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RACE EQUALITY DIGEST

**Occasional briefing paper produced by Race Equality West Midlands
on race equality issues.**

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**HOW SHOULD LOCAL RACE EQUALITY WORK
BE ORGANISED?**

**Developing and positioning race equality organisation in the
context of Neighbourhood Renewal and the statutory duty of
public authorities to promote race equality.**

(reissued February 2004)

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HOW SHOULD LOCAL RACE EQUALITY WORK BE ORGANISED?

(1) Introduction

Race equality has been promoted at local level in a variety of ways and by different kinds of agency. In many places in the West Midlands, there has been a long post-second-world-war evolution of dedicated agencies through a series of stages, from the early councils for the welfare of immigrants, through to councils for racial harmony and community relations councils, to racial equality councils and, more recently, race equality partnerships. There is no reason to think the evolutionary process has come to a standstill.

This edition of the Race Equality Digest explores one direction in which, in the light of current circumstances and opportunities, local race equality work might be developed and given an institutional form and location. It builds on the previous strategic review of race equality councils and scenario-planning exercise undertaken by Race Equality West Midlands, the regional body charged with building the capacity of race equality organisations in the region. Currently, the strategic development exercise for local race equality work is conceived in three parts:

- an outside-in approach involving an examination of the external environment and concentrating on the ideal structure and position for an organisation designed to meet identified local needs.
- an inside-out approach, involving an audit of the resources and competences of existing race equality organisations and proposals as to how they might best be developed and put to use.
- a human-resource development and organisational transformation approach, exploring how best race equality organisations might add value to their work.

This Race Equality Digest deals with the first of these approaches: the outside-in. It focuses on those deprived urban environments where race equality interventions are required and asks how they might be arranged to achieve maximum effect.

A further Race Equality Digest, due shortly, will be dedicated to the results of the 2003 audit of current race equality council and partnership resources and competences: the inside-out approach. It is hoped at some later stage, following discussion and debate generated by the outside-in and inside-out approaches, to publish a third paper in 2004 on the way value can be added to race equality work.

(2) Organisation adapted to context

Different conditions

Given the widely differing ethnic profiles, migration histories, settlement patterns, and legacy of political and institutional reaction and response to race equality issues

across the region, there can be no one right way to eradicate racial inequality or single model for race equality work. Each local race relations context requires the development of its own set of solutions and strategies.

For example, the phenomenon of increasing social fragmentation identified in the north of England may be particular to those northern districts, or occur at a greater intensity there than elsewhere in the country, and require its own customised policies. The number, relative prosperity, and level of dispersal of ethnic minorities, and the services at their disposal, will all help to create a unique race-relations complex. Rural areas with small scattered ethnic minority populations may require specific measures to combat rural racism and isolation. Ethnic minority concentrations in job-rich urban areas often enable ethnic groups to exercise greater political control over their neighbourhoods and the public authorities serving them. Local demography and economics, therefore, should play an important part in determining the choice of race equality strategy.

Different organisational provision

Local institutional arrangements for race equality work already vary enormously from area to area. In some parts of the region, well-established and respected race equality councils exist, operating to a Commission for Racial Equality model constitution (for example, Dudley, East Staffordshire and North Staffordshire race equality councils). In other areas (such as Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton), race equality organisations have closed, leaving serious vacuums in provision, sometimes filled opportunistically and haphazardly by other agencies. Other boroughs (such as Solihull) have never supported local race equality bodies.

In more rural two-tier county councils, race equality needs and the structures set up to satisfy them are likely to be different. The developing Worcestershire model, embracing other dimensions of equality and involving a decentralised service, provided locally in some of the county's small towns and districts, may be the appropriate way forward for rural areas.

The emergence of partnership organisations

Three areas of the West Midlands, Birmingham, Sandwell and Walsall, have already developed new forms of race equality organisation involving partnerships. Birmingham was the first, with the innovative Birmingham Race Action Partnership (BRAP), developed out of the All Different All Equal campaign launched in 1995. The five founding organisations were Birmingham Health Authority, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham and Solihull TEC, the Birmingham Voluntary Services Council and Birmingham Trades Council, all represented on the board, but on the understanding that a further half of the directors was drawn from local communities. BRAP is a company limited by guarantee with a status independent of its partner agencies.

