

**Action Notes of the Equalities and Communities Theme Group held on
Wednesday 26th November 2008**

Present:

Sue Bent, Jancis McDonald, Charley Gibbons, June Morley, Vicky Millard, Chaman Verma, Surindar Nagra, Jody Gordon, Joy Warren and Debbie Briggs

Apologies:

Cllr Kevin Foster, Jenni Venn, Sally Giles, Supt Jim Titley, Alison Quigley, Richard Tomlins, Teresa Staniewicz, John Payne, June Jeffrey, Alison Porter and Janita Wesson

Sue Bent welcomed everyone to the meeting and round table introductions took place.

Debbie Briggs asked people if the venue and the time of the meetings were still appropriate for Theme Group meetings. Some people identified issues around parking, but on the whole, people were happy to continue to meet at St Peter's.

Surindar Nagra said that some people had fed back to her that they felt that the meetings needed to be more focused and that the group should discuss real issues that people can really get their teeth into.

Sue said that when we did a review of the Theme Group a couple of meetings ago, some people had raised similar issues and we have tried to set a work programme and make it clear what we will be doing at each meeting in response to this. We are no longer managing a series of projects and it is important to be clear about our impact. The approach we are now going to take, particularly in relation to the work we will be doing on the LAA action plans, will hopefully encourage people to attend. This is quite a policy focused group but we want to keep people engaged.

Chaman Verma said that we should think about limiting meetings to 90 minutes, and trial this for 3 – 4 meetings. Sue said that when we start to review the LAA action plans, and asking people to talk to us about embedding the equality and cohesion agenda, we are anticipating that this discussion will take 1 hour. Sue agreed that we would note Chaman's comment but we will need to see if 1 hour is long enough for the LAA discussions when we do the first one in January.

1. Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed and there were no matters arising.

2. Embedding Equality and Cohesion into the LAA

Sue reminded the group that at the last meeting we had discussed our approach to embedding equality and cohesion into the LAA, and that we would do this by looking at the LAA indicators clustered under each theme.

It was agreed that the themes we will look at first are: Jobs and economy, Community Safety, Children and Young People and Health. Once these themes have been considered we will review progress and decide on which themes we will discuss next.

These discussions will form the main agenda item for each meeting. We will be sending out guidance to help people to prepare for this in advance, and this guidance will include the questions Andrew Harrison put together for us. We will also ask people to circulate some information to theme group members in advance. It is important that we are clear that this is not some kind of inquisition, but that we want to have a conversation with people and offer support in a constructive way.

3. Coventry City Council's Race Equality Scheme

Surindar Nagra circulated copies of the consultation draft of Coventry City Council's Race Equality Scheme. This is the third Race Equality Scheme the Council has done and covers the period 2009 – 2012.

The consultation draft and on-line questionnaire can also be found here:

<http://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/content/chief-executives-directorate/corporate-policy/Equalities-and-Communities/race-equality--your-views-are-needed.en>

Joy Warren asked what progress has been made on the Council's RES. Surindar confirmed that progress is reported on a half yearly basis to the relevant Cabinet Member. Progress reports for the Council's Equality Strategy, which incorporates all the actions from the Race Equality Scheme, can be found here:

<http://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/community-and-living/equalities-and-communities/equality-strategy/>

Action	Timescale	Who
Any comments on the Council's draft Race Equality Scheme to be passed to Jaspal Mann (Jaspal.mann@coventry.gov.uk)	19 December 2008	ALL

4. Community Organisations Support Team

June Morley talked to the group about her new role as Communities Co-ordinator within Neighbourhood Management. June's role has a City-wide remit and there are 2 sides to the role.

Firstly, June is working with refugees, asylum seekers, and new communities in the city and part of her work will be to ensure that members of the Coventry Partnership and strategic policy makers are aware of the needs of asylum seekers and new communities.

One of the projects June will be involved in is the production of a regional web site for new communities. The web site will contain PDF leaflets which will signpost people to useful information such as health services. June is also involved in a project looking at improving access regionally to benefits for people who cease to be asylum seekers.

June would like to feed back to this group on the work she is doing and is therefore looking for an invitation to this group. June confirmed that the work she is involved in around children and young people's issues is reporting back to the CYP Strategic Partnership and June would like to link the rest of her work through this group.

The other side of June's role is working with the 34 community centres in the city to ensure that over the next 10 years they become viable and sustainable. Many community centres can also provide venues for meetings and events and June is looking to develop a web facility to showcase what facilities are available.

Tina Mistry is also working with new communities in the city and she sits in June's team. Tina is looking at the barriers new communities face and it is important to embed the lessons from the needs analysis into mainstream services from this project and other areas of work.

Surindar Nagra advised June that there are materials and templates on the IDeA web site which may help with the setting up of the Welcome web site.

