

VISION STATEMENT: "To work towards the elimination of racial and religious discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations between persons of different races, religions and cultures. To encourage social inclusion and diversity amongst different groups".



Bedford Race Equality Council

Newsletter

JULY 2007

Randolph Charles

The New Speaker of Bedford Borough Council

Cllr Randolph Charles, chair of Bedford Race Equality Council has been a Borough Councillor since 1999. He will serve as Speaker of the Council for one year. The traditional civic duties include attending opening ceremonies or representing the Borough at official engagements and are shared between the mayor, deputy mayor, speaker of the council and deputy speaker of the council. Cllr Charles will represent the Borough by attending engagements on behalf of Bedford Borough Council. Upon receiving the appointment Cllr Charles said, "I believe my previous experience of working with a very diverse community will be very beneficial in working with fellow councillors fairly and impartially within the council and positively engaging with the wider community.

**BREC would like to CONGRATULATE
Randolph on his new role.**





BME Community Development Officer (Housing) for Bedfordshire

Gurbaksh Mahi was recently seconded from Bedford Race Equality Council into post as the **BME Community Development Officer** based at Aragon Housing Association's office in Sandy.

She started in post in April 2007 and works directly with the Bedfordshire BME Housing & Communities Forum to implement the recommendation from The Bedfordshire BME Accommodation Needs Study which was completed in 2004.

She will be working with BME community groups across Bedfordshire and Luton to promote awareness of various housing options and to find out about their housing needs.

For more details please contact Gurbaksh Mahi at Aragon Housing Association on 01767 685835





Refugee
Week

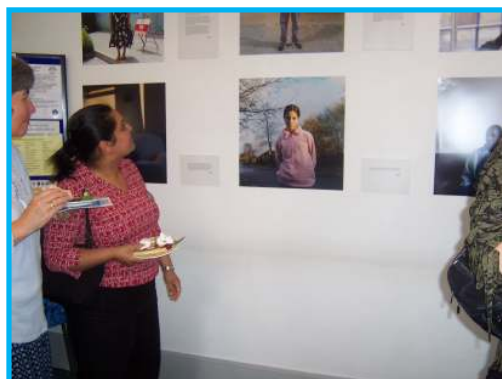
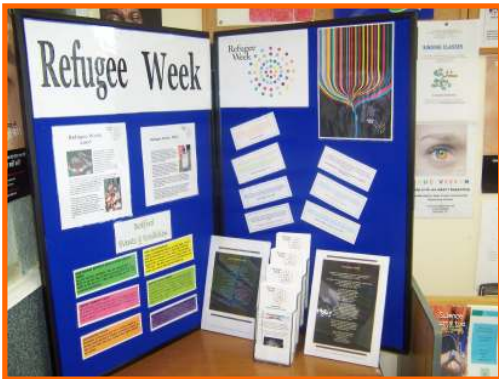


REFUGEE WEEK

18th - 24th June 2007

Here are some photos taken during Refugee Week which was supported by BREC along with other agencies.

Next month look forward to more information on Refugee Week!



See page 12 for a poem on refugees in celebration of Refugee Week.





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RAISING AWARENESS OF INFANT HEALTH IN LUTON ENCOURAGING COMMUNITIES TO MAKE A HEALTHY START

Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali project managers and community group leaders are invited to learn more about helping their communities to make a **Healthy Start**.

They will take part in an event hosted by **Luton Teaching Primary Care Trust** in partnership with the **Department of Health** on **Tuesday 3rd July 2007** at Riverside Conference Centre, Luton.

Regional health representatives from, Luton Primary Care Trusts will be speaking about the new initiative from the Department of Health that replaces the old Welfare Food scheme called Healthy Start.

Through the Healthy Start scheme qualifying families and pregnant women are provided with vouchers that can be exchanged for fresh fruit and vegetables as well as milk and infant formula, plus free vitamin supplements. It also provides the opportunity to access quality information and advice about healthy family diet and breastfeeding, as well as broader health issues.

