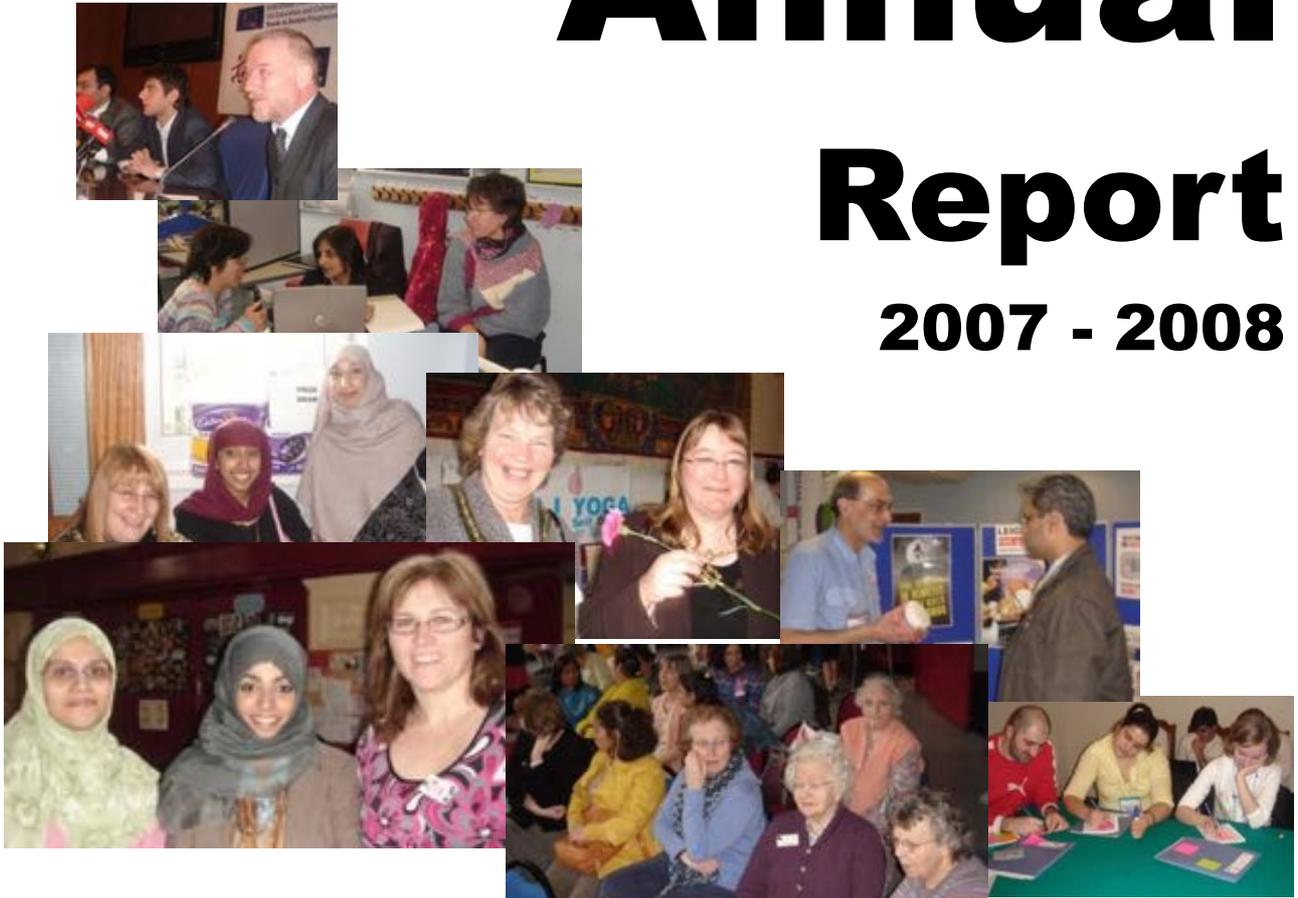


# Charnwood Racial Equality Council

# Annual

# Report

2007 - 2008



**Work towards eliminating racial discrimination**

**Campaign for equality and opportunity**

**Promote good relations between persons of different racial groups**



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Southfield Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire. LE11 2TX

Direct Line: 01509 634602

Email: [mayor@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@charnwood.gov.uk)

29<sup>th</sup> May 2008

**Dear Friends,**

The early seventies, now, seem like only yesterday.

The economy of Loughborough and surrounding area was beginning its journey from manufacturing to education. Equality of pay and opportunity were high on the agenda for women workers. Into this developing world we welcomed Commonwealth citizens, in particular from Kenya, Uganda and Bangladesh.

Sadly not all of us extended the hand of friendship and so it became necessary to form an inter-racial solidarity campaign as a support group for our new neighbours and a lobby group for equality.

More than thirty years on and the scene has changed greatly. Charnwood Borough Council is established as the local government administration and the solidarity campaign culminated in the creation of Charnwood Racial Equality Council.

The work and imagination of this organisation over the years is stunning. The dedication of the members, officers and staff of CREC is something of which we are all very proud. Much has been done in the cause of equality, decency and humanity. Much remains to be done.

We in Charnwood have the will and the people to do it.

Le gach dea-guidh

**JOE TORMEY**  
**Mayor of Charnwood 2007/8**

# **BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND COMMITTEES 2007/2008**

## **Officers**

<b>Chair</b>	Anne Williams
<b>Vice Chair</b>	Peter Lewis
<b>Treasurer</b>	Trevor Shaw
<b>Company Secretary</b>	Amrat Bava

## **Trustees**

Anne Williams	Peter Lewis	Trevor Shaw
Daphne Beale	Ranjit Jalota	Jewel Miah
Val Watts	Anthony Payne	Usha Solanki
Anthony Gimpel*	Hiron Miah*	Wei Shen*

(\*resigned during the year from the Board and various committees)

## **Co-opted Trustee**

Norma Curtis	Lesley Bowell	Linda Shaw
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## **Finance & Property Committee**

Anne Williams	Peter Lewis	Trevor Shaw
Jewel Miah	Wei Shen	

## **Personnel Committee**

Daphne Beale	Anne Williams	Ranjit Jalota
Val Watts	Trevor Shaw	Anthony Payne

## **Marketing, Publicity and PR Group**

Peter Lewis (Chair)	Jewel Miah	Usha Solanki
Patricia Pinder	Amrat Bava	Adam Hartopp
Wei Shen		

