

Henry Duncan Project Grants

Bringing a racial justice lens to our grantmaking



CORRA
FOUNDATION
voice • power • change

This insight briefing is based on learning gathered from Corra staff involved in the design, delivery and decision making of Henry Duncan Project Grants for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. It also incorporates feedback received from applicants to the fund. These lessons will continue to inform this fund and Corra’s wider programmes, with the aim of embedding a racial justice lens throughout our work.

1. Background

In 2021 Corra’s Henry Duncan Grants focused on community-based support for mental health and wellbeing. Grassroots charities play a vital role in offering support that is accessible, inclusive and that is often particularly well placed to overcome stigma.

Around one in four people in Scotland are estimated to experience mental health problems¹. The impacts aren’t spread equally across the population, with adults living in areas of poverty approximately twice as likely to experience common mental health problems². We also acknowledge the impact that racial injustice has on mental health and well-being. Research shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are disadvantaged when accessing mental health and well-being services, including receiving poorer quality care. This is due to racism, structural and institutional inequalities, fear, stigma and discrimination.³

- 1 [Key points – ScotPHO](#) Scottish Government national statistics on mental health (March 2022)
- 2 [Public Health Scotland Improving our health and wellbeing – Public Health Scotland](#)
- 3 [The Ubele Initiative – National Mapping Of BAME Mental Health Services](#)

In response Corra designed a targeted fund for charities led by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities who were helping people with their mental health.

We approached our grant making slightly differently to how we’ve done so in the past. We made changes to structures and processes to further improve accessibility, tried to improve our reach to diverse groups and better support communities who, traditionally we haven’t reached as well and who might be furthest away from funding. We learnt a lot as a funder, a staff team and organisation, but we have so much more to do, and will continue listening and learning.



2. Summary of Henry Duncan Project Grants 2021

Focus of fund

Will fund Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic led grassroots charities running **projects** which aim to support people who experience mental ill health.

What we did

- Designed a programme with members of Corra's Anti-Racism Working Group.
- Ringfenced funds offering multi-year grants over three-years.
- Targeted criteria to grassroots charities led by people with lived experience of racial injustice – all organisations applying to the fund had to be led by people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.⁴
- Dedicated staff to help reach and engage with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic networks and charities.
- Simplified application form and produced easy read documents.

A list of all grants made including the amount received and geographical base is included in Appendix 1.

This was a targeted approach and while we have made positive steps, we acknowledge that there were communities and groups we didn't reach. This included Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people from rural communities. We are also aware that the fund was not available to voluntary groups (non-charities).

⁴ Following a scoping exercise of other work around diversity, equity and inclusion Corra defined 'led by' as organisations that had at least 70% of people on their Board/Management Committee and 50% of their Senior Management team from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority communities.

Profile of applicants and grants

32 applications received

16 grants made

50% success rate



£330,000

Total grants made, with an average grant size of £20,000

84% Majority of applicants had income of less than £250,000

50% Half of organisations funded had income of less than £100,000

84%

Nearly all applications were from the central area of Scotland

37%

were delivering support across Scotland and in multiple areas



Intersectionality was present in the majority of applications. Groups were working alongside people experiencing racial injustice and poverty, disability discrimination, and issues relating to gender.



- 6** organisations were working with migrants and asylum seekers.
- 8** organisations were working with women and girls.

3. Where we were

In early 2021 Corra was already taking actions on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We had published statements and taken initial steps in grant making through the Equity Programme to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. However, there wasn't a direct pathway into how this would translate into our core grant-making activities, particularly when many of the programmes we deliver are on behalf of others.

The most natural connection was through our Henry Duncan Grants. As part of Corra's ten-year strategy, our Henry Duncan Grants has a different thematic focus each year. In 2021 this was mental health.

Evidence from across Scotland and the UK was clearly showing that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities were struggling with mental health issues⁵. Many felt this had deepened due to coronavirus. Many staff in Corra were aware of the longstanding lack of accessible services sensitive to people's lived experience, backgrounds, heritage or culture. However, we didn't initially consider this within the Henry Duncan Grants mental health theme. **Steeped in our grant-making experience we focused on accessible and open approaches, without realising that this wouldn't deliver equitable distribution of funding.**



5 [Health and mental health statistics – Institute of Race Relations \(irr.org.uk\)](https://irr.org.uk)

We learnt that mental health support for ethnic minority people was more likely to be given by a project, rather than by a mental health focused organisation. In designing a fund that would give unrestricted funding to “mental health organisations,” we had inadvertently excluded people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

