

# Black Thrive Birmingham



2022 - 2023

## Impact Report





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# Introduction

Catalyst 4 Change (Catalyst) has worked to improve mental health (and mental health services) in Birmingham for eight years. We have built our reputation by working in partnership with organisations and individuals, as well as learning from lived experience.

During our second year of delivering the Black Thrive Thriving Futures Programme we have continued to build our reputation as a trusted partner and enabler, that connects public systems to networks of Black-led civil society organisations.

We work with networks of Black-led civil society organisations, Black service users, carers and wider Black community members to improve Black mental health experiences within Birmingham and the West Midlands. Catalyst hosts a membership programme for individuals and organisations that are also committed to this work and at present we have 195 members. Our membership programme has various tiers including a free and a premium subscription base. Our premium support option includes funding support, policy development, research and evaluation support. In addition to this, we are developing a professional services online directory; this will feature both member and external professional services across a broad spectrum from catering providers, media and print, office furniture to consultancy. Members will be able to access a discount.

Over the last year there has been a significant increase in the number of public services and systems, civil society organisations and research institutions that are keen to work with Catalyst because we:

- act as a point of connection for Black people working to improve mental health in the region
- create opportunities for collective action across a broad spectrum of organisations
- bring new knowledge, tools and access to the latest thinking about improving Black mental health
- have a demonstrable commitment to strengthening the capacity of Black-led organisations to deliver well-run and quality services in Birmingham, to meet the mental health support needs of Black communities and their carers
- act as a stimulus and incubator of new services that meet gaps in mental health provision for Black communities.

We have developed our skills in reviewing individual cases and seeking opportunities for systems change.

With the support of the Black Thrive Global Research Institute we have developed an emerging operating model of systems change. We bring to this process of change the following areas:



- data and stories
- learning about how to overcome barriers to change in the city, and
- the collective power of civil society organisations and communities working together.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the brutal and needless death of father of three, [Michael Lloyd Powell](#) (commonly known as Mikey and a cousin of one of Catalyst's directors, Tippa Naphtali) at the hands of West Midlands Police in Birmingham. Mikey was experiencing a psychotic episode. The National Mikey Powell Memorial Family Fund (NMP-MFF) is the main legacy to Mikey. Catalyst is also a legacy of his death. Despite criticism from some fellow campaigners, the family of Mikey Powell have worked closely with the police and other statutory agencies in order to bring about meaningful changes in practice and policy, achieved through joint lobbying and other actions.

**Catalyst honours the people and work that have come before us. Our work also draws upon their wisdom, knowledge and expertise.**



# Two

## Progress Towards Our Ambitions and Milestones: Thriving Futures Year Two

Our work has been categorised under three programme objectives:

- Black communities driving change
- learning about thriving: knowledge construction and dissemination
- strong and agile backbones.

### Black communities driving change

#### *Black communities at the forefront of co-creating a society*

The goal of this category is to build a network of Black-led community organisations and leaders that have articulated the changes in system conditions that will enable Black people to thrive and will have developed sufficient tools and know-how to lead the constructive challenge of systemic racism.

In this section we will cover four systems that Catalyst has worked with throughout the year:

1. Mental health – Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF).
2. Maternity Services.
3. Public Health - [Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review \(BLACHIR\)](#).
4. Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS) Board.

### Mental health – PCREF

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust (BSMHFT) was an early adopter and pilot site for the PCREF.

In 2021 Catalyst was commissioned by BSMHFT to support and enable Black communities, service users, carers and the wider community:

- to articulate changes in mental health services, and in the community, that would improve the mental health experiences and outcomes of Black communities
- to co-produce service improvements and community involvement that will address these changes.

BSMHFT also commissioned [The Association of Jamaican Nationals](#) and [Making Connections Work](#) who facilitated online and in-person dialogues within African and Caribbean community settings including a barber shop and a hair salon along with community and men's faith groups. Their small group meetings focused on building trust, confidence and shared understanding about collective responsibility within safe and familiar settings.

Between Catalyst, the Association of Jamaican Nationals and Making Connections Work we consulted over one hundred African and Caribbean people about their experiences and views of accessing mental health services and support systems.