## **Development Group**

Peter Lewis	Trevor Shaw	Daphne Beale
Hiron Miah	Jewel Miah	

## **STAFF**

Varsha Parmar	Co-ordinator
Kazi Mashud	Welfare Benefits & Immigration Officer
Amar Bashir	Complainant Aid and Harassment Officer
Nadja Rein	Community Cohesion Officer
Runa Chowdhury	Employment Rights Officer (Employment Rights Project)
Nzinga Wenham-Beckford	Assistant Employment Caseworker
Neeta Popat	Employment Rights Project Administrator

## **CHAIR'S REPORT**

My first year as Chair has certainly been a challenging and eventful one. Firstly at the beginning of the term the Board made the tough decision to close down the Employment Rights Project. This was a difficult decision as the project had been very successful and an identified need was there for this kind of work. However, due to tapered funding, combined with other major issues, the Board felt that they had a legal duty to declare the unstable financial viability of achieving the funder's aims. Therefore the project closed in November of last year.



Over the past year CREC have been closely looking at their strategic aims and after long consultation with stakeholders made the decision to change over to a single equalities Council in line with the Government move to a single equality commission. The Equality and Human Rights Commission was set up in Oct 2007. The new commission brings together the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, and the Disability Rights Commission. The new commission is building on their legacy to achieve change to benefit some of the most disadvantaged and voiceless people in our society. It takes on responsibility for the other aspects of equality: age, sexual orientation and religion or belief, as well as human rights. CREC, after consultation, intends to mirror this move.

The idea is that we don't duplicate the efforts of other organisations or groups but rather complement their work by addressing gaps and issues in their provision and working in partnership with them to bridge these gaps. We are currently researching these gaps and issues whilst at the same time sourcing funding for a Director post to move all of this forward.

In line with this move to a single equality council we have conducted a skills audit with our Board to identify the skills we have and the skills we will need in the future. Norma Curtis the Quality Manager at RNIB, Lesley Bowell the Area Community Manager at Loughborough Library and Linda Shaw Chair of the Hate Incident Action Group have all been co-opted to the Board to widen our expertise.

We have held a training event for all staff and Trustees to update our knowledge and skills. During the past year we have also rewritten all of our Organisational policies and practices. In the absence of a Director a Trustee Mentor scheme has been introduced for staff. This should sharpen up lines of communication for staff to and from the Board and also provide support.

Funding for the Racial Harassment Officer and Community Cohesion Officer was not renewed this year by the EHRC. However we are seeing this as part of a bigger picture to look at the way we do things. We are currently exploring alternative ways of carrying out this work and other sources of funding.

All in all it has been a very exciting year of change. We hope to make a big contribution to making Charnwood an even better place to live.

**Anne Williams**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The past year has been eventful to say the least.

The closure of the Employment Rights Project and the various unsuccessful funding bids consumed a great deal of time among all the trustees.

A knock-on effect on me as Treasurer was finding time to do the normal duties of the post in addition to everything else that was going on.

Hopefully we have now turned the corner and in the coming year the Finance and Property Committee will have more space to help the trustees plan for the future and take care of our premises in a better way.

As always I owe a debt of thanks to Varsha for her tremendous help with the accounting and to Marsh & Moss for putting the final accounts together and doing the audit.

Also, thanks to our many funders and partners without whom we cannot function. In particular, thanks to the Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council, the Big Lottery and the British Council for the funding.

**Trevor Shaw**



## **COMPANY SECRETARY'S REPORT**

First of all I would like to say that we have complied with all the regulations of the Company House and Charity Commission by filing in the annual return in good time.

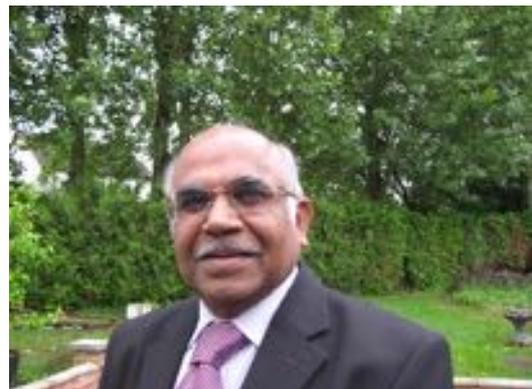
During the year, the Board of Trustees have had to take some very difficult decisions regarding the work of the CREC.

Right through all the circumstances, the Board has responsibly taken actions to resolve situations and take the work of the organisation forward in line with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Both trustees and staff have made great efforts to keep CREC delivering quality services to the service users and the people of Charnwood.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our all members who are giving their continuous support to our work.

**Amrat Bava**



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES' REPORT**

An Annual Report can sometimes dispel one's natural inclination to feel pressing problems outweigh achievements. While it should never encourage complacency, we should rightly, if with due modesty, give testimony to the huge amount of work done by volunteers, Trustees, and professional staff. And it should say thank you to everyone who has helped make this organisation viable and significant in Charnwood.

As Trustees we must thank without reservation our Chair, Anne Williams, who completes her first year at the helm, has steered us resolutely through unexpected storms and dangerous shoals, to ensure we stay an effective, efficient and responsive organisation. In particular she has led again this year on the development of our Business Plan. But the other key priority for all Trustees, old and new, has been essential capacity building and training. Those days of simply being a well-meaning, caring volunteer have past. Government at every level demands a degree of professionalism and accountability unheard of ten years ago. Clearly, as she says elsewhere about our change of direction into a wider brief, such a deepening and broadening of capacity has been imperative. Anne has offered us both dedicated and good humoured leadership for which we must all be grateful.

Thanks are also due to Daphne Beale, who as the Trustee directly responsible for managing the office and staff, has had to respond to many disruptions and changes in the professional side of our work and develop ways of ensuring with other Trustees, that our staff are fully supported in their work. Thanking Daphne has become almost an annual event for years; but we never take her unique personal contribution for granted and are exploring ways in which we all can offer her back-up and support.

The move to a Single Equalities organisation has involved consultation events in August 2007 at the University, in February 2008 at Moira Centre, and at Shree Ram Krishna Centre in May 2008. All of have been constructive, informative, encouraging and at times even inspirational in looking ahead. Alongside these have been positive approaches to widening representation on the Board of Trustees, with co-options with RNIB College, St Peter's Community Centre, and the Library Service and also a broadening of our membership with contacts on all equality groups such as LGBT, Age Concern, Women's Aid etc., to which Anne Williams makes reference elsewhere in the report.