Corra staff member

Staff on the Anti-Racism Working Group⁶ were able to flag this issue and identify an opportunity to help address racial injustice through our grant making. There was a unanimous decision from Corra's Senior Management Team to redesign Henry Duncan Grants with a racial justice lens. From this, a ring-fenced funding strand was created for groups led by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

Key insights

- **Confidence of staff**, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues to say we needed to stop and re-think our approach.
- **Timing** was critical. Having the ability to adapt quickly and flexibly enabled us to revise criteria so it would be responsive to need.
- **Supportive** structures (Senior Management Team and Trustees on the Anti-Racism Working Group) to ensure proposed changes and actions could be driven forward.
- **Dedicated** time and resource to ensure the fund was relevant to those we were trying to reach.

6 Anti-Racism Group is part of Corra's governance. It is made up of staff and trustees who are from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and White heritage. They are involved in prioritising, overseeing and supporting the delivery of Corra's Anti Racism Action Plan.

4. The steps to change

Implementing a funding approach with a racial justice lens meant we had to listen, be responsive to gaps in our knowledge, and accept critique. Two staff led the work (Grants Advisor and DEI and Engagement Officer). An additional small team⁷ was established to support this work, made up of staff from across Corra with a range of expertise and backgrounds (including staff with lived experience of racism and racial injustice).

All elements of the application journey from criteria, materials, marketing, pre-application support and reviewing applications were considered with a focused racial justice lens. Appendix 2 provides more details on the changes made.

The grants staff working on the programme welcomed the dedicated input from a seconded staff member⁸ leading on the Anti-Racism work. The staff member helped with design, development and delivery, including reaching out to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic charities and networks. They also brought *an applicant's eye*, offering expertise and knowledge of barriers faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and measures that could help overcome these. This wasn't always a straightforward process and staff reflected on the sometimes, *uncomfortable conversations*, discussing traditional funding processes, but coming to agreement on workable solutions.

The biggest change to delivery was the involvement of an internal lived experience panel⁹ who made the final decisions on all applications. The panel members felt able to

7 This team was representative of six staff including members of the Anti-Racism Group.

8 Corra had seconded a member of staff to lead on progressing the Anti-Racism action plan this included working on the Henry Duncan Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Project Grants.

9 This was an internal lived experience decision-making panel made up of four staff from across Corra.

challenge the initial recommendations made by grant advisors. Grants advisors talked about the different dynamic this brought, with a more holistic consideration of the applicant's work and delivery as opposed to a narrow assessment of how groups had answered the question on the form or of cost effectiveness.

The panel looked [at the applications] differently [and] understood the driver of what they [the groups] were trying to do and change.

Corra staff member

Taking a holistic approach [to the funding application] meant the decisions looked at the whole approach.

Corra staff member

By taking a holistic approach to grant making, meant that panel members focused on understanding what communities were trying to say and the context they were operating within.

Staff involved spoke positively about the whole experience. It was evident everyone was committed to this work. It was also clear all staff involved in this work held onto a lot of responsibility, with a desire to ensure the programme wasn't tokenistic, reached the intended grassroots groups requiring support, and would leave a legacy.

Key insights

- Having **dedicated** time and staff resource.
- Ability to hold **uncomfortable** conversations, being **open** to reflection and learning.
- Senior Management Team that supported staff to take the lead. **Shift** the power dynamics.

5. Initial impact

Reaching the right groups

Staff involved spent a considerable amount of time connecting to groups through their own contacts, networks and via word of mouth. 11% of respondents to Corra's customer experience survey who applied to the Henry Duncan Project Grants heard about the fund from Corra staff or word of mouth compared to the overall responses (6% and 8% respectively). A third of organisations funded were new to Corra.

Staff also spoke about the positive reach and engagement particularly in connecting to communities that were 'minorities within minorities.' For example, they were pleased that they were able to reach out to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic LGBTI communities.

An accessible and supportive experience for applicants

Staff recognised that application forms and assessment processes can present barriers in accessibility. They talked openly about how the format and structure of standard grant application forms can create inequity including if English isn't your first language. A significant amount of effort went into making the grant processes and forms more accessible.



Targeted funding advice sessions were jointly delivered by the Grants Advisor and the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff member. Together, they brought a mix of skills, experience and understanding of grants processes and community groups. Corra staff and people attending the advice sessions felt this was a really important step to help understand the context and offer a supportive environment.

