

RACE EQUALITY WEST MIDLANDS

Annual General Report and Audited
Accounts

2004-2005



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RACE EQUALITY WEST MIDLANDS

CHAIR'S REPORT

by Amir Kabal, JP, DL, Chair of Race Equality West Midlands and
Director of East Staffordshire Race Equality Council

Race Equality councils and partnerships (RECs and REPs) first came together on a regional basis in 1997 to form the West Midlands Race Equality Forum. In 1999, the Forum won National Lottery funding to mount a development project providing support at regional level to West Midlands race equality councils and partnerships. Since then, Race Equality West Midlands (REWM) has undertaken important capacity-building and strategic development of race equality services across the West Midlands region. It is a second-tier organisation working, wherever possible, through, and in partnership with, local race equality councils, but never as an alternative to them.

In January 2002, REWM became a company limited by guarantee. In April 2003, it moved from St Swithuns, Worcester, to the Aston Science Park, Birmingham, and, in 2004, was granted charitable status. A significant new initiative in 2004-05 has been the West Midlands Discrimination Advisory Service, a partnership project with the University of Wolverhampton, which provides second-tier support to complainants of racial discrimination in employment and services. In 2004-05, REWM received funding for the different strands of its work from the Community Fund, the Commission for Racial Equality, Walsall Strategic Partnership, the DTI, the Government Office and various other minor contracts.

Currently, the West Midlands Forum consists of the chairs and directors of the eight remaining race equality councils and partnerships in the West Midlands. Since 2002, North Staffordshire REC has taken over the office of the former REC at Stafford, while RECs in Coventry, Telford and Shropshire, Walsall, Warwick District and Wolverhampton have closed, following the withdrawal of funding. Work is under way in Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, and Wolverhampton to explore the kind of local race equality organisations that might replace former RECs. Currently, REWM is assisting in various ways with the development of new agencies in Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, as well as contributing more generally to maintaining our regional race equality network.

REWM, in partnerships with the CRE, has provided advice and consultancy on practical and constitutional race equality development across the region. It should, however, be remembered that, at one stage during the last year, REWM staffing fell to just two staff with the departure of Gerald Nembhard, although I am now pleased to report that we have put in place a vibrant new team of seven full and part-time staff and two trainees, including those working on the complainant aid team.

General capacity building

To assist in building the capacity of local race equality organisations, REWM has made funding applications, engaged in research and development, and offered help with training, quality assurance and service improvement. For REWM, the year 2004-05 was one of financial consolidation, strategic development, and significant achievement of outcomes, delivering its targets on time to the satisfaction of its major funders and contracting agencies.

Network support

REWM has continued throughout 2004-05 to make a substantial contribution to the development of national, regional and sub-regional strategy, in regard to equality and diversity policy, community regeneration and cohesion, public awareness-raising, and legal advice to complainants of discrimination. We have played a lead role, as always, in the British Federation of Race Equality Councils at national level, helping organise the successful conference on the proposed Commission for Equality and Human rights at Stoke Rochford in June 2004. The West Midlands Race Equality Council Forum, amply serviced with reports, minuted, and with action taken by REWM, has continued to meet on a regular basis throughout the year. REWM has also acted as convenor and secretary to important regional networks: the West Midlands Local Strategic Partnerships Race Equality Support Group and the West Midlands Local Authorities Race Equality Implementation Group. REWM has been an active member of the Midlands Network for Monitoring the activities of the racist far-right. In March 2005, REWM gave evidence to the West Midlands Regional Assembly on the state of the region's race equality councils and progress towards promoting race equality.

Funding

Following on from last years report on the condition of West Midlands race equality councils, REWM conducted a national audit on the impact on local race equality work of the Commission for Racial Equality's policy for funding organisations under section 44 of the Race Relations Act. The results made grim reading, Recommendations, all very reasonable, have not in general been accepted or acted on by the CRE. We are now all aware of the consequences for our organisations of decisions relating to *Getting Results* funding 2005-06. The reductions in funding to some of our hitherto most effective West Midlands RECs/REPs are having a catastrophic impact. Birmingham Race Action Partnership, Dudley REC, East Staffordshire REC, North Staffordshire REC, Race Equality West Midlands, Rugby REC and Worcestershire REC have all received considerably less funding from the Commission than in 2004-05. While REWM has assisted RECs/REPs in locating new sources of funding and making funding applications, it has not been able to reverse the decline in REC fortunes or to achieve a breakthrough in securing more permanent longer-term funding, or a recognition of the need to cover more core costs.

