

EREN: UPDATE REPORT 2012/13

The English Regions Equality and Human Rights Network (EREN), set up in 2008 is made up of voluntary sector organisations from all nine English regions with a broad equalities and human rights brief and a significant membership of associate networks in the Region that they serve.

EREN aims to engage these influential regional equality networks in a regular dialogue with national policy making bodies in order to influence and shape policy debate; collect, examine and share good practice; exchange information and intelligence; and help with delivery in the regions.



EREN members include:

North East	Equality North East, North East Equalities Coalition
North West	North West Equality and Diversity Group
Yorkshire and Humber	VCS Equality and Human Rights Network Yorkshire and the Humber (VEHRN)
East Midlands	Regional Equality and Diversity Partnership
West Midlands	brap
East	MENTER
London	HEAR
South West	Equality South West
South East	INDI South East; RAISE

Foreword by Asif Afridi, EREN Co-Chair

When the Coalition Government first set out its plans for the Big Society there was at least some agreement that the kinds of activities suggested – more volunteering, localism and more active citizenship – was a good thing. However over the last year, as the full scale and speed of the government’s austerity measures and spending cuts become clear, there has been a growing realisation amongst our membership that in the field of equality and human rights, we have to have Big Society because public funding and Government support for this type of activity will be massively reduced or simply won’t be there. There are some things – that if we want them – we will have to do ourselves.

Clearly we consider this to be short-sighted and a significant problem. Particularly when it is those that have historically been worse affected by inequality and discrimination that will feel changes in public spending cuts and welfare reform the most. This short update report from a sample of our members describes some of the innovative ways in which our organisations and networks are striving to keep equality and human rights high on the agenda in our regions over the last 2 years.

EREN continues to be an effective network for sharing examples of effective practice. Our members learn from each other and share ideas and good practice in areas such as: supporting equality in the workplace, understanding changes in equality and human rights law; ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable are heard; and collecting strong evidence to inform policy. I hope that this short snapshot of some of our members' work will help to give you a flavour of this. Over the next year EREN will be continuing this dialogue and sharing the evidence and learning we collect from across the country with national decision-makers. If you'd like to find out more I'd encourage you to get in touch with EREN or directly with our members in your region.

Equality in the Workplace and Beyond - Equality North East

Equality North East (ENE) is an independent not-for-profit organisation that works across the whole of the North East region towards achieving equality in employment, entry to employment, training and services. In April 2011 ENE was commissioned by The Home



Group to carry out and collate current research in order to provide:

- An overview of equality and diversity in the North East of England;
- Information on local minority groups and groups with protected characteristics and
- Best practice examples on the attraction, recruitment and retention of people from diverse groups.

The resulting 'Promoting Equality and Diversity in the North East Workplace' report included research findings and examples of good practice and recommendations on:

- How to communicate and work in partnership with minority groups and groups with protected characteristics in the region and
- How to implement good practice in recruitment and retention.

In 2012 ENE delivered two conferences. Equality and Health and Equality and Education The conferences were mainly attended by the Third and Public sectors with Learning providers (work based and Colleges). The programmes looked at 'latest legal requirements for the sectors and the impact of poverty on health and education. These were followed by the 'Equality in the workplace and Beyond' conference in March 2013. This conference provided a space for all sectors to be updated on and discuss equality related issues including changes to the Equality Act and other relevant legislation; how businesses be supported to ensure they have fair and diverse workplaces; barriers

facing people with protected characteristics in particular, older working people, people with mental health issues, women and LGB and T. This conference was well attended and the feedback was excellent. It was evident that there was a great deal of concern in the region surrounding the impact of the cuts on vulnerable groups. It was also a concern that equality in the workplace was not receiving the focus it deserved and employers should be given more support in making sure they provided a fair and diverse workplace. ENE has also delivered a seminar on how and why to monitor LGB and T and a seminar on the current debate surrounding religion. Both of these seminars were provided after feedback at the conferences on what further information people felt they needed support with. We have also held a 'mock' tribunal which had people from Scotland as well as the North East.