...For the first time I could tell that the Henry Duncan project fund was written by a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic person. The understanding of racism was clear. The link to how it affects mental health was clear. The thought behind the layout was clear.

Respondent to Corra Customer Experience Survey 2021

Applicants were able to contact Corra for advice prior to sending their application. A small number were also contacted by Corra staff for further clarification on their application. While Grants Advisors did not speak to everyone, they welcomed the opportunity of having conversations with applicants. This brought the *applications to life* and ensured there was a deeper awareness and understanding of the work and communities, groups were working alongside. This in turn helped to address some of the barriers created by application forms.



Well informed decisions

A lived experience panel was a key part of the decision-making process. The panel brought expertise and knowledge, from working alongside grassroots Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic organisations, and from their own lived experience.

A collaborative and positive experience for Grants Advisors and panel members

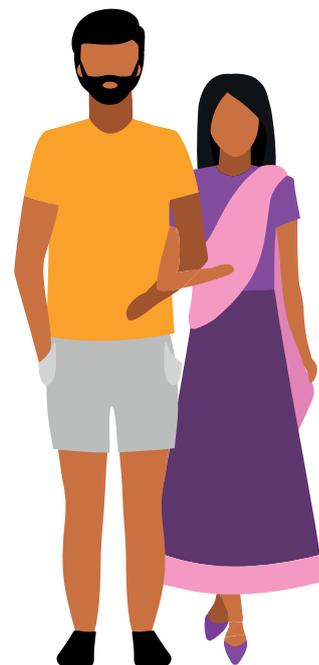
This changing dynamic felt positively different for Corra grants staff who openly talked about a real shift in how the decision-making process worked. Grants Advisors took a step back and supported the process rather than leading.

Panel members described the thoughtfulness and measured diligence provided by grants staff, and how this had helped them to fulfil their role.

The mix of lived experience panel members and Grants Advisors working together created a strong, positive group dynamic. Everyone commented on the benefits of creating the right space that encouraged open and honest dialogue, enhanced the decision-making process for the group.

Key insights

- Be **proactive** – reach out to diverse networks and communities, don't be reliant on your website or other usual routes.
- **Adapt** and ensure you are responding to the needs of the people you intend to support, whether redesigning grant processes, application forms or hosting information or targeted advice sessions.
- Create a **collaborative** decision-making process that draws upon different knowledge and expertise.



6. What we can build upon or do differently

The value placed on relationships was evident throughout this approach. Applicants responding to Corra's customer experience survey felt that Corra understood the context and priorities of their organisation (100% from Henry Duncan Grant Project Grants compared to 94% overall). Staff also spoke about the feedback they had received when speaking to communities which suggested that applicants had felt listened to and supported.

We got a couple of fantastic bits of feedback on accessibility – [with one community group saying this was 'one of the first times [they had] seen racial justice stated in application material'.

Corra staff member

Having someone from [a] Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic community at the advice session really helped.

Corra staff member

While staff involved in this work agreed a lot had been accomplished, they emphasised this was a starting point with scope to build a deeper relational model. They specifically mentioned more could be done to:

- Reach and support people.
- Simplify and make the grants process more accessible.
- Offer capacity building for organisations and groups.

Through the process, staff identified a gap in capacity building support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community groups and organisations. This wasn't part of the 2021 Henry Duncan Grants programme, however staff identified emerging needs coming across in the application forms. This included support around governance, funding and long-term planning. Staff felt there was a strong sense that groups would welcome dedicated capacity building support alongside space for peer learning opportunities.

Staff unanimously spoke about the opportunity to *ditch the written application form*. Everyone agreed that this was one of the main barriers, especially for grassroots groups. They felt having either a conversations or video applications would allow for many groups including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to get across what they were aiming to deliver and how funding would be best used.

Timing and maximising the opportunity was a key feature of this work. While everyone welcomed the chance to work on this, they also acknowledged some limitations e.g. *if only we had more time*.

Staff strongly welcomed the decision to ensure there was a dedicated member of the Corra team to drive this work and make things happen. However, they also identified potential improvements, such as longer lead-ins to assist planning. Longer lead-in times would have allowed staff to develop plans for each step and given more space for reach, developing applications and involving people.

Everyone agreed the lived experience decision-making panel was valuable and important. However, they acknowledged this was made up of Corra staff and would have benefited from external participation to bring further depth of insight and knowledge to shape decisions.