During 2022 Catalyst, the Association of Jamaican Nationals and Making Connections Work joined forces to work together on promoting and supporting the implementation of the PCREF programme to ensure that Black people with mental health support needs and their carers' views on BSMHFT services are heard and acted upon.

In the 2022 Catalyst Thriving Future's annual report we provided an overview of the key findings of this engagement and these were presented at our community assembly.

Catalyst secured funding from BSMHFT (received in September 2022) to deliver a PCREF activist programme that would recruit and train a team of PCREF advisors and collaborators from the African and Caribbean communities to work together with the Trust staff and respond to the issues and themes that emerged from the PCREF engagement programme facilitated by Catalyst in 2021.



We appointed a team of three PCREF Advisors, who started work in March 2023. They have received extensive training on: PCREF; race and mental health; mental health services; engaging communities; systems change; and facilitation. They have worked alongside the Catalyst team to co-design the PCREF delivery programme and have contributed to the development of our PCREF Dialogue series.

With the support of Dr Karen Newbigging, we revisited the key themes from our phase one engagement sessions. Further to our work with Karen we have set out our original themes categorised under two umbrellas:

- firstly – individual level changes in care and treatment
- secondly – systemic change.

## PCREF Engagement Themes

| Individual level changes in care and treatment   |
|--|
| Culturally appropriate services – care and support that understands patients as individual people, their uniqueness and their cultural heritage and community                          |
| Greater choices – about the type of support and care on offer, including alternatives to Western models and the option to have support from a shared identity                          |
| Advocacy – Enabling service users to be at the centre of decision making, with a focus on protecting and promoting rights  |
| Proactive involvement of families and carers – community support is kept informed and involved in decision making as appropriate   |
| Systemic change  |
| Greater representation of people from Black communities in the workforce – in the public sector and in voluntary sector organisations  |
| Better care pathways – providing better access to a range of support before a mental health crisis occurs  |
| Increased cultural sensitivity of service provision and staff – this should be achieved through appropriate training and support   |
| Systems change that ensures equality and fairness – this focus should be interwoven with other aspects of identity   |
| Engaging with communities in systems change – ensuring that the experiences and voices of service users, families and carers, and their communities co-design and co-produce solutions |

The framework's themes largely focus on the intersection between individual action and systemic changes to effect lasting change. However, poor mental health can be challenging and people may be unaware, be unable or lack support to stand up for their rights and to advocate for themselves or their loved ones. This contributes to people having a worse experience of mental health services and poorer outcomes. Catalyst's approach is focused on people's rights. This is key to addressing racism and ensuring that Black people and their carers are treated equally and fairly and not discriminated against.

We support service users and carers to stand up for their rights through collective and individual advocacy. Catalyst is developing advocacy models to enable Black service users and carers to have a voice in systems change and for their preferences about care and support to be understood and actioned. We do this so that mental health services are more culturally appropriate and better able to allow people to get on with their lives.

Catalyst's collective advocacy process is rooted in community engagement, facilitating the voices of people from African and Caribbean communities facing poor mental health not only to be heard but to drive system transformation. Feedback that we have received from service users and carers through the focus groups has reinforced that, alongside this transformation, individual level advocacy is required to enable people to take a central role in decisions about their care and support.



## Our collective advocacy approach

Catalyst commits to:

- promoting and protecting people's rights
- knowledge sharing and engagement with local community organisations
- understanding community history, cultural idioms of distress, the nature of potential stigma, preferences for support (e.g. the role of faith organisations, family and community)
- addressing racism
- linking individual and collective themes to systemic change.

Our collective advocacy approach means we ensure that there is ongoing engagement with Black service users and carers, and focus our efforts on establishing that advocacy is rooted in their experiences.