We continue to focus on improving our communications both on this community and beyond. The Website has been well developed, with many people using it. We have many more links to local, national and international organisations, and are currently redesigning in order to prevent abuse. Our staff have continued to attend training seminars across and beyond the European Community, as can be seen in the following Reports. These international links, particularly where young people are involved, are of huge value to this community and something we are determined to maintain and develop. They already cover the wider all-equalities brief, and involve us in equalities issues which cover the whole EU and its legislation.

We are fortunate too in the way in which both the *Leicester Mercury* and the Loughborough *Echo* have always been responsive to publicising our work and encouraging public interest.

Indeed *Loughborough Echo* in particular has encouraged us to submit articles with the Council of Faiths. The local press comes in for much criticism at times. We have greatly valued their interest and involvement.

Within the Borough there have been regular 'special events'. We have successfully hosted a Making Contact Seminar 21 – 27 August 2007, been involved with Interfaith Dialogue 5 – 10 Sept 2008. Individual Reports follow. An Open Day was held at Moira Centre on 28 June 2007, in partnership with Adult Learning and Police, with attendance from other key agencies. The Mela successfully was held on 2 September 2007, with very good attendance and involvement from local communities/partner organisations. The Plans for Mela 2008 are underway, to be held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2008, hopefully in the centre of town Market Place. The Mayor, together with other Agencies attended our Coffee Morning on 7 December 2007. In March 2008 there was Loughborough in your Eyes and International Women's Day. And on 19<sup>th</sup> March Khadijah Chowdury organised a Learning Disability Partnership event at Shree Ram Krishna Centre.

Inevitably, funding remains a major concern. We are delighted that Leicestershire County Council Service Agreement has been extended for another year until March 2009, and that Core funding has been secured from Charnwood Borough Council. We are hopeful of further partnerships with the Borough Council, more involvement in its strategies, building on the excellent working relationship established over the past two years.

Leicestershire Learning Disability Partnership funds a full time Link Worker, working with BME people with Learning Disabilities and is based at our Office. This post is up to March 2009).

During 2007/2008 – the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (formerly CRE) funded the employment of a part-time Complainant Aid and Harassment Officer and part-time Community Cohesion Officer. Regrettably we were unsuccessful in securing funding for 2008/09. However, this should not be seen as a criticism of ourselves. There was a wholesale redistribution of funding right across the UK, and East Midlands Racial Equality Consortium is working in partnership with us and other East Midlands RECs in a similar position to look at ways in which these funding crises can be resolved.

We are used to working with other partners across Charnwood. The Loughborough Council of Faiths Development Worker is based at our office, working together in organising events such as Feast of Faiths, and One World Week. The Charnwood Refugees and Asylum Seekers Forum is supported from our office. We also work very closely with the East Midland Racial Equality Consortium where some of our trustees are key officers.

We are always delighted to welcome young people in our office, especially when it can be through placements. This year we have worked with Dan Higgins and Christopher Breen from Rawlins College, Mozaher Hussain from Loughborough College, Shorifa Khatun from Burleigh College, Christopher Andrews and Alistair Lewis from Burleigh College and Dominic Finlayson from Gateway College. Thanks are also due to volunteers Sharmin Aktar, Min Topliss, and Nimu Vadher who helped with the organising of the International Women's Day event.

The latest news is good and exciting news. Our next *Public Lecture* will be on the evening of Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October in the Cope Auditorium by kind invitation of the University. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Shirley Pearce, will Chair it. Our Guest is Jasvinder Sanghera, author of the best selling biography, *Shame*. She is Founder Member of *Karma Nirvana*, an Asian women's project of national and international significance, and addresses issues of forced marriage and honour based crime. She has been a regular and articulate contributor to all major media networks here and abroad.

I began this report with thanks both to our Chair and our Managing Trustee in particular. But all Trustees have sought to carry out their responsibilities assiduously and thoughtfully. It would be remiss not to mention our Treasurer of many years, Trevor Shaw, on whose shoulders fall often seemingly insuperable financial burdens. That we remain viable is in no small way to his careful stewardship.

But during the year, for various reasons of health and work, we had to say farewell to familiar friends. Hiron Miah, now a magistrate as well as Borough Council Officer, had to withdraw, and we congratulate him on his legal appointment. Anthony Gimpel had to stand down as Company Secretary, after seeing us through a difficult period of change and his good humoured gentle participation is still missed. And Shen Wei, who did so much to initiate, develop and lead our international work and activities with young people, had to step down in January when he moved to teach in the University at Angers in France. Wei will continue some links with us through *Youth across Frontiers* together with Nadja Rein and myself. He too is sadly missed as Trustee.

The Trustees are well aware of the difficulties ahead. These are not just in ensuring funding to support and develop our work, but also from those who think 'equalities issues' are simply to do with political correctness. We are very aware of threats from extremist political groups growing stronger even on our own doorstep. We must remain ever alerts to those who like to find 'the enemy within', who is in their view hell bent on 'destroying our way of life'. I'm proud to affirm, as Cabinet Lead Member for Community Cohesion and Equalities, that Charnwood Borough Council is fully committed to equalities and human rights, and that this organisation will work as both a critical friend and supporter with both Borough and County to ensure we are indeed all different and all equal in this community to which we all contribute.

***Cllr Peter Lewis, CC,  
Vice Chair of Trustees***



## **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT**

The committee is responsible for seeing that the Charnwood Racial Equality Council

- Recruits and manages the right people to work as staff and volunteers to the benefit of the organisation and its users
- Values its staff and volunteers and the contribution they make towards achieving the organisation's aims
- Supports staff and volunteers in gaining appropriate skills and knowledge to meet their responsibilities.

Once again we would like to thank all the Trustees, Staff members and volunteers who have enabled us to keep such high standards in our work and service to the community. Particular thanks for the loyalty of our core staff, Kazi Mashud (WBIO) and Varsha Parmar (Co-ordinator) during a difficult year.

During the year our Racial Harassment Officer, Amar Bashir, started a job share at Charnwood Borough Council and we employed Nadja Rein, as a part-time Community Cohesion Officer to create a full time post.

We were sorry to lose the Employment Rights Project which closed in November 2007. This was due to a number of factors outside our control.