ENE is the regional co-ordinator for the NIACE Adult Learning Awards and has over 100 nominations. In addition, ENE is about to launch the 2013 North East Equality Awards that bring together people from the voluntary, private and public sectors to recognise and celebrate good equality practice. ENE is celebrating its 10th year in running these unique awards!

ENE continues to support the use of the Equality Standard, a nationally acknowledged practical tool to help organizations of all sizes and sectors embed equality. ENE has been working a lot with the Housing Sector and work is being developed to help employers contracted by this sector use the Standard.

Sharing evidence - informing thinking and practice

Brap is a Birmingham based national equality and human rights charity that works primarily, but not exclusively, with the public sector, covering areas such as health, children and young people services, education, housing and employment. Its core delivery areas include: service re-designing and re-modelling, professional development, campaigning, research, and community development support. In 2011 and 2012 brap published a number of reports on a variety of issues namely:



Age (younger and older) and race:

- ['Line in the sand'](#) describes the results of a survey of over 400 young people in Birmingham exploring their views about employment and education and their aspirations for the future. This group isn't affected by the current economic situation because even at the best of times they have difficulty benefiting from society. They make up 23% of the unemployed but less than half are registered to vote. Some of them have been unemployed for a third of their lives. They're optimistic and pessimistic; confident and uncertain. And despite all the problems they face, many are worried about the next generation.
- ['Armchair Advocates: Key Issues affecting older people'](#) outlines challenges BME older people face in engaging in civic engagement. This was based on feedback from conversations with over 50 black and minority ethnic older people conducted as part of the 'Armchair Advocates' programme.
- [Child Protection and BME communities: A conference](#) report. In 2011-12, brap

worked with over 2,000 professionals who deliver frontline services to children and young people. The sheer number of people requesting advice, help, and support suggests there is a growing recognition among management and leadership that we don't deliver as effectively to some ethnic minority communities as we do when we work with White British communities. More pertinently – and perhaps more pressingly – many of the professionals themselves related problems and concerns they had that current equalities guidance does not adequately reflect the complexities of real-life situations. Traditional thinking on 'race' and ethnicity has encouraged only limited progress on narrowing inequalities in outcomes, and this is increasingly worrying people charged with the delivery of fairer and more effective services. A key aim of the seminar was to identify precisely what changes can be made in relation to implementation and practice to ensure the next generation of ethnic minority children can live in a society that is safer, fairer, and more nurturing. This report includes some of the main themes from that seminar.

Addressing poverty, gang crime and interculturalism:

- [Social Networks: Their role in addressing poverty](#) report: literature review of the relationship between poverty and social networks. Particular focus placed on the extent to which social networks might help the most disadvantaged and excluded in society to escape from or cope with poverty.
- [Stuck: What works in addressing gang crime](#): In 2011 there were an estimated 42 urban street gangs in Birmingham, involving about 400 individuals. This report looks into the interventions designed to help them. Stuck explores current approaches to the design and delivery of interventions to address gang-related violence in Birmingham, focusing on the views of young people and practitioners about their value. Based on interviews with 31 gang-affiliated members; seven voluntary and community sector organisations; three law enforcement agencies; seven independent experts, and two academics, Stuck gets to the very heart of what those on the frontline think about our current approach to tackling crime. The report takes a critical look at key topics including: reasons for joining gangs; challenges of multi-agency work; the need for more sensitive screening and profiling; perceptions of gang members as victims; the need to identify good practice; how and why to involve young people in the design and scrutiny of services; and the challenge of sustainability in community-led responses
- [The Interculturalism: a breakdown of thinking and practice](#) report explores the practical and theoretical application of intercultural dialogue in the context of modern Britain. This report is intended to promote a more progressive and human rights focused interpretation of integration policy in the UK in the future.