Surindar also asked what the plans are for when Tina Mistry's post comes to an end. June said that the funding for Tina's post ends at the end of March 2009 and June is currently seeking funding to get the post extended. Tina has made lots of really good contacts at the grass roots level and this knowledge is critical and provides a channel for new communities to focus through. June confirmed that she is also working on an exit strategy for Tina's post should continued funding not be available.

Sue asked people if they were happy to receive reports about the work June is doing. The group agreed that it would be helpful to receive updates and that it would also be useful to take this information back into their own organisations. It was therefore agreed that June would become a member of this group in her new role.

Sue asked June about the project she is undertaking in relation to benefit uptake and whether this was just aimed at refugees as there are many other groups who have issues accessing benefits. June confirmed that there are no problems looking at this more widely. Charley Gibbons said that this is also an issue for people experiencing mental health issues. Sue said that people are not getting through the system as people may assume they are asylum seekers and there may also be communication issues. Assumptions are often made about non entitlement and people are being sent away. People are also being directed to phones and may not be able to use them. June said that she will pick these issues up and it may also be worth raising this with the Economy, Learning, Skills and Employment theme group.

Action	Timescale	Who
It was agreed that June Morley would become a member of this group in her new role.	From this meeting – 26 November 08.	June Morley/ Debbie Briggs
Project looking at benefit uptake to consider people experiencing mental health issues and people who are assumed to be refugees.	December 2008 - ongoing	June Morley

5. Refugee Week

John Payne is currently off sick and this item will therefore be discussed at our next meeting.

6. Discussion about establishing a Reference Group

This agenda item follows on from a discussion at the last meeting. When the theme group was re-established, the task for the new group was about embedding the equalities and cohesion agenda so it was important for people to bring expertise and facilitate dialogue with other groups and organisations. There were some members of the community on the previous group and it became difficult to know which communities to invite on to the group as we didn't want the group to become too large. It was therefore decided that we would establish a reference group to enable a wider group of people to be engaged in the work of the group.

Sue met with Debbie Briggs and Jenni Venn earlier in the week to discuss this and it was identified that the deputy Leader, Cllr Kevin Foster, who also sits on this group, also holds a community cohesion meeting twice a year, where he invites lots of members of the community to discuss cohesion issues. At the last community cohesion meeting, people were asked to contribute to the guidance that Andrew Harrison is developing on our behalf. Sue proposed that we think about linking in with this group in the future rather than establishing another separate reference group. Sue said that she would also need to discuss this in more detail with Cllr Foster.

Jody Gordon said that there were a lot of professionals at the last cohesion meeting. Surindar Nagra confirmed that the invitation is sent out widely but a lot of professionals do attend. It is important to get to the real people and that links are made with the Partnership Boards.

Sue agreed that it is important to get past the spokespeople and this is a challenge for us. Jody said that we should try this approach first and see if we can get more community members to attend. Surindar said that we can learn lessons from our Partnership Boards and think about how we involve people in the decisions we make. We need to think about reimbursing expenses and making it easier for people to attend.

Sue asked the group if they felt it would be a good way forward to work with Surindar and Cllr

<p>Foster to try and broaden representation. The group felt that this was a good idea and Surindar also said that she had organised a meeting with faith organisations earlier in the year and that we could also involve this group.</p> <p>It is important to use members of this group to help us to connect with 'real people' and to help us to broaden our invitation list. Those people who maintain lists of 'service users' for consultation purposes were asked to share them so that they could be invited.</p>		
Action	Timescale	Who
Sue to think about the best time to hold the first reference group and to discuss this with Cllr Foster.	14 January 2008	Sue Bent
7. Making Coventry a More Equal and Cohesive City		
<p>Sue reminded the group that this was about the guidance that Andrew Harrison is developing on our behalf. This guidance will be used with the other theme groups to help them to embed our agenda. Andrew Harrison brought the draft guidance to our last meeting and Debbie circulated an electronic copy to all theme group members for comment. Sue said that she was now asking for agreement for a sub group of this group to get together to feed in any final comments. This meeting will take place on 17th December from 3.00 – 4.00pm in Diamond Room 5 of the Council House. Sue asked if anyone would like to be apart of this group and Surindar, Joy and Jody said that they would like to be involved.</p>		
Action	Timescale	Who
A Sub Group will meet to feed in any final comments on Andrew Harrison's draft guidance.	17 December 2008	Sub Group of the Theme Group.
A discussion will take place at the next Theme Group Leaders and Advisors meeting to agree how the guidance will be used and the best way to get this information disseminated. This will be fed back at the next meeting.	18 December 2008	Sue Bent/ Debbie Briggs
8. PCT Equality Agenda		
<p>Chaman Verma circulated a handout outlining how the PCT intend to produce their single equality scheme.</p> <p>Chaman said that NHS organisations are required to produce a single equality scheme and that there is a Single Equality Bill which is due to go through Parliament.</p> <p>Chaman said that the EIA process encompasses the positive outcome model and the PCT is keen for partnerships such as this to influence the content of their single equality scheme. All stakeholders and partner organisations across the board will be involved in this. Chaman said that he would like an opportunity in the new year to seek the views of this group in order to influence the way in which the NHS is shaping services and ensuring good treatment outcomes and experiences for everybody.</p> <p>Joy Warren said that it is important to consult with the users of Coventry's health service. Chaman said that he is keen to involve not just service users but also representatives and champions of diverse communities and anyone with an interest in ensuring the people of Coventry receive an excellent outcome from the NHS.</p> <p>Joy said that the PCT are nationally known to lag behind on the equality and diversity agenda and she expressed concern that Coventry PCT appear to be leaping straight into a single equality scheme when a lot of PCTs have not done the separate equality schemes well. Joy acknowledged that Coventry PCT do appear to be leading the field compared to PCTs nationally.</p> <p>Chaman said that he did not agree with this and that he felt it inappropriate to make</p>		

