



December 2003, No. 6

A regional event for BME organisations on 26th February

Race Equality in the Region

The Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) and MENTER are jointly hosting a one day conference for BME and public sector organisations. The event will take place at the Meadows Community Centre, Cambridge on Thursday 26th February 2004 from 9.30am to 3.30pm.

The purpose of the conference is to:

- Clarify the key issues facing BME communities in the region
- Highlight any resource, leadership and management challenges within the BME sector
- Raise awareness of new government initiatives to strengthen the voluntary

and community sector. For example, the Home Office will be allocating £93 million to support capacity and sector infrastructure organisations between the end of 2003 and March 2006; and

- Help public authorities close race equality performance gaps.

There will be speakers from BTEG, MENTER, Government Office for East of England, East of England Development Agency and other agencies.

There will also be workshops looking at fundraising; how the BME voluntary sector can help improve job and education prospects and the impact the new race

equality duty is having on public authorities. It should be a great networking opportunity!

If you would like to attend this event, please complete the booking form which you will find with this newsletter and return it to BTEG by 30 January 04. There are a limited number of free places for unfunded organisations. For more information contact BTEG on tel. 020 7713 6161 or e-mail info@bteg.co.uk

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E E D A

East of England Development Agency

Amit Popat at MENTER's AGM: "Any diversity agenda will be about dealing with conflict and respect."

Amit Popat, Diversity Officer from National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) spoke on "Diversity in the BME Voluntary and Community Sector" at MENTER's AGM in Cambridge on Tuesday

28th October. He was pleased to talk to a group which has been advocating diversity, but he questioned if the BME sector did enough for other social groups ie gay people, women, people

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with disabilities. He asked how the skills that the BME sector has gained will be used to assist other groups and create good diversity practises. Amit Popat: "Diversity has to happen on a personal level, at an organisational level, and a cultural level. The diversity agenda is going to challenge us as driving any diversity will be about dealing with conflict and about respect. We cannot say that we have a monopoly on the truth. We all have our individual truths."

The talk by Amit Popat was followed by the first showing of the video from the Traveller Video Project. This project is supported by The Prosper Scheme, Suffolk County Council and SCC's Social Inclusion Fund. The project aims at building bridges with the Traveller/Romani community, especially the young members of this community.

Through CSV Media a number of Travellers living

in Suffolk produced a 15 minute video dealing with important issues that affect them: education, racism, discrimination and living in houses as opposed to caravans and site locations.

The storyline followed a teenager called Kelly, dealing with her concerns and aspirations. The project has already started breaking down some barriers. Whilst it's not a slick (RED Rose Chain type) production, it is unique in that Suffolk Traveller/Romani people (with no previous drama experience) worked with local actors.

After the video there was a discussion led by two members of the Traveller community who participated in the video.

Other items on the AGM agenda were the approval of MENTER's accounts, changes to the constitution, and the election of a new Board. A full list of board members can be found below and a copy of the accounts and the new constitution is



"Pamela Alum and Sylvie Parker (above), actors in the Traveller Video project, were pleased to talk about the issues that affect them and to answer questions. Amit Popat (left) spoke of the challenges of the diversity agenda.

available from the MENTER office.

A buffet followed the meeting and thanks to the Suffolk Interfaith Resource (SIFRE), the 'Faces of Suffolk' exhibition could be viewed. By illustrating the diversity of contemporary Suffolk, it aims to undermine stereotypes, encourage inclusiveness and tackle racism, particularly among young people.

MENTER's Board

As elected at MENTER's AGM on Tuesday 28th October, Cambridge and including November co-options.

