

Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood

Annual Report 2008-2009

All different all equal

Work towards eliminating discrimination

Campaign for equality of opportunity

**Promote good relations between all persons
in the borough of Charnwood, in the county
of Leicestershire**



Southfield Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire. LE11 2TX

Ask for: Allan Clarke – Mayoral Officer

Direct Line: 01509 634602

Email: mayor@charnwood.gov.uk

It was a great pleasure for the Mayoress and myself to attend the 40th Annual Dinner having served on the Charnwood Racial Equalities committee a few years ago.

I was amazed to see how the group has grown and how busy you are under the new name of Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood. It is a sad reflection of times that in Britain there is still the need for groups such as yourselves to help citizens from other countries and faiths to settle into society.

HR & EC continue to do splendid work for the Borough of Charnwood.

I wish the group all the success for the future and offer help where I can.

Roy Brown

Mayor of Charnwood

Telephone: 01509 263151

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Visit us at www.charnwood.gov.uk

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Board of Trustees

OFFICERS

Chair	Anne Williams
Vice chair	Peter Lewis
Treasurer	Trevor Shaw
Company secretary	Amrat Bava

TRUSTEES

Anne Williams	Peter Lewis	Amrat Bava
Trevor Shaw	Daphne Beale	Jewel Miah
Val Watts	Lesley Howell	Ranjit Jalota
Tony Payne	Usha Solanki	Linda Shaw

CO-OPTED TRUSTEES

John Capleton	Aruna Measuria
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FINANCE & PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Anne Williams	Peter Lewis	Trevor Shaw
Jewel Miah	John Capleton	

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

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

MARKETING, PUBLICITY AND PR SUB GROUP

Peter Lewis	Patricia Pinder	Usha Solanki
Amrat Bava	Adam Hartopp	Linda Shaw

BUSINESS PLANNING GROUP

Anne Williams	Trevor Shaw	Daphne Beale
Val Watts	John Capleton	

STAFF

Varsha Parmar	Co-ordinator/Development Officer
Kazi Mashud	Welfare Benefits & Immigration Officer
Chayara Chowdhury	Bangladeshi Liaison Officer
Amina Wadud	Bangladeshi Liaison Officer
Minara Rahman	Bangladeshi Outreach Officer
Khadijah Chowdhury	Link Worker for BME people with Learning Disabilities
Nadja Rein	Youth Project Co-ordinator

Chair 's Report

My second year as Chair has been another interesting one.

After consultations and two general meetings, to agree the name and remit of the organisation, we formally changed over, in September 2008, to a single equalities Council and changed the name from Charnwood Racial Equality Council to Human Rights and Equalities Charnwood. This was followed by launch of a new website, name and remit in Nov 2008.

Last July we held an induction event for our new Trustees and we also had a training event for all staff and Trustees to update our knowledge and skills.

The Trustee Mentor scheme that we introduced last year in the absence of a Director has been working well to sharpen up lines of communication for staff to and from the Board and has also been a means of support for staff. Our thanks to Daphne Beale, who has continued being the Managing Trustee and supported the staff and trustees over the last few years.

In August we were, again, the lead body for the Charnwood Mela which was held in the Town Centre for the first time. This was well attended and proved to be a popular new location.

In October we held a public lecture, hosted by Loughborough University, on forced marriages. The speaker was Jasvinder Sanghera, author and human rights campaigner who founded Karma Nirvana Centre in Derby that gives assistance to girls at risk of forced marriages. It was a very interesting and enlightening talk.

In November we had a visit at the HREC office in Nottingham Road from Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, Shadow Minister for Community Cohesion and Social Action. It was an honour to meet Baroness Warsi and to have the opportunity to talk about community issues in some depth.





Baroness Warsi 's visit to HR&EC

We were involved with and supported the Loughborough Council of Faiths Multi Faith Pantomime held at the Town Hall in March. This was a fun evening which was well attended and reviewed.

We have recently obtained funding from Lloyds TSB for a 2 year contract for a South Asian Women' s Development Officer. This project will work to engage South Asian women who are not otherwise engaged to play a more active part in the Community and to access services available to them

Through grant funding we have been able to work in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) by seconding Varsha, in the absence of a Director, to develop a strategy to establish and begin delivery of the new organisation which would meet CBC ' s Corporate Plan objectives.

In May we held a Commemorative meal in Futures Restaurant, at Loughborough College, to celebrate 40 years of the organisation ' s existence. The new Mayor attended the event and was pleased to see so many members present.

Again, it has been a very exciting year of change and we hope that by working in partnership we can help to make Charnwood a better place to live.

Anne Williams

Treasurer 's Report

For me, the most significant event in our 40th year was in September when HR&EC sprang out of CREC and I 'm sure this will be commented on elsewhere in our annual report.

However, as Treasurer I was pleased that after the change, Charnwood Borough Council gave us a significant grant for us to develop our new role and to reach out to all equalities. I think we have put that grant to good use and the development work will put us in a firmer place for the future.

As I write this we have just submitted our latest grant application. This time, to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission for funding supporting victims of hate crime. Our bid is supported by our local Police and Charnwood Borough Council and if we are successful, the project will benefit all the equality strands and the borough in general. I am pleased that the Lloyds TSB Foundation has funded a project again – working with South Asian Women. This too will be of benefit to our local community.

In other areas, the County and Borough Councils continue to fund our welfare rights and immigration work and the County the learning disabilities project. Also, the British Council have continued to fund our European wide youth conferences.

I am grateful to Varsha Parmar for her sterling efforts with the administration and to the staff of our auditors Marsh and Moss Ltd, who in addition to doing the audit, prepare our formal accounts.

Trevor Shaw

Company Secretary 's Report

This year has been an interesting and challenging one due to the change of name and remit of the organisation from Charnwood Racial Equality Council to the Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood. We had to have a lot of communication with the Charity Commission and the Companies House to ensure that the correct protocol was followed.

We are pleased to say that after seeking their approval and advice and consulting with our members, partners and local communities we finally changed the name and remit from September 2008. As always we have complied with all the regulations of the Companies House and Charity Commission by filing in the annual return in good time.

We as an organisation would like our current work to go from strength to strength and appeal to all individuals and organisations to help and support us in our work. If you are interested please contact the office to see how you could be involved. We are particularly seeking to engage with groups and individuals from all the equality strands.