Key insights

- Develop a **clear plan** from that start that gives enough time to map out activities and a timeline for each step of the journey.
- Invest in **relationships** both internally and externally. We learnt that working across different teams in Corra helped to create a more rounded programme.
- Consider **capacity building** needs additional to money and how to help organisations to be sustainable and flourish in their communities.
- **Allocate resource** to help engage and reach the communities we are seeking to support.

How we'll embed the lessons

At Corra we want to be alongside Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to tackle structural racism, and support racial justice. The lessons we've learned from the Henry Duncan Project Grants, along with other key pieces of work such as the Equity Programme, will help to shape what we do next.

[We've been able to do] amazing and different work and [now we need to] incorporate this in [our wider] ways of working [and ask] how we build this across all our grants... It shouldn't be seen as extra work.

Corra staff member



Corra's commitments

We:

- Will continue to ring-fence funds through our Henry Duncan Grants for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Build on the learning from Henry Duncan Grants, as well as other programmes like the Equity Programme and take actions to embed racial justice throughout our work
- Support Corra staff to ensure our criteria and materials support equity in access to funding.
- Whenever possible involve people with lived experience in the design and decision making of funding programmes.
- Will test changes to our processes, for example alternatives to application forms and 'monitoring conversations' instead of lengthy written reports.
- Will be accountable for continuing to improve our contribution to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, including racial equity. This will include an annual summary of our progress on DEI, [regular updates on our website](#) and reporting against the actions we take to towards our commitments as part of the [IVAR UK Flexible Funders](#) pledge.

Appendix 1 – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Project Grants made

Charity name	Local authority	Grant amount
Community InfoSource	Glasgow	£24,000
Fair Justice System for Scotland	West Lothian	£18,000
FENIKS. Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd	Edinburgh	£18,000
Greatway Foundation	Edinburgh	£22,000
ILC, Darnley, Scotland (IQRA Learning Centre)	East Renfrewshire	£24,000
Mwamba	Edinburgh	£24,000
Networking Key Services Limited	Edinburgh	£19,000
Pollokshields Development Agency	Glasgow	£24,000
Rainbow Women’s Muslim Group	Falkirk	£24,000
SCOREscotland	Edinburgh	£19,000
Scottish Arab Women Association (SAWA)	Glasgow	£24,000
Scottish Ethnic Minority Deaf Club SCIO	Glasgow	£23,776
Scottish Iraqi Association	Glasgow	£6,000
Time to Heal	Aberdeen	£24,000
Ubuntu Women Shelter	Glasgow	£17,567
Yusuf Youth Initiative	Dundee	£19,000

Appendix 2 – Summary of Corra’s actions

What we did	Why
<p>Henry Duncan Grant name change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational grants • Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Project grants • Micro grants 	<p>Prior to 2021 the Organisational funding stream had been called ‘standard’, which automatically makes other funds appear less standard.</p>
<p>Changed the structure of questions on the application form. Removed questions that weren’t relevant.</p>	<p>Our aim was to make the form as equitable as possible. Including adding a Word version of the application form to allow drafting and pre-working of application. Taking out unnecessary information that would not form part of better understanding of need or the application review process.</p>
<p>Offered three-year funding for Project grants instead of five-years.</p>	<p>This meant that if a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic charity successfully applied for a three-year project grant this year, they would be able to apply again to Henry Duncan Grants in 2024 (if they are eligible). In 2024 the theme will be ‘supporting people experiencing inequality or discrimination’ – potentially giving people a chance of up to eight-years funding.</p>
<p>Explicit mention of racial injustice across communications and funding guidelines</p>	<p>Our aim was to reach groups who we weren’t connected with, but we knew needed support. At Corra we understood the impact that racial injustice has on mental health and by explicitly stating this in the guidelines, we acknowledge this. This was looking to eliminate the burden groups place on themselves by trying to ‘fit funding criteria’.</p>
<p>Criteria and application co-produced by people with lived experience.</p>	<p>To acknowledge the way materials are written don’t always allow for groups to tell their story. By restructuring the criteria, form and producing easy read documents we were looking to give people best opportunity of access to funds.</p>
<p>Staff from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage co-hosting funding advice sessions.</p>	<p>By including staff with lived experience and awareness of issues affecting those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, helped build relationships with the people/groups attending.</p>
<p>Introduced a decision-making panel with people who had professional and lived experience.</p>	<p>It provided us with knowledge and awareness of what and where funding would make the biggest difference.</p>
<p>Shifted the role of Grants Team within the decision-making process.</p>	<p>Giving more focus on Grant Advisors providing information to support decision making helps move the power dynamics within traditional funding models.</p>

About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

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