Multi-strand equality work

In regard to strategy, REWM made important contributions to our understanding of how to begin to accommodate multi-strand equality work in our governance and partnership arrangements and work programmes. With the help of DTI funding,

REWM organised a very successful conference on the new employment regulations relating to sexual orientation and religion or belief. REWM produced *Modelling the delivery of local equality services in rapidly changing circumstances: exploring the feasibility of local equality and human rights facilities*. In August, it published the results of a substantial piece of research: *Walsall racial equality and diversity audit, review and plan*, which proposes a new kind of local agency for Walsall, the Walsall Partnership for Equality and Cohesion, which may provide a model for our way forward. Other research reports covered work with Gypsies and Travellers, Youth work aimed at promoting race equality, how to deal with racist far-right political policies, and mentoring.

The electoral threat from the far right

REWM continued its efforts to defeat the racist far right's electoral campaigning and divisive and destructive interventions in community relations. Apart from its extremely useful published guidance, REWM assisted the CRE in jointly organising a very successful and well attended conference in March at Villa Park, Birmingham, on *Defeating Racial Hatred*.

Training

REWM has continued to undertake training and to produce training materials. It has encouraged race equality officers to attend courses and conferences and to follow accredited training in management, particularly diversity management. It has organised an academic seminar programme in partnership with the University of Birmingham Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Culture. REWM staff have spoken at conferences, meetings and workshops nationally, and across the region, on various subjects including the development of new equality initiatives in the community. The appointment of a training and development officer in 2004-05 led to a rapid surge in conference organisation and education and training initiatives.

Complainant aid provision

There were other success, too, but perhaps the great achievement of the year, due mainly to the strategic vision and hard work of Frank Reeves, our principal officer, has been the successful creation of our very own West Midlands Discrimination Advisory Service, to which local agencies can refer their complex complaints, or where they do not have facilities for individual complainants of discriminations, send clients directly.

The partnership arrangement with the University of Wolverhampton School of Legal Studies provides a great deal of added value to the initiative, for example, in the form of legal advice and training and the potential for work placements, I should like to conclude my report not only by thanking our new staff at WMDAS for their efforts, but also the University staff, in particular, Brian Mitchell, Dean of the school, and Martin Cartwright, Associate Dean, for their generous, freely-given, hands-on help and support.

RACE EQUALITY WEST MIDLANDS

PRINCIPAL OFFICER AND COMPANY SECRETARY'S REPORT

by Frank Reeves, Principal Officer,
Race Equality West Midlands

Given the limited resources at its disposal, REWM has achieved a great deal during the financial year 2004-05 and laid the foundation for the consolidation of its success in 2005-06. In the six years of our existence since 1999, first as the West Midlands Race Equality Development Project under the leadership of our chair at the time, Waqar Azmi, and then as Race Equality West Midlands, a discrete organisation, company and charity, chaired by Amir Kabal, we have learned many lessons about twenty-first century race equality promotion, but also about how to survive in the voluntary and community sector, a politically-difficult, unstable and competitive environment.

Since our inception, despite our capacity-building brief, we have watched the demise in this region of at least six former race equality councils for a variety of different reasons. Despite our best efforts, we were unable to find ways of intervening to save them, or our help and advice was refused. Our focus now has shifted to recognising that in order to survive and develop, voluntary organisations must meet local needs, plan strategically, adapt to a rapidly-changing social political and economic environment, and be generally fit for purpose. Voluntary-sector capacity building is more than the acquisition of resources to sustain the idealism of the few. It involves developing an effective strategy to promote race equality in contemporary context, and delivering suitable, accessible, reliable, responsive and high quality services. Even then, funding may be hard to come by, but it will not flow, indeed will be diverted away, if these conditions do not apply.

Although, in general, the race equality movement has already learned this lesson the hard way, it was not fully prepared for the onslaught on its funding caused by the Commission for Racial Equality section 44 *Getting Results* outcome-related approach made operational over three years, and impacting with particular ferocity on West Midlands RECs/REPs in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006.

The following table shows how West Midlands RECs/REPs CRE budget allocations were reduced between 2004-05 and 2005-06.