Amrat Bava

Board of Trustees ' Report

The work of the Trustees goes on throughout the year mostly unseen to outsiders. We have responsibility for keeping the staff and ourselves well trained; caring for the staff and volunteers; keeping the accounts and caring for the building; keeping policies and monitoring and evaluating our strategic direction for the Business Plan; planning our General Meetings, AGM and special events; preparing publicity to keep everyone informed about our activities including newsletters and our Annual Report; and negotiating for funding for our ongoing work and for particular pieces of work.

We meet approximately 6 weekly and have full but business like agendas ably focussed by our Chair Anne Williams. All this takes time and energy and the HR&EC would not be in the respected position it is without such commitment from the Trustees who share the responsibilities.

This year we have carried out training for staff and trustees and updated all our policies and procedures. These have been made available to all staff and trustees via a handbook and a section of our new website. Our business plan is a working document and this is regularly updated each year to be presented at our AGMs.

In order to widen our knowledge on the main equality strands we held a General Meeting at the Moira Centre in April 2009 where we had speakers from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) College and the Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender Centre (LGB&T) in Leicester talking about issues faced by both groups of people. As part of our remit to work on all equalities, we are building contacts and networks with groups in Charnwood and forming stronger partnerships.

To enable staff and Trustees to work more closely together we have appointed a Trustee Mentor for each member of staff, encouraged Trustees to meet with staff in the office as part of their induction and to maintain those links, received reports from the regular staff meetings at Board meetings and dealt with issues raised through our Personnel Committee.

We have tried to maintain contact with our members through General Meetings, through invitations to join working groups and through events like our Christmas coffee morning. Through such meetings we also hope to encourage more friends to be elected or co-opted as Trustees, especially in areas of expertise where our skills audit of Trustees says we are lacking.

We have had an ongoing concern to involve more young people. We have been involved with the British Council Projects through Nadja Rein and this has been very valuable but we also need to work more closely with our local young people and their communities. Please let us know of any initiatives you are involved in.

We also enabled the Charnwood Borough Council's Green Spaces project to apply for a mobility scooter from the Jean Cope Trust for use in the Outwoods by being the lead applicant for the grant.

We have spent some time this year on our change of name and remit and on securing funding for the years ahead. Funding applications take a great deal of time and effort especially as each seems to have its own special language and requirements.

We have tried several new applications which failed, but we did make a successful bid to the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales enabling us to carry out a 2 year project working with South Asian Women. This project will employ a part-time Development Officer to encourage and engage women to take on a fuller role in society and their family, including their children's education, and take up volunteering, further training and education opportunities for themselves.

We have been successful in securing a further year's Service Agreement with the Leicestershire County Council Adult Social Care Department for all our welfare rights work. Our thanks to Ranjana Kachhela and the Adult Social Care team for their continued support of our work. We are in the process of negotiating a Service Agreement with Charnwood Borough Council, and are forming excellent working relationships with their officers, Tom Kiernan, Michael Hopkins and John Lenny.

We have continued to support placement students from local schools and colleges and also have several volunteers who are with us throughout the year and some that come in when particular events are being organised e.g. Youth conferences and the Charnwood Mela.

Particular thanks to Lu Li, Victoria Clark and Elizabeth Rye who are helping us currently with preparing information to mark 40 years of our organisation's existence and work and to Leila Gao who is helping with our case files.

Our continued thanks to Anne Williams, our Chair, who has guided us through yet another interesting year, and to Trevor Shaw, our Treasurer, who has had to cope with necessary but challenging and difficult funding applications as well as keeping our finances on target. Thanks also to Varsha Parmar who so efficiently services our meetings as well as the work added by her secondment.

Finally, thanks to all our members, volunteers, trustees and staff for their work and support throughout the year and in particular to the local press, Loughborough Echo and the Leicester Mercury, for the on-going coverage of our work. Thanks also to all our funders for the grants to enable us to carry on this valuable work.

Daphne Beale - Managing Trustee

Business Plan sub group

This groups looks at the ever changing needs of the local communities and our work to reflect this in our business plan which is a live working document. The information is monitored and updated to be presented at our Annual General Meeting each year. This enables us to identify the gaps in service and look for funding sources to deliver the service. Our research helped us to apply to the Lloyds TSB Foundation for a project working with South Asian Women.

Another gap identified is support on hate incidents/crime and our discussions with the Charnwood borough Council, Police and other relevant bodies has highlighted this as a much needed service. Currently we are applying to the Equalities & Human Rights Commission under their grants programme.

Daphne Beale

Marketing Publicity & PR sub group

Our Marketing, Publicity & PR Sub Group consists of 3 elected members at the AGM and members from the Board of Trustees. This last year the elected members at the AGM were Patricia Pinder, Councillor Amrat Bava and Adam Hartopp. Usha Solanki, Linda Shaw and I were the Trustees on this group. On behalf of HR&EC, I would like to express our thanks to them all for their support throughout the year.

The Group has been very active in identifying ways of raising awareness of issues of concern to the local communities and in line with our expanding remit to work on all equalities, bringing issues faced by particular groups to the attention of agencies, members and individuals.

We had a very successful Annual Public Lecture in October 2008, held at Loughborough University by invitation of the Vice Chancellor, where Jasvinder Sanghera, talked about forced marriages. This event was very well attended, particularly, by young women, and brought to the forefront issues that often happen but are not heard about. The Lecture quite rightly challenged everyone present, and was particularly appropriate as the first Public Lecture of Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood.

Our open general meeting in April 2009 also raised awareness of issues faced by students from the local Royal National Institute for Blind College and the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual & Transgender communities in the area.

We would like to thank the local press, particularly Loughborough Echo for the regular coverage we receive on our work. We are always seeking to recruit new members and welcome applications for either individual members or organisation to affiliate. We also have spaces for co-options to our Board of Trustees and several sub groups, so if anyone is interested in our work and wishes to get involved, please visit our newly developed website on www.humanrightsandequalitiescharnwood.org or ring the office on (01509) 261651.

Cllr Peter Lewis CC

Personnel Committee Report

The committee is responsible for seeing that the Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood

- 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.

The committee meets regularly to ensure its responsibilities are fulfilled and it reports to each Board meeting. 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.

Our thanks to Varsha Parmar who has continued to coordinate our work throughout the year and to our advice staff Kazi Mashud, Chayara Chowdhury, Amina Wadud and Minara Rahman. Chayara and Amina now work half their time with us and half with the Bangladesh Social Association following the closure of the Bangladeshi Ekota Project. Minara is our new Outreach Officer who has a remit to visit in their homes those people who cannot get in to the office .

