lead to a situation whereby the housing needs of

Somalis and other refugee groups have been partially neglected by statutory bodies such as local authorities and mainstream service providers. Professor Robinson of Sheffield Hallam University stated that more support was needed from the national and local governments to assist Black Minority led Housing Associations and that the focus on supporting just one group which has recently become unfashionable for the purposes of Community Cohesion is not always the best policy as when dealing with refugee communities this specialism and expertise is crucial to success.

In Birmingham this point was reiterated by John Morris of Trident Group (Emerging communities Report) who went further by stating that local authorities and the national government needs to urgently invest in services to support the newly arrived community's community in the form of language and employability skills as well as understanding key UK systems such as health and education. Both key note speakers in both cities passionately argued for more research to be carried out on the Somali community in order that their needs as a community be better understood in the future.

"Ashley Community Housing is working hard to integrate our tenants into UK life and we understand the importance of housing, skills and employability to this important process,"

said **Fuad Mahamed,**
the Chief Executive Officer.

ACH has a unique business model, with its commitment to supporting the settlement and resettlement needs of newly arrived members of the BME community at its core. If you are interested in discussing partnership

opportunities with Ashley Community Housing, please contact:
info@ashleyhousing.com