We have also supported placement students from Burleigh and Rawlins and other local Colleges and also had several volunteers through the year to help in general and on specific work e.g. the International Women's Day.

Staff from other projects working with us include Khadijah Chowdhury, Link Worker from the Leics County Council Learning Disability Partnership, whose full time post has been extended to March 2009, Chayara Chowdhury, Amina Wadud and Alea Sayed from the Bangladeshi Ekota Project who work part-time. Alea left during the year and we are currently recruiting for an Outreach Worker to replace her.

We have continued to do annual appraisals with each member of staff to look at how they are finding their work, what training needs they have and to look for advice from them about the running of the CREC. The Trustees and staff have also been on training and we are currently reviewing all our policies and procedures. The Trustees have carried out a skills audit and this will help us to access the expertise on our Board and see what gaps there are.

We have also introduced Trustee Mentors for each member of staff to support and offer guidance and this is helping to support the work of our Managing Trustee.

Thank you to all our members who give us encouragement in our work.

**Daphne Beale**  
**Managing Trustee/Member of Personnel Committee**

## ***CREC's consultations towards becoming a Single Equalities Organisation***

In October 2007, we saw the creation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Commission amalgamated the previous Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and Equal Opportunity Commission. The intention of the new commission is to be the focal point for all activities with regards to equality. The commission will also work in the areas of religion and belief, sexual orientation and age equality in addition to the three mentioned above.

Charnwood Racial Equality Council, through initial conversations with staff and colleagues in the race equality field and intense discussion amongst the Board of Trustees, consultation with individual members and groups in Charnwood, felt that this is the appropriate time to expand its brief to cover all equalities. We would not be taking away from the need to keep race high on our agenda but would also work to ensure all our work reflects all the other equalities. This would be a fundamental shift for the direction of the Charnwood Racial Equality Council.

As a community organisation we would not be able to function without the support of the surrounding communities and partner agencies. This is why we feel that it is vital to involve and consult with the community and work together to provide the best possible services to ensure the citizens of Charnwood can learn, work and live free from discrimination and prejudice and from fear of harassment and violence.

Initial discussions, were started with Voluntary Action Charnwood, Charnwood Borough Council, CREC with other partner organisations and this led to a conference being held at the Loughborough University in August 2007.

A general meeting was then held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008 by CREC, at the Moira Centre, where nearly 40, individuals, members, representatives of local groups and organisations attended to discuss, raise concerns and give views on the future role of CREC on becoming a single equalities organisation to work in partnership with existing groups and agencies. At the end of the meeting, all members present agreed unanimously for CREC to take the lead in this direction.

A further consultation took place on 13 May 2008 at Shree Ram Krishna Centre where individuals, groups and agencies discussed ways to work together to enhance the services available and any gaps.

***At the CREC, we are always looking for new people and groups to get involved in our work and details of all this are on our website at [www.charnwoodrec.org](http://www.charnwoodrec.org), so please have a look and should you wish to join us in our work ring the office on (01509) 261651 or email to us at [crec@btconnect.com](mailto:crec@btconnect.com) and we will be happy to talk to you to see how you could get involved.***

# ***LIST OF MEMBERS 2007/2008***

## ***Hon President***

The Mayor of Charnwood

## ***Hon Vice President***

Dr A Strachan

## ***Hon Solicitor***

Mr I Nicholson

## ***Hon Treasurer***

Mr T Shaw

## **Individual Members list**

Mr G Ali	Cllr A Bava
Mr J Capleton	Mr J R Catt
Mr R Chander	Mrs A Gimpel
Mr A Gimpel	Mr D Goss
Mr J Harrison	Mr A Hartopp
Mrs M Hopewell	Mrs K Jackson
Cllr P Lewis	Ms M Mahmoud
Ms S Meridith Velado	Mr H Miah
Mr J Miah	Mrs N Morgan
Mrs B Newton	Mr S G Patel
Mrs P Pinder	Mr T Priestley
Mr A Reed	Mr M Shahid
Mr T Shaw	Mr W Shen
Mr P Singh	Ms U Solanki
Dr A Strachan	Mrs J Vincent
Mr P Yeo	

## **Organisations**

<b><i>Buleigh College</i></b>	C Horsefall	
<b><i>Charnwood Arts</i></b>	K Ryan	
<b><i>Charnwood Bangladeshi Society</i></b>	MTA Chowdhury	A Shahid
<b><i>Charnwood Borough Council</i></b>	J Capleton D Green	G Gay P Lewis
<b><i>Churches Together in Loughborough</i></b>	D Beale	A Speight
<b><i>Connexions Loughborough</i></b>	E Rolfe	
<b><i>Geeta Bhawan</i></b>	R Jalota	D Passi
<b><i>Hate Incident Action Group (former L&amp;D Racial Harassment Group)</i></b>	L Shaw	
<b><i>Leicestershire Adult Learning Service</i></b>	P Chowdhury	V Watts
<b><i>Leics Teachers Association</i></b>	G Gay	
<b><i>Limehurst High School</i></b>	S Coneron	R Das
<b><i>L'boro Baptist Church</i></b>	S Cramer	M Spreight
<b><i>L'boro College</i></b>	J Spavin	A Williams
<b><i>L'boro Council of Faiths</i></b>	F Catling	M Graham
<b><i>L'boro United Reformed Church</i></b>	D Beale	A Payne
<b><i>L'boro University</i></b>	L Mansell	
<b><i>Rendell Primary School</i></b>	H Coleman	
<b><i>St Peter's Church</i></b>	J Holland	
<b><i>St Peter's Community Centre</i></b>	D Bentley	
<b><i>Swaminarayan Hindu Mission BAPS</i></b>	R Limbachia	C Panchmatia
<b><i>Thurmaston Jagruti Group</i></b>	K Sharma	S Valand
<b><i>Turning Point</i></b>	Z Natha	
<b><i>Voluntary Action Charnwood</i></b>	S Frost	N Lambert

# **WELFARE BENEFITS AND IMMIGRATION OFFICER'S REPORT**

## **Introduction**

We work towards eliminating discrimination, campaign for equality and opportunity and promote good relations between persons of different groups.

We provide information, advice and a limited advocacy service on welfare benefits, housing, health & hospital, immigration and nationality matters. We also take up individual cases and liaise with Local Authorities, Home Office and other agencies.

Assistance is given in completing necessary forms, writing letters and making phone calls to other agencies on behalf of service users. We also make referrals to appropriate agencies when necessary and often receive referrals.