We also have Khadijah Chowdhury continuing to work with us as the Link Worker from the Leicestershire County Council Learning Disability Partnership. Nadja Rein has also continued working with us part-time when we have youth conferences, projects and events such as the Charnwood Mela.

We are grateful to Charnwood Borough Council who gave us some extra funding to further the expansion of our work to cover all equalities; we have used this to second Varsha to pursue this work and invited Nadja Rein to work half time for us to cover some of the administrative work for 3 months.

Members of the Personnel Committee have continued annual appraisals for staff and made sure they have adequate training for their work and professional development. To back this each member of staff has a Trustee Mentor with whom they can meet whenever either feels the need. They also attend or have feedback from the regular staff meetings. We have also revised our policies in the light of professional expertise.

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

Daphne Beale - Managing Trustee/Member of Personnel.

Celebrating 40 years of service to the communities

1969 – 2009

The HR&EC was first established as the Loughborough & District Community Relations Council in the Borough of Charnwood in May 1969 (then known as “The Garden ”) and became the Charnwood Racial Equality Council in November 1996.

From 9 September 2008 it became the Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood (HR&EC), changing its name and remit to reflect the widening brief to work on all equalities in partnership with others.

Over the years the organisation, responding to the changing needs of the community and the need for specific services, has employed many long term and short term staff to offer advice and support to individual clients, community groups and statutory agencies.

Events have been planned to celebrate 40 years including a commemorative meal that was held in May 2009 at the Radmoor Centre, Loughborough College. Our thanks to the staff and students at the college for the excellent service and planning.

With our volunteers, Victoria Clark and Elizabeth Rye we are working on a booklet to capture our work and the changing needs of the local community in Charnwood which we hope to present at the Annual General Meeting together with an exhibition being put together by Lu Li, another volunteer.



Commemorative Meal at Radmoor Centre, Loughborough College 12/5/09

Membership

Hon President

The Mayor of Charnwood

Hon Vice President

Dr A Strachan

Hon Solicitor

Mr I Nicholson

Hon Treasurer

Mr T Shaw

Individual Members

Mr 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
Mr R Kershaw	Mr P Lewis
Ms M Mahmoud	Ms S Meredith Velado
Mr J Miah	Mrs N Morgan
Mrs B Newton	Mr S G Patel
Mrs P Pinder	Mr T Priestly
Mrs P Ranson	Mr A Reed
Mr M A Shahid	Mr T Shaw
Mr P Singh	Ms U Solanki
Dr A Strachan	Mrs J Vincent
Mr P Yeo	

Organisations

All Saints Parish Church	P Pinder	
Burleigh Community College	C Horsefall	
Charnwood Arts	K Ryan	
Charnwood Bangladeshi Society	M T Chowdhury	A Shahid
Charnwood Borough Council	J Cappleton D Green	G Gay P Ranson
Churches Together	D Beale	A Speight
Connexions Loughborough	E Rolfe	
Fearon Hall	Z Weatherly	
Geeta Bhawan	R Jalota	D Passi
Hate Incident Action Group	L Shaw	
Leics Adult Learning Service	V Watts	P Chowdhury
Leicestershire Libraries	L Howell	N Sakaria
Leics Teachers Assoc (NUT)	G Gay	
Limehurst High School	S Coneron	R Das
Loughborough Baptist Church	S Cramer	M Spreight
Loughborough College	A Williams	J Leivers
Loughborough Council of Faiths	F Catlin	M Graham
Loughborough Labour Party	N Stork	
Loughborough URC	D Beale	T Payne
Loughborough University	L Mansell	
Rendell Primary School	H Coleman	
St Peters ' Community Centre	D Bentley	L Shaw
Swaminarayan Hindu Mission	C Panchmatia	
Thurmaston Jagruti Group	S Valand	K Sharma
Turning Point	P Callanan	
Victim Support Leics North	D H Reed	M Hall
Voluntary Action Charnwood	N Lambert	S Frost

Welfare Rights and Immigration Report

1. Preface and Acknowledgements:

This report gives an outline of the work done by the Welfare Rights and Immigration Officer (WRIO) at the Human Rights and Equalities Charnwood (HR&EC) for the period from April 2008 to March 2009. This also highlights some of our achievements and successes and provides details of our service users.

The WRIO has successfully assisted Service Users to deal with their Welfare Benefits, Community and Social Care, Health & Hospital and Immigration matters. This service is now fully established in Charnwood and people from various ethnic minority backgrounds and of all ages regularly visit the HR&EC office.

At present the WRIO is providing Welfare Rights and Immigration Advice to Service Users face to face and by telephone and helps them with correspondence with various agencies such as Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council Adult and Social Care Services, Department of Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, Pension Service, Home Office 's UK Border Agency, Nationality Department, Inland Revenue for Child Benefits and Tax Credits etc.

Thanks to Ranjana Kachhela – the Contract officer at Leicestershire County Council 's Adult and Social Care Services for her support.

2. Activities and Achievements:

2.1 Meetings, Contacts and Liaison:

In order to enhance the services for clients, the WRIO established and maintained regular meetings, contacts and liaison with various statutory and non-statutory organisations:

- Pension Service
- Women 's Aid Loughborough
- Child Benefit Centre
- HM Inland Revenue
- Charnwood Health and Wellbeing Forum
- Primary Health Care Trust
- 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
- Immigration Advisory Service, Leicester
- Home Office – UK Border Agency
- OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner)
- Housing Benefits Working Group – Bridge Housing
- Advice UK

2.2 Publicity and Campaigns:

In order to inform the members of the community in Charnwood as well as other voluntary and statutory organisations about the continuation of the welfare rights support, information and advice work, letters were sent to relevant organisations. Up to date information on various issues has been published in the HR&EC 's newsletters and in the HR&EC 's website. A brief report is also produced at the Board of Trustees meeting.

2.3 Leicestershire Working Together:

The WRIO has been engaged with "Leicestershire Working Together" which is part of Leicestershire Together – the local strategic partnership organisation whose are:

- provide a voice for diverse communities in Leicestershire
- aid and encourage the building of positive relationships between diverse communities in Leicestershire
- assist the Leicestershire Together Partnership in ensuring the needs of all groups and individuals in Leicestershire are met, including improving access to health services, education and employment, and access to social facilities to improve quality of life
- raise awareness of equality, diversity and human rights in Leicestershire
- improve communication with, and between the diverse communities of Leicestershire and increase joint working between different groups
- challenge the Leicestershire Together partnership in a "critical friend" role, aiding decision making and improving communication between Leicestershire Together Partners and representatives on the group
- Provide a place where differences can be openly discussed and addressed
- Provide a place where policy makers can consult with representatives of diverse communities in Leicestershire, who can offer expert advice and drive improvements in service delivery

2.4 Leicestershire Adult and Social Care Voluntary Sector Forum:

The WRIO was also involved with Leicestershire Adult and Social Care Voluntary Sector Forum which is part of Leicestershire Adult and Social Care Service.

