



April 2003, No. 4

Introducing MENTER in Peterborough and Essex

On the evening of Thursday 1st May Peterborough Racial Equality Council invited MENTER to give a presentation to its General Council Meeting.

The presentation was designed to introduce MENTER and John Day, the new County Outreach Development Officer for Essex and Cambridgeshire, to Peterborough's BME Communities.

Ila Chandavarkar MENTER's Regional Co-ordinator, gave a 20 minute PowerPoint Presentation to an audience of thirty five people representing many of the cities diverse communities and organisations. After the meeting a buffet was provided which allowed people to network and make contacts in an informal atmosphere. John reported that the next day his phone was continuously ringing with

people wanting to meet with him.

A similar event is to be held in Essex next month to introduce MENTER and John to the BME Communities across Essex; Details to follow (Watch your mail).

In the mean time, if you wish to contact John Day yourself or any of the other two new County Outreach Development Officers, you will find their contact details on page 3.

Black and Minority Ethnic Trainers (BMET) in Luton and Bedfordshire.

MENTER in co-operation with GO-EAST and an independent consultant, Jim Thakoordin, are taking steps to establish a handbook of BME trainers and consultants in Bedfordshire and Luton.

Our experience suggest that those kinds of people are hard to track down. However, there exists a pool of qualified trainers who face barriers such as discrimination when they promote their services. Therefore the BMET handbook will help organisations find relevant BME trainers and

consultants as well as promote the use of qualified BME professionals.

An event for people who might be interested in being included in the handbook will be organised this summer.

If you are/or are aware of BME trainer(s) or consultant(s) who might be interested in having their details placed in the BMET handbook please do not hesitate to contact Ila Chandavarkar or Shaila Bibi at MENTER.

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**Deadline next issue:
3rd October 2003**

E E D A

East of England Development Agency

MENTER's County Outreach Development Officers



Ozzie Matika
County Outreach Development
Officer for Suffolk and
Norfolk

As a recent arrival in the UK I am painfully aware of BME issues, many of which I have to deal with as I settle in the UK with my family. My educational background is diverse. I have studied in Zimbabwe, France, Scotland and South Africa and I have been fortunate to have had ample opportunity to interact with people from various cultures and backgrounds at a range of different levels.

I have a PhD and 18 years livestock research experience in Zimbabwe. The analytical skills I have acquired through direct training as a scientist, and more indirectly through my experiences, will be usefully applied. I have extensive experience in networking and collaborating with other institutions e.g. international institutes, non-governmental organisations, Universities, and community organizations. I will work with the team at MENTER and others to objectively identify BME problems and constraints, formulate and implement projects to address these and evaluate progress.

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Shaila Bibi
County Outreach Development
Officer for Hertfordshire and
Bedfordshire

I have had a great deal of experience within the voluntary sector. Previously I had the opportunity to develop skills in volunteer recruitment, PR and marketing, community research, rural community charities, mental health, education and the overall development of good practice within the voluntary sector. I have always been committed to equal opportunities professionally and personally. I grew up in a multicultural county and studied within a diverse environment.

Currently I have been a staff member of MENTER for six constructive weeks (Starting date 24th March). However time has flown by as it does when you are having fun. I have had the opportunity to start mapping out the services available to BME groups within Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. This task has been the initial start of monitoring the development of the BME communities in the designated areas. Census 2001 data has also given me the opportunity to compare statistics across counties.

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John Day
County Outreach Development
Officer for Cambridgeshire and
Essex

I am a member of the Romany/Gypsy community and have been actively involved in Gypsy/Traveller Civil rights since 1975 when along with others I helped found the East Anglian Gypsy Council, where I currently hold the office of Assistant General Secretary.

I am also active in a number of other organisations, being a founder and the Executive Director of the International Association of Gypsies in Professional occupations (IAGPO) and a member of The Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare & Civil Rights for whom I am the Delegate to Peterborough REC.

My previous professional experience was with the Cambridgeshire Multicultural Education Services Team for Traveller Education, where I worked as a Home School Liaison Officer from April 1992 until March 1998 when I was transferred to Peterborough when the city became a unitary Authority. During this time I gained my Diploma in Social Work at Anglia Polytechnic University.

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Ozzie Matika's introduction continued

My vision is that of a community which can express their aspirations no matter how trivial they may seem, where nothing less than excellence is expected from all public service providers and a community where all voices are heard and cherished. I am very happy to have joined MENTER during this exciting period when most public service providers value the opinions of their clientele. Please speak out and we will help ensure your views are heard by the relevant authorities and problems dealt with. MENTER is your network, use us and remind us of our obligations to you. Let us communicate... communicate... communicate. Together let us face the future in the certainty of a better tomorrow for all of us living in the east of England, irrespective of ethnicity.