	2004-05	2005-06	Variation
	£	£	£
BRAP	35,000	25,000	-10,000
Dudley REC	39,652	11,500	-28,152
East Staffordshire REC	34,113	8,000	-26,113
North Staffordshire REC	67,041	51,770	-15,271
Rugby REC	27,500	20,000	-7,500
Race Equality Sandwell	15,600	20,000	+4,400
Race Equality West Midlands	16,000	12,000	-4,000
WMDAS	80,000	94,440	+14,440
Worcestershire	18,700	0	-18,700
	333,606	242,710	-90,896

The CRE insists that this situation has arisen because RECs/REPs in our region have paid too little attention to the CRE's new funding priorities, these being: levels of racial harassment/discrimination, extremism, needs of Gypsies and Travellers, new migrant communities, and issues of local community fragmentation. This does not entirely ring true and, even were it to be the case, it scarcely justifies the longer-term (often terminal effects) of such wild fluctuations in year-on-year funding. Shifts in the pattern of funding can also cause disunity in the movement itself, as one REC which has a good reputation for practical delivery tries to understand why a neighbour, apparently less proficient in providing services, but clearly better at making application, has received more funding.

REWM itself has suffered a funding set back in its CRE annual funding allocation, receiving £20,000 in 2003-04, £16,000 in 2004-05, and £12,000 in 2005-06. The bright light for REWM has been the CRE's agreement to fund the West Midland Discrimination Advisory Service to the tune of £80,000 for 2004-05 and £94,440 for 2005-06. For this we are most grateful to the CRE, but must warn that while our partnership has been well provided for, the tree which bore this fruit is on the point of wilting. RECs who think we stole their allocation in 2005-06 for WMDAS should note that REWM and WMDAS combined, received an increase of just £10,000 on 2004-05 funding. This does not explain the West Midlands regional reduction for RECs/REPs of £90,896 or 27% (excluding pension payments) on 2004-05.

REWM funding 2004-05

REWM has continued to rely in 2004-05 on its mainstay Community Fund grant which pays the wages of three of its staff. This funding will continue for a third year until March 2006, when it will cease. Despite our continued efforts, there is no certainty of life for REWM beyond that date.

We have made or are in the process of making further funding applications and tendering for contracts. We shall, of course, make *Getting Results* applications for REWM and WMDAS for 2006-07.

As the accounts show, in addition to standard CRE 2004-05 funding, we received a CRE special grant later in the year for undertaking race equality development work in Walsall. REWM was also contracted by Walsall Strategic Partnership to deliver a Walsall Racial Equality and Diversity Audit, Review and Plan, a research project involving a thorough investigation of race equality needs in Walsall. Other funds accrued from minor research contracts during the year, including money from the Government Office to promote race equality in and through Local Strategic Partnerships.

REWM staffing 2004-05

In 2004-05, three staff were appointed to the WMDAS project, Stephanie Lehnert, Neera Bhatia, and Aman Jogi, as a part time manager seconded from Race Equality Sandwell. Aman has since returned to her position at RES and WMDAS is in the process of appointing a full-time manager.

The REWM development officer, Gerald Nembhard, resigned from REWM in November 2004 to work for EMBRACE, the black and minority ethnic regional capacity-building project. Agreement was given by the Community Fund to split his post into two specialist fragments, a training and development post, subsequently occupied by Mrs Adele Allbrook, and a project and fieldwork post, filled in April 2005 by Ms Anastasia Lymperaki. Reworking of the REWM staffing policy in the light of consideration of the short-term, unpredictable and intermittent nature of our funding, the need for specialisms and expertise, and the difficulties of attracting and keeping high-calibre staff on fixed-term contracts, resulted in the decision to appoint part-time specialists, bring in consultants where necessary, and consider part-time and flexible arrangements, including the use of expenses- paid volunteers, and students, and others seeking work experience. Under these new arrangements, Miss Ayo Bakare, Ms Ruksana Kauser, and Lindsay Bennett are now contributing to the work of REWM.

While technically her resignation falls within 2005-06 (31 May 2005), Forum members will be sad to learn that Tracey Smith, who was with our project in its Worcester days, is moving to a new job with the General Teaching Council. We wish her well in her new post.

Strategy and strategic development 2004-05

REWM has worked closely in 2004-05 to an organisational development strategy, based on recognition of the following factors:

- the need to establish the region-wide discrimination advisory service.
- REC/REP capacity-building objectives and targets.
- the need to rebuild and renew the race equality network in areas where no services were being delivered or where they had collapsed, that is in Coventry,

Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwick District (Warwickshire), and Wolverhampton.

- the publication of the White Paper, *Fairness for All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights* (May 2004) and its implications for the possibility of local multi-strand equality agencies and work.
- the importance of working in partnerships and through consortia, as with the Race Equality Forum, the regional LSP Race Equality Support Group, and the regional Local Authority Race Equality Implementation Group.
- the priority of confronting the racist activities of far-right political parties and preventing from gaining a foot-hold in local communities.
- the requirement placed on public authorities to promote race equality in employment and services.
- a recognition of the importance of community cohesion and the role that young people can play in establishing good race relations.
- acknowledgement of the Commission for Race Equality's priority areas mentioned above.