We are a Community Legal Service's Quality Mark organisation and regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. We also work to PQASSO and CRE Core standards.

This report will focus on the main activities and achievements of the Welfare Benefits/ Immigration Officer (WBIO) for the period from April 2007 to March 2008.

## **Meetings, Contacts, and Liaison**

In order to enhance services for clients, the WBIO has established and maintained regular contacts, meetings and liaison with various statutory and non-statutory organisations. Below is a list of some of these contacts.

- CREC General Meeting at Moira Centre
- Review and Appraisal meeting with CREC Personnel Committee members
- Board of Trustees Meeting
- Charnwood Health and Well Being Forum
- Primary Care Trust
- Loughborough Mela
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Leicestershire Adult and Social Care Department
- Loughborough Job Centre Plus
- Bangladesh Social Association
- Shree Ram Krishna Centre
- Charnwood Asylum Seekers Forum
- Turning Point
- OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner)
- UK Border and Immigration Agency.
- "UNITED against intolerance" conference in Madrid, Spain.
- Housing Benefits Working Group – Bridge Housing
- Loughborough University.

## **Open Day and Publicity**

Publicity is necessary in order to inform the members of the community in Charnwood and voluntary and statutory organisations, about the work done on welfare benefits. This has been done by sending letters to relevant organisations and holding an open day at the Moira Community Centre in conjunction with the Leicestershire Constabulary and Leicestershire Life Long Learning with other key agencies having display stands. Up to date information on various issues has also been published in the CREC's quarterly newsletters and on the CREC's website.

The WBIO has developed the feed-back questionnaire for service users and case notes. There are monthly and quarterly statistical reports produced for the Board of Trustees and the funding authorities.

## **Consultation and Campaigning**

### ***a) Charnwood Borough Council's BME housing strategy***

'To deliver improved access to good quality affordable homes and related services for the people of Charnwood and to support a sustainable and balanced community'. The WBIO has been consulted on the strategy by the Director of housing and other staff at the Charnwood Borough Council. The consultations are held mainly on issues of ensuring better access to housing by the BME community in Charnwood.

### ***b) Charnwood Health and Wellbeing Partnership***

Charnwood Strategic Partnership now called Charnwood Together was formed in 2002 to improve the quality of life in Charnwood by addressing important issues affecting those who live and work here, such as health, wellbeing, housing, community safety, transport and education and employment.

The CREC has been part of the Charnwood Together Board and WBIO is representing CREC in the Charnwood Health and Wellbeing Forum.

Charnwood Together has embarked on a further review to create a new "Sustainable Community Strategy" in 2007.

'To secure the provision of accessible facilities and services to meet the needs of all local people, having regard to the particular needs of the young, old and hard to reach families.' The WBIO has emphasised the importance of appropriate interpretation and translation provision. Information through "word of mouth" works very well for a lot of individuals and families especially from BME, refugee and migrant workers background.

## **Travel Passes for older and disabled persons in Charnwood**

WBIO was part of consultation process for service users regarding Concessionary Travel Passes for older people and disabled people in Charnwood: From 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008 holders of the Charnwood Gold Card has become entitled to free, off-peak county wide bus travel. Older and disabled people are able to travel free on buses after 9.30am, Mondays to Fridays and all day at weekends and on bank holidays throughout the scheme area. This includes free travel to Leicester and to the cities and key market towns in neighbouring counties located within the scheme area.

Older and disabled people will not be able to use the Charnwood Gold Card to travel free on bus services that operate before 9.30am on Mondays to Fridays nor on local rail and eligible community transport services. They will qualify for half fare on these services. For further advice contact the Concessionary Travel Team at the Charnwood Borough Council on 01509 634561 or CREC on 01509 261651.

## **Consultation on Self Invested Personal Pensions**

The WBIO was also part of the consultation process for service users at the CREC on the Government proposal to permit Self Invested Personal Pensions (SIPPs) to hold protected rights. This is something that is currently prohibited under DWP regulations. The change is planned for October 2008. In order to make the necessary changes, amendments are being made to The Personal Pension Schemes (Appropriate Schemes) Regulations 1997 No.470).

The consultation document seeks views on the draft regulations: The Personal Pensions Schemes (Appropriate Schemes) (Protected Rights) (Amendments Regulations 2008. It is on the Department's website at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2007/>

## **UNITED against Intolerance Conference**

Diversity is one of the clearest identities of Europe. The terrible history experienced by Europeans during the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows how important it is to preserve diversity as a positive value. Memory is one of the essential issues in forging a future. However there are those who work intensely to destroy our coexistence promoting hate against any they consider as different. Unfortunately the growth of intolerance is a fact around Europe. Vulnerable people are target of hate groups.

In order to understand and share experience in welfare and immigration advice work for BME, Migrant workers and other EEA nationals from a European perspective the WBIO has attended on a week long conference in Madrid in April 2007. The conference was organised by UNITED, a Netherlands based international organisation and it was funded by European Youth Commission.

Delegates attended from all European countries and the conference mainly focussed on Migrant Workers, Refugees and people looking for life security who are facing discrimination, xenophobia and difficulties related with integration and identity loss in Europe.

## Welfare Benefits and Immigration Caseworks and Service Users

The ethnic background of our service users is changing. Although higher numbers of service users are from South-Asian origin, there is a significant number from other backgrounds, such as European, Eastern European and Middle Eastern, who are settling in Charnwood. Statistics show that there are 93 service users who are EEA nationals which represent nearly 10% of all service users in the year 2007 – 2008.

<b>Nature of cases/queries</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Gender Breakdown</b>	<b>Total</b>
Welfare Benefits	501	Male	602
Housing and Accommodation	397	Female	371
Immigration and Nationality	170	<b>Total No of Service Users</b>	<b>973</b>
Social Services Support	58		
Training/Education Support	33		
Miscellaneous Support	62		
<b>Total Cases/Queries</b>	<b>1221</b>		

<b>Ethnicity Breakdown 2007 - 2008</b>	<b>Total Number of Service Users</b>
White	4
Other Background	24
Indian	315
Bangladeshi	343
African	27
Chinese	8
British	30
Other European	93
Asian	18
Pakistani	23
Other Asian Background	6
Caribbean	28
White and Asian Mixed	22
Not Stated	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>973</b>

## Draft Proposal to Leicestershire Social Care Service

Our current commissioning agreement came to an end in March 2008; the Welfare Benefits Officer has drafted a proposal to Leics Social Care Services for the future of CREC's Advice work. Prioritised areas of work will be to:

- Signpost and support people to access benefits and welfare advice and advocacy services.
- Arrange critical appointments e.g. Social care and Community care assessments, hospital, Leicestershire County council, Charnwood Borough Council etc.

