

Engagement Brief: Portsmouth Black Histories

An exploration of the people, places and movements that have shaped Portsmouth

Background

The **Blaggrave Trust** is deepening its work in Portsmouth and wants to build its understanding of the city through the knowledge, experiences and histories of the communities who live there.

As part of this work, we would like to commission a Portsmouth-based Black-led organisation, community researcher(s) or group of organisations to develop a short engagement piece exploring Black history in Portsmouth, including community migration, leadership and organising. This is about deepening our shared understanding of Black communities' rich contribution to the city and sits alongside a wider effort to improve Blaggrave's local knowledge as we embark on our new strategy, [Leading With Hope](#). The outputs from this engagement piece could be written, or in audio, video or other creative format, depending on the skills and experience of the people producing them.

What we'd like the research to explore

We are leaving space for the commissioned organisation(s) to shape the approach and outputs. As an example, this *could* include topics such as:

- Migration and settlement: the different Black communities that have made Portsmouth home.
- Black leadership that spans generations, such as in community organising, grassroots groups and/or faith spaces
- Places and spaces: neighbourhoods, buildings, community organisations and gathering places that have particular significance in the city's Black histories.
- Community events, that celebrate Black communities and culture, and/or demonstrate solidarity in the face of hostility.

Whose voices or stories should be included?

We encourage the engagement Partner to hear directly from people with lived experience and understanding of these histories, from across generations. This could include community leaders, young changemakers, local storytellers, and community groups. We welcome input from allies and supporters, where felt beneficial to the work.

Geographic focus

The primary focus should be Portsmouth city, rather than the wider Hampshire area.

However, the engagement can explore elements of migration and connections beyond the city where those relationships are felt important to understanding Portsmouth's story.

Suggested outputs

We will be led by the engagement Partner to propose how the outputs are best shared. If useful, here are a few examples of how this *could* look:

- A short accessible illustrated written report telling the stories you've chosen to represent of Black migration, leadership and community life in Portsmouth.
- An short video, podcast or audio recording that paints an engaging picture of people, organisations and movements.
- A timeline or community map highlighting significant moments, people, organisations and developments.

Audience and tone

We want the piece to center the stories of Portsmouth's Black communities, with a clear and accessible narrative. Alongside this, the output should meet basic accessibility standards (e.g. a video should include captions). Where useful we can provide examples of this in our own work or signpost to tools/resources.

How Blaggrave might use the work

Within our organisation, the report would help deepen our understanding of Portsmouth as our place-based work develops and contribute to our wider community intelligence. It would also contribute to how we continue to work with communities as we design and plan programmes in the city.

With agreement from contributors, and where felt beneficial to local Black communities, we are open to working with the commissioned organization to meaningfully share outputs of the brief.

An important principle

We recognise that documenting Black history is itself a form of knowledge creation. We therefore want the organisation(s) undertaking this work to have genuine ownership over the methodology, whose stories are prioritised and how the final story is told.

Budget

We have up to **£7,500** (including VAT and expenses) available for this engagement piece. This should include all costs, including:

- project management
- any desk-based or archival research
- interviews, conversations or oral-history work
- payments for community participants
- transcription if needed

- travel and local expenses
- writing and editing (whether copy editing or visual / audio)
- videography
- photography or use of archive images where appropriate and permissions allow
- design and production of the final report.

If applying as part of a collective of organisations or Partnership, Blaggrave will consider covering additional costs of up to £1,500 (inc. VAT) towards effectively leading and convening a collaboration.

How to apply

If you are interested in undertaking this commission, please send us a short proposal (e.g. 2-3 sides of A4 or a few slides) outlining:

- your organisation or team and your connection to Portsmouth (if applying as a collective of organisations, please name a Lead Partner)
- your proposed approach to the research, including how you would involve Black communities and people with lived knowledge of Portsmouth's history
- what you expect the final outputs to include
- your proposed budget and timeline
- links to or copies of examples of relevant previous work or projects, where available.

We're interested in understanding who you are, your connection to Portsmouth, how you would approach the commission and what you think would make the work valuable. We are particularly interested in approaches that are **community-led, creative and accessible**.

Application deadline: 11am Friday 4th December 2026

Contact

To submit your proposal, or for questions about the commission / an informal conversation before applying, please contact: **Kosh Shengamo**, Portsmouth Community Engagement Manager at **kosh@blagravetrust.org**

Selection

We'll be looking for a proposal that demonstrates:

- strong knowledge of and relationships within Portsmouth
- meaningful involvement of Black communities in shaping the engagement piece
- an approach that brings together historical research and lived experience
- sensitivity in collecting and representing people's stories
- accessible and engaging ways of communicating the findings
- a clear and realistic approach to delivery.

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