The Adult and Social Care Services main purpose is to deliver high quality Social Care Services to the people of Leicestershire in line with statutory responsibilities, corporate objectives and policies of the county council.

The Service commissions and provides these services in order to benefit, empower and safeguard vulnerable people to promote independence and maximise life chances and to contribute to the overall health of the community.

3. **Proposal to Leicestershire Social Care Service:**

As our present agreement was going to end in March 2009, the Welfare Rights and Immigration Officer has outlined a proposal to Leicestershire Social Care Services for the future of HR&EC 's Support, Information and Advice work.

Prioritised area of work will be to:

- Continue signposting and supporting people to access benefits and welfare advice and advocacy services.
- Continue arranging critical appointments e.g. Social Care and Community Care assessments, hospital, Leicestershire County council, Charnwood Borough Council.
- Continue Advising and providing practical assistance on Immigration matter for people who are in need.

Following submission a proposal and a consultation meeting, Leicestershire County Council have agreed to continue its funding until the end of March 2010 while a Service Level Agreement for a longer period is being processed.

4. Clients and Service Users:

The ethnic background of our service users is changing. There are still higher numbers of service users from South-Asian origin but there are a significant number of service users from other backgrounds such as European, Middle Eastern background who are going to be settled in Charnwood. The statistics at the end of this report show that, in the year 2008 – 2009, there were 88 Service Users from white, other than British, background have received our services.

5. Welfare Rights and Immigration Advice Work:

- 5.1 The services provided range from making phone calls to filling up various forms, writing letters, maintaining up-to-date case records and filing systems and continuously reviewing casework.
- 5.2 *The WRIO also provides advice, support, guidance and consultation involving and affecting ethnic minority communities in the Borough of Charnwood including some development work.*
- 5.3 Support, Information and Advice work is well established and it is going steadily. On average 5/6 Service Users visit HR&EC office on every working day and get help and support with their queries. The number of clients and service users we have dealt with in the year 2008 – 2009 is 1207 whereas in 2007 – 2008 the number was 973.

This is based on the number of clients coming to the office although some come with several queries. This gives a sustainable established number of service users at the HR&EC. The number of clients receiving services goes down when the WRIO is on leave or on training as there is no coverage available. The breakdown of the services are given in Tables at the end of this report.

6. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner 's (OISC):

In order to continue the Immigration Advice service, the WRIO has successfully completed the CPD 's online assessment test. The CPD courses contain both core and non-core modules. This scheme has been designed in conjunction with Open University 's Online Learning Platform for the OISC regulated advisers and started on 1st April 2008.

The scheme was introduced by the OISC to encourage and assist advisers in undertaking continuous learning in order that they are best able to assist their Service Users.

7. Training and Conferences:

7.1 The WRIO has attended a day long conference in London arranged by the Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) and a half day conference in London arranged by the OISC. Conference has mainly focussed on the issue of Legacy Cases held at the Home Office and introducing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points for all OISC regulated advisors.

7.2 WRIO has also attended a series of free training sessions on Asylum and Refugee issues in Leicestershire, Human Rights impact on Disabled and Older persons, Council Tax Enforcement Procedures etc. Training programmes have been provided free by Refugee Action Leicester, the Government Office in the East Midlands and Charnwood Borough Council.

8. Future of Advice and Information service work:

8.1 Welfare Rights has gradually become more and more complicated over time and we have witnessed a new set of complex rules such as the right to reside rules governing how European nationals can be entitled for welfare benefits. As a result we have had some successful decisions made by the Department of Work and Pensions and Charnwood Borough Council 's Benefit Service.

8.2 Currently HR&EC has Quality Mark – General help level from the Community Legal Service for providing welfare rights advice work. According to the statistics the number of queries relating welfare benefits is on the increase. There is a significant number of clients who have complex circumstances and they are in need of a specialist level of support to deal with their welfare benefits claims. This applies especially to review and appeal cases for Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Pension Credit etc.

8.3 So, it would be highly beneficial for service users, if the current Advice work is developed up to specialist level through appropriate training and by meeting other requirements set out by the Community Legal Service.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The Welfare Rights, Benefits system and Immigration and Nationality matters are very complex and daunting to the average service users. It is essential, if service users and clients are to receive their Welfare Benefits entitlements, that they receive appropriate Immigration advice and that the work of the WRIO continues to be recognised and valued by our funding bodies.

Statistics show that the advice work is now firmly established in the community and service users from various ethnic backgrounds are directly benefiting from its services.

10. Recommendations:

- A part-time Caseworker' s post made available to assist WRIO to cover the caseload while WRIO is on training or on leave.
- A part-time Administrative Support post made available to assist WRIO to comply with OISC 's and CLS 's regulatory requirements and to input information in the existing case management system.
- An ongoing commitment from the funding bodies.

Kazi Mashud

Welfare Rights/Immigration Officer.

Our service users often take the time and trouble to comment on our service and this year sent us 19 thank you cards. We also got chocolates, flowers and gifts that were passed to other community centres for funds raising purposes. Service users also have an opportunity to comment on the feedback form and a selection of the comments our service users made are given below:

- *Excellent service.. It was a difficult time for me and the service was immensely helpful. April 08.*
- *Given a great service, handled with care and concern. Sept 08.*
- *We could not believe the kindness and the help we received. If only all the benefit services could be as helpful. Feb 09.*

Casework Statistics

Nature of Cases/Queries	Total
Welfare Benefits	551
Housing and Accommodation	372
Immigration and Nationality	210
Social Services Support	61
Training/Education Support	41
Miscellaneous Support	247
Total Cases/Queries	1482

Gender Breakdown	Total	Disability Breakdown	Total
Male	737	Male	29
Female	470	Female	23
Total Number of service users	1207	Total	52

Ethnicity Breakdown

Total Number of Service Users

White (otherbackground)	88
Indian	387
Bangladeshi	452
African	45
Chinese	45
British	38
Pakistani	30
Other Asian Background	3
Caribbean	29
Other Ethnic Group	47
Not Stated	40
Total	1207

Liaison Officer ' s Report

In April 2008 the Bangladeshi Ekota Project was dissolved and the workers of the project Chayara Chowdhury, Amina Wadud and the Outreach Worker ' s post became direct employees of the two different organisations, which are Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood and the Bangladesh Social Association.