Bedfordshire: Mr. K. Rupra (Guru Nanak Gurdwara) **Chairman**

Cambridgeshire: Mrs J. Andrade (Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum), Mr. J. Yow (Chinese Community Centre Cambridge)

Essex: Mrs. J. Hammond (Essex Racial Equality Council)

Hertfordshire: Shanaz Ali (Watford Racial Equality Council), Tap Bali (Ravidassia Community Centre)

Norfolk: Mrs. J. Dyson (Norwich and Norfolk Racial Equality Council)

Suffolk: Mr. M. Alam (Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality), Mr. S. Carr (Ipswich Caribbean Association)

Luton: Mr. J. Thakoordin (Luton Committee for Racial Harmony)

Thurrock: Mrs. S. Williams (Thurrock Racial Unity Support Taskgroup)

Peterborough: Maheeb Ladha (PREC)

Region: Mr. A. Eshetu (NACA), Mr. P. Mercer (East Anglian Gypsy Council)

Co-options: Mr. S. Budu (COVER), Mrs. M. Knights (Arts Council England, East), Mr. B. Chahal (Guru Nanak Gurdwara Bedford Trust), Mr. A. Rahman (Bangladeshi Welfare Association, Ipswich), Anjana Pamar (Luton Assembly), Dina Mandalia (Stevenage Hindu Society) with the understanding that the aim is for another member of the society to take over her role in a few months.

Advisors: Mr. T. Allard (COVER), Kai Yin Low (NNREC), Mr B. Hazell (Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum), Mrs. S. Lowe (Go-East), Mr. R. Ayavoo (Go-East), Steve Morris (EEDA), Jon Fox (Homeoffice), Michelle Du Preez-Psotka (Watford Women's Centre) Val Grant/Raj Nayer (Luton Borough Council)

Trevor Phillips speaks at NNREC's 10th anniversary celebration

Norwich & Norfolk Racial Equality Council (NNREC) celebrated its 10th Anniversary as part of Black History Month in Norfolk.* The event brought together over 350 people from Norfolk Communities and Agencies who have made a contribution to race equality actions. The event celebrated achievements in eliminating racism, promoting equality of opportunity and good race relations between all people.

The celebrations took place at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, which houses a unique combination of modern western art and fine and applied arts from Africa, the Pacific, the Americas, Asia, Egypt, medieval Europe and the ancient Mediterranean. NNREC guests had an opportunity to explore the gallery exhibits which showed how well-known artists like Francis Bacon, Henry Moore, Picasso and Modigliani were inspired and influenced by non-western art and antiquities. A resource of 'Black History' right on our Norfolk doorstep!

NNREC was proud to display the Norfolk Roots of the Future Exhibition in the gallery and unveiled a new section of Norfolk Roots on Norwich born Pablo Fanque - the first Black Circus Proprietor in Britain. Pablo's 19th Century circus poster was the source and inspiration for

the song 'Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite' by the Beatles, performed live on the night by "Boogie" band member Kelvin.

Norfolk Roots is a travelling exhibition that celebrates the achievements and history of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Norfolk. It aims to challenge stereotypes and myths about BME communities by raising awareness about their significant

understanding Rural Racism and the extensive contributions that Black and Minority Ethnic people have made to Britain. The programme for the evening also included a live poetry performance by Norfolk 'Equal but Different' young poets and New York based Slam Poet Ainsley Burrows. To get people dancing there was a live music performance from Anna Mudeka & Svikiro, Norwich Samba and Debabrata and Padmaja Das, with a premiere of a collaborative 'jam' by our Norfolk based artists performing rhythms and dance from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The evening ended with the hardcore party people boogie-ing to Bob Marley and The Yam - resident Love Music Hate Racism DJ.



For more details contact Kai Yin Low, Community Race Development Officer at Norwich and Norfolk Racial Equality Council. Tel: 01603 611644 Email: admin@nnrec.org.uk

contributions to Norfolk life and economy. Dr. John Turner who contributed to the Pablo Fanque panels, hoped that local research into Pablo's life in Norwich would continue. Pablo Fanque's achievements certainly inspire us to find out more about Norfolk Black History.

The key speaker for the evening was CRE Chairman Trevor Phillips who highlighted the importance of

www.nnrec.org.uk

*NNREC worked with Norfolk Education and Action and Development (NEAD) to co-ordinate and promote a series of events for Black History Month that covered music, art, creative writing, storytelling, anti-racist seminars, theatre and organic gardening.

Refugee Council warns new asylum Bill is the wrong approach to reform

New reforms announced in the Queen's Speech fail to address the flaws in the asylum system and threaten to remove vital legal safeguards, commented the Refugee Council.

