

BECAUSE WE'RE WORTH IT

Conference Report including An A – Z of Equalities Legislation, Policy, Strategies and Toolkits

**The Regional Forum
Winter 2007-2008**

To suggest additions for updates of this Equalities briefing please
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An Introduction

At **Because We're Worth It** we explored how the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can promote equality and value diversity in its work. This final conference report highlights some of the many relevant issues and ideas discussed on the day. It also includes a digest of and signposts to some of the principal policies, strategies and structures designed to support and advance the Equalities and Diversity agendas.

Because We're Worth It was the Regional Forum's annual policy conference - this year themed on equality and diversity. At **Because We're Worth It** the Regional Forum brought together VCS organisations from across the Yorkshire and Humber region to re-assert these values and to examine how, if these are our values, how does this affect the way we do things? Our conference was just one of the many events around equalities issues during 2007 which was the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Whilst it is extremely important to highlight issues through high profile campaigns, it is also important to "get it right" year in, year out, and **Because We're Worth It** took a serious look at the voluntary sector's role in promoting equality and valuing diversity, both in our every day work and our future direction.

The conference took its departure point from recognising that equalities and diversity are already core values in the sector: the key is how best to use these values to tackle the inequalities that persist in our region. Focusing on the policy implications for our region, the conference also provided a draft digest of and signposts to some of the principal policies, strategies and structures designed to support and advance the equalities and diversity agendas active in our region.

Equality from a Human Rights Perspective

Our keynote speaker for the day was Joy Warmington, Chief Executive of the Birmingham based organisation BRAP: Making Equality Work for Everyone.

Joy outlined how BRAP's approach to equality is now founded on principles of human rights, and how this has been successful in addressing many of the inconsistencies of representational models which can tend to "de-personalise" through generalisations and identify people only through the labels, or groups to which they belong.

Joy spoke about how BRAP has evolved in the last 5 years, and that now its mission is "to help people, communities and the organisations that serve them to turn equality into a reality". It is also about helping communities and organisations to identify what the underlying causes to inequality are. BRAP aims to help organisations find the right questions, in order to help them work on the right solutions. For example, were the Bradford riots really about differences in race, or were they more about poor quality housing or limited opportunities for all the people in those areas of Bradford?

Equalities and the Sector

Joy's speech was entitled: *"Me, them, us. Our Shared Values: Are we living up to them?"* It proved to be a thought-provoking and challenging presentation, questioning the sector about, despite our long history of campaigning on behalf of the 'underdogs', whether we can still claim to be at the forefront of how equalities are put into practice. Joy talked about the VCS' role in working for social justice and how by updating our thinking we might be able to tackle this differently. The

recognition that everyone has their own culture but that people often see multiculturalism as being about other people. This encouraged us to challenge some of our beliefs about equality and how we look at difference. The human rights approach encourages looking at the rights of each individual. Everyone has a right to access services and we often use the differences between people to fight for these rights. The human rights approach encourages us to get away from perpetuating the practice of labelling people by looking at the issues rather than which group someone belongs to. Joy's address was particularly pertinent in the context of the Government's move towards a single equalities bill and the setting up of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights

Joy's insightful presentation provided a rich forum for discussion between delegates who grappled with the question: "What would a human rights based approach to equality mean for your work?"

Table Discussions

Following Joy's insightful presentation, delegates took part in lively table discussions. Each table was tasked to debate the question:

What effect would a human rights based approach to equality have on your work?