The Department of Health has identified that there is a low uptake of Healthy Start amongst the Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali communities and that they may be missing out on opportunities to receive financial help. With this in mind, the Department of Health's Healthy Start team has planned a number of conferences throughout the country to help introduce Healthy Start to these communities.

Consultant nutritionist and registered dietician and best-selling author, Azmina Govindji, will be joining the regional health representatives to promote healthy eating and will demonstrate a number of healthy recipes for families. She said: "Parents find it difficult to get children to eat foods which are good for them. I will be demonstrating easy ways to incorporate fruit and vegetables into traditional meals and showing how to make fun food that will appeal to children."

The conference will provide project managers and community group leaders with information on Healthy Start, local community health, key health and lifestyle messages and tools to help them take the messages of Healthy Start benefits to their members.

**The Conference is taking place on
Tuesday 3rd July
@
The Riverside Conference Centre
Luton**

**If you are interested in attending, please book your place by calling
0208 902 5575.**

**For further details please contact:
priyapatel@mediamoguls.com or 0208 902 5575**



Millennium Volunteers



make a difference

R U 16-25? Want to get involved in volunteering? Looking for new challenges?
Like the idea of meeting new people? Want to give something back to your community?

Millennium Volunteers has a range of volunteering opportunities! Sign up as an MV and you can gain accreditation for your volunteering through nationally recognised certificates that look awesome on your C.V and UCAS forms.

We are also looking for organisations and charities in need of volunteers. If you are a charity that needs help with an event or project get in touch.

Past projects have included: Stewarding at public events, Gardening work, Community fairs and fun days, Painting spaces, fundraising for charities and much more!



To find out more about MV or to organise challenge days for our volunteers get in touch with

Danny 07809551477 or Dquinn@csv.org.uk (project worker for north beds) or
Laura 07881405455 or Lbarrie@csv.org.uk (project worker for Luton and south beds).

HOPE not hate - BNP hammered across country

With just a few key councils still to declare we can happily say that the BNP has not made its promised breakthrough in the 2007 local elections. Despite standing over 750 district and borough candidates (and boasts of winning up to 60 seats) the current net gain is ZERO.

The BNP has so far won eight council wards but then they have also lost eight council wards.

BNP gains have taken place in
Stoke-on-Trent (3),
North West Leicestershire (2),
Charnwood (1),
Bradford (1)
Burnley (1).

However the BNP lost seats in
Burnley (3),
Bradford (1),
Calderdale (1),
Stoke-on-Trent (1),
South Holland (1)
Broxbourne (1).

Particularly pleasing were the great results in Sandwell, Bradford, Kirklees, Epping, Dudley and Burnley. Even in Stoke-on-Trent, where the BNP won three, they lost in both of the key wards where a strong campaign was fought.

Searchlight's campaign website "<http://www.hopenothate.org.uk>">www.hopenothate.org.uk has the BNP results and we will shortly be producing a more detailed summary of the election results and campaign reports from around the country.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people that have worked with Searchlight over the last few months, and the unions who have supported us, and we can now happily say that all our hard work has paid off.

Taking on the BNP and working hard at a local level works.

Nick Lowles mail to: nick@stopthebnp.org.uk

www.hopenothate.org.uk

A Cohesive Britain?

We have had warnings of communities living parallel lives and that we may be "sleepwalking into segregation".

There are fears over the impact of the great wave of migration that has brought hundreds of thousands of Eastern European workers to the British economy.

But Darra Singh, chairman of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, rather deliberately says that the real danger is that we are "sleepwalking into simplicity".

His detailed report, published on Thursday, argues that for too long government and society has been blinded by events - panicked by race riots, worried by the rise of far-right politics in poor white communities and terrified of suicide bombings.

If we are going to get a grip on the super-diversity of modern Britain, to use the technical lingo, then we need to think beyond these crises, he says, and understand the very delicate, local nature of building ties that bind.

So it's time to invest heavily in local action to get neighbours of different backgrounds talking to each other, says the commission.

At the heart of its argument is a focus on local action - that central government has at the very least misunderstood some of the dynamics of how change from immigration and diversity affects how society feels about itself.

