

HARROW COMPACT

HARROW CODE OF PRACTICE ON BLACK, MINORITY ETHNIC AND REFUGEE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

Aims and Objectives

The aims of this Code are:

- To acknowledge the diversity that exists in Harrow, promote community cohesion, champion equality of opportunity throughout all sectors and ensure that the voluntary sector is used as experts in this field. It should be recognised that black, minority ethnic and refugee voluntary and community organisations play a vital part in improving the quality of life of their communities and Harrow in general.
- To develop innovative approaches to working in partnership with asylum seekers, refugees and refugee communities to promote refugee rights.
- To promote and support networks of voluntary and statutory organisations to help them plan and provide better services for and promote increased awareness of issues affecting refugees such as employment, interpretation, training, resettlement, counselling and human rights.
- To promote and support networks of voluntary and statutory organisations to help them plan and provide better services and promote increased awareness of issues affecting black and minority ethnic communities.
- To identify BMER groups, co-ordinate existing information and produce community information about them.
- To eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote good relations between people of different racial background.

The National Perspective

The Macpherson report highlighted the concept of institutional racism. Many recommendations came out of the report to abolish practices in the workplace that fail to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. This Code builds on the recommendations featured in that report.

Discrimination can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which, through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping, disadvantage minority ethnic people.

The Race Relations Act 2000 places a duty on all public sector bodies to promote equal opportunities between people of different racial groups.

The Local Perspective

Harrow is the ninth most diverse Borough in the country with over 50% (Census projections 2008) of residents coming from minority ethnic groups. The largest minority ethnic group are the Asian or Asian British residents (excluding Chinese) who constitute 30% of the population. There is also an increasing but unknown number of refugees in Harrow, (estimates suggest the number of refugees residing in Harrow could be approximately 10,000).

People from BMER communities suffer disproportionately from social exclusion.

One of the more effective ways of addressing this form of social exclusion is through the work of voluntary and community organisations. There is no data as to the definitive numbers of black and minority ethnic voluntary and community organisations that exist in Harrow but it is acknowledged that the sector plays a crucial role in accessing the views and meeting the needs of minority ethnic communities.

It is also acknowledged that work needs to be undertaken to identify BMER groups, co-ordinate existing information and produce community information about them.

Faith Organisations

“Faith groups” is a term to describe groupings of people brought together through a shared faith, religion or belief. Harrow is the most religiously diverse Borough in England and Wales with a 62% chance that any two people in the Borough will be followers of different faiths. Faith groups have a range of resources and offer support to their members and the wider community. Faith groups have the ability to reach some of the most excluded residents in the borough.

Refugee and Asylum Seeker Organisations

Harrow has a growing and active refugee and asylum seekers community. Many groups have been formed to represent countries of origin and The Harrow Refugee Forum is the overarching organisation that supports these smaller groups.

Actions

In recognition of the needs of black, minority ethnic and refugee communities, and the voluntary and community organisations that represent and provide services for them,

The statutory sector will

- Value the work, knowledge and expertise of the BMER voluntary and community sector, including its important role in helping organisations to achieve their objectives.
- Recognise and support the independence of the BMER Sector and its right within law to challenge institutions, policy and practice, irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist, and to determine and manage its own affairs.
- Operate effective and transparent equal opportunity monitoring and evaluation systems that ensure BMER voluntary and community organisation are treated fairly and with respect in all their interactions.
- Include consultation and partnership with, and funding for, the BMER voluntary and community sector within guidance on the statutory duty of public authorities to promote race equality.