Some of the key points raised in the discussions were:

- Taking a human rights approach to tackling inequality could help as it would encourage a focus on the right of everyone to be treated fairly and decently. Such an approach would help us to get closer to the real issues affecting people.
- The Government's current approach which focuses on six equalities strands could perpetuate difference rather than promoting inclusion. A more inclusive approach would focus on the rights of everyone. We should be working towards ensuring that everyone can access good quality services instead of constantly focusing on differences between groups of people.
- Inequality often has deep seated structural roots. This means we need to take a longer term view to challenge and change the systems. This should include a programme of education about the value of equality and diversity and to increase the understanding of human rights. There are resource and capacity issues in the sector's ability to deliver such a programme. We also need to acknowledge that this will take time, there are no overnight solutions. This is a long term strategic challenge.
- Legislation has a key role to play in protecting people against discrimination. There is an abundance of discrimination legislation and its most powerful role is to protect us when things go wrong. As a sector, we should be focusing on preventing things from going wrong and ensuring that discrimination legislation is implemented effectively.
- Great inequalities still persist in this country. The voluntary sector has a significant role to play in finding new ways to tackle inequality and support those people who are most disadvantaged. In a funding environment which increasingly shapes the activity of the sector, we need to consider how we can influence thinking on equalities.

Soap Boxes

With our short soapbox presentations, we aimed to give a flavour of the range of equalities issues facing society today. All our soapbox speakers presented compelling arguments for taking a more inclusive, holistic approach to equality. Speaking from three different equality areas, each presenter challenged us to think about how we can address discrimination, disadvantage and unfairness. They advocated that championing diversity and recognising the human rights of everyone can help us to work towards a fairer, more equal society.

Zoë Smith - Gender

Zoë Smith manages the ReGender project at Oxfam UK Poverty Programme. The aim of the project is to raise awareness of gender issues in regeneration. Oxfam has been involved in gender equality work for 30 years.

Equality is about social justice and fairness. It's a basic human right for all men and women to be treated equally and to have access to good quality, effective services. To achieve real social justice we have to consider each individual who is disadvantaged in accessing services and opportunities and work towards a situation where active participation is universally available.

Issues relating to gender equality have a significant impact on a wide range of social situations. For example, tackling poverty without addressing gender inequality would not be possible. Successfully addressing gender inequality will have far reaching social effects. By working towards true gender equality we are working, in tandem, towards getting other equality issues right.

Helen Jones, Gypsies and Travellers

Helen Jones is Director of the Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE) and is a founder member of the Northern Network of Travelling People. GATE is a community members' association for Gypsies and Travellers who live in, or resort to, Leeds. It is working to find ways for Gypsies and Travellers to have their voices heard.

The freedom to choose is a basic human right. For Gypsies and Travellers, the closure of many stopping places and persistent barriers in accessing education and health services strike at the heart of their right to choose their way of life.

Nobody denies that it is right and just that Gypsies and Travellers are offered protection under discrimination law. However, many of the barriers to effective services faced by Gypsies and Travellers are also faced by other people living in our society. Such discrimination and disadvantage must therefore be tackled wherever it exists and whomever it affects, irrespective of social status.

Often barriers to services are approached by focusing on the perceived different needs of various communities and interest groups. However, a human rights approach could offer a more effective means of tackling these barriers. By focusing on fundamental human rights rather than specific communities would ensure that the needs of all people, including Gypsies and Travellers, are being addressed. This alternative approach would reduce the need to constantly single people out and draw attention to differences within society and could focus much more on addressing the issues.

Robert Beard, Religion

Robert Beard is Policy Officer at the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber.

There is an increasing recognition within Government that faith plays a central role in modern society. Faith organisations and groups have much to contribute towards building community cohesion and promoting shared values of respect and fairness in neighbourhoods.

The “Faith Matters” programme and the “Understanding Faith” publication both offer ways of increasing understanding of faith communities and their contribution to society. Faith brings people together through a set of common beliefs, which underpins their work. Faith groups, whilst being particularly active in their own communities, can also contribute to other areas of equality. By developing relationships between faith groups and other agencies it is possible to build communities which feel confident about tackling inequality and shaping a fairer society.

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The Equalities Briefing Winter 2007-2008

REGIONAL

Regional Structures Guide for Yorkshire and the Humber

This guide is a listing of the key structures in both the statutory and voluntary sectors in Yorkshire and the Humber.

🔗 www.regionalforum.org.uk/publications_resources/information_guides.php

Regional Networks Guide for Yorkshire and the Humber

This guide is a listing of key voluntary and community sector (VCS) networks in Yorkshire and the Humber, most of which are working within one of the equality strands.