In order to do this we are committed to engage with the people who took part in the original focus groups, to share our findings and receive their feedback on what else needs to be done and discover methods to achieve this. We are also engaging with other communities that have a distinct identity that may not have been reflected in the earlier engagement process, particularly people from LGBTQ+ communities and specific African communities from Somali and West Africa. In addition we are developing group advocacy in inpatient and community settings and co-facilitating conversations in these settings to identify common themes and the changes required to better meet people's needs. We are also engaging with the relevant BSMHFT forums to share the concerns and experiences of African and Caribbean people with mental health problems and their carers in an effort to develop ideas to drive change and improvements, and provide feedback to the groups and/or people who have shared their concerns and experiences.



From January 2024 our PCREF advisors will continue to:

- increase awareness of PCREF and share our 2021 PCREF engagement themes
- receive feedback and are connected to the 2021 PCREF engagement themes and determine priorities
- provide a suite of PCREF seminars on mental health, race and advocacy
- encourage people to become involved with our systems change work activities

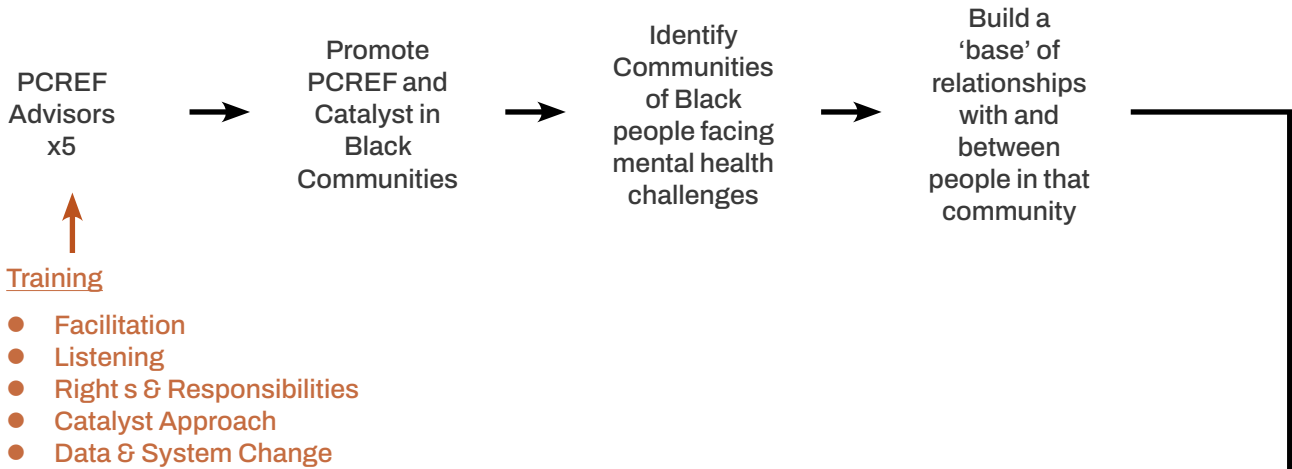
From January 2024 we are continuing to provide a suite of PCREF seminars on mental health, race and advocacy.