The commission accepts that in some circumstances greater diversity - essentially meaning immigration or ethnic change - has a "negative impact".

It warns that integration "freezes" in poorer areas where jobs are not plentiful. And from there it is a short step to communities believing they are competing over jobs, decent housing and schools.

In some areas these complex phenomena are not a problem. Many Londoners revel in the capital's reputation as the most diverse city in the world.

But other areas - old northern industrial towns or rural areas unused to mass migration - may feel differently. And it is these potential "hot spots" that Darra Singh says we need to get wise to.

Get mapping

So how should this done? The commission says the UK needs to start mapping how it is changing - and by this it means going beyond a headcount once every decade.

The last census was in 2001 but the pace of change means that those figures are arguably completely out of date: more than 560,000 immigrants came to Britain in 2005 to live for at least a year.

The commission has done some of this mapping itself with a special analysis of how cohesive each area of England feels.

At the same time, government needs to help areas experiencing similar problems from change - the rural areas for instance - get together to work out solutions, rather than imposing one single master plan from Whitehall.

The commission argues for big investments in citizenship through school-twinning and other projects. Tied to this, flying squads of experts could be brought in to tackle rising tensions in "hot spots".

Similar ideas have been floated by Professor Ted Cattle, the author of the seminal "parallel lives" report into the 2001 northern riots.

The commission's call to end funding to single-issue groups may be not as bad news as it seems for ethnic minorities. The very fact that many cities are becoming more diverse has already forced the issue.

One west London mosque in an area of extraordinary diversity long ago opened its classrooms and meeting halls to the whole neighbourhood, turning itself into a hub of activity for people of all backgrounds.

What all of this entails is a move away from crisis management and into a "long game" of steady investment in neighbourliness - a new social contract of sorts.

But there are elephants in the room. The commission was launched amid a debate on two key issues - the 7/7 bombings and single-faith schools.

The report does not go into the impact of political extremism in communities, and was not asked to look into whether faith schools help or hinder integration.

But the commission was swamped with public comments from people opposed to faith schools. It acknowledges this in the report - but says it wanted to focus on measures to bring pupils from all schools together.

Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly has warmly received the report and will respond fully to its proposals in the autumn.

She has not ruled out any of the commission's main proposals, including a national integration body and flying squads for troubled towns.

But community activists at the frontline of building trust between people of different backgrounds will want to see if ministers are going to be prepared to open the chequebook.

This article has been taken from the BBC News website on www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6753887.stm

Commission on Integration & Cohesion

4 weeks to go...

...you still have the chance
to tell us what you think.

There are fewer than **4 weeks to go** before the **Commission on Integration and Cohesion** retires to consider its recommendations to Government! To conclude its outreach and consultation programme, the Commission recently launched its "4 Weeks To Go!" campaign; this is aimed at finding out what individual people think about community relations and how we can improve them, by posing the question:

"If you were in charge for a day, what would you do to help people from different backgrounds in your neighbourhood get on better?"

You can tell us what you think **online** in the discussion forum at:

www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk

We would be most grateful if you could also forward this invitation e-mail to your stakeholder networks. The Commission has also produced a set of **postcards** for the same purpose: please let us know if you would like to receive some to distribute (and/or know someone who would!) - again, we would be very grateful. Looking forward to hearing from you!

There are 4 WEEKS LEFT to tell us what you think!
Join the debate online at www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk

* **Contact us at coic@communities.qsi.gov.uk**
* **Visit us at www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk**

James Hayes
Policy Adviser
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7944 3984
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7944 8974
Email: james.hayes@communities.qsi.gov.uk

Bedfordshire County Council wins first prize at the East of England Regional Council Equalities Award 2007

Bedfordshire County Council's Adult Learning Disability Direct Services have been awarded first prize in the East of England Regional Council Equalities Award. The team were one of ten entrants this year and the County Council were runners-up last year with Prepare to Soar a staff development scheme for ethnic minority employees.