🔗 www.regionalforum.org.uk/publications_resources/information_guides.php

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Regional Panel

The purpose of the BME VCS Regional Panel is to provide a strategic voice on behalf of the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector in Yorkshire and the Humber. Information on the activities of the Panel can be found at:

🔗 www.bme.org.uk/panel

The BME Information Service

The BME Information Service is a website that provides effective communication links to promote a sustainable regional and sub-regional Black and Minority Ethnic community and voluntary sector. Visit the interactive website to share news and information relevant to Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Yorkshire and Humber.

🔗 www.bme.org.uk

Yorkshire and Humber Regional Equalities Network

The Regional Forum is currently supporting the development of a Regional Equalities Network.

We see this as a crucial opportunity for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the region to develop a coherent and linked approach to equalities and also to ensure that we can relate to and influence the work of the new Commission, particularly in terms of how it operates in the regions. Alongside developing our existing support for regional

engagement networks, the Regional Forum is keen to develop the sector's capacity to join up to tackle discrimination by championing the development of a regional equalities network.

By bringing together VCS networks we are seeking to facilitate shared learning and understanding of the nature of inequalities and its impacts.

What happens next?

Following an event on Monday 2nd July 2007 the Regional Forum is now taking forward the development of the Regional Equalities Network. Delegates who attended the conference will be contacted by the end of February to be kept up to date about how to get involved. The network and equalities egroup was launched in January 2008.

If you would be interested in being part of the Regional Equalities Network contact **Ruth Beattie** on **0113 394 2300** or by emailing ruth.beattie@regionalforum.org.uk

Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Disability Network

The Regional Forum is currently working alongside partners to support the development of a regional network for disability organisations in the region. An online mapping survey of disability organisations and groups in the region is now being analysed and will be used by a steering group to identify a way forward for the network.

If you are interested in this work, or being a member of a disability network, please contact Gopal Lama at the Regional Forum at gopal.lama@regionalforum.org.uk

Regional Research

From Yorkshire and the Humber:

Lesbian Gay and Bisexual

Report of the Support Needs Audit of LGB (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual) Groups and Organisations in the Yorkshire and Humber Region, Equity Partnership 2007

This report gives the results of the audit of support needs for LGB groups in Yorkshire and the Humber. AS the first study of this type in the region it provides a useful insight into the support needs of LGB groups and recommendation for action.

The report is available from the Equity Partnership website.

 www.equitypartnership.org.uk

GYPsIES and TRAVELLERS

The Housing Support Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York

Seven local authorities (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield, North Yorkshire and York) jointly commissioned a research project to investigate the housing related support needs of Gypsies and Travellers across West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and York.

This is available at:

www.travellersinleeds.co.uk

Yorkshire and the Humber Sub-Sectoral Research

This research has been funded by Capacitybuilders and will identify sub-sectors that would benefit from further investment in either generic or specific infrastructure services. The final report will suggest ways that these additional infrastructure support needs could be met.

The term sub-sectors relates to the subject or theme rather than the form of delivery. Sub-sectors mean “groupings” of organisations with a shared theme or specialism, for example older people, disability, LGB and working with offenders. The report is being used by Capacitybuilders to assist them in making decisions about potential for future funding streams for sub-sectors.

This report is available from www.regionalforum.org.uk or contact ruth.beattie@regionalforum.org.uk

An A – Z of Equalities Legislation, Policy, Strategies and Toolkits

Age Proofing Toolkit (Regional Strategies and Demographic Ageing)

This toolkit provides a briefing and questions focusing on the issues of demographic ageing in the context of regional and cohesion policy. It is a tool for regional agencies and organisations from all sectors to consider the issues of an ageing population when preparing strategies

🔗 www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/Documents/regions_age_proofing_toolkit.pdf

British Institute of Human Rights - BIHR

BIHR is a human rights organisation that challenges inequality and injustice in everyday life. This includes supporting people to use human rights principles and standards to improve their own lives and as a tool for organisations to develop more effective public policy and practice.