Oswald Matika

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Or

c/o Ipswich & Suffolk CRE, 46a St Mathews Street, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 3EP

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E-mail: ozmatika@menter.org.uk

Shaila Bibi's introduction continued

As a member of MENTER I aim to promote race equality and improve the social and economic inclusion of minority ethnic communities. With the commitment, help, trust and enthusiasm of our local communities I look forward to supporting and developing the Black/ Minority Ethnic (BME) sector to its full potential in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. I would like to be a partner helping to create a safe environment for today and tomorrow, that is rich in diversity but most importantly offers equality in all forms.

I hope to work with you to ensure that the voice of BME groups is heard. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and members of your organisation in order to explore ways in which we might benefit from working together.

Shaila Bibi

c/o Race Equalities Council Office, Mill Street, Bedford, MK40 3HD, Tel. 01234 350459

Or

c/o North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum, 63 Walworth Road, Hitchin, SG4 9SX.

Mobile: 07717220207

E-mail: shaila@menter.org.uk

John Day's introduction continued

I worked for the Peterborough Traveller Education team until Oct 2001, I then took up a post with the Ormiston Children & Family Trust as a Community Development Worker in the Cambridgeshire Traveller Initiative Team, on a capacity building programme with Cambridgeshire's Traveller Community. This was my last job before joining MENTER. I am married to Louise and we have two adult daughters and three grandsons. We live on a local Authority Traveller site in Peterborough where we have resided for 22 years.

My hobbies include building scale model Gypsy Caravans for which I have won international awards and running Cultural Awareness Training sessions to try and break down the barriers between communities. A firm believer in equality, I want a society that values a person for who they are, rather than from what race or culture they belong to. I look forward to working with BME communities to help them achieve their aims and goals, and contributing to the kind of society to which we all aspire.

John Day

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East of England Anand Mela - 18, 19, 20th July

East of England Anand Mela is the only event of its kind in the East of England. It is an event celebrating Indian Arts and Culture and to promote, enhance and protect cultural diversity in Peterborough and the East of England.

Organised for the first time last year by the Indian communities of Peterborough, Huntingdon & Cambridge, it proved to be an instant success. Over

a 3 day period, about 6,000 people of all ethnic backgrounds enjoyed the event.

This year the Anand Mela takes place from Friday 18th July 2003 to Sunday 20th July 2003 at The Embankment, Peterborough. The event is a sheer extravaganza of food, fashion, music, dance, arts and crafts and all things Indian. For more information visit the Mela's website on www.eenam.org

State of the Sector Panel

The Home Office is encouraging community and voluntary organisations to get involved in a major new initiative, the State of the Sector Panel.

Over the next three years the Home Office will contact the panel every three months to monitor progress in increasing voluntary and community sector activity. It will also explore additional matters of concern to voluntary and community organisations - for example, the implementation of the Compact, support for infrastructure organisations, technology and funding.

The Home Office is inviting organisations which are interested in becoming members of the Panel to put themselves forward. The Panel will be selected from organisations which have returned a brief registration form available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/sosp.html> on the Home Office website

The first survey of the panel will be in June 2003.

Panel membership will involve responding to one postal questionnaire (for more complex financial information) and up to four telephone surveys (of between 15 and 20 minutes in length) per year.

This is an excellent opportunity for organisations - large and small, working in all regions of England and providing all types of services - to make their voices heard.

A draft regional social strategy has been prepared. If you are interested in social inclusion issues you may like to attend one of the following consultation events: 19th May at Swallow Churchgate Hotel, Old Harlow, Essex; 20th May at Brome Grange, Near Eye, Suffolk; 22nd May at Millenium Grandstand, Newmarket, Suffolk; 29th May at Robinson College, Wyboston, Bedfordshire. For further details and to book a place

Regional Social Strategy

please contact Sue Holder at Flempton House, Flempton, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP28, tel: 01284 729020, email: sue.holder@eelgc.gov.uk

East of England Faiths Agency

The East of England Faiths Agency (EEFA) is an independent, voluntary, democratic all-inclusive organisation which has been established in response to regionalisation.

