



## **Project Information**

### **Stories of struggles and strides**

***Half a century of Bangladeshi endeavours in London's East End (1950-2000)***

*A new project by East End Connection (EEC)*

### **Community participants and support**

The project will recruit about a dozen community participants, who will receive a range of training and support to deliver the project. They will undertake background archival research, data analysis and oral history recordings of past activists from a Bangladeshi background including community leaders, businesspeople, politicians, religious figures, cultural advocates/performers and educationists as well as some Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi residents of East London and non-Bangladeshi activists who supported the Bangladeshi community during their struggles.

It is a voluntary role with an opportunity to discover and share a significant heritage, mostly unknown to the wider public. The community participants will receive the following support to deliver the project.

- Travel and volunteers' expenses – upto £300 per person for the duration of the project to cover refreshment, lunch, journeys, etc.
- Childcare support – up to £40 per time \* ten times = £400 per person (maximum)
- Respond to needs, if possible, as and when required
- Create opportunities for networking and sharing and access to experts in the field.
- Set personal environmental sustainability goals.

### **Project details**

The project is about east London Bangladeshi activists of the past - the pioneers who responded to challenges that our 'vulnerable' community faced in the 1970s and 1980s. Violent and non-violent racism, severe poverty, widespread disadvantage, low aspiration, poor educational levels and housing (not fit for humans) were the everyday experiences of East End Bangladeshis. They got organised, developed campaigns, joined mainstream politics and ran countless activities to turn things around.

However, many of them now feel the multi-dimensional nature of the community's life, struggles and the transformations they helped create have not been recorded, explained and shared from the community's perspectives. They have yet to tell their stories through their voices. As time passes, the number of individuals who lived and struggled through the 1950s, 60s and 70s is shrinking fast. A world of valuable experiences and perspectives is being lost with their passing away. Every day one hears on Facebook or WhatsApp messages about the death of this or that person.

To prevent a significant and permanent loss of this important history and heritage, East End Connection worked with several organisations and individuals who were active in the area to develop this valuable project. In recent years, there has been an increase in interest within the community of heritage learning and the realisation of the importance of history recordings. Therefore, more people are willing to share the memories and documents they possess.

As this project will also involve many younger generations of people as project participants, it will be an opportunity for them to learn directly from the mouth of the activists of the past who paved the way for how things have developed. The impacts of direct learning and recording from the mouth of some of the people who played important roles in dealing with the complicated challenges of the past will have a significant impact on the understanding and memories of the community participants, which will help them grasp more fully the past and influence how they communicate that through their activities and the project outcomes.

The Bangladeshi community – primarily young men – started coming to the East End more significantly after the Second World War. In the 1950s, a small growing community emerged, which paved the way for more significant developments in subsequent decades. This project will undertake background archival research, data analysis and oral history recordings of past activists from a Bangladeshi background (community leaders, businesspeople, politicians, religious figures, cultural advocates/performers and educationists); Bangladeshi and non- Bangladeshi residents who lived in East London during 1970-90; non-Bangladeshi activists/leaders who helped and supported Bangladeshis in their struggles against barriers and discrimination. The interviews, data analysis and research will complement one another and help develop a more multi-dimensional picture of the complex evolution of the community and the ingredients behind the particular paths it followed during the fifty years in question.

The project will recruit a dozen community participants from diverse backgrounds and provide them with high-quality training on oral history, community research and statistical analysis. They will also receive mentoring support from start to completion. The community participants will undertake oral history interviews, research the five decades covered by the project and collect and explain statistical information, including developments and trends, through graphs, tables and percentages. It will work with educationists to develop and trial-run an education learning pack for Key Stages 2 and 3.

The project will produce a collection of fifty oral history recordings, a dedicated website, virtual reality learning materials/immersive video experiences, a short

documentary, an exhibition, a drama performance, a school digital education pack and a printed book with all the oral history transcribed and findings from research. There will be a project completion celebration where a high- quality theatrical performance will bring the past to life. The community participants and some past activists will share their experiences, and they and the public will view the exhibition.