Brap has also developed a [Data Store](#) that includes data on Employment, Crime, Education and Learning, Housing, Health and Deprivation in Birmingham– all disaggregated by ethnicity, age, gender and any other relevant available categories. This data store will act as a resource for public sector staff and voluntary and community groups too who will have a chance to comment on and add evidence about inequality in their own neighbourhoods and communities.

Working Across Equalities and Human Rights in London – HEAR

HEAR is the London network of equalities organisations and acts as a strong pan-equalities voice and source of knowledge and expertise on equality issues on London's voluntary and community sector.



In October 2012 HEAR ran the 'Working Across Equalities and Human Rights in London' conference. The conference was attended by more than 60 organisations from across London representing a diverse range of equalities groups as well as representatives from local authorities, health and poverty organisations, advice and advocacy organisations, trade unions and more. The aims of the conference were to express concerns on recent threats to equalities and discuss actions to address this; debate the meaning of pan-equalities; and explore working together across equalities in the context of the diverse issues faced by people with protected characteristics.

In the context of disability and experiences of hate crime that many people have in common, speakers opened the debate on the relationship between specialist expertise and cross-equalities work. Further case studies were derived from work done in the fields of (for) LGBT, race and age equality. One of the afternoon table discussions focused on poverty and inequality in London as a cross cutting issue affecting all equalities groups in the context of current and planned cuts to welfare support.

Austin Taylor-Laybourn (Trust for London) led a lively discussion around pressing issues affecting the most vulnerable in the capital. The result of the group discussion was the commitment to form a group interested in finding ways to do further work on these issues, including through the collection of evidence, as many participants, the HEAR membership and other interested parties have a wealth of experience and expertise, working with a wide range of people negatively affected by welfare 'reforms'.

As a follow up to this A round table event was held on 30th January 2013 at the Human Rights Action Centre, organised by Deirdre McGrath. It aimed to identify:

- who is carrying out research and on what themes;
- research which looks at the impact of reforms on equalities groups;
- any significant gaps in research/data being produced and
- decide if more qualitative information should be collated from frontline organisations on the impact of their services due to welfare reforms particularly from a pan equalities perspective and identify who could support any further research and where could it sit?
- consider how this research could be used for advocacy and help make an impact; what vehicles already exist to do this?

This work will support HEAR by bringing together the wealth of knowledge of members and their wider networks; supporting members to use existing data and research in their campaigns; developing a greater understanding of the impact of cuts/reforms from a pan equalities perspective. Moreover this will feed into LVSC's work, including the annual Big Squeeze report that supports VCS organisations and the local Joint Strategic Needs

Assessments, which gathers evidence of needs across London to inform the decisions of policy-makers, commissioners, businesses and frontline organisations delivering services in London.

Informing and supporting - INDI South East

INDI (infrastructure network for disability information) is a south east infrastructure organisation for disability organisations and their partners working on disability and broader equality issues. It offers resources, networking opportunities, resources, consultation briefings and information sharing.



In 2011 and 2012 INDI hosted 21 networking meetings across south east England for INDI members and their partners (including local authority commissioners and relevant officers such as LINK workers) to share information, respond to local and national consultations, build links and partnerships and ultimately help improve the lives of disabled people. Apart from representing its members at conferences and local disability forums, INDI hosted three disability awareness days training 187 people on a variety of topics relevant to disabled people.

Through INDI's regular e-bulletin and website it has been able to keep its members and broader network updated. Moreover, the INDI website provides a training guide with relevant training opportunities, a directory of disability organisations based in the south east and a resource page with relevant research reports and toolkits.

INDI responded to national consultations and/or briefed on the following:

- Fulfilling Potential
- Public Sector Equality Duty (briefing)
- Building Capabilities for Impact & Legacy
- Welfare Reform Bill
- PIP Assessment Criteria
- Care & Support Bill and Independent Living Fund
- Transition to Healthwatch (local discussions facilitated by INDI).