EEFA has been contracted by COVER (the Community and Voluntary Forum for the Eastern Region) to undertake research into the religious / faiths profile of the Region and to set up a database of all faith groups in the East of England, and to establish a network to facilitate communication with them and between them. In the longer term, the emerging network will enable every religious group, great or small, in every locality throughout the Region to become better informed about Regional issues and to gain a voice in Regional affairs.

Over the last year, three Faiths Officers have been engaged in gathering information for the database. They have been making contact with Faith and Inter-Faith Groups using all possible sources of information in the public domain.

EEFA wishes to be all inclusive but it is aware that many small faith groups / communities / meetings are 'hidden' and it would value hearing from such groups directly. If you are involved in any such group which is interested in joining this project, please make contact writing to EEFA, c/o SIFRE, Suffolk College, Rope Walk, Ipswich. IP4 1LT or by emailing office@eeefa.net. There is more about EEFA on its web site at www.eeefa.net

The East of England Faiths Agency undertakes not to give, sell or otherwise transfer the information it receives, to any other bodies who intend to use it for any commercial purpose. Where appropriate, and with the permission of the subject group, EEFA would like to make the information available to other Faith and Inter-Faith Groups and other organisations who are positively committed to promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding.

David Capey (Co-ordinator of EEFA)

Scope Central & East Community Team

If a member of your family or a friend has cerebral palsy, hemiplegia or quadriplegia, Scope Central & East Community Team may be able to be of assistance.

We provide information and support to individuals and families at all stages of life, whether after a diagnosis of disability, at the point of preparing for school, looking for somewhere to live or any one of the other issues or challenges they face.

We produce written information, we can talk on the phone or by e-mail or we may be able to home visit. We have access to Language Line translation both in written and spoken form.

We want to reach members of ethnic minority groups with our services and would be pleased to hear from you. Please phone 01284 731600, e-mail east.anglia@scope.org.uk or contact our Helpline on 0808 8003333.

Members' Spotlight: Ipswich and Suffolk Bangladeshi Muslim Community Centre and Mosque

This Thursday the Bangladeshi Elderly Luncheon Club served rice & curry. "We've tried something different, but then people said they had had enough sandwiches at work" explains Azizur Rahman and he adds: "You can't win". This, however, doesn't sound very convincing from a man who has played a crucial part in achieving many of his community's aspirations. Since his arrival in the UK in 1957 he has been committed to improving the welfare of the Bangladeshi people living in Suffolk and improving multi-racial relations.

2000 Bangladeshis

There are about 2000 Bangladeshis living in Ipswich. Rahman is chairman of the Ipswich and Suffolk Bangladeshi Muslim Community and Mosque which he helped found in 1980. Back then people were not sure if they needed it, as they felt, they would not be staying here much longer. More than twenty years later they have not moved back to Bangladesh and Rahman speaks of an increased number of members who wish to be buried here in Ipswich, rather than have a final resting place thousands of miles from their children and grandchildren.

Building

Practising their religion and culture has not been without its difficulties. In 1984 they acquired their current building, an old fire station. Rahman was successful in raising £45,000 pounds, but not without taking a huge personal risk. On a Monday he was told that he had to put his signature under the buying contract otherwise he would lose the building. It was only on the following Wednesday that the Ipswich Borough Council had their meeting in which they would decide on the remaining £22,000. Luckily the grant was awarded. If this hadn't been the case he would have had to sell his restaurant: "Sometimes you have to take a risk in life", he says.

Today they are looking at raising another one million pounds as the current building is not sufficient. On a Friday there are over 200 Muslims praying. Many of those have to find a place in the car park. Half of the million pounds will be spent on the mosque and the other half on the community centre, which is even more important for Muslims as they do not go to pubs.

This was recognized by the funders of the original centre. Rahman has already raised a considerable amount and hopes to receive the remaining funds from the lottery (for the community centre) and the Saudi embassy (for the Mosque). Although he is confident that he can raise any shortfall, he hopes to know by August when the building can begin.

Every day members of the community are using the buildings at 36-38 Bond Street in Ipswich for both social and religious purposes. There is the weekly luncheon club, monthly talks on a general subject, various meetings of women's and men's groups and of course the children who have their Quranic after school classes five days a week and on the weekend a class on Bengali. One of the two Imams actually lives with his family above the community centre. Last year they bought a TV and other equipment, with the help of the ICVS (Ipswich Council for Voluntary Services), which allows them to watch Bangla TV. This is very much appreciated by the elderly members of the community.

"In general we try to help where there is a need, and not only when it concerns Bangladeshis", explains Rahman. Kurdish Iraqis, Turkish and Iranian Muslims are also members of the community and a couple of months ago Rahman was contacted by an English Muslim.