- Advise and provide practical assistance on immigration matters for people who are in need.

Following the proposal Leicestershire County Council's Adult and Social Care Department have confirmed another year of funding (until March 2009) for the CREC while they prepare longer term contractual agreements.

### **Leicestershire County Council's Premises Audit**

We have had a successful audit by the Leicestershire County Council's Adult and Social Care Services towards the end of financial year 2007 - 2008. The Audit was carried out by one of the Contract Officers and it is a part of the on-going Commissioning Agreement with Leicestershire County Council.

### **OISC Training and Conference**

WBIO has attended a day long conference in London in November 2007 arranged by the OISC. The conference mainly focussed on the issue of introducing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points for all OISC regulated advisors.

In order to be up to date with all the changes and for the benefit of our service users in Immigration Matters, the WBIO has attended various training sessions on Immigration Advice e.g, Family Migration, Nationality, Professional conduct in Immigration Advice, EU Law and Presenting Immigration Appeals. The training has been provided free up to Level – 3 the highest level of advice work by the OISC.

### **Continued Professional Development (CPD) for OISC Regulated Advisers**

CREC will be part of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme for OISC as it has become compulsory for all immigration advisers from April 2008.

The CPD scheme is associated with the Code of Standard's on-going requirement for organisations to have training plans and will operate together with the OISC's competence assessment programme to encourage advisers to retain and / or expand their skills and knowledge. However, an adviser will only be able to change their level of competence or widen their categories of service if they are assessed and judged competent to do so by the OISC, not through the CPD scheme. Advisers can obtain it through attending conferences, online training facilitated by the Open University and other recognised providers such as JCWI, HJT, ILPA.

### **OISC Premises Audit**

We have had a successful audit by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2007 for our Immigration Advice Work. OISC is the regulatory body which has established by the Home Office to regulate all the Immigration Advice Work in the UK. The Auditor from the OISC has also suggested that the CREC should try to attain Level 3, the highest level of Advice Work, as we are already carrying out some of the work related to this level.

## **Other Involvement**

- WBIO has given presentations on the CREC and its Welfare and Immigration Advice work on various occasions, eg as an external lecturer at Loughborough University and at the European Youth Conference at Ramada Hotel, Loughborough.
- WBIO also took part in the consultation on the Equality Strategy at Charnwood Borough Council.

## **Acknowledgements**

WBIO would like to extend sincere thanks to all the team, both paid and unpaid volunteers, members of the Board of Trustees at the Charnwood Racial Equality Council, particularly to Anne Williams - the Chair, Peter Lewis – the Vice Chair, Daphne Beale – the Managing Trustee and Trevor Shaw – the Treasurer for their management and direction of the casework. Also thanks to Ranjana Kacchela – the Contract Officer at Leicestershire County Council’s Adult and Social Care Services and Robin Harris at the Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner for their support. Finally, thanks to Varsha Parmar the CREC Co-ordinator for giving administrative support to WBIO’s work.

## **Conclusion**

At present WBIO is providing Welfare Benefits and Immigration Advice services to clients face to face, by telephone and corresponding on their behalf with various agencies such as Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council and Adult and Social Care Department, Department of Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, Pension Service, Inland Revenue for Child Benefits and Tax Credits. Clients and service users come from various backgrounds such as BME, Asylum seekers and refugees, vulnerable adults, EEA and non-EEA nationals etc. This also involves maintaining up-to-date case records and filing systems and continuously reviewing casework.

## **On-going commitment from the Funding bodies**

Welfare Benefits and Immigration Advice work is well established in Charnwood. An average of 5 clients and service users visit the CREC office on every working day and get help and support with their queries. The number of queries we have dealt with in the year 2007 – 2008 is 1221. This is based on a single client coming to the office with various queries, and it shows how established this service is in Charnwood.

## **Recommendation**

On-going funding being made available to maintain and enhance this provision so that the work of the WBIO continues to be recognised and valued by our funding bodies. Service users have better access to all the provisions and thus reduce social exclusion and deprivation and give an improved quality of life for everyone living in Charnwood

### **Additional need for Funds**

According to the statistics, the number of queries relating welfare benefits is on the increase. There are a significant number of clients who have complex circumstances and are in need of a specialist level of support to deal with their welfare benefits claim and it requires an extra amount of time. This is especially true for review and appeal cases for Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Pension Credit etc.

### **Recommendation**

Further funds be made available to employ a part-time casework administrator to provide general advice service and maintain casework for service users.

### **Some of the comments from service users**

“Thank for your support which was essential and because of this support my benefits and community care assessment has sorted out. Without your help it would not be possible.”

***A 74 years old woman.***

“You helped me a lot to sort out my immigration matter – there was no one available to support me but with your help my appeal has been allowed. Thank you very much.”

***A 72 years old woman.***

“Thank you for your advice that I can get Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit while I am working in Loughborough, UK.”

***40 years old EEA National.***

“Thank you for your support in my destitute situation- there was nothing available for me without your help”

***27 years old woman (Domestic Violence matter)***

**Kazi Mashud  
Welfare Benefits/Immigration Officer.**

## ***RACIAL HARASSMENT OFFICER'S REPORT***

The past 12 months have seen a lot of changes to the project. Previously the project only focused on Racial Harassment and victims of Racist Incidents. In conjunction with the Racial Equality Council and the then Racial Harassment Contact Group (RHCG) it was decided to expand our expertise to combat all forms of hate crime. Hate crime is when a victim is targeted due to their Race, Gender, Age, Religion, Disability or Sexual Orientation (this list is not exhaustive).

The RHCG relaunched the group as the Hate Incident Action Group (HIAG). The group invited the Leicestershire Common Monitoring Group and the Police to attend a launch seminar to inform members of the Hate Incident Action Group and members of the public about Hate Crime and how agencies are working to tackle hate crime. The launch attracted over 50 members of the project.