## Systems change work

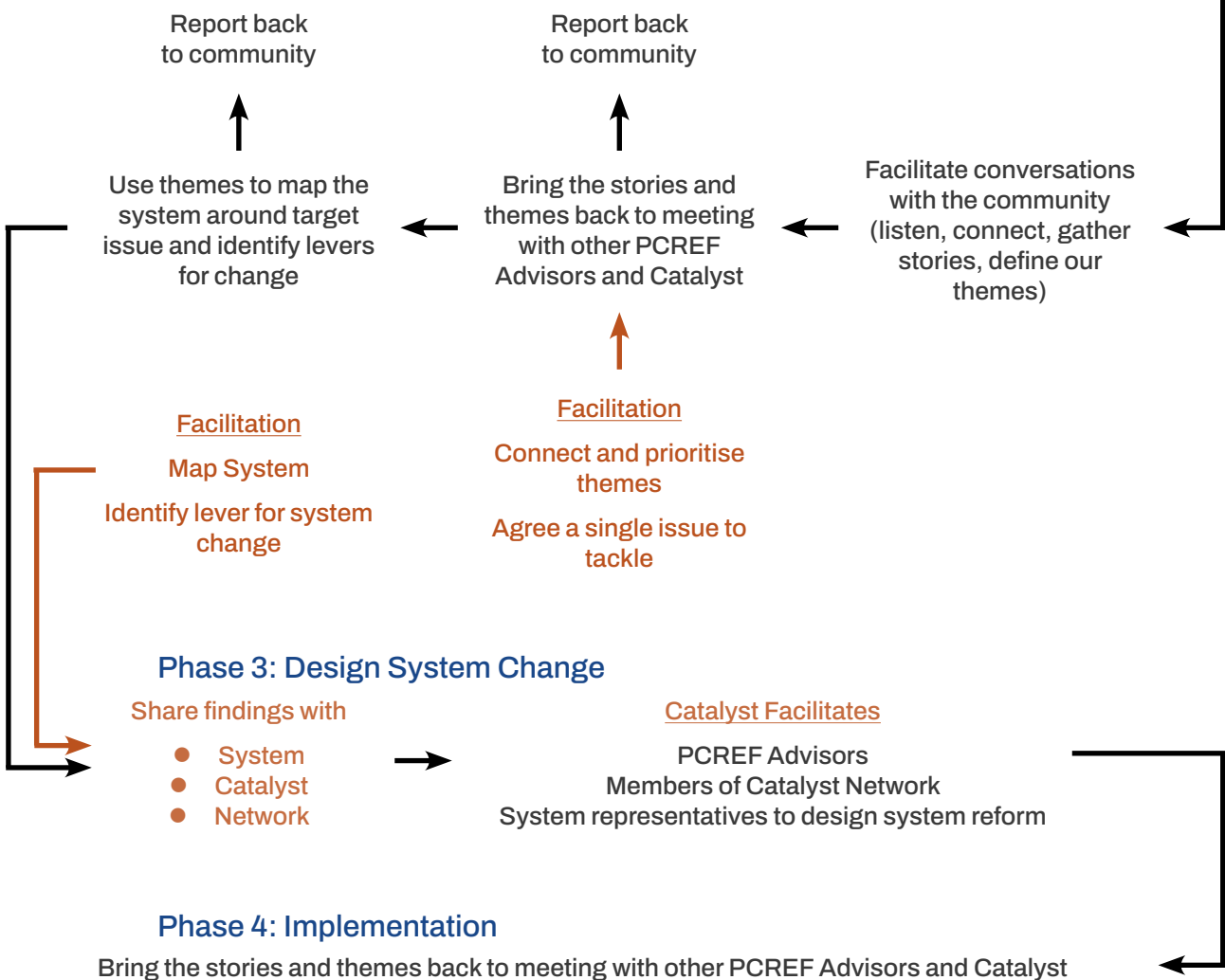
We are developing an operating model for our systems change work with the support of [Ratio](#).

Below is an initial diagram that describes this process.

### Phase 1: Building Relationships



### Phase 2: Learning or Prioritising



This process is currently being finetuned and will be presented at our Catalyst Assembly in 2024. It incorporates the summary and findings of our PCREF engagement sessions and promotes the framework and the themes that emerged from the sessions.

Moreover, additional feedback that we received from the engagement sessions revealed that there is a growing concern about the way our local Trust deals with complaints from Black service users and carers about the provision of care and the staff's attitude. Therefore, we envisage that the first theme for our systems change discussions will be a focus on complaints procedures.



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### Individual level advocacy

While collective advocacy is focused on systems change, people who are using mental health services need their rights protected and promoted from the start. To facilitate this, Catalyst is part of a partnership alongside [POhWER](#) (a local mental health advocacy provider) and [Sandwell African and Caribbean Mental Health Foundation](#) that submitted a Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Culturally Appropriate tender. The model included:

- one-to-one advocacy
- group advocacy
- co-production group work
- peer advocacy
- cultural awareness raising training.

It was announced in late 2023 that the bid was successful.

### Additional resources about PCREF

Catalyst has also produced a PCREF podcast series called [PCREF Dialogues](#). To find out more about our PCREF work and to listen to our podcast go to this link.