🔗 www.bihar.org

Commission for Equalities and Human Rights- CEHR

The new Equality and Human Rights Commission opened on 1 October 2007. The new commission is working to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good relations, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society. The new commission brings together the work of the three previous equality commissions and also takes on responsibility for the other aspects of equality: age, sexual orientation and religion or belief, as well as human rights.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission acts not only for the disadvantaged, but for everyone in society, and can use its new enforcement powers where necessary to guarantee people's equality. It also has a mandate to promote understanding of the Human Rights Act.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established under the Equality Act 2006 – accountable for its public funds, but independent of government.

🔗 www.equalityhumanrights.gov.uk

Commission on Integration and Cohesion

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion is a fixed term advisory body, announced by Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly, on 24 August 2006. The Commission considered how local areas can make the most of diversity while being able to respond to the tensions it may cause. This site will provide you with information about the work of the Commission.

🔗 www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk

“Our Shared Future” the Commission report is available to download:

🔗 www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/Our_final_report.aspx

The Disability Discrimination Act

In April 2005 a new Disability Discrimination Act was passed by Parliament, which amends or extends existing provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, including:

- making it unlawful for operators of transport vehicles to discriminate against disabled people
- making it easier for disabled people to rent property and for tenants to make disability-related adaptations
- making sure that private clubs with 25 or more members cannot keep disabled people out, just because they have a disability
- extending protection to cover people who have HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis from the moment they are diagnosed
- ensuring that discrimination law covers all the activities of the public sector
- requiring public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people

Some of the new laws - including the increased protection for people who have HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis - came into force in December 2005. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website has more about the December 2005 changes.

🔗 <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/employers/dda/>

Disability Equality Duty

The Disability Equality Duty is a new way of helping the public sector make a real, positive change to the lives of disabled users and employees, ensuring that they are treated fairly and equally.

The Disability Rights Commission has produced a wealth of information for public authorities and disabled people on the duty which is available here.

🔗 http://www.drc.org.uk/employers_and_service_provider/disability_equality_duty.aspx

Discrimination Law Review

In order to simplify and modernise discrimination law and to make it more effective, the Government committed to introduce a Single Equality Bill. In February 2005 the Government launched the Discrimination Law Review (DLR) to undertake a fundamental review of discrimination and legislation in Great Britain, and bring forward proposals for a clearer and more streamlined equality legislation framework, which produces better outcomes for those who experience disadvantage. The DLR was set up alongside an independent Equalities Review, chaired by Trevor Phillips, to look at the underlying societal and cultural causes of disadvantage and inequality.

The Diversity Driver

The Diversity Driver is a self-assessment tool that helps you to focus on and agree what should be the diversity priorities for your organisation. It's based upon the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence model and it provides a base line upon which to build plans and check progress.

www.fairplaypartnership.org.uk/diversitydriver.html

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 make it unlawful to discriminate in employment and vocational training on the grounds of religion or belief. The Religion or Belief Regulations apply to discrimination on grounds of any religion, or religious or philosophical belief. They cover discrimination on grounds of perceived as well as actual religion or belief

Equal Pay Act 1970

The Equal Pay Act 1970 makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate between men and women in terms of their pay and conditions where they are doing the same or similar work; work rated as equivalent; or work of equal value.

The Act applies to both men and women but does not give anyone the right to claim equal pay with a person of the same sex. In other words, any comparison must be with a person of the opposite sex.

The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, when the pay gap between men and women stood at 37%. By the time the Act came into force in 1975, it had closed to 30%.

The Equal Pay Act addresses one aspect of the gender pay gap — that of unequal pay. The Government is helping to tackle wider causes of the pay gap such as job segregation and differences in work experience.

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 came into force on 30 April 2007. The regulations make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation and apply to the provision of goods, facilities and services, education and disposal and management of premises and exercise of public functions.