statements of this nature in a forum such as this without providing specific evidence. Chaman asked that these comments are noted.

Surindar Nagra said that the Council can support the PCT in terms of the lessons they have learned. Surindar also asked how long the single equality scheme would be for. Chaman said that it would cover a 5-year period and would be reviewed annually.

Surindar said that the Equality Bill has not yet been approved and that it was not due to be implemented until 2010. Surindar therefore advised caution as we do not yet know what the requirements of the Bill will be.

Chaman said that the key reason the NHS wants to produce a single equality scheme is to ensure that no matter who you are, you receive an excellent treatment outcome and experience – and that this is not just about race, gender and disability. Chaman said that all NHS organisations in the country have produced, or are working towards a single equality scheme. Joy said that this is not the case around the country and Chaman said that he disagreed with this.

Surindar said that a lot of consultation was carried out jointly between the PCT and the Council to produce the Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes and that it is a legal requirement to have these schemes in place. Surindar also said that there have been challenges up and down the country where organisations have had a single equality scheme but failed to have separate race, disability and gender equality schemes in place. Chaman said that the new single equality scheme will subsume the existing schemes. Sue clarified that Surindar is highlighting the need to be cautious and that other organisations have been challenged in relation to this. Joy also reiterated this view and said that she has seen the implications of this nationally. Chaman said that he will be able to pull out the relevant race, gender and disability sections from his single equality scheme.

Joy said that Chaman should advise his organisation of the risk they are taking in developing a single equality scheme prior to 2010 as we are not yet required to adhere to the Equality Bill, but we are required to comply with the current Race, Gender and Disability legislation.

Chaman said he felt it to be inappropriate that negative comments were being made without any evidence or information to support them. Joy explained that she is involved in joint work with the NHS and she was repeating what she had heard at these meetings. She said she was sorry if Chaman had found the comments to be unhelpful.

Sue repeated that she felt that the contributions that had been made were supportive and that members of the group had simply been advising caution based on challenges that other organisations had faced in adopting this approach.

She asked Chaman how far he was going to go to broaden this to include other groups that are not protected by legislation. Chaman said that Carer's are a key part of the patient journey in the NHS and that he is keen to work with the community and voluntary sector around this. Chaman said that the NHS business is about improving health and reducing health inequalities. The EIA process will help us to look at the experience of people in areas of deprivation.

Charley Gibbons asked if this will cover services that are commissioned by the PCT and Chaman confirmed that this approach will include the commissioning side.

Chaman asked for a half hour slot at the January meeting. The agenda for this meeting is already looking quite busy and Sue suggested that it may be worth setting up a separate meeting to discuss this and also inviting representatives from other theme groups to attend.

9. Any Other Business		
Community Cohesion Strategy		
<p>Surindar Nagra said that she is tasked with developing a Community Cohesion Strategy for the Coventry Partnership. Surindar will be setting up a steering group to help deliver this and is looking for members of this theme group to be involved in this. It is anticipated that the Community Cohesion Strategy will be launched in July 2009 and the sub group will report back to this group.</p>		
Action	Timescale	Who
If anyone is interested in being a part of the steering group to help develop the Community Cohesion Strategy, please contact Surindar directly (surindar.nagra@coventry.gov.uk).	19 December 2008	ALL
Future Meetings		
The next meeting will take place on 14 th January 2008.		
Action	Timescale	Who
The meetings scheduled for 25 th February 2009 and 8 th April 2009 have been cancelled and will be replaced by a meeting on 11 th March 2009. Can all theme group members please make a note of this change?	ASAP	ALL
As some members of the group have to leave meetings early, it was agreed that the next meeting would take place from 1.30 – 3.30pm. If this causes a particular problem for anybody, please let Debbie know.	ASAP	ALL