### Maternity services – Maternity Engagement Action (MEA)

MEA's community-led research project: The pregnancy and birth journeys of Black women navigating public healthcare systems in Birmingham

In the summer of 2022, MEA and its group of Maternity Ambassadors for Change (MACs) initiated their first community-led research project exploring the perceptions and experiences of Black women navigating their pregnancy and birth journeys within Birmingham's public healthcare system. MEA's community-led research project comprised two parts:

1. The development and dissemination of MEA's first summer survey – a short online questionnaire administered through Google forms and shared and advertised via the organisation's social media platforms.
2. The organic development and refinement of a 'data reflection' process and methodology, which allowed for the collective analysis and interpretation of the summer survey data in ways that embraced and included their own lived experience and both personal and professional knowledge and expertise.

# Three

## Methods and Methodology: Summer Survey and Data Reflection Sessions

MEA's summer survey was designed to record the experiences of Black women trying to use Birmingham's public health system during their pregnancy and after the birth. The survey was designed by Amanda Smith, CEO and founder of MEA, who is also a doula, birth educator and experienced mental health and wellbeing facilitator within the community. The survey gathered demographic data related to the women (i.e. their names, ethnicity and place of residence), along with information about their experiences of pregnancy and birth acquired through both closed and open-ended questions.

The data obtained from the survey was then analysed, interpreted and reflected upon by MACs, a group of local women with recent experience of perinatal services in Birmingham, as part of a (series of) data reflection session(s) facilitated by MEA's research partners, Black Thrive Global's Research Institute and Observatory (RIO) and Ratio. Both research partners were involved in the launch of the Black Thrive Birmingham initiative and had committed to supporting the process and 'walking alongside' the women as they initiated their work on community-led research.







The data reflection sessions created two important opportunities. Firstly, these sessions created a space in which MACs could reflect on and interpret data from the summer survey data, thus developing what we term 'the collective conceptual tools for liberation' which we believe can be seen as an essential component of consciousness raising and storytelling for systems change. Secondly, the sessions created a space in which MACs could actively and explicitly be encouraged to reflect upon the data, with reference to their own personal experiences, thoughts and feelings as Black women and mothers who had also, as had the summer survey respondents, navigated the public healthcare system. The sessions allowed the women to draw on their own positionality and intersubjective engagement with the data, creating the space for processing thoughts, feelings and embodied responses to survey data, while generating new sources of data that could also be collectively analysed and interpreted in order to better understand and explore the experiences of Black women on pregnancy and birth journeys.

A draft summary of the findings of the summer survey has been produced by RIO and has been reviewed by MEA. The final report will be finalised in early 2024.

Moreover, in September 2023 MEA launched their See Me, Hear Me campaign funded by [the Rosa Voices from the Frontline fund](#). This campaign will highlight and address the lack of Black perinatal voices in the research and data space.

On 31 October MEA held an event where conversations concentrated on the importance of community-led wisdom and community knowledge in facilitating better maternal outcomes for Black families. Catalyst was represented by speakers at this event and we are looking forward to hearing more experiences from Black families in the West Midlands.

## Public health – BLACHIR (Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review)

In 2023 we continued working to influence BLACHIR.

Our work focused on contributing to one of their five workstreams, cultural competence. Our community engagement and membership manager chaired this workstream which primarily comprised community members and the BLACHIR project team and this allowed for open and honest conversations about whether cultural competence would make a difference to African and Caribbean communities. These conversations have shaped a cultural competency programme that reflects the views, aspirations and outcomes of African and Caribbean communities.

### Birmingham and Solihull ICS Inequalities Board

We continue to build our relationship with ICS through our membership of their Stakeholders Board and by meetings with the Interim Chair of ICS. Through this engagement we have been connected to the wider NHS Trusts across Birmingham and the West Midlands and have started a conversation about community-led systems change and community data. There is growing interest in these concepts and an emerging opportunity to present this approach to ICS.

### Learning about thriving: Knowledge construction and dissemination

The objective is to demonstrate that we will be able to see the shape of a Black-focused community Shared Measurement System (SMS) which goes beyond statutory indicators to incorporate community 'metrics', draws on existing research, stimulates new research and builds a shared understanding of what the real issues are, and through this identify the outcomes and actions that communities want to see.