The Liaison Officers were positive about the transition and becoming the employees of both organisations. Both Chayara and Amina have now been in post with both organisation for the past year and feel that both the organisations have been very supportive to their job role.

Chayara and Amina deal with clients who are mainly from the Bangladeshi Community but have seen an increase in the number of clients from other Ethnic groups. Both the workers have seen an increase in the number of female clients seen from the Bangladeshi community. This is very positive as female clients were quite vulnerable and in the past did not access the service fully due to cultural reasons. As there are now two female workers readily available the female clients do not feel so threatened.

The work that Chayara Chowdhury and Amina Wadud carry out is as follows:

- Immigration
- Welfare Benefits
- Housing
- General Information

Timetable

Human Rights and Equalities Charnwood

	Monday	Wednesday
Chayara Chowdhury	1pm-4.30	9am-5pm
Amina Wadud	9am-1pm	

Recommendations

That the post of Bangladeshi Liaison Officer is made full time and that further funding is available for training.

Chayara Chowdhury
Amina Wadud
Liaison Officers

Liaison Work Statistics & Case Studies

Type of query	Number of queries
Immigration/nationality	217
Employment/education	24
Welfare benefits	380
Housing	241
Others	213
Total	1075

Age	Female	Male
Under 18	1	0
18-24	61	15
25-34	162	69
35-44	81	127
45-59	60	109
60+	116	118
Total	481	438

Ethnicity	Female	Male
Bengali	368	296
Gujarati	67	72
Punjabi	3	7
Others	43	63
Total	481	438

Case Study 1

Mr Y was receiving Incapacity Benefit but received a letter informing him that he no longer qualified. Mr Y started to panic and came into the HR&EC with a friend as he suffers from depression and various other illnesses.

We contacted Incapacity Benefit, explained the problem and put in a new claim. Mr Y was successful in receiving the appropriate benefit. We also claimed Disability Living Allowance which was successful and Mr Y received the middle rate for the mobility component and low rate for the care component.

Mr Y was very happy as he would never have known to apply for Disability Living Allowance and only learnt about it through coming into the HR&EC.

Case Study 2

Mr Z applied for his mother to visit the UK. The application was refused on the basis that Mr Z 's mother would not return back to her own country after 6 months, the duration of the visiting visa.

We appealed on behalf of Mr Z 's mother and were successful in getting entry clearance.

Outreach Officer' s Report

I started my job as an Outreach Officer in July 2008. After my induction period and clearance of my CRB check, I started seeing clients from August 2008.

It all started off quite slowly as the community had to be aware of this new service available and then start to use it.

The outreach service has proved to be very successful, especially for the elderly, disabled and vulnerable people who are unable to come to the office.

I have managed to help a number of people to apply for certain benefits, which they were not even aware of and are now receiving. I have assisted people to apply for home improvement grants and Warm Front grants. I have also made some referrals to Social Services.

I am providing continuous help to clients who due to the language barrier find it difficult to deal with financial, health and housing issues.

Since the start of my job, I have attended a number of welfare benefits training sessions to improve my knowledge of the different benefits. I have found them to be very useful and use the information gained to help clients access further services.

Outreach statistics

Type of query	Number of clients	Age	Male	Female
Welfare Benefits	103	25-34	0	14
Employment/Education	2	35-44	1	1
Housing related eg benefits	81	44-59	8	30
Personal (health, police, financial etc)	80	60+	57	58
Social Services referrals etc	15			

Contact with various agencies	Number of contacts	Ethnicity	Male	Female
Pension Service	36	Indian	11	17
Job Centre Plus	41	Bangladeshi	43	83
Inland Revenue	8	Pakistani	0	1
Charnwood Borough Council	38	Other	0	2
Social Services	14			

Outreach Case Studies

Mr M is 74 years old. He was receiving state pension and pension credit for himself and his wife. Mr M has been suffering from many health problems for a number of years but he was unaware that he could make a claim for attendance allowance as he actually did not know about his benefit. After I went to see him I helped him to make a claim for attendance allowance which he was awarded within a few weeks of claiming. I then helped him to apply for a disabled parking badge and this was also issued to him.

His wife was not receiving any benefits for herself. At the age of 62 she had not made a claim for state pension. As she has never worked she assumed that she would not be entitled to this. I got in touch with the pension service and they were able to advise me that Mrs M was entitled to state pension based on her husbands national insurance contributions.

I helped her to make a claim for state pension and her payments were backdated from her 60th birthday. She received a lump sum of over £4000.

Mrs C had fled from London with her two young children to get away from her violent husband. She had been a victim of domestic violence for about 2 years and then finally had the courage to leave him after getting the police involved. She is currently staying with relatives in Loughborough who contacted me to help her.

I got in touch with the job centre plus and helped her to make a claim for income support. I also helped her to update her details for child benefit and child tax credits. I then took Mrs C to Charnwood Borough Council to make a claim for housing. They advised that because Mrs C had just moved to Loughborough it could take longer to house her. I explained the situation that Mrs C was living with relatives in an over crowded house with her young children and it was very difficult for both her and her relatives to live this way for very long. The housing officer was able to take all the information into account and she is now on the waiting list.

She has shown a keen interest to take up some English language courses and also look for playgroups to send her son. I have been able to refer her to the relevant places.

Learning Disabilities Partnership Link Worker 's Report

Introduction

The Learning Disability project started at the Human Rights & Equalities Charnwood on 8th January 2007 and 2 years on the funding has been extended until the end of March 2010. The project has maintained its aim of working with learning disabled people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and carers of BME people across the Charnwood district, Leicestershire and East Midlands region.

The project has continued in the last two years ensuring that people with learning disability and their families or carers got the best possible outcome from the carer assessment and review processes as well as making people aware of the full range of support options available to them.

The project has been proven to make positive achievement on/outcome for individual lives through collecting information from individuals, carers and their families on why they do not use services and how to make services better. It has also helped health and social care professionals to understand the diverse cultural needs and change some of the practices of the service.

Who does the Link Worker work with?