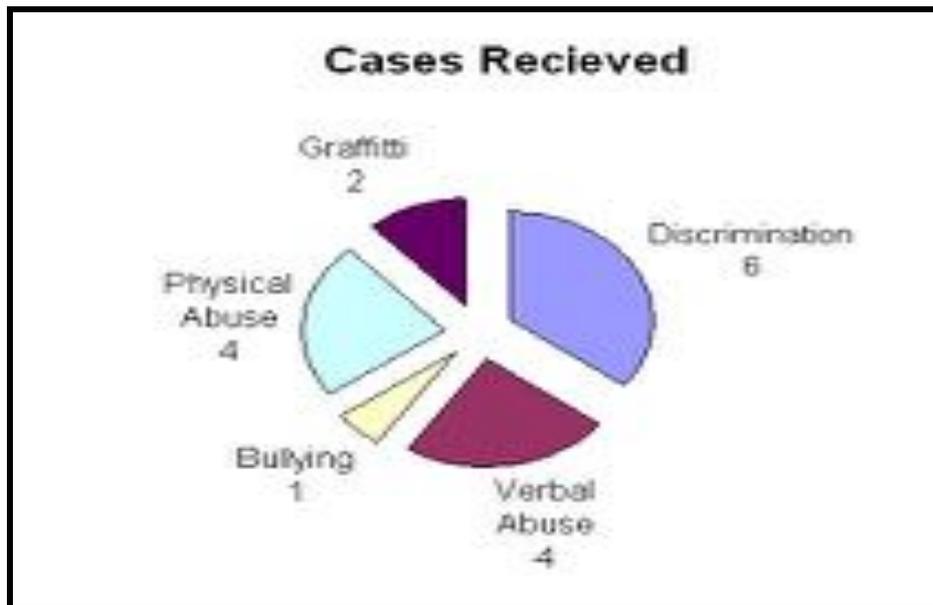
In May 2007 Charnwood Borough held its local elections for councillors for the next 4 years. It felt that it was important for the project to raise awareness of the importance of equality and community cohesion to the Borough. In partnership with Leicestershire Multi Cultural Group the project produced a race equality protocol for parties to sign up to ensure that they did not discriminate directly or indirectly against people of the Borough. The main parties signed the protocol in addition to several individual councillors signing the protocol personally.

In November the HIAG held the first hate crime awareness week in the town centre. The week involved several agencies including the Racial Equality Council, the Borough Council, Anti Social Behavior team, Loughborough College and St Peters Community Centre setting up a stall in the market place and distributing information and talking to people about their experiences of hate crime within the town. Although not all the inquiries made to the stall related to hate crime we were able to pass on information not just to victims put also individuals who may have friends or family affected by hate crime. The week surpassed the group's expectations receiving over a hundred enquires. There was also media support from both radio and newspapers.

The project in addition is working with clients at a strategic level to influence change so that hate crime can be reduced and that the service that victims receive is adequate and sufficient for the client's needs. The project works with a number of groups such as the Racist and Religious Incident Review Panel, the Police Advisory Group for Racist Incidents in Leicestershire and Charnwood Refugee and Asylum Seekers Forum.

The project provides caseworker support for a wide range of clients. Caseworker support is an integral part of the service that the Racial Harassment Project provides. The service is unique in Charnwood and without the support of the project victims of racial harassment would not be able to receive specialist advice any where else. Harassment due to an individual's characteristics, such as skin colour or any other identifier, can be extremely traumatic especially when it is aimed at the individual and their family. The project assisted 17 clients directly with caseworker support.

Below is the type of incidents we provided support for.



The work of the project could not have been achieved without the partnerships that it has developed over the years. Without the support of organisations such as the Police, Council, Victim Support, and the community centres and places of worship the project would not have been able to help and assist victims of Hate crime. We would like to thank all the agencies involved in assisting the project to be successful.

Unfortunately the project was unsuccessful in applying for funds for the forthcoming year. However the REC will endeavor to provide assistance to victims of Hate Crime when it can and will endeavor to re-apply for funding to employ a caseworker.

### **Case Study**

We received a self referral from a victim of racial harassment. The individual was a single male looking after his mother on his own. He felt isolated as he was being harassed by a number of neighbours. The person had been receiving harassment such as broken windows, graffiti and dog mess being left on his grass and threats to his life for over 2 years.

The council found one of the perpetrators guilty of harassment and was taken to court. At the time we were not happy as there were two others that had harassed the victim but there was not any direct evidence to find them guilty. We continued to support the victim however and eventually the harassment stopped. This was probably due to the main ring leader being evicted.

The client was very grateful for the support we gave him as he had exhausted all other avenues before finding out about the support available at the CREC.

**Amar Bashir - Complainant Aid and Harassment Officer.**

## **COMMUNITY COHESION OFFICER'S REPORT**

Since July 2007 to the end of April 2008 the Community Cohesion Officer initiated, assisted and managed a number of events, meetings and discussions aimed at bringing people from different backgrounds together, to break stereotypes and even make new friends. It started with a meeting of leaders and members of different local communities and community centres together with officers from the Board and sub groups of the Local Strategic Partnership, *Charnwood Together*, and followed by a sustainable partnership, which enabled Nadja Rein to successfully organise what is might now be called 'traditional Charnwood events' such as Loughborough *Mela* 2007 (see pg 37). Also she initiated and successfully implemented an event for Charnwood women, 'International Women's Day' on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008 (see on pg 27) together with an activity for young people living in Loughborough, 'Loughborough in your eyes'.

The latter project involved local young people between the ages 16 and 26, both long-term Loughborough residents and temporary residents such as refugees, migrants and students. The project included free workshops on photography, generously provided by *Charnwood Arts*, individual work by young people whose aim was to express their opinion about Loughborough by taking photographs of things they like about the town and things they would like to change. The photos were then shown in an exhibition in the new sports hall at *Loughborough University* on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2008. The exhibition event, which was organised in partnership with *Mountfields Lodge Youth Centre*, began with name games and team-building exercises, followed by a badminton competition between randomly constructed teams. As the project and event demonstrated a great potential for young people from different backgrounds to realise that most of the time they think similarly, and that the differences in their thinking makes them see things from another perspective, we are hoping to gain funding to widen the project to 'Charnwood in your eyes', and make it sustainable to reflect the development of these people's opinions and monitor any improvements over issues which were raised.