The Equalities Review

The Equalities Review was established to carry out an investigation into the causes of persistent discrimination and inequality in British society. The Review, which was independent, was chaired by Trevor Phillips in a personal capacity. He was supported by a Review Panel comprising Sir Robert Kerslake and Dame Judith Mayhew Jonas.

www.theequalitiesreview.gov.uk

Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review

The Final Report of the Equalities Review was published on 28 February 2007, and it can be downloaded from:

🔗 www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk/publications.aspx

The Equality and Diversity Forum

The Equality and Diversity Forum is a network of national organisations committed to progress on age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and broader equality and human rights issues. The Forum promotes dialogue and understanding across the separate equality 'strands', and to ensure that policy debate on proposals for discrimination legislation and a single equality body recognises the cross-cutting nature of equality issues. The resources section of the Forum's website includes a range of fact-sheets and resources to help you find out more about what's happening around equality and diversity.

🔗 www.edf.org.uk

Gender Equality Duty

The Gender Equality Duty came into force in April 2007 and it requires public authorities to promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination. Instead of depending on individuals making complaints about sex discrimination, the duty places the legal responsibility on public authorities to demonstrate that they treat men and women fairly. The duty will affect policy making, public services, such as transport, and employment practices such as recruitment and flexible working.

🔗 <http://www.eoc.org.uk/default.aspx?page=17686>

There is also a special guidance document on the Gender Duty for the Voluntary and Community Sector who work with public authorities.

🔗 http://www.eoc.org.uk/Docs/Voluntary_and_community_sector.rtf

Human Rights Act

The Human Rights Act 1998 came into force on October 2, 2000. Its aim is to give 'greater effect' to the Convention of Human Rights in two main ways:

- It makes it clear that as far as possible the courts in this country should interpret the law in a way that is compatible with Convention rights.
- It places an obligation on public authorities to act compatibly with Convention rights.

The Act also gives people the right to take court proceedings if they think that their Convention rights have been breached or are going to be.

A Guide to the Human Rights Act 1998: Third Edition

This guide to the Human Rights Act 1998 aims to ensure that the human rights message is communicated clearly to everybody. Produced by the Department for Constitutional Affairs it contains a guide to the legislation and its components and also a directory directing readers to further information.

Available from:

🔗 www.dca.gov.uk/peoples-rights/human-rights/pdf/act-studyguide.pdf

Race Equality Duty

In 2001, the Race Relations Act was amended to give public authorities a new statutory duty to promote race equality. The aim is to help public authorities to provide fair and accessible services, and to improve equal opportunities in employment.

🔗 <http://www.cre.gov.uk/duty/index.html>

The ChangeUp Race Equality Framework

The Race Equality Framework is a useful toolkit for consortia to ensure that the needs of BME VCS groups are met through the Changeup investment programme. The modular approach means that it is something that can be used either in full, or as individual sections, and it could be useful tool for more general partnerships and across equalities strands.

🔗 www.yhregforum.org.uk/publications_resources/knowledgebase/500/540/189.pdf

Race Relations Act

The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origin. The amended Act also imposes general duties on many public authorities to promote racial equality.

It applies to:

- jobs
- training
- housing
- education
- the provision of goods, facilities and services

It is also unlawful for public bodies to discriminate while carrying out any of their functions. The amended Act imposes a general duty on all major public bodies to promote race equality.

Social Exclusion Taskforce

This Task Force co-ordinates the Government's work around social exclusion and facilitates the cross departmental approach to this. It's role is to promote the needs of those who are most disadvantaged across the whole of Government to ensure that people remain at the top of the public service reform agenda.

🔗 www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/

Women and Work Commission Recommendations: Towards a Fairer Future

This report gives an update on progress against the Women and Work Commission recommendations following the Action Plan issued in September 2006.

Produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007

🔗 www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research/index.htm

This is the first edition of the Regional Forum's Equality Briefing which we hope to update later in 2008. We are aware that there may be omissions but please do let us know of any relevant legislation, toolkits or resources that you think should be included.