### Continuing our Stop-and-Search work

Following the community assembly in 2022, there has been significant interest from some attendees and stakeholders about the Stop-and-Search work undertaken by Black Thrive Global and Black Thrive Lambeth. In January 2023, a pivotal focus group convened in Birmingham; this was facilitated by collaboration between Black Thrive Global, Catalyst and A Father's Child Services (AFCS). This included 14 representatives from Birmingham-based organisations and individuals structured into three distinct parts.

The initial phase of the focus group discussion concentrated on participants' thoughts and experiences of Stop and Search and the relationship between the police and Black communities in Birmingham. In the second part, we showed some of the data we have produced on Stop and Search in Birmingham and asked participants for their thoughts. The aim here was to understand how local experts interpret the patterns of results and how they fit in with their own experience of Stop and Search, both professionally and personally. In the final section we asked participants about the impact of Stop and Search on communities; an aspect of Stop and Search that goes largely undiscussed in the statutory literature.

A provisional analysis of the focus group discourse revealed three predominant themes:

- intergenerational trauma, protection and coping
- lived experience and common sense
- learning, playing and losing the game.

It is important to note that these key insights would not be obvious from studying solely



quantitative data.

Black Thrive Global's RIO has produced a draft report describing the research methodology and findings from the focus group; this will be published in 2024.

Following on from the focus groups, Catalyst and A Father's Child have had discussions about how to build on the findings and connect this research with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commission's Fairness and Belonging strategy. These include:

- strategies to address inequality, discrimination and justice
- evaluating and enhancing existing community scrutiny panels and the Stop and Search Commission
- exploring post-mental health triage provisions in policing, and
- assessing the implications of the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018.

Our previous workshops in Coventry on Seni's law had set a precedent, with plans in motion to conduct similar workshops in Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Moreover, further collaboration with BSMHFT's restrictive practice collaborative is anticipated, building upon existing efforts to raise awareness and ensure the effective implementation of pertinent legislative acts.





## Strong and agile backbones

The prime objective of this category is to develop the infrastructure, tools and skills that will act as a backbone for our work in Birmingham and within our local communities.

In 2023 our main output and focus was to develop our leadership programme. In June 2023 we completed our two-year Lived Experience (LEx) Leaders Programme. The programme was delivered via four training providers in total, spread across eighteen session dates and covering a wide variety of legal, management and governance topics.

To ensure continued support and learning, each training provider supplied a resource pack for all the covered topics. These resources collectively laid the groundwork for what we have coined the 'Living Toolkit', an ongoing reference resource for our participants.

To accelerate the initial phase, the Lottery Fund Uplift was allocated as an essential fund for startup costs. This provided selected participants with £300+ to cover crucial resources such as laptops, language accessibility, office supplies and affiliation fees. The impact of the programme was recognised with awards granted to seven LEx-led community enterprises. These organisations provided a range of services from counselling and family support to first aid for mental health and technology training. The funding facilitated essential elements, including temporary sessional costs, office equipment, website design, marketing, transportation aids and printed materials; fostering the growth and outreach of these enterprises.

Drawing from invaluable feedback and insights gathered from our participants, the LEx Leaders Development Programme put forward two transformative infrastructure proposals:

1. Programme for supported housing: Inspired by the success of Panelcroft Village in Newtown, Birmingham, this initiative seeks to establish a supported housing system.
2. African and Caribbean Wellbeing and Resource Centre: Envisioning a dedicated centre with diverse spaces for events, activities, therapy, hot desks, pod-office facilities and therapeutic zones, this initiative aims to create a nurturing environment for holistic wellbeing.

In summary, the LEx Leaders Development Programme has witnessed significant milestones, from intensive training sessions and empowering community enterprises to securing funds and envisioning transformative infrastructure initiatives. As we continue this impactful journey, our commitment remains steadfast to foster growth, empowerment and community development.