*One World Week* (OWW) (19-28 October 2007) gave a number of diverse events for people to follow things they like and to learn something new. For example, the *Celebration of Eid* at Moira Centre gave an opportunity for women from the Muslim community to get together and enjoy celebrations away from their daily house routines, and for women from the neighbourhood to learn more about people who live on the same street or the same place/town.

The *Launch of OWW* held in the Town Hall brought together people to enjoy of music performed by students from Loughborough College, dancing performances and workshops (*Garbas* and *Scottish Dance*). Informative stalls gave information about some local organisations and companies. There was also a possibility for "retail therapy" at the jewellery stalls.

During this year we have strengthened old partnerships with local voluntary, statutory and business organisations and developed new ones. That resulted in projects organised with the *Council of Faiths*:

- ◆ *Feast of Faiths* (November, 2007) - this event gave an opportunity for more than 60 local people to exchange their knowledge about the marriage traditions in their own faith, and learn about wedding traditions and ceremonies in other faiths;

- ◆ That was followed by the event at Loughborough College, where more than 60 students got an opportunity to learn about wedding ceremonies and marriage values in different religions;
- ◆ Moreover, there were ten publications in the *Loughborough Echo* under the title 'Faith Matters', which gave an opportunity for the wider public to learn about different faiths and cultures, to understand the meaning behind the symbols, rituals and traditions, and to express their opinion;
- ◆ *Pilgrimage of Prayer for World Peace* on 23 Oct 2007 on the *One World Week* – invited people from different religions to visit the worship centres in Loughborough, and learn about some of religions active in Charnwood today.

A close partnership with Charnwood Borough Council also engaged us in Diversity Week (October 2007).

*Diversity Game*, which was initiated and organised by Community Cohesion Officer, and was a part of International training course, 'Interfaith Youth Dialogue for a Common Europe', held at the Ramada Hotel between 4-11 September, 2007, brought officers from Charnwood Borough Council, Loughborough College, Loughborough Council of Faiths and CREC, as well as young people attending the conference all together to try someone else's shoes. While playing the game, each player has to answer questions, not from their own point of you, but as if they were someone else, expressing the values and customs of a faith other than one's own. The workshop was a success, and as a result, after further consultations with Loughborough College, Development workers included it as a tool for their future work.



Playing *Diversity Game* at the Ramada Hotel, September, 2008.



Furthermore the Community Cohesion Officer has been engaged with new arrivals, including migrant workers from Eastern European countries, which highlighted awareness about needs and issues they face, and their motivations, which we believed could help us build bridges with their communities, and offer them help and assistance with engaging them in the life of the broader community.

A lot of time and energy was spent filling in grant application forms, and researching the needs of local communities, groups and individuals, and service providers existing in Charnwood to meet such needs, in order to identify gaps in current service provision in Charnwood, to enable maintaining contacts, and build new partnerships, such as with RNIB college, Loughborough University, LGBT group, etc.. This is on-going.

**Learning about cultures, experiences and good practice from our colleagues on our International projects, we learn more about ourselves and become more interested in people who we live in Charnwood with.**

In partnership with *Youth Across Frontiers (YAF)* there were three international youth events, where participants from European Union Countries and local young people had an opportunity to share their knowledge, and to learn best practices about working with different equality groups (*'Equality Project'*, August 2007) and different religious groups (*'Interfaith youth dialogue for a common Europe'*, September 2007).

The third project was held in the capital of Azerbaijan, Baku. It is situated north of Iran on the Caspian Sea and the course was attended by over thirty people from all over Europe.



Official opening of the Event in the media centre of Azerbaijan, Baku February 28<sup>th</sup> 2008

Above: Nadja Rein, Community Cohesion Officer at CREC and a Project Director at YAF and Varsha Parmar, CREC Co-ordinator, Kevin Ryan, Director of *Charnwood Arts* and Ferid Sayed, a volunteer at *Azerbaijan Volunteers' Public Union*



Countries represented include UK, Georgia, Turkey, France, Poland, Hungary, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan itself.

Specialists from *CREC*, *Youth across Frontiers* and *Charnwood Arts* shared their knowledge of working with Youth in Action Programmes.



The beginning of the actual programme of the course

A group working on a new project



The overall programme is funded by the European Commission, and gives fantastic opportunities to develop connections and networks with Charnwood. It resulted in some exciting and valuable new project ideas to bring people together from across Europe and beyond..

One of them has been tailored for the needs of a number of local voluntary and charity groups, as well as youth clubs and community centres. The training course '*Paparazzi of Youth Project*' is approved by the UK National Agency, British Council and will take place in Loughborough, September 28<sup>th</sup> – October 4<sup>th</sup> 2008. Its main aim is to raise awareness of voluntary, statutory and charity organisations of the importance and possibilities of promotion of their work and organised activities.

**Nadja Rein**  
**Community Cohesion Officer**  
**Project Director - Youth Across Frontiers**

## ***INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - 8 March 2008***

A fabulous event was enjoyed by women from all over Charnwood on International Women's Day on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March.

The event, organised by Nadja Rein, Community Cohesion Officer, at Charnwood Racial Equality Council, to celebrate International Women's Day was a huge success with over a hundred women from all ages and backgrounds coming together and having a couple of hours of enjoyment. The event was attended by the Mayoress of Charnwood, Debbie Green and Marj Jones, wife of Mike Jones, Chairman of Leics County Council.

Our thanks to Charnwood Borough Council for paying for the venue and to Fearon Hall for providing a free crèche. There was also a lot of support and hard work given by workers from local groups like St Peter's Community Centre, Fearon Hall, Shree Ram Krishna Centre, Moira Centre Adult Learning, Loughborough College and Charnwood REC. Everybody worked together to make this event work and our particular thanks to our volunteers, Min Topliss, who worked very hard over the last few months to help make the event successful and Nimu Vadher who compered the programme on the day.

The programme included a fashion show where women from the audience were encouraged to walk on the catwalk and many did. One of the women who attended said,

***"I thought the fashion show aspect, inviting all to take part was great, a real show of all women"***

There were several performances by local young women, including Fusion, Bollywood Dancers, Irish dancers and Arabic dancing.

There was also a dessert competition and prizes were given to winners.  
(picture below)

**Daphne Beale said, "it was a brilliant event and owes a lot to all the people who helped including the men who helped setting up the room and clearing away. As a first event of this kind, it went amazingly well".**



## ***International Women's Day***



*Our young female DJ*

*Making name badges*

*Our VIPs enjoying themselves.*