"Our major concern is that refugees

who have fled torture and persecution will be penalised by this legislation", said Maeve Sherlock, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council.

Key proposals are: cutting right to appeal, cutting legal aid to £500, removal of support from rejected

families and then putting their children into care, clampdown on unscrupulous advisers and penalties for destroying ID documents.

Further information is available from www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Refugee Integration: Celebrating the achievements of refugee communities in the East of England

1 Day event, June 2004

Perhaps you are a community group organising cultural activities or providing support for refugees. You could be a refugee artist, dancer, musician, poet or storyteller, have a successful business, or have made a career here in the UK. Maybe you are working with refugees in the voluntary, public, statutory or private sector and have ideas and different practice you'd like to share.

The East of England Consortium for Asylum & Refugee

Integration, comprising a range of agencies, is looking for people like you to help the region celebrate the contribution made by refugees to the cultural, economic and social life here.

This refugee-led event will include:

- Culture & testimony – music, dance, art, poetry, storytelling
- Social enterprise & business
- Employment, education, training & volunteering
- Health & wellbeing
- Advice & information for living our lives

If you would like to contribute, please contact the event planning group and let them know how e.g., through performance, visual art & the written word, video / DVD / CDROM, information stalls or displays etc.

Event Planning group/VSRN-EE, Christina Tarring, 4-8 Museum Street, Ipswich IP1 1HT

Email:

christina.tarring@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Tel: 07799644142.

Research into what young people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds say about mental health services

YoungMinds is conducting research to find out what young people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds know about the services available to them, and what their experiences have been of the services they have used. They hope to find out how to make services more acceptable and accessible for these young people so that they can benefit more from them.

YoungMinds is a charity promoting the mental health of children and young people. The study is being led by two consultants, Cathy Street and Zarrina Kurtz. The project has a steering group of young people and an advisory group of professionals who have worked in mental health services.

The researchers will meet with

young people aged 12-25 from six different areas across England and Wales. Some of the young people will have used mental health services and will hopefully be able to tell them about their experiences. Other young people will not have used any services and the researchers can talk to them about what they



would expect from them. Other information is being collected by interviewing staff from some services and making visits to services to understand what they do, how they go about it and whether the service is working well and appealing to young people. They will also interview

parents and carers who indicate that they wish to contribute to the project.

The main outputs from the project will include information materials for young people which are helpful and easy to use, examples of interesting and innovative practice to distribute among professionals working in mental health services and a formal research report.

YoungMinds is keen to hear from anyone working to raise awareness of mental health and mental health services and to devise strategies to promote access for young people from these groups. Please contact:

Emily Taylor or Ceilidh Stapelkamp at

emily.taylor@youngminds.org.uk
ceilidh.stapelkamp@youngminds.org.uk or on 020 7336 8445.

MENTER and REC Partnership

Joella Hazel is one of the newest additions to the MENTER team and has been in post for two months. Based at the MENTER office in Cambridge, her primary focus has been the Race Equality Councils (REC) Partnership Project and developing a regional race equality partnership in tackling race hate crime. So far, initial contact has been made with all Local Authorities and Unitaries and meetings have taken place with the Directors and teams of the majority of RECs and organisations in the Region. Joella has been thrilled with the enthusiastic response that she has received from all those involved in the partnership. All of the REC staff have helped her in collecting information about their

project work, initiatives, local statistics and involvement in anti-race crime. This has facilitated in building up a regional picture of the RECs and their work. It is already clear that there are key common themes and issues that are emerging for organisations that are actively involved in the fight against race hate crime and a partnership meeting will be held during February to encourage partners in sharing good practice and developing solutions to common problems.

Joella recently attended an informative, pro-active conference, 'Crime and the Communities' organised by Cambridgeshire Criminal Justice

Board (CCJB). The response by the various statutory agencies involved in combating crime in Cambridgeshire and their pledge to tackle this important issue is being taken seriously at all levels. Joella is pleased that race hate crime is very much on individual county partnership agendas.

The next step is to start the process of developing a regional framework on race equality. In doing this, Joella is keen to make contact with or hear from any form of strategic race equality umbrella organisation involved in networking or tackling race hate crime that is not already involved in the project.