# Four

## Reflections

Throughout the past eight years, Catalyst has steadfastly contributed to the advancement of mental health services in Birmingham. Our commitment to collaboration, learning from lived experiences and partnerships with various organisations and individuals has solidified our reputation as a trusted entity. Collaborating with Black Thrive Global, we have pioneered an emerging operating model for systems change; leveraging data; stories; knowledge about overcoming barriers; and the collective strength of civil society and communities.

Ultimately, we are proud of our commitment to uphold our values of collaboration, respect and innovation; remembering the legacies of those who have gone before us and paved the way for profound mental health advancements in Birmingham and beyond.

We would like to thank our core Catalyst team, as well as consultants for all your hard work.

### Catalyst team members:

**Sandra Griffiths**

Black Thrive Birmingham Lead, Business & Partnership Development Manager

**Beverley Stephens**

Community Engagement & Membership Manager

**Tippa Naphtali**

Central Services & Development Manager

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Community Development & Network Co-ordinator

**Tiffany Springer**

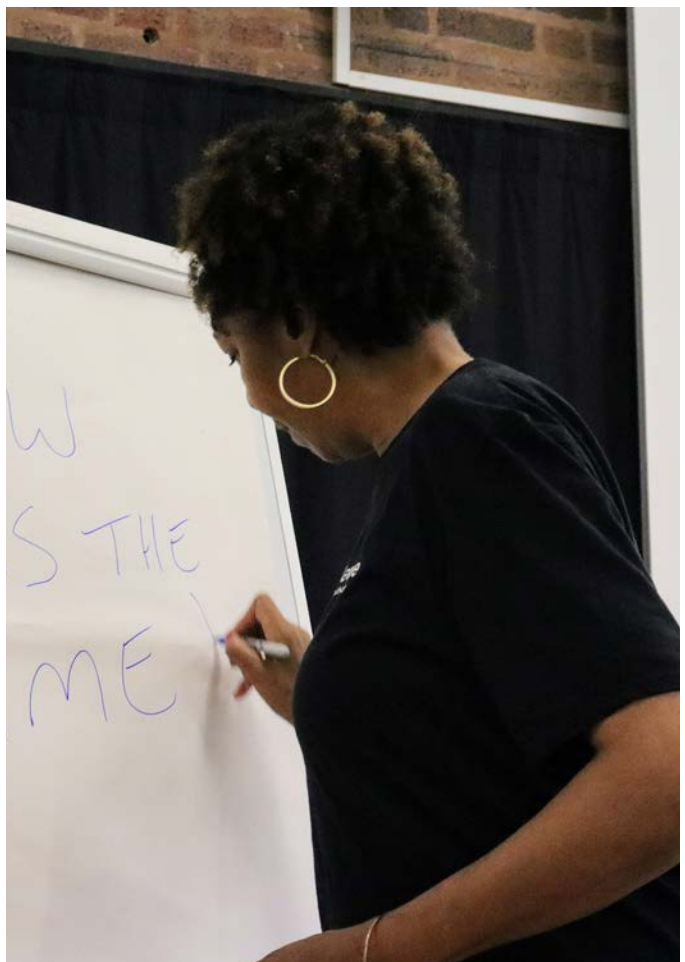
Temporary Administrator

### Consultants:

**Rudi Page**

Making Connections Work

**Dr Karen Newbigging**



## Acronyms

| Acronyms and definitions |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>AFCS</b>              | A Father's Child Services  |
| <b>BLACHIR</b>           | Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review |
| <b>BSMHFT</b>            | Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust                   |
| <b>BTG</b>               | Black Thrive Global  |
| <b>BTL</b>               | Black Thrive Lambeth   |
| <b>BSMHFT</b>            | Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust                   |
| <b>DHSC</b>              | Department of Health and Social Care                                     |
| <b>ICS</b>               | Integrated Care System   |
| <b>LEx</b>               | Lived Experience   |
| <b>MACs</b>              | Maternity Ambassadors for Change   |
| <b>MEA</b>               | Maternity Engagement Action  |
| <b>NMPMFF</b>            | National Mikey Powell Memorial Family Fund                               |
| <b>PCREF</b>             | Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework                                |
| <b>RIO</b>               | Research Institute and Observatory                                       |
| <b>SMS</b>               | Shared Measurement System  |