Some of the services that the community centre has helped to provide are now located elsewhere, like for example the Bangladeshi Support Centre which is based at the Citizens Advice Bureau. Rahman is also in the process of applying for two youth workers.

School visits

Every now and again school groups visit the mosque and the community centre. Unfortunately this led to a split as some members felt that it was inappropriate that English women and children visited the mosque. Rahman was considered to be too liberal by those members, but in his opinion this was essential for maintaining good race relations in Ipswich and teaching



Akhtar Miah, Co-ordinator of the luncheon Club for Bangladeshi Elderly People, and Azizur Rahman

non-Muslim children about the Muslim faith. He explains: "Women can visit the mosque when they are properly dressed, so this shouldn't be an issue." The members who left set up their own mosque.

Community

Rahman believes strongly in the need to be part of the community. To illustrate this he shows a leaflet about blood donor sessions, which he has asked the imam to announce Friday. Back in 1979 he was already involved in the inter-faith movement as he believes that in order to receive respect from people you have to show them and their religion respect. He has also been a school governor for many years, as well as a board member of the Ipswich Race Equality Council and MENTER. "You have got to work with people", he stresses. Although some members of his community may consider him slightly too liberal, they also know that he has stayed with his faith and his customs. "We cannot do everything that we did back home, but there are some good things here as well." And many of these good things Rahman has helped to establish, for which he is widely respected both in and outside his own community.

Funding news

Connecting Communities

The Home Secretary has announced the Connecting Communities grant scheme to promote race equality. The grant is worth some £15 million over 3 years and will be used in the following three programme areas: (1) Community Networks; (2) Access to Jobs and Services and (3) Positive Images. With the exception of the Access to Jobs and Services programme where it is specifically required that the lead organisation is a community group, the grant scheme is open to any organisation. The deadline for receipt of bids is Wednesday 25 June. MENTER is planning June workshops in the region where an advisor from the Home Office can meet with organisations planning to submit bids. Please do contact us if you want information about these workshops or want to discuss a bid.

East of England Community Safety Fund

This fund is primarily about capacity building in support of on-going partnership work and is designed to help foster problem solving approaches to tackle the crime and disorder problems that affect communities across the region. The fund is £1 million in 2003/4 and the closing date for initial applications is 28th May 2003. Please contact MENTER if you want to discuss a joint bid.

Refugee Week, 16-22nd June

Refugee Week is a nation-wide programme of arts, cultural and educational events that celebrate cultural diversity and promote understanding about the reasons why people seek sanctuary.

It is a chance to deliver positive educational messages that counter fear, ignorance and the negative stereotyping of refugees, and an opportunity to tell people about the enormous economic and cultural contribution that refugees have made to British society.

The theme of Refugee Week 2003 is children and young people, and we hope that many of the events taking place will involve and engage young refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as children from schools and host communities across the country.

As in previous years, the national launch event of Refugee Week will be held on the South Bank in London, as part of the Coin Street Festival. This year, **Celebrating Sanctuary** will be held on Sunday 15th June and will feature more exciting music, dance, story-telling and visual arts - not to mention wonderful food and drink - from Britain's refugee communities.

For more information on refugee week, on how to organise your own event, browse the events database or to download a document that takes a closer look at some of the most common misconceptions about the asylum issue in the UK media, please visit: www.refugeeweek.org.uk

Is it time for Action Learning?

Action Learning allows individuals with different levels of experience and interests to come together to share work-based issues in a supportive and confidential environment. The Action Learning for Managers Project based at NACVS realises that there are specific times when colleagues in the voluntary and community sector might find it particularly helpful to take action and to continue their learning.

Whether you are settling into a new role, coping with externally-imposed changes or feeling stuck in a rut, Action Learning can help.

Peers can help you to build upon ideas on your future development. They are not personally involved so can be clear-sighted in helping you to recognise where you want to be. Although Action Learning is based on a questioning and

challenging approach, there is scope for you to receive suggestions and to hear of others' similar experiences. Taking part in a disciplined process where you agree action points and are held accountable for implementing them puts an end to procrastination. Your organisational problems will not go away overnight but you will have an ongoing relationship with your set where you can review your progress and receive reassurance that you are on the right track.

The Action Learning for Managers Project has already helped people in circumstances similar to the above. The project will end in December 2004 so book your place on a FREE Taster Day now.

Contact the ALM Team on 0114 278 6636 or email kate@nacvs.org.uk