The principal aim of BRAP is fundamentally to change institutional policy and practice through partnership working between public sector organisations and black and minority ethnic communities. The model adopted is one of a structured action-planning, issue-based approach that empowers communities, shapes the agenda, and

gets institutions to reflect the reality of working in a multi-ethnic environment. Services are to be improved by ‘adjusting them to meet the needs of people rather than adjusting people to meet the needs of services’.

The Walsall Strategic Race Equality Partnership (WSREP) was established in 1997 and consisted initially of three main partners, the Commission for Racial Equality, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, and Walsall Council for Voluntary Service. Apart from its strategic partnership title, however, and unlike BRAP, WSREP’s constitutional aims, vision, and mode of working, remained very much the same as that of a traditional race equality council. Now defunct, the organisation appears to have failed to engage successfully with Walsall’s Strategic Partnership and Community Empowerment Network, or to become involved in assisting Walsall’s public authorities to meet their duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

Race Equality Sandwell came into being in 2003, as a partnership between the Sandwell Partnership (the LSP) and Sandwell Ethnic Minority Umbrella Forum, with the intention of progressing towards a tripartite structure of governance in the form of a board whose members were drawn in equal strength from the LSP (mostly public authority), the voluntary sector, and Sandwell’s black and minority ethnic communities. Its objects were seen largely, as are the proposals contained in this paper, as contributing to policy and community development in collaborative working through the local strategic partnership. This paper builds on the developments first envisaged in the Race Equality Sandwell Business Plan, 2003.

The need for context-specific arrangements

The proposal that follows is derived from an analysis of the emerging context in the seven West Midlands Neighbourhood Renewal areas and, while likely to have relevance elsewhere, is not intended to serve as a universal blueprint. It is unlikely to be suitable, for example, in rural Warwickshire or Herefordshire.

The perception of the need for different kinds of intervention, organisational functions, structures, targets, strategic positioning and connectivity in different circumstances is at odds with the earlier one-size-fits-all approach to race equality work, exemplified by the Commission for Racial Equality’s 1990 (revised 1992) nationally-recommended model constitution for race equality councils.

(3) The rapidly-changing urban environment

In order to obtain a picture of the kind of functions and organisation required to deliver race equality at local level, it is necessary to chart the main features of the rapidly-changing social, political, economic, legal and technical environment (SPELT). Race Equality West Midlands first undertook an environmental scanning exercise in August 2001 (see *Race equality: the significance of working with local communities. A strategic review of West Midlands racial equality councils and partnerships*), but the pace of change is such that only some of the ‘SPELT’ analysis conducted then remains relevant. In the two years since, a combination of changes to the law and of government regeneration initiatives has had an increasing impact on race equality work and on how it might be delivered.

Factors directly relevant to race equality work

The most important factors relating directly to race equality work are:

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act

- the general and specific duties placed on public authorities to promote race equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

- the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal aimed at improving the quality of life for people living in deprived areas and narrowing the gap between those areas and the rest of the country, together with the setting up in the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Community Empowerment Networks (CENs).

In the 88 areas targeted by the government's neighbourhood renewal strategy, it is no longer possible to operate effectively without taking NRF policy initiatives into account.

Community cohesion policy

- the development of community cohesion thinking, policy and pathfinders, following the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001. In the West Midlands, Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent are designated community cohesion pathfinders.

Consultation on Equality and Human Rights Commission

- the proposed Equality and Human Rights Commission and the broadening scope of equalities legislation (including Article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998, the Employment Directive and the Race Directive under European Union law).

Other factors that have directly affected local race equality work are:

Getting results

- the replacement of Commission for Racial Equality funding of race equality officer salaries with *Getting Results*, a system of grant aid for local race equality work based on priorities and outcomes (mostly related to community development).

Census 2001

- the widespread availability of up-to-date Census 2001 data on ethnicity and religious affiliation by local authority and ward.

Electoral success of the extreme right

- concern at the activity and electoral success of the extreme right-wing racist political parties often capitalising on the imaginary threat from asylum seekers/refugees.