'Stronger Together' – Equality South West

Equality South West (ESW) is a charity established to actively promote equality, diversity and human rights within the region. It works with voluntary, public and private sector bodies at local, regional and national levels to help embed equality and human rights into organisations' policies and practices. It also works with and supports seven regional equality networks whose members' experience and priorities inform specific areas of ESW activity. The past year has seen cuts in public services by already low-spending SW councils, the abolition or demise of some valued ESW partner agencies and organisations, and shrinkage and



restructuring in others. As a result ESW, in early 2013, was focusing primarily on a programme of work funded by a Big Lottery 'Supporting Impact and Change' grant. At local level, funding for specialist support against discrimination is drying up, with large geographical areas lacking such provision. There are genuine fears about the tone of national debates around such issues migration and welfare benefit claimants and their impact on protected groups in the year ahead. In 2012 ESW produced a number of reports on different issues namely:

LGB and T:

Not labelled but understood: Transgender Equality in Later Life. The result of a focus group meeting with members of the South West Transgender Equality Network to identify key concerns connected with care for Trans people affected by frailty and dementia. The document compiles messages for care providers and managers about how to provide care with dignity and respect for Trans people.

Pride, Progress and Transformation Series: Health and Well Being; Safety and Security; Visibility, Dignity, Respect and Freedom of Expression; Knowledge, Influence, Voice and Engagement. These reports highlight findings from a regional survey among LGB and Trans people. The survey was framed around the 'Ten Dimensions of Equality'. Moreover they include recommendations on how public bodies can work towards discrimination-free services and to promote LGB and T equality including developing and maintaining in-house expertise to ensure the public sector Equality Duty is met; ensure inclusiveness is visible and explicit in publications and websites; work with LGBT staff and service users to change attitudes and educate the wider public.

'Out' in the country: Rural isolation for LGB and Transgender people. Drawing on evidence from a range of sources, primarily from responses to the Pride, Progress and Transformation survey, this report discusses factors that contribute to, and exacerbate social isolation for LGB and Trans people living in rural England.

Achieving Equality for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual people in Moorhaven. Report and recommendations arising from a focus group with LG and B people commissioned by a multi-agency partnership in the rural south west.

Gender and race:

Race in the South West: More or less equal? This provides a summary of issues and concerns affecting front-line race equality organisations in the South West within the context of public sector austerity measures and government approach to race equality.

Gender Equality in Housing. This briefing highlights key issues that need to be considered when doing equality impact assessments and considering women's housing needs including: invisibility; representation; caring roles; misogyny, sexual and domestic abuse; security issues; poverty and low pay; transport; Religious and cultural attitudes towards women; harassment and anti social neighbours.

Health and hate crime:

Challenge and Change: Health service. A review of changes in the structure of the NHS, the potential impact on equalities and where influence can be brought to bear.

Hate Crime - Exploring Prejudice: Mapping Hate Crime in the South West. Primary research with the University of Plymouth exploring the ways in which the multiple agencies involved in addressing crime and community safety issues define, record, report and address hate crime.

Some of the policy mapping recommendations are: publically available information regarding hate crime should be consistent across agencies, particularly between the police and local authorities; Hate crime information should be clear on what processes are available to victims for support and prosecution; Hate crime policies should not conflate hate crime matters with domestic abuse matters.

To find out more about work carried out by EREN members see details below

North East	Equality North East, North East Equalities Coalition	www.equality-ne.co.uk www.equalitiescoalition.org.uk
North West	North West Equality and Diversity Group	www.vsnw.org.uk/networks/nwedg
Yorkshire and Humber	VCS Equality and Human Rights Network Yorkshire and the Humber (VEHRN)	www.regionalforum.org.uk/
East Midlands	Regional Equality and Diversity Partnership	www.redp.org.uk/
West Midlands	brap	www.brap.org.uk
East	MENTER	www.menter.org.uk
London	HEAR	http://www.lvsc.org.uk/policy-areas/equalities/hear
South West	Equality South West	http://www.equalitysouthwest.org.uk/
South East	INDI South East; RAISE	www.indi.org.uk ; www.raise-networks.org.uk

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