The Adult Learning Disability Direct Services supports a number of in-house council services, including community support, day and residential care.

In the last year the service has been working hard on building diversity and equality into the everyday ethos of people receiving and working in the services. The service has also reviewed processes and services for cultural sensitivity including Spiritual and religious needs, Language and Interpreting Services, Stereotyping, Gender expectations.

The service has set up an Equality and Diversity Forum which works with groups such as the Bedford Council for Faiths, Advocacy Agency and Community Nurses. The Diversity Forum has highlighted the need for a review of in-house policies and has resulted in the launch of a Spirituality Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Personal Relationship and Sexuality Policy.

Councillor Bob King, Cabinet Member for Community Services says "This is fantastic news and a real recognition of the Adult and Learning Disability Services hard work. The County Council is committed to always looking at its services and improving them. Well done to the team for their continued hard work and commitment".

The East of England Regional Council Equalities Award is an annual event to celebrate and encourage creativity and innovation in promoting equality of opportunity for all. The Award is given to the Local Authority/Partnership of Authorities within the region which submits the best evidence of an activity or project which promotes Equality of Opportunities in terms of Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation, Faith etc. Previous winners have included Luton Borough Council (2006) and Cambridge City Council (2005).

The County Council's other entry; 'The route to Citizenship with Bedfordshire Library Service' also received a significant thumbs up from the awards board. The bid outlined the library service's support of those in the local community who were embarking on the route to British Citizenship. Support on offer included fully trained staff to offer advice, free computers and Citizenship tuition classes. Though the bid did not win, feedback was extremely positive with the scheme been referred to as 'A very good initiative' and that it seemed 'to contribute to a positive, welcoming approach to the process of becoming British'.

Media Contact: Danielle Williams, Senior Communications Officer, 01234 276024
danielle.williams@bedscc.gov.uk or **Matthew Deaves, Senior Communications Officer,**
01234 276095 matthew.deaves@bedscc.gov.uk



Forsaken Child

**I want you to understand my life and my vanishing identity.
Having lost the meaning of my life ... now I survive!
It is like being again ... a child.**

**I am trying to tell you my needs while I am learning to speak again.
I am discovering my new world
and what is there for me ... you know
I am looking for my rights.**

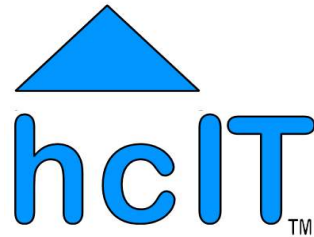
**I don't know what happens
if I am sick, I don't know either
if my children became ill.
Once, my hands were fruitful,
now they are tied up.
They are skilled hands but ...
you don't see them.**

**They want to produce again
and they will go anywhere
to contribute in the new world.
Like a child, I am scared of the dark
not having a home to go to at night.
I have space and house but in this ...
there is not a warm bed and
when I feel alone and lost, the door
of the house is closed.**

**I have found other forsaken children
like me ... we need the understanding
and care of those who can show us
the path and their hands to become
independent again.**

**I like to make you understand
that in my country there was
not queue to jump.
I had to leave...
and I did not choose to
become a child again.**

This poem has been taken from the Refugee Claimants Support Centre website on www.refugee.org.au



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Friday: 9:30-1:30

Our office hours are: Monday to Friday 9:00am -
5:00pm

Answer phone services at all other times.

Contact Bedford REC:

36 Mill Street, Bedford, MK40 3HD

Tel: 01234 350459 / 340728 Fax: 01234 327487

Email: brec@fsmail.net

Website: www.voluntaryworks.org.uk/brec

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01234 350459 or email brecnews@hotmail.com**

BREC welcomes your comments about all aspects of this newsletter. If you have any comments about the layout, content or distribution of the newsletter, or if you wish to make a contribution to the next issue, please contact us on 01234 350459 or email brec@fsmail.net

Bedford Race Equality Council is supported by: The Commission for Racial Equality, Bedfordshire County Council, Bedford Borough Council, Mid Beds District Council, HMP Bedford, European Social Fund, & MENTER