The Link Worker has worked with staff from the community teams, people with learning disabilities and their families and carers in the Charnwood area as well as other parts of Leicestershire and the East Midlands.

This includes

- Social Workers from the Learning Disability Community team
- ' Adult Learning Services ' from the Transition Team at Rawlins Community College
- Mencap Outreach Workers
- Other Mencap staff
- Black and Minority Ethnic Community Development Workers
- Glebe House
- Multi Faith organisations
- Age Concern Leicestershire and Rutland
- Ansaar Centre – this is a service for black and minority ethnic people in Leicester.

Support for individual, carers and families

The Link worker

- has supported the services to maintain communication with individual, families and carers and has communicated across some communities, in English, Bengali, Gujarati and Urdu languages, respecting their socio-cultural sensitivities.

- has been able to support young people and the family to plan transition when the young person was leaving school and moving from children's services to adult learning services during the transition process
- has worked closely together with the social workers and other professionals in the transition team providing information and training on cultural awareness.
- has acted in the role of an advocate for families on many occasions, and has also supported the course co-ordinators in prioritising the learner's needs.
- has provided families with emotional support acting as a link worker.

Through this effective communication and the full range of support on cultural understanding the Link worker has been able to share information with community teams, direct payment teams and the transition team staffs which contributed to making assessments and reviews easier to follow.

This has encouraged a closer working relationship between agencies and departments to ensure good support and help was available for individuals and their families to make a good informed choice that is appropriate and suitable for their need.

This has also helped to identify what contacts were most valuable, what information people needed most often and what the common barriers were for the individual and their carers.

How does the Link Worker do this?

The Link worker has taken different approaches, from arranging special meetings for the community members to giving presentations, talks and training to staff in the community service teams on cultural issues and raising learning disability awareness within the community.

The outcome to the meetings was that people who were not aware of carers support available are now aware of it. Learning disability issues are not usually discussed within groups or communities therefore, on request, information, documents and leaflets were made available in different languages.

Meetings were arranged with social workers to assess reports on family carers' issues and related matters. This enabled the needs of individual and family carers to be met on a one-to-one basis at home and at centres. It gave individuals information and reassurance on services available for them in connection with specific needs.

The Link worker has continued supporting and working closely with the voluntary and independent services offering advice on culturally appropriate services and signposting both the social worker and the family to the relevant agencies.

The Link worker has helped professionals through minimising language barriers and ensuring that the family can directly contact the worker should they need to.

Often services were unable to fund a translator/interpreter and without the Link Worker 's support they would have been unable to commence any communication.

This effective working relationship with professionals and families allowed a smooth transition and a positive outcome for the young person and their family.

Challenges

Research showed that there are lots of things that stop people with learning disabilities from black and minority ethnic communities getting good support and good services.

This can be for cultural, religious and social reasons, for example some people believe that having a disability is a punishment for bad things they did in another life, so they don 't think it is right to ask for help and support.

Some people believe that women should not talk about personal things, especially if there is a man there. So they don 't tell people about their disability, or their disabled child.

Some services don 't know much about the black and minority ethnic communities, so they were not offering services in the way that those people needed them.

Some services expected Asian people to fit into their service, rather than change the way they work.

Some things are about religion, some are about the way communities expect people to behave, some are about what families expect. These things are part of the person 's culture.

Overall, it means that many of the black and minority ethnic people do not use services or get the right support.

Promotion & Great Achievements!

Cultural Awareness Handbook

The Link worker produced a cultural awareness handbook to serve as a guideline for the community staff to learn more about the diverse cultures. It provided some basic information about the different communities, their cultural norms, religions and needs and enabled staff providing services to people in their own home or organisation to feel more confident in providing appropriate services to meet the needs of all communities.

The guidelines on the handbook were tools to learn about different cultural etiquettes and to shape future policies that promoted cultural awareness, tolerance, harmony and mutual respect amongst the diverse populations.

The Link worker received excellent feedback on this handbook as it was the first ever useful booklet health and social care staff had seen, no other has been produced before of this kind. The Link worker received feedback to say that it has greatly helped the services across the City of Leicester and the County of Leicestershire.

It has now been widely circulated and used across the regions in the City and County. Helen Mycock of the Valuing People Regional Programme Lead from the Department of Health and NHS East Midlands has put it onto the national Valuing People website as an example of really good work.

Feedback & Complimentary Letters

The Link worker has received complimentary letters on how useful the work has been when working with some of the teams in the Charnwood and East Midland areas.

Team professionals have stated that in the future they would like see more strategic partnership work with the Link worker in particular for promoting inclusion of the Black and Minority Ethnic people with learning disabilities and in ways of person centred learning as well as training and information publicity.

BME Awareness Event

In 2009, the Link worker organised a BME awareness event it was a great success. It was the second event happening since the project started in the Charnwood area.

The aim of the event was to provide information and chat to service users and professionals on a one-to-one basis.

It was a fairly well-attended day and the feeling was positive. Yet again it was a great opportunity to do an event like this as it gave the community people a chance to socialise and allowed putting the right message across to them.

Learning Disabilities Partnership Board Presentation

The massive highlight and achievement of the BME Link Workers project this year was doing a presentation at the board meeting on 4 June 2009 at County Hall. This was to present the BME project works finding and outcomes and other future plans of the project, in order to secure future funding.

In completion of the presentation, a vote was taken in at the partnership board meeting with members voting, if they would like for the project to continue or not. The result proved positive high numbers of board members agreed upon wanting the project to keep up with the good work and continue to fund the project for another year.

Future plans

Having established some of the gaps in services, link worker feels many of the needs, difficulties and wishes of Black and Minority Ethnic carers reflect the views of all carers from all backgrounds experiencing difficulties in accessing a break and often lacking knowledge of services and support available locally.

Therefore the Link worker would like to continue to develop the Black and Minority Ethnic Link Workers Project. This group of people are those amongst the Hard –to –Reach groups and need to start early in the development process through working for the future with children who are moving into transition going from children 's services to adult services.

What the Link worker most wants to do is carry on being a Champion for Black and Minority Ethnic people with learning disabilities and their families, and friends across Charnwood and other parts of Leicestershire.

The Link worker hopes to help and support the Valuing People team in securing future funds to recruit more workers to do the same role as the Black and Minority Ethnic Link worker across the county.

Conclusion

Since the project has been running people from the Bangladeshi and Indian communities have benefited tremendously through raising awareness. The project has been able to give advice and help to professionals and the community people in a number of areas from transition process to adult learning and independence skills.

