

## Social & Community Development Sub-Group – Promoting Equal Opportunities and Tackling Diversity

Equal access to services is a key priority of the Sub-Group, and the first targeted project in this area of work was first addressed in February 2004. The Chair of the Sub-Group at the time, John Harrison (previous Executive Director of Professional and Customer Services, Bassetlaw District Council), gave a presentation at a local conference, 'Valuing Diversity', in September 2003. This was held at the Holocaust Centre in Laxton, Nottinghamshire, and involved a series of presentations on the activities of local agencies including Age Concern, and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Lesbian and Gay Switchboard.

The Sub-Group progressed work further, through the assistance of John Bentley (Policy Officer, Bassetlaw District Council), who gave a presentation at the Sub-Group meeting in September 2004, regarding Equal Opportunities standards, and the production of an Equal Opportunities Policy Statement. A draft was circulated for discussion, and finalised at the following meeting in November 2004. This is now awaiting ratification by the BLSP Board. (A copy is attached for information.)

The BLSP Board received a copy of the draft Policy Statement at their October 2004 Board meeting, and held further discussions on how the BLSP could ensure better co-ordination of how equal opportunities/ diversity issues were addressed within the District. A decision was taken that a time-limited 'Tackling Diversity Task Group' should be formed, with the support of Michael Newstead (Vice-Chair of BLSP).

At the initial meeting in March 2005, the Task Group were involved general discussions on what each partner organisation was currently doing to address Equal Opportunities/ Diversity within their own organisations. Initial ideas as to the role of the group and work it could undertake were as follows:

- ▶ Reference Groups across District – Can any of the local groups be consolidated? For example, Bassetlaw Partnership for Health runs 2 meetings within 1 session to cover both the LSP Session, and the Healthy Living Centre Network
- ▶ Mutual Training – Examine potential of merging training across organisations within the District to avoid duplication.
- ▶ Assess what support is available i.e. how are young people addressed within schools regarding education on diversity
- ▶ Community Empowerment Network (CEN) – once operational this will be a means for all key agencies in District to ensure all residents in Bassetlaw are included
- ▶ Pool current research
- ▶ Examine the Action Plans currently being used by local partners – NNC have a number of strands to consider:
  - ▶ Service Provision-support,
  - ▶ Internal Management,
  - ▶ Conflict between two Internal communities-staff and young people.
  - ▶ What capacity is there within each organisation to deal with equalities/ diversity? – This is an area to address at future meetings.
- ▶ Raise awareness locally

At the second meeting in April 2005, the Task Group finalised its objectives, and agreed to adopt a revised version of a draft Terms of Reference, kindly produced by

the Bassetlaw Primary Care Trust representative. The objectives of the Task Group were agreed as follows:

► **Objectives**

1. To promote the types of support available to local people/ organisations, including information sessions, which showcase specialist support and examples of good practice.
2. To facilitate, where possible, mutual training sessions across organisations within the District. This will include recommendation of good training providers, and sharing evaluation of training sessions.
3. To ensure a co-ordinated approach to consultation with Bassetlaw residents, whether general or targeted to a specific community or group of residents. This will ensure consultation is not duplicated and hopefully encourage all Bassetlaw residents to become more involved with service delivery.
4. To collate current data on the population of the District, the needs of different communities to give an understanding of the current situation. This will enable us to identify areas for improvement i.e. where communities are excluded or discriminated against, or where members simply do not engage. By having a co-ordinated approach to consultation, this will also enable local organisations to be consistent in developing policies and procedures, which ensure that differences in religion, culture, race, age, nationality, gender, disability, and sexual orientation are accepted and accommodated wherever possible.

These will be addressed of the coming months with an Information Event showcasing services in Autumn 2005.

**For more information on how the BLSP hopes to address Diversity and Equal Opportunities, or to find out how to get involved contact Michael Newstead on 01909 476118 ext. 22**