Continuing repercussions of the McPherson report

- the continuing repercussions on the police and criminal justice system of the McPherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence and attempts to change deeply-engrained police culture.

Support for victims of racial harassment

- the development of local schemes to support victims of racial harassment and violence.

New migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

- while new migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have received intense and mostly hostile media coverage, local race equality workers have largely failed to engage with these groups or their needs.

Other important factors

If race equality work is to achieve the major social transformation expected of it, it must also take into account and relate closely to a much wider range of key public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Changes to these sectors' structures and methods of working must be fully recognised if local race equality organisations are to retain their relevance and usefulness. The list of examples that follows is not definitive but provides an idea of the changing context and range of current race equality activity.

Local authorities

- changes in the way local authorities make their decisions, as in the development of cabinets, scrutiny committees and the direct election of mayors (with varying powers).

Regional development agency

- the importance for economic regeneration of regional development agencies (Advantage West Midlands), regional assemblies and regional economic strategies.

Health

- the replacement of area health authorities and community-based health trusts with sub-regional Strategic Health Authorities, and local Primary Care Trusts (with Hospital Trusts).

Youth and careers

- the creation of Connexions Partnerships to provide integrated access, advice and services for young people.

Criminal justice

- the development of Criminal Justice Partnership Boards, local community safety and crime prevention partnerships, and Community Legal Services.

Learning and Skills Councils

- the replacement of the Further Education Funding Council and local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) with the Learning and Skills Councils organised nationally and with sub-regional offices (47 local areas), and with responsibility for funding post-16 education and training.

Housing

- changes to the administration of social housing with the break-up of large local government housing departments and transfer of housing stock, together with initiatives in estate regeneration and the recent announcement of nine housing market renewal pathfinder areas.

Higher education

- the growth of local university attendance fuelled by the charging of student tuition fees and the higher costs of living away from home.

Joined-up working and partnerships

Many of these developments represent a recognition of the importance of joined-up working, partnership, and strategic leadership, for service improvement. Race equality organisations that have ignored or failed to respond meaningfully to any, or all, of these changes will have seriously compromised their ability to promote race equality in and through the public services.

(4) Implications for race equality work of changes in the local environment

The analysis of the new local environment in which race equality promotional activity now has to take place has profound implications for the strategic positioning and organisation of race equality initiatives.

Local strategic partnerships, neighbourhood renewal and the duty to promote race equality

The two major features mentioned above that have most profoundly changed the nature of, and approach to, West Midlands local race equality work are, firstly, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, particularly in regard to the development of local strategic partnerships and community empowerment networks and, secondly, the duty placed on public authorities to promote race equality (under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act). Two traditionally-recognised dimensions of local race equality work, policy development and community development, are brought together under the umbrella of the local strategic partnership in the shape of public authorities' policy in relation to race equality and initiatives to increase local voluntary and community sector representation.

The local strategic partnership's role is to improve local public services by bringing those who deliver or commission different services together with those for whom the services are provided. Represented on the LSPs, public service providers are required under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act to assess their functions and policies for their impact on race equality and to consult with service users and members of the public, ensuring that they have access to information and the services provided.

Members of the Community Empowerment Network (as part of voluntary and community sector representation on the LSP) are expected to be well informed about community needs, to possess the skills to communicate their views on the LSP, and to encourage the active involvement of marginalised communities and under-represented groups.

Adopting a strategic position

The LSP, then, is conceived as the bridge between public authorities and service users and appears to provide the most appropriate arena for the promotion of race equality in the general context of the drive for service improvement.

The race equality promotion now statutorily required of the public sector forms an integral part of the drive for service improvement. The race equality scheme approach set out in the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice is often referred to as 'the service improvement model'. There is a strong case for strategically positioning the location of race equality promotion within, or in close proximity to, the local strategic partnership. Marrying public authorities' statutory duty to promote race equality in a context of improving services for all, with community cohesion programmes involving voluntary and community groups, and the local neighbourhood communities themselves, has exciting possibilities and remains to be fully explored.