Overall, once again, the Link workers project has proven to be highly valued amongst the community team professionals and carers, especially families who were not previously aware of the Link workers service.

In summary, there have been great achievements in this project, with the Link worker 's interaction and support for the local people and community who lacked information about their entitlements and services, and knowledge about how to access services - even though some carers were fluent in English.

If you want to know more about the learning disability project then please contact:
Khadijah Chowdhury

Link Worker for Black and Minority Ethnic people with Learning Disabilities

E-mail: khadijah@humanrightsandequalitiescharnwood.org

Learning Disabilities Partnership
BME Awareness Event
Held at the Moira Youth and Community Centre 19/3/2009



Training Course 'Paparazzi of Youth Projects'

A training course 'Paparazzi of Youth Project' was conceived by a group involved in a Youth in Action programme in Azerbaijan in January 2008. The course was designed to develop the skills of youth leaders in promoting and disseminating the results of youth projects via the mass and alternative medias.

HR&EC successfully applied for funding to the British Council to host the training course from 28 September to 5 October 08. The course was designed to address both practical and theoretical learning and involved production work towards a magazine and a series of short films which were completed by participants over the week. We designed the infrastructure for a new website, organised and held a press conference and considered the development of internal and externally focused media policies. We also began to explore issues of compliance in relation to media related work and promotion.

The week was rich in inter-cultural learning and participants were introduced to the rich cultural diversity of Loughborough. The aim of the training course was to reach beyond the course itself to establish and build contact and support between participants and participant's organisations and to invite other youth organisations to make use of the web based resources that were developed.

We had participants from Moldova, Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus, Armenia, Portugal, Poland, Georgia, UK, Greece and Bulgaria.

Local impact included engagement of staff and visitors from Fearon Hall, Charnwood Arts, the Mayor and the Mayor's Office at CBC, the Loughborough Echo, Radio Oak FM, 3M, St Peters Community Centre and several individual youths who volunteered in the event. Participants visited the Echo Newspaper offices, Navratri celebrations held at the St Peter's Community Centre, a reception hosted by the Mayor of Charnwood and the various local eating places.

***We would like to acknowledge the hard work put in by
Nadja Rein, Co-ordinator for the event,
Kevin Ryan and the team at Charnwood Arts and
Zoe Whetherly, Project Manager at Fearon Hall.***

Press conference arranged at Fearon Hall with Oak FM, 3M and Loughborough Echo



Participants working on a project



Youth Conference 28 September 2008

PAPARAZZI OF YOUTH PROJECTS

a week long training course in the UK



This Training Course was conceived by a group involved in a Youth in Action programme in Azerbaijan in January 2008. The course was designed to develop the skills of youth leaders in promoting and disseminating the results of youth projects via the mass and alternative medias. The course was designed to address both practical and theoretical learning and involved production work towards this magazine and a series of short films which were completed by participant over the week. We also designed the infrastructure for a new website, organised and held a press conference and considered the development of internal focused and

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Public Lecture

Jasvinder Sanghera

“ Forced Marriages & Honour based violence - A National Issue ”



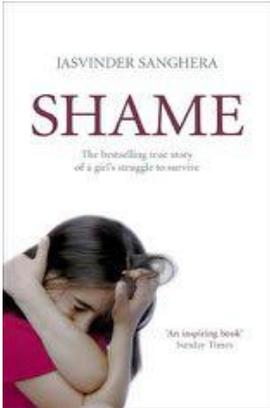
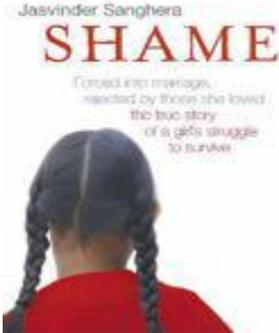
Our Public Lecture, held on 13 October at the Cope Auditorium, was an occasion where we showed that our concern and help could bring about real debate and change. Jasvinder Sanghera, our Guest Speaker, deserved the widest public audience and we were very pleased to see that the event was very well attended and to see the range of the audience which included young people from all backgrounds as well as many high ranking officers from the Police, Charnwood Borough Council and local voluntary and statutory bodies.

Jasvinder Sanghera, author of bestseller “Shame” and founder member of Karma Nirvana, Asian Women’s Project spoke about her own experiences and addressed the issue of ‘Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence – a National Issue’ and the effects of this on society.

Cllr. Peter Lewis, Vice-Chair of HR&EC said, “This was an incredibly moving evening. Many were only slightly aware of these issues. But we can’t and must not ignore the criminality of what is going on. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: ‘Marriage shall only be entered into with the free and full support of the intending spouses’. That consent is required by all world religions. What we heard at this lecture was as shocking as slavery was to similar audiences two hundred years ago. UK law is to change to deal with this injustice shortly, but we must all work to support the well-being and physical safety of those women and men who’ve been so oppressed.”

Vanita Gohil, group leader of Vibes, a young girls group in Loughborough who attended with the group said, “The girls found the talk very inspirational and an eye opener. It is an issue that needs to be addressed by everyone and Jasvinder is seen as a role model for young women to speak up about such issues.”

We would like to thank the Vice Chancellor and Loughborough University for their kind support and invitation to the campus for this event.



Jasvinder Sanghera



Kazi Mashud, Anne Williams, Varsha Parmar, Jasvinder Sanghera & Peter Lewis

Charnwood Mela 2008
Town Centre hosted Charnwood Mela 2008
“ Charnwood Together ”



This year's Mela took place on Bank holiday Sunday 24th August in Loughborough Town Centre for first time.

Charnwood Mela 2008 was a partnership event between Charnwood Borough Council, which was the main funder of the event, Charnwood Racial Equality Council, which was the lead organisation and Charnwood Arts, with involvement from local community groups, agencies and individuals.

In addition, there were fairground rides, food and specialist market stalls and the usual friendly relaxed and harmonious atmosphere.

Whilst the core of the Mela remains a celebration of Asian culture, entertainment included a wide variety of music and dancing from across the world. The main underlying theme of the Mela, that of encouraging people from different nationalities & cultures to work together in Peace & Harmony, was clearly achieved.