West Midlands Discrimination Advisory Service

The region-wide Discrimination Advisory Service has been mentioned earlier in the Chair's report. It came into being in December 2004 and takes cases directly, or referred to it, if appropriate, through to tribunal. Applications for further funding to support this work will be made to a number of funding agencies in 2005-06.

Capacity-building

REWM has continued to act as a voice for West Midlands RECs/REPs and continued to capacity build through advice giving, developing strategy, research, service provision, training and quality assurance systems development.

Development of new equality agencies

REWM has undertaken important research and development work in Warwickshire and Walsall, and has talked to steering groups and commissioning partners in Wolverhampton and Telford.

Relevant publications include:

RED 8 *Modelling the delivery of local equality services in rapidly changing circumstances. Exploring the feasibility of local equality and human rights facilities in a world of race equality councils and other single equality strand agencies* (July 2004).

RED 9 *The 2004 national audit of race equality councils and partnerships* (September 2004).

RED 10 *Assessing the impact on local race equality work of the Commission for Racial Equality's policy for funding organisations under section 44 of the Race Relations Act* (October 2004).

White Paper: Fairness for All

Race Equality West Midlands has provided a strong strategic lead to RECs/REPs on the need to adapt to the possibility of multi-strand equality working, as in *Race Equality Digest 8*, listed above, and the *Walsall Race Equality and Diversity Audit, Review and Plan*.

In October 2004, REWM organised a conference in West Bromwich entitled, *The Local Race Equality Roadmap: The Way Ahead*. In March 2005, REWM organised a successful conference at the Aston University, Lakeside Centre on the new work regulations relating to sexual orientation and religion or belief. Conference papers are still available, but the important lesson is that race equality councils are already well positioned to offer advice to individuals on the new regulations relating to these two additional equality strands.

Partnerships and consortia

Aspects of our partnership development and maintenance work in 2004-05 is mentioned in the chair's report. REWM is now well positioned at the hub of a number of strategically important groups, partnerships and consortia, and is keen to continue its promotional work with and through Local Strategic Partnerships. Our work during the year in this area was part funded by the Government Office for the West Midlands.

Confronting the racist activities of the far right

In 2004-05 REWM built on its earlier work in this field, widely distributing the conference report, produced in partnership with the CRE and the TUC, on *Combating Racism through the Ballot Box*. In March 2005, a further conference, entitled *Defeating Racial Hatred*, was organised in partnership with the CRE, and funded by it, at which the REWM Principal Officer spoke on the role of the voluntary and community sector. Throughout the year, REWM has been a lead member of the Midlands Network for Monitoring Far-Right Activities. Eric Seward, formerly the CRE's Northern regional director, and lead on combating the far right, agreed to become a consultant to REWM on this important area of race relations. With Eric's assistance, REWM has also produced two editions of the *Race Equality Digest*:

RED 11 *Confronting the Racist Activities of Political Parties, A Guide for Local Authorities* (February 2005).

RED 12 *Confronting the Racist Activities of Political Parties, A Guide for Local Authorities* (February 2005).

These were distributed at the *Defeating Racial Hatred* Conference and in the lead up to the May 2005 General Election, and have been very well received.

The public duty to promote race equality

REWM has played a role with Local Authority equality and diversity officers in examining the Best Value Performance Indicators relating to race equality and the race equality scheme requirement. A paper in the Birmingham University seminar series entitled *Meeting the legal duty to promote race equality: the role of the sociology of organisations in the elimination of institutional racism*, will shortly be published with other seminar papers.

Community cohesion

As one of our *Getting Results* outcomes, and in pursuit of our objective of promoting community cohesion, REWM has researched West Midlands youth projects promoting race equality and community cohesion. The result is a publication researched and written by Adele Allbrook, our training and development officer, entitled, *Young people for race equality*. It provides ample scope for further work and development in this important area.

CRE priority areas

In July 2004 REWM commissioned and published *Gypsy and Traveller Communities in the West Midlands Region* (RED 7). It intends to follow this initiative in 2005-06 with further research, needs analyses, and publications on Gypsy and Traveller communities in the West Midlands, with a view to involving a greater number of local race equality agencies in countering the rampant prejudice and discrimination experienced here. This is not just a rural issue but affects many of the urban areas, too.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I should like to thank all members of the West Midlands Race Equality Forum for their support in 2004-05. Despite your own difficulties, you have continued to provide your time to help in the governance of REWM. I'm very grateful for your friendship and kindness and just hope that in 2005-06, REWM can reward you with some tangible and material support in return.

11 May 2005