The thematic, cross-cutting, and geographical sub-partnerships of the LSP provide more specific opportunities for engaging with and mainstreaming established race equality activities, previously considered the remit of race equality councils and/or racial harassment networks.

Through thematic partnerships there are opportunities for pursuing inter-agency race equality initiatives in relation to:

- employment and employment opportunities,
- post-sixteen education and training, Connexions and careers,
- Sure Start, primary, secondary, further and higher education,
- primary care, social services, hospitals, and health issues,
- housing, and regeneration, and
- community safety, crime reduction and the police.

The interrelationship between these themes in areas of deprivation is well recognised. Policy makers seek to break the vicious cycle of deprivation, (often starkly experienced by ethnic minorities), of poor education and training, poor employment prospects, poor quality housing, squalor and the potential for crime.

Through the geographical area-based partnerships, a race equality organisation might successfully pursue various community development initiatives aimed at consulting on the kind and quality of local services, building the capacity of ethnic minority community groups, developing inter-ethnic projects for improving community cohesion, working with young people, and providing public information to tackle the racist propaganda of extreme right-wing groups.

As another instance, community safety and crime reduction partnerships, involving the police, the local authority, criminal justice agencies and community representatives, might provide ideal opportunities for dealing with incidents of racial harassment and violence and racially-motivated crime.

Community cohesion initiatives

Following reports on three northern towns, Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, in which 'fragmentation' and ethnic communities living 'parallel lives' were identified as important issues, a National Community Cohesion Review Team was set up in 2001, chaired by Ted Cante, to identify ways of developing confident, active communities and social cohesion. The Cante report led to a series of government-inspired initiatives aimed at improving 'community cohesion'. Local Government Association guidance identified a large number of practical steps that local authorities and partner organisations might take to build the promotion of community cohesion into the policies and delivery of services. Local authorities and local strategic partnerships are given key roles in driving forward the community cohesion agenda.

In November 2000, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and the Home Office published a prospectus on how to apply for funding to undertake pilot community cohesion work: the Community Cohesion Pathfinder Programme. In the West Midlands, Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent were each successfully awarded £285,000 to embark on community cohesion programmes. Other local areas which were unsuccessful were,

encouraged, nevertheless, to work to the community cohesion agenda which now forms a further integral aspect of local neighbourhood renewal and social regeneration policy.

Local strategic partnerships, or their most suitable major public sector partners, appear to be optimal locations from which to steer, direct, coordinate, plan and, possibly, performance-manage community cohesion work. In Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent, LSP community cohesion/race equality coordinating committees oversee the community cohesion pathfinder programmes. Any new race equality organisation would have to work to the government's community cohesion agenda.

Proposed Equality and Human Rights Commission

The European Union has recently established a common legal framework to tackle unfair discrimination on six grounds: sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age. The framework comprises the Race Directive (2000), the Employment Directive (2000) and the Equal Treatment Directive (1975, amended 2002). While Britain already has legislation protecting people from discrimination on the grounds of sex, race and disability, new measures will need to be put in place to outlaw discrimination at work and in training on ground of sexual orientation, religion and age. Given the current existence of three national commissions to support race, gender and disability measures, and the prospect of extending legislation to outlaw three more kinds of discrimination, the government has proposed the creation of a single statutory commission to deliver integrated advice, guidance and support across all six equality dimensions.

This proposal has resulted in speculation about the organisational options for race equality work at both national and local level. What will happen to local race equality organisations when the Commission for Racial Equality is absorbed into the proposed Equality and Human Rights Commission? At a recent national conference of the British Federation of Racial Equality Councils, race equality officers were much preoccupied with the strategic direction that local race equality organisations should take and whether they would continue to be funded by any new body that replaced the Commission for Racial Equality.

Some race equality councils, such as Worcestershire, are actively exploring the possibility of becoming equality councils. Others doubt that the legal rationale for drawing the national commissions into one overarching equalities body transfers automatically to a local context in which small single-equality bodies deliver specialist community and policy development projects.

Attempts to extend the work of local race equality organisations, in the first instance, to gender and race issues, might not seem problematic in relation to legal complainant aid work. While continuing to specialise in race cases, they could with little difficulty extend their remit, resources permitting, to sex and disability discrimination.