Varsha Parmar, one of the Mela organiser 's said "Holding the event in the middle of town centre made it more inclusive to the general members of public who come into the town centre and who may not have otherwise attended the event. It was great seeing people who had not heard that the Mela was taking place, coming into the town centre and being surprised to see all the activities and joining in. We hope this format will be built on to make the Charnwood Mela bigger and better for future years. "

Kevin Ryan of Charnwood Arts said "The Mela attracted some exciting performances from local groups as well as performers from around the country, a big thank you to all involved. "

Cllr Peter Lewis also commented how good it was to have the Mela celebration in the heart of town, and be able at the same time to link with the Olympic Celebrations, which also brought people from all over the world together. "This was the ideal occasion to celebrate what unites us, and look to a positive future for the people of Charnwood. I hope the success of the Chinese Olympics will be the spur for even greater achievements by all our communities, especially in developing the sporting capabilities of our young people. "

If you are interested in getting involved in organising future events or would like to participate or have a stall please contact us on (01509) 261651 or email to info@humanrightsandequalitiescharnwood.org.

Charnwood Mela 2008



Dancer from the Maher Samaj

Irish Dancers



Speech for the Olympic celebrations

Other work

Loughborough Council of Faiths (L CoF)

We are continuing to work very closely with the Loughborough Council of Faiths and supported their first ever Multi Faith Pantomime, “Dick Whittington, Lord Mayor of Loughborough” which was performed at the Town Hall on 24th March 2009 to a packed audience of over 400 people from all the diverse communities of Charnwood and surrounding areas. The actual performance brought together members of the major faith communities locally.

In October we supported LCoF during One World Week including the launch of the week held at John Storer House which was very well attended. Members of the faith groups said a small prayer and talked about the relevance of a particular symbol from their faith.

We also support other events hosted by the Loughborough Council of Faiths during the year, e.g. the annual Feast of Faiths, to bring together people from the various faiths and of no faith.

The Faiths Forum for the East Midlands (FFEM)

107 Moira Street Loughborough LE11 1AU

The Faiths Forum for the East Midlands was formed in 2004 as a response to the need to appoint a second Faiths Seat Holder to the Regional Assembly alongside the appointment from the East Midlands Churches Forum. Loughborough Council of Faiths was a founding member of FFEM.

As a response to 'Face to Face and Side by Side', the Government has set up vital regional bodies. With government funding the FFEM is linking with the region's inter and multi faith bodies and providing access points for their voices. We now have in post a Development Officer and a Finance and Admin Officer and will shortly appoint a CEO. The FFEM is open to all inter and multi faith groups and initiatives within the region. We want to hear the views of the faith sector on specific policies and to support inter and multi faith groups in the region. We hope to bring people together through meetings, events, newsletters and email.

Charnwood Refugees and Asylum Seekers Forum

We carry on supporting, and are part of the multi forum of agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers. Issues and concerns are shared at the meetings and we invite people from agencies to respond to any issues raised.

For more details on any of these groups please ask for their reports.

East Midlands Racial Equality Consortium

I have been asked by EMREC to offer a short outline of the work and visions for the organisation and the future challenges it faces in meeting the growing importance of tackling inequality and diversity issues in the East Midlands region.

It certainly has been a pleasure working with EMREC over the last few years. During this time EMREC and its constituent membership has grown from strength to strength. The quality of experience, skills and knowledge that EMREC holds within its membership is second to none. The talent it has developed amongst new team members has offered opportunities for professionalism as well as career development that exceeds beyond normal expectations and certainly the work done on a 1-2-1 basis with individual members of staff far exceeds the general level of expectation within the VCFS.

Over the last twelve months EMREC has begun its Equalities programme to promote government legislation and the Human Rights Act as a central focus for its work. This started with many of the former race equality councils to review their direction of travel and by reconstituting themselves as equality and human rights agencies; thereby working as a collective network of support agencies to promote diversity, equality and human rights. This first major change in twenty years brought with it many difficult decisions where local communities feared that the race agenda may become lost in this review. EMREC played an important part in assisting and supporting its membership to undertake the review and to rebuild and continue to support confidence with community stakeholders who fear that race may become a 'lost agenda'.

The targets which EMREC has been concerned with cover an expansion of their work programme to include the Traveller and Gypsy community, young people, disabled people and LGB&T communities. The development and growth of good community relations has been at the heart of EMREC's work and continues to remain so.

EMREC continues to build strong partnerships where these have not existed in the past and to encourage greater collaborative working to follow through in to a single gateway for the delivery of diversity, equality and human rights work for the organisation and its membership.

Unfortunately last year EMREC failed to secure any grant aid and this hampered some of the work they were able to undertake. However with the support of its membership EMREC has continued to remain ahead of many similar organisations and continued to offer capacity building support and infrastructure development across the region.

The next year is an important milestone for the organisation, it aims to develop links with new and emerging organisations and agencies such as migrant communities, socially disadvantaged groups from across the ethnic divide and Age discrimination infrastructure organisations all of whom are working in the region.

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission has been a strong advocate of EMREC and since its 2007 conference on Human Rights in Northampton, work has progressed on assisting the development of the Regional Champions Forum which is presently led by Dr Stuart Young Director for the East Midlands Regional Assembly and the EHRC. This work is an important part of regional infrastructure support which aims to bring together a selected number of senior and chief officers from across the region to enable effective leadership to promote diversity, equality and human rights in the public sector.

I look forward to next year 's challenges that EMREC has planned and I am confident that the work they will undertake will build upon the already excellent programme of activity.

Dr. Mohammed P. Aslam

Associate Consultant for EMREC on behalf of VIVITAS

Project 22 and the Equalities, Human Rights & Social Regeneration Conference 2008

The core aim of the conference was to explore the equalities and human rights debate in order to assist and support professionals working in the public sector to effectively tackle discrimination and social exclusion.

The British Institute for Human Rights played an enormously important role in building the understanding of participants on this subject and through the two sessions they were able to offer case study examples on how the Act is applied within the delivery aspects of the public services.

The participation within the seminar events varied from local professionals who attended and some as far away as Wales and Scotland who expressed an interest to attend.

The key aspects of learning at these events were framed under the following headings:

- Understanding of human rights based approaches (HRBAs) being the process by which human rights principles and standards are made real in people 's lives
- Exploration of myths, stereotypes and ideas surrounding human rights
- Knowledge of the origins and key features of human rights
- Understanding of the principles of human rights
- Understanding of the UK legal institution/practice context
- Understanding of the relationship between the International/regional/UK legislation
- Understanding of the difference between rights and how rights work
- Knowledge of the Human Rights Act and the new EHRC
- Exploration of the relationship between human rights and equality
- Understanding of how human rights how it work in practice

For more information about the work of EMREC please visit: www.equalitiesem.org

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