- Include within the local authority's robust requirements to ensure equality of access to quality public services, that BMER groups are actively involved in service planning, performance target setting and scrutiny processes.
- Consider the views and encourage the active engagement of the BMER voluntary and community organisations in the community strategies that the local authority will prepare e.g. Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Encourage BMER people to volunteer in other sectors to ensure that the activities and services offered are relevant to the concerns of BMER individuals.
- Take a proactive approach to dealing with any existing under-representation of BMER people among the volunteers, paid staff and trustees working in the voluntary and community sector.
- Dismantle any unnecessary bureaucratic procedures in relation to dealings with the voluntary and community sector. Many BMER people enjoy and prefer the informality they experience in BMER organisations;
- Offer a choice of ways to be involved and remove practical obstacles.
- Allocate resources to the voluntary and community sector using clear, consistent and published criteria as described in the funding code.
- Acknowledge that institutional racism exists and work with BMER groups to develop and continuously monitor policies and services to eradicate discriminatory practice.
- Adopt the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry definitions of institutional racism and a racist incident and share with the voluntary and community sector information on the levels of incidents.
- Adopt the national Census ethnic monitoring classification.
- Adopt the following definition of what constitutes a Black, Minority Ethnic or Refugee group: 'an organisation whose main aim is to put the interest of black, minority ethnic and/or refugee people on top of its agenda i.e. the whole ethos of the organisation is geared towards the empowerment of black, minority ethnic and refugee people. Such a philosophy could only or perhaps be best achieved by organisations where the leaders have shared experiences of the issues affecting black, minority ethnic and/or refugee people'.
- Ensure that BMER voluntary and community organisations have equal access to available resources.
- With the voluntary and community sector, undertake research and develop joint initiatives in relation to levels of funding of BMER organisations, services to BMER communities and employment and volunteering within the voluntary sector.
- Work with the voluntary and community sector to encourage the development of a range of BMER groups in the borough.
- Support the development of an infrastructure for BMER voluntary and community groups.

- Ensure, through policy objectives and commissioning strategies and as far as possible, that BMER voluntary and community organisations are resourced to provide culturally sensitive services for their community, wherever appropriate.
- Respond to the needs of groups for whom English is not their first language.
- Ensure that BMER voluntary and community groups have an opportunity to be actively involved in the Local Area Agreement and other multi-agency partnerships.

The voluntary and community sector will

- Encourage the BMER voluntary and community sector to play a full and active part within the wider voluntary and community sector in fulfilling the significant undertakings in the Compact.
- Work in partnership with the statutory sector and other voluntary organisations in promoting race equality, tackling exclusion and promoting community cohesion.
- Inform and present community concerns to the statutory sector and other partners based on evidence gained through working with and representing local communities.
- Adopt appropriate quality standards and apply best practice in management and delivery within organisations.
- Make use of appropriate training opportunities.
- Develop open organisations, providing opportunities for voluntary and community action by a diverse range of individuals demonstrating a commitment to wider equality issues in addition to race equality.
- Measure the impact of policy and service changes on their members, informing service users, volunteers and service providers accordingly.
- Act as an independent voice for residents and their representatives.
- Recognise the duties placed upon the statutory sector and the restrictions that limit the provision of services.
- Strengthen and maintain good joint working arrangements for the delivery of services.
- Acknowledge that institutional racism exists and work with the statutory sector to develop and continuously monitor policies to eradicate institutional racism.
- Adopt the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry definitions of institutional racism and a racist incident and share with the statutory sector information on the levels of incidents.
- Adopt the national census ethnic monitoring classification.
- Adopt the following definition of what constitutes a black, minority ethnic or refugee group: 'an organisation whose main aim is to put the interest of black, minority ethnic and/or refugee people on top of its agenda i.e. the whole ethos of the organisation is

geared towards the empowerment of black, minority ethnic and/or refugee people. Such a philosophy could only or perhaps be best achieved by organisations where the leaders have a shared experience of the issues faced by black, minority ethnic and/or refugee people'.

- With the statutory sector, undertake research and develop joint initiatives in relation to levels of funding of BMER organisations, services to BMER communities and employment and volunteering within the voluntary sector.
- Respond to the needs of service users by providing culturally sensitive services;
- Develop an infrastructure for BMER voluntary and community groups; establish a BMER forum to share information and good practice.
- Formalise mentoring of BMER groups by BMER groups and non-BMER groups to share experiences and learning.
- Recognise and respond to the needs of groups for whom English is not the first language. For organisations that represent particular communities, this should include offering translation services of key documents.

Priorities for Action

- Develop a strategy for providing infrastructural and developmental support to BMER voluntary and community groups.
- Both sectors to review policies and practices to ensure that the Compact undertakings around monitoring policies on institutionalised racism, recording racist incidents, ethnic monitoring classification and definitions of BMER groups are reflected.
- The statutory sector to review funding and procurement policies and practices in partnership with BMER groups to ensure that the undertakings in relation to BMER issues are addressed.
- Develop a joint strategy for responding to the needs of groups for which English is not the first language.

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