But it is when attention is switched to the possibility of expanding the membership of a local race equality council and its executive committee to accommodate representatives of women's organisations and user groups of the disabled and chronically ill that the difficulties implicit in transforming the existing model of

governance become apparent. At local level, women's and user groups of the disabled and chronically ill (with the exception of mental health) tend to be organised on single issue lines.

Currently, it is not easy to see the implications for local race equality organisation of the government's intention to create a single integrated equality commission. But the difficulties and questionable benefits of attempting at this juncture to create local equalities councils are already apparent. Nevertheless, the idea of siting race equality work at the centre of a web of local partnerships instantly removes the existing straightjacket of the traditional race equality constitution and structure of governance.

Within the context of the local strategic partnership, there should be sufficient flexibility to assemble partnerships and forums suited to the needs of all equality interests. In relation to the neighbourhood renewal strategy, for example, it should not prove difficult to work with others on developing generic equalities or equal opportunity policies, or on pursuing generic diversity or community cohesion programmes. The closeness of the relationship with the local strategic partnership should give any proposed new race equality body far greater scope for developing joined-up working on the other dimensions of equality.

Regional economic strategy

With representation from the public and private sector, the local strategic partnership might also provide opportunities for tying together neighbourhood renewal and economic regeneration. While the importance of the economic driver is well recognised, there is at present insufficient coordination between social objectives, spearheaded by the Government Office, and the regional economic strategy of the Regional Development Agency. The service improvement model of race equality promotion adopted for the public sector, however, cannot be easily applied in the private sector: a well-constructed diversity management model is probably more suited.

(5) Suggested aims and functions for race equality organisations operating in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas

Aims

From the preceding analysis of need, it is possible to formulate far more precisely the purpose and functions of a contemporary local race equality agency. As before, it would operate within the framework of the Race Relations Act and other equalities legislation:

- to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination, especially, but not only, in regard to the kind based on colour, race, or ethnicity.
- to promote equality of opportunity within and across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

- to promote good relations between persons and communities of different racial, ethnic, cultural and religious groups.

Functions

More precisely, in relation to its local area of benefit, it is envisaged that traditional race equality functions (policy development, community support, assistance to individuals, and public education) will continue to be performed, but in a manner that addresses more directly the new context of neighbourhood renewal and the statutory duty of public authorities to promote race equality. Any, or all, of the following functions might be adopted:

Policy development

- to develop, and cause to be implemented, policy aimed at promoting race and other equalities.
- to facilitate collaboration between the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, by means of the local strategic partnership and its constituent thematic, geographical and cross-cutting partnerships, in order to promote race equality, encourage inclusivity, and improve community cohesiveness.
- to assist public authority service providers to work individually, and in partnership with one another, the private sector, and the broader community, to bring about concerted service improvement and to ensure services are delivered fairly, and free of institutional racism and discrimination.
- to advise and assist public authorities on their general and specific duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and, as appropriate, to scrutinise and monitor their performance in relation to the legislation.
- to assist in identifying and monitoring public authority functions and policies that impact on race equality, consulting groups that may be affected by those functions and policies, and making available information about the outcomes of assessment, consultation and monitoring exercises, and the benefits of services available.

Community development – service improvement

- to engage with, and participate actively in, plans, programmes, and service delivery aimed at alleviating disadvantage and discrimination, in order to ensure that all local ethnic communities receive their fair share of appropriate public services, delivered consistently and to a high standard.
- to bring service providers and users together in purposeful ways to plan the provision and improvement of local services.

Community development - democratic participation

- to work at local level with members of all communities to encourage maximum participation in the democratic process and in decision-making, and to bring about active citizenship, expressed through involvement in voluntary and community groups, and growing concern for the excluded or disadvantaged.
- to monitor, review and report on the adequacy of the involvement, representation and participation of ethnic minority and hard-to-reach groups and communities in the local strategic partnership, its sub-partnerships, and the community empowerment network and, when and where required, to develop and implement procedures for improving that involvement, representation and participation.

Community development – empowerment and capacity-building

- to encourage, support and empower groups, especially those from black and minority ethnic communities.
- to develop the skills and knowledge of members of voluntary and community groups to enable them to engage effectively in public and civil affairs, the business of the local strategic partnership and the community empowerment network.
- to advise on the allocation of resources aimed at building the capacity of voluntary and community groups to help them participate in public and civil life, the work of the local strategic partnership and community empowerment network, and the drive to improve local services and the quality of life in deprived areas.

Community development – project management

- to mount and/or participate with others in projects for local communities aimed at improving equality of opportunity, race relations, community cohesion, and the general quality of life in the area.

Community cohesion

- to contribute to community cohesion in the locality by playing an active part in developing a common vision, sense of belonging, an appreciation of diversity, and strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds, in local schools, colleges, places of work, and residential neighbourhoods.

Economic regeneration and the private sector

- to work in support of the regional economic strategy and in partnership with the private sector to eliminate racial and other forms of discrimination

in the work place, promote equal opportunities through training and other means, and to realise the economic advantages of work-force diversity.

Public information and education

- to provide information and education to members of the public and to local organisation, especially those that are members of the local strategic partnership, on race and community relations, with a view to dispelling misconceptions and stereotypes, and promoting understanding and tolerance.
- to monitor national, regional and local media for news and opinion about racial groups and their relations and to take action to redress misinformation and promote positive reporting about the benefits of living in a multi-racial environment.
- to monitor and take effective action against the propaganda, behaviour and campaigning of extreme nationalist and racist groups that oppose the Race Relations Act and other anti-discrimination legislation and seek to undermine good race relations and the cohesion of local communities.

Racial harassment and violence

- with the police and other criminal justice agencies, and through the appropriate sub-partnerships of the local strategic partnership, to provide support and assistance to victims of racial harassment, violence and other racially-motivated crime.
- to monitor incidents of racial harassment and violence with a view to providing information and advice to public authorities on measures that might be taken to reduce their number.

Complainant aid

- to work with the Citizens' Advice Bureau, Community Legal Services and other appropriate agencies to provide information, professional advice and, resources permitting, representation at tribunal and County Court to complainants of discrimination under the Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act, Disability Rights Act, and other equalities legislation.

General

- to undertake any other similar function compatible with the functions listed above.
- to work closely and in collaborative partnership with other race equality organisations in neighbouring areas and the region to fulfil these functions.

(6) Inclusivity, representation and accountability

One criticism levelled at traditional race equality councils (RECs) has been that they have become increasingly detached from the local communities that they were set up to serve and in many cases are no longer representative of them, or working to eliminate racial discrimination and disadvantage across all communities.

In some cases, new groups of immigrants are not being served by, or represented on, the councils. There have been instances of race equality councils operating as a minority alternative to local voluntary sector councils, thus perpetuating, rather than eliminating, 'us and them' attitudes.

How well suited are race equality councils to undertake the functions demanded of them in the new local context? How should they be redesigned better to perform those functions? And in the light of their functions, in what way should they be held accountable and what organisational shape should they assume (including their governance)?

Governance

One suggestion is that local race equality organisations should retain their autonomy and independence in order to be able to mount professional criticism of perceived racial inequalities in local institutions and the community. This would involve them registering as charities, companies limited by guarantee, or both. They should, however, be accountable through their governing body (board of trustees, or of directors) to the constituencies they have been set up mainly to serve.

In the light of the preceding analysis, these constituencies are the four sectors represented on and through the Local Strategic Partnership: the community sector (through the CEN), the voluntary sector (either directly, or indirectly through the CSV), the public sector (the main public authorities) and the private sector (or in its absence, public bodies set up to serve it). The precise proportions from each sector would have to be decided by reference to specific local conditions. (Sandwell, for example, has adopted a tripartite model consisting of (ethnic minority) community representatives, members of the voluntary sector, and members/officers of public authorities.)

The advantage of this kind of proposal is that the proportionate partnership pattern of governance might help to bring about the collaboration between public authorities and local communities that is necessary for successful race equality promotion (particularly in regard to the statutory duty) and community cohesion. It would also keep open the possibility of increased contact and work with the regional development agency and the private sector.

Successful race equality councils in urban areas, such as Dudley, East Staffordshