

Making Rights Real

A major national event for voluntary and community organisations working to tackle inequality and promote human rights

9.30am – 4.30pm
Thursday 15 November 2007

International Convention Centre
Birmingham

Speakers and contributors include:

Barbara Follett MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities

Patrick Diamond

Head of Strategy, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Sarah Spencer

Chair, Equality and Diversity Forum

Dinah Cox

CEO, Race on the Agenda and Chair of the Pan London Change Up Equalities and Human Rights Sub Group

Katie Ghose

Director, British Institute of Human Rights

As well as representatives and activists from a wide range of national, regional and local voluntary and community organisations working to tackle inequality.



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Introduction

Prejudice and discrimination have no place in a fair, free and just Britain. While we have made substantial progress to fight these injustices over the past decades, inequality still scars our society and holds back too many individuals from realising their full potential.

2007 is the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. This event is part of the Government's and the new Equality and Human Rights Commission's discussion and consultation on:

Rights – how can we further raise awareness of the right to equality and non-discrimination, and the problem of multiple discrimination?

Representation – how can we increase the participation of under-represented groups in society, in particular groups that are victims of discrimination?

Recognition – how can we facilitate and celebrate diversity and equality?

Respect – how can we promote a more cohesive society?

Why this event?

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) plays a key role in all these areas. The Government Equalities Office and the new Equality and Human Rights Commission have therefore joined forces and, with the support of the Equality and Diversity Forum and the British Institute of Human Rights, have arranged this dedicated event for VCS organisations to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of key equality and human rights frameworks and developments in the UK
- Discuss the current and future role of the VCS and those people and communities it works with and represents, in 'making rights real'
- Identify existing best practice and make recommendations to the Government and others on how to improve the way that inequality and discrimination are tackled in law, policy and practice

A report will be produced pulling together the key issues raised, ideas and recommendations.

Who should attend?

The conference will be relevant to a wide range of VCS organisations working to tackle inequality including:

- Local level groups and the regional and national support and umbrella bodies that support and represent them
- Groups that provide advice and services to people who are marginalised or discriminated against in their community

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- Organisations that provide advocacy and represent excluded and marginalised people and/or particular interests e.g. women; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; people with disabilities; faith groups; Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups; older people; children and young people; carers
- Groups that work to strengthen the voice and participation of marginalised groups, or that are made up of people with direct experience of discrimination
- Policy and campaigning organisations

Key benefits of attending

- Get an update on key developments in equality and human rights law, policy and practice and how these could impact on voluntary and community action
- Hear from and influence key national equalities and human rights actors including Government representatives and the new Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Make links with and discuss common issues with a range of VCS equality, diversity and human rights organisations ranging from local grass-roots groups to national campaigning organisations

Programme

09.30 – 10.00 Registration

10.00 – 10.10 **Introduction by conference chair: Sarah Spencer**, Chair, Equality and Diversity Forum

10.10 – 10.25 **Keynote address: Barbara Follett MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities

10.25 – 10.45 **UK developments on equality and rights: Patrick Diamond**, Head of Strategy, Equality and Human Rights Commission

10.45 – 11.00 **Key opportunities and challenges for the VCS: Dinah Cox**, CEO, Race On The Agenda and Chair of the Pan London Change Up Equalities and Human Rights Sub Group

11.00 – 11.30 **Roundtable discussion and questions to speakers**

11.30 – 11.45 Break

11.45 – 13.15 **Bringing Rights to Life: Ceri Goddard**, Head of Development and Training, BIHR – an interactive session exploring the link between human rights and equality and how human rights can be used as a practical tool for change

13.15 – 14.05 Lunch

14.05 – 15.35 **Workshops:** breakout sessions on the main conference themes of Rights, Representation, Recognition and Respect

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15.35 – 15.50 Break

15.50 – 16.25 **Feedback from groups and panel plenary session** Members include: Janice Shersby, Director, Government Equalities Office; Katie Ghose, Director, BIHR; Cheryl Garvey, Director of Connectivity and Communities, Birmingham Race Action Partnership; Dinah Cox, CEO, Race on the Agenda and Chair of the Pan London Change Up Equalities and Human Rights Sub Group

16.25 – 16.30 **Closing remarks**

Workshops

Each session will include a short context-setting input from voluntary and community sector speakers to stimulate discussion, and will then consider the following questions:

- What are the key challenges and opportunities in making change?
- What is/should be the role of the VCS in addressing these – including examples of good practice?
- Recommendations on supporting and strengthening the participation and contribution of the VCS

Session 1: Rights – how do we raise awareness of the right to equality and non-discrimination, and the problem of multiple discrimination? Speakers: Den Foley, Director, Newport CAB; Nony Ardill, Legal Policy Advisor, Age Concern England

Equality and human rights have been strengthened in recent years through the Equality Act 2006, the Human Rights Act 1998, and other new legislation. But are people aware of and benefiting from these new rights? What can the VCS do to help and how should it work with the new Equality and Human Rights Commission? How would VCS organisations like to see the law improved to address persistent inequalities?

Session 2: Representation – how can we increase the participation of under-represented groups in society, in particular groups that are victims of discrimination? Speakers: Paul Dunn, Chief Executive, Equality South West; Karen Moore, Policy Research Officer, Women's Resource Centre

How can the Equality and Human Rights Commission ensure that the voices of under-represented people and groups are heard and how can the VCS help them to do this? How can minorities within marginalised communities – for example women and young people – make sure that their needs are met?

Session 3: Recognition – how can we facilitate and celebrate diversity and equality? Speakers: Tim Finch, Director of Communications, Refugee Council; Mark Reedman, Chief Executive, LGBT Consortium

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How can the positive contribution that people make to society as a whole - irrespective of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or immigration status - be emphasised; in particular focusing on the value of a diverse society. Does the VCS have a role to provide space for dialogue when one group's rights appear to conflict with the rights of another group. What is the role of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission in this situation?

Session 4: Respect - how can we promote a more cohesive society? Speakers: Raja Miah, Director, Peacemaker; Cheryl Garvey, Director of Connectivity and Communities, Birmingham Race Action Partnership

There has been a great deal of talk recently about national identity and the basis of 'Britishness'. What is the basis of social cohesion? Can values such as respect help bind different groups and communities together? How can we spread and imbue values like respect and dignity throughout society and the general cohesion debate?

About the organisers:

Government Equalities Office:

To strengthen further the Government's ability to deliver across the entire equalities agenda, a new Government Equalities Office has been established.

The Government Equalities Office will take on responsibility for the Government's overall strategy and priorities on equality issues (including the lead on the Discrimination Law Review, the Single Equality Bill, and the Equality Public Service Agreement (PSA); sponsorship of the Equality and Human Rights Commission; and the response to Trevor Phillips' Equalities Review). It will also be responsible for policy on gender equality and sexual orientation and for integrating work on race and religion or belief equality into the overall equality framework.

Equality and Human Rights Commission:

The new Equality and Human Rights Commission opened on 1 October 2007. The 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. It brings together the work of the three previous equality commissions on gender, disability and race, 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.

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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. Its members are: **Age Concern England; Amicus; Board of Deputies of British Jews; British Humanist Association; British Institute of Human Rights; Children's Rights Alliance for England; Citizens Advice; Discrimination Law Association; End Violence Against Women Campaign; Equality Challenge Unit; Fawcett Society; Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism; Help the Aged; Institute for Public Policy Research; JUSTICE; Liberty; Mind; Muslim Council of Britain; National AIDS Trust; Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity; Press for Change; Race On The Agenda; RADAR; Refugee Council; RNID; Runnymede Trust; Scope; Stonewall; The Age and Employment Network; Trades Union Congress; Women's Budget Group; Women's National Commission; Women's Resource Centre.**

British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR)

BIHR is a national human rights voluntary organisation that is committed to challenging inequality and injustice in everyday life here in the UK. We want a society that has become stronger because all human beings are equally valued, can participate fully and are treated with fairness, dignity and respect. We aim to achieve this by bringing human rights to life – supporting people to use human rights principles and standards to improve their own lives and as a tool for voluntary and community organisations and the public sector to develop more effective public policy and practice.

Further Information

Venue

The International Convention Centre, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2EA, England
T: +44 (0) 121 200 2000 • F: +44 (0) 121 643 0388 • Email: info@theicc.co.uk

Individual requirements

Please provide details of any individual requirements/special arrangements on your booking form. The venue has full disabled access and we welcome delegates with disabilities.

Fees

This event is funded as part of European Year of Equal Opportunities so there is NO FEE for attending.

To ensure that a range of organisations are able to attend the event the Government Equalities Office is happy to reimburse the travel costs for small/low-income organisations. See the criteria listed below - a travel reimbursement form will be available on the day in your delegate pack.

In order to qualify for travel reimbursement delegates must:

- belong to a voluntary or community group in the UK with an income of under £100,000 per annum and under 5 full time members of staff

GNN contact details

For further information about the VCS conference, please contact GNN by emailing: vse@gnn.gsi.gov.uk

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Delegate booking form

Please complete one registration form for each delegate. Photocopy form for additional delegates.

Deadline for registration: Monday 5 November 2007. Use block capitals and black/blue ink.

There are three ways you can book a place at this event. You can either:

- **Email:** complete an electronic booking form and email to vse@gnn.gsi.gov.uk
- **Print form and post to:** Angela Hickin, VCS Event, GNN WM, 5 St Philip's Place, Birmingham, B3 2PW
- **Print form and fax to:** 0121 352 5533

Name:

Title:

Position:

Organisation:

Address:

..... Postcode:

Phone no.

Email:

Dietary Requirements:

Accessibility Issues:

Sector

- Voluntary and community sector – national
- Voluntary and community sector – regional/local
- Public sector
- Private Sector
- Individual
- Other Please specify

Workshop selection

Delegates can attend one workshop. Please choose a first and second choice for the workshop session. Places will be allocated to workshops in order of receipt of registration forms. Space is limited in each workshop, however, and whilst every effort will be made to allocate delegates to their first choice this cannot be guaranteed

- Rights
- Representation
- Recognition
- Respect

If you have not received confirmation of your place and joining instructions by Friday 9th November, please contact **Angela Hickin**, GNN on 0121 352 5500 or by emailing: vse@gnn.gsi.gov.uk

Places are limited and if you have booked and are not able to attend please let us know so somebody else can take your place.