For more information contact Joella Hazel, MENTER, tel: 01223 355034, mobile: 07776 041171 or email joella@menter.org.uk

Do you care about health?

Read on to see how you could really make a difference

How often have you walked away from a situation, frustrated and annoyed at a service you have received and wished that you could have said something or done something to resolve it, and know that your suggestion was being taken seriously? Or, have you ever seen good practice or customer service in one situation that could easily be copied in another, but no opportunity to pass the good practice on? And has this ever happened when you have been at the doctors, your local hospital or dentist?

Health is so important and affects everyone. Nearly all of us at some point in our life will seek the help of a healthcare professional, often at times when we may feel anxious and vulnerable. Yet how much input do we have on the care that we receive and the services that we use?

A brand new independent organisation, the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH), has been set up for this very reason to give patients and the public a greater say in the healthcare services that they use. Instead of politicians or policy makers sitting around making decisions on our behalf, people from local communities, from all backgrounds - people just like you will be able to have your say too.



Over 550 people are needed across the East of England to speak up on health issues by joining a Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) forum. A PPI forum will be attached to each of the NHS organisations in the region, such as Primary Care Trusts or Mental Health Trusts, and the forums will monitor the work that they do.

Anyone can join a forum. A couple of hours a week is the minimum time commitment but really it will be up to you and the rest of the forum as to when, where and how often you meet. Each forum will be supported by a local network provider (LNP) and regional centre who will offer advice, support and training as appropriate.

We believe these forums can be a real force for change - the NHS has a legal duty to listen to what the forums say. All we need is for you to make some time for health.

For more information or an application pack please call 0845 120 7115 or alternatively register online at www.maketimeforhealth.org

What is life like when somebody close to you goes to prison? How does it affect the children? Is there anyone there for support?

These are just some of the questions that the Ormiston Children and Families Trust are asking of families of prisoners, as part of a new study.

Eight years ago, Caroline Noble, Researcher, interviewed thirty families living in Cambridgeshire who had a relative in prison. The resulting report, Prisoners' Families: The Everyday Reality, graphically described the social, emotional and financial impact on the adults and children left behind. Most were isolated, stigmatised and living with little or no support.

We know that the imprisonment of one person affects the well-being of their whole family. But we want to find out more about what this means day-to-day for adults and children involved, and how things may have changed in the years since the last study was carried out.

TIME FOR FAMILIES

We are now looking for people of all ethnic backgrounds who would be willing to be interviewed as part of this new study – partners, husbands, wives or other relatives who are caring for a child with a parent in prison.

All interviews will be confidential and last approximately one to two hours. Gift vouchers of £15 will be given to those taking part.

If you live in East Anglia, and are caring for a child with a parent in prison and would like to find out more, please telephone us free on the Prisoners' Families Helpline on 0800 389 3003. Or, you can speak directly to the researcher, Gill Pugh, on 01223 426148 or email gill.pugh@ormiston.org.

Celebrate the learning journey

Adult Learners' Week

15-21 May 2004

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education is now calling for nominations for its Adult Learners' Week Awards.

If you know someone whose learning achievements can inspire others to return to learn, then nominate them for the 2004 Adult Learners' Week Awards.

The awards recognise and celebrate the learning achievements of adult learners across England who have embarked on a learning journey, overcome obstacles and have made a difference to their lives as well as those around them.

NIACE, the organisation that co-ordinates the awards, is also looking for community groups that have learned together, benefiting its members and the wider community.

Further awards are open to individuals learning in the workplace, projects that widened access and provision to adult learners, families learning together and family learning providers that make family learning available and accessible.

If you would like to know more about the awards and Adult Learners' Week please contact Campaigns and Promotions on 0116 2044 200 or visit www.niace.org.uk/alw/competitions

If you would like to be put on our NIACE's mailing list for a free issue of the newsletter 'Discover' which highlights the different campaigns and a whole range of ideas, please email mariyam.sidik@niace.org.uk or send a letter to Mariyam Sidik, NIACE, Renaissance House, 20 Princess Road West, Leicester LE1 6TP.

Adult Learners' Week is co-ordinated by NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and is supported by the Department for Education and Skills, European Social Fund, **learnirect**, the Learning and Skills Council and NHSU.

Free training on tax credits

The Maternity Alliance has secured funding from the Inland Revenue to provide free training on tax credits, targeted at those who work with BME and other disadvantaged groups. The course will cover:

- **what tax credits are,**
- **eligibility,**
- **claiming, how the system works and challenging decisions**

The course, which lasts half a day, will focus specifically on the availability of tax credits for people taking maternity/paternity/adoption leave i.e. how families can maximise their income, at a time when their salaried/employment income is likely to fall. The training will be offered regionally and will be delivered between January and April 2004.

For more information, please contact Sarah King, Legal Officer, Maternity Alliance, tel. 020 7490 7639 x137, sking@maternityalliance.org.uk www.maternityalliance.org.uk

Members' spotlight: Gyros

GYROS was born out of the motivation of church members to support the first asylum seekers in Great Yarmouth in 1997. They arrived as a result of the Governments' dispersal policy. The church members went to visit the asylum seekers and saw that there was a need to support them. One of them was David Nettleship, who is now employed by GYROS as Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Six years later that need is still there, alongside many other settlement and integration needs that GYROS has recognized for newcomers in the UK. GYROS now employs three people and aims to provide support services in the whole of Norfolk. One of the three people employed is Des McKeating. His full time co-ordinator post has been made possible by the Norfolk Children's Fund. At this moment GYROS works with 33 families in the Great Yarmouth area and his task is to develop services for children and families county-wide.

Des, David and Brenda McDonough, who is a childcare worker and runs Wednesday's drop-in sessions at the Youth and Community Service Centre, all work from home. They have just put a bid in to the Community Fund which, if granted, will provide the funds for some office space. Like every other BME group, funding is one of GYROS' biggest challenges. The Norfolk Children's Fund limits Des' work to working with families and children, but he is very aware of other needy client groups, for example elderly refugees. In order to be able to be eligible for the Community Fund GYROS had to make some changes to their constitution, which meant that employees could no longer be on the Board. Des admits that this is good practice anyway, but in their case it meant that David, who puts in more hours than his contract, had to stand down as Board Member. GYROS is now looking for new Board Members, especially those who are interested in helping out

with the finance and strategic planning: "the Board needs to be developed so it is up to strength to manage and supervise the organisation and take it forward."

Adapting to different kinds of immigration

Another challenge for GYROS is to adapt to different kinds of immigration. Des: "There is quite a significant number of migrant workers in Great

Yarmouth. I estimate that there are between one and two thousand, but I have also heard figures of four thousand." Most of the migrant workers that GYROS is concerned about have Portuguese nationality and are likely to have come from one of Portugal's former colonies. Often their employment has been advertised in Portugal and they work for an agency on poultry farms or at poultry factories. They work long hours and the agency deducts costs for living and transport off their salaries. Des: "We consider them to be an extremely vulnerable group. Not only because of the language and cultural differences, but also because of the exploitation due to the way that they are employed. They don't know their rights, and neither do some of the service providers." GYROS has not had much success in reaching out into the Portuguese community, but has been successful in advocating their case to the service providers. Des: "This has been done through the GYROS Forum, which is a monthly meeting of all agencies involved with refugees, asylum seekers and other newcomers."

GYROS Multi-Agency Forum

As well as the support given to refugees and asylum seekers over

the years, the Forum is one of GYROS main achievements. Des: "It has brought all sorts of agencies and statutory bodies together, from the library services, to the police, fire service, representatives from the hotels, etc. It has allowed communication between agencies which wouldn't have otherwise



One of Gyros' social events: a BBQ on the beach

happened and all sorts of protocols have come out of it." Des is pleased that Norwich copied the concept as soon as it was announced that the city was also becoming a dispersal area. Des: "The Norwich forum was up and running before the first asylum seeker had set foot in Norwich."

Hostile attitudes

Nationally, the attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers have become more hostile since GYROS was founded in 1997. Des: "Certainly in the communities that we come across we have been able to combat some of the negative attitude." GYROS also has a good relationship with their local press: "They usually do contact us if they need information, but like any other press they like sensational news." In Des' opinion, the British press has forgotten that the UK benefits from immigration: "On the one side we need to offer sanctuary to those who are fleeing their country for fear of their lives and they, on the other side, will also contribute to our society."

The current political climate only seems to grow worse. Des is concerned about the families who will be granted amnesty as they

applied for asylum before October 2000. "The 'move on' period is a crucial time for them," explains Des, who also worked for the Scottish Refugee Council, "They may receive two weeks notice about losing their financial support and having to apply for benefits. They may also lose the accommodation where they have been living for years. They are quite settled in terms of school, and doctors, especially if their GP has been involved in treatment of any post-traumatic stress syndrome. Therefore it will be quite upsetting for them if they have to uproot and move." GYROS will do all it can to make the transition period as smooth as possible.

Concerns about legal aid

In addition to this there are also other worrying developments, especially in relation to legal aid. Des: "It was already difficult to find legal representation for asylum seekers outside London and now the main firm in Norfolk has announced that it is not taking on any new cases." There are similar developments in other counties due to the government's plans to cap legal aid to £500, which is nowhere near enough of what is needed. GYROS may consider participating in action with regard to the legal aid issue. One of GYROS' aims is advocacy and in the past they have contacted MPs, especially about individual cases and issues like opening bank accounts. This appears to be really difficult for refugees and one of the MPs that GYROS approached is looking into the issue and gathering evidence.

Des is well aware that the GYROS' working environment will continuously change. Des: "We will also change our focus and will adapt to where it is most needed."

Des McKeating can be contacted at tel. 07734 678463 and des.mckeating@GYROS.org.uk

Community involvement, consultation, community planning: everybody is doing it – where is the BME involvement?

Earlier this year a potential gap was identified in the regeneration and renewal field in the Eastern Region: in short, the availability of a pool of BME trainers, consultants, facilitators and group leaders. Just ask yourself whom you know from a Black or minority ethnic group with these skills. And to what extent they are getting work, for example via tenders for short term contracts to help find out what local communities feel about their areas, planned development, regeneration schemes and so on.

There is a growing 'industry' around this kind of work with the advent of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, ongoing regeneration programmes and the need for local authorities to produce community plans to name but a few. But again, stop and ask, how many of the trainers, consultants and discussion group facilitators working with communities are from a Black or minority ethnic background.

So perhaps not everybody is doing it!

And if the contracted pool of "experts" does not reflect the diversity of the community does this increase the likelihood of missing out on particular skills, knowledge and experience?

This is why BMET (Black and Minority Ethnic Trainers) is being developed. We are a group of agencies in the Region working together to identify the right people with these kind of skills and interests. We will then find ways to let the Region know about them, possibly by publishing a contacts directory. To that end, MENTER would like to hold two focus group discussions made up of people with views and interests on this issue next February. You may receive an invite.

Agencies involved in this project include Go-East, MENTER (the Regional Black Minority Ethnic Network), Community Renewal Network East (CRNe) and the Refugee Council. A consultant, Jim Thakoordin, has been appointed to advise on the project. Jim is a BME consultant with substantial experience in giving advice and delivering training to communities involved in regeneration and voluntary sector development. If you would like to talk about the project or give us names either of BME trainers / consultants or people who would like to attend the focus groups please contact Vicky Etheridge (CRNe - tel. 01842 754101 or vicky.etheridge@crne.org.uk)



If you are a member of a bme community group, your organisation will be sent a questionnaire in January next year. We urge you to reply to this. No individual organisation can be identified through the survey but it is hoped that the general findings of the survey will help MENTER help you. The MENTER Board has planned an away day following the survey findings to design MENTER programmes to help develop strong BME organisations with good links

with external agencies and adequate funding.

We will also commission interviews with people who are not well represented in community groups. If you know of anyone in the following groups who would be willing to be interviewed please let us know. The groups are: women, young people, people in rural areas, refugees, Gypsies / Travellers, migrant workers. Please do contact MENTER if you want to find out more about this. The contact details of MENTER's central office are on the front page and contact details for County Outreach Development Officers are available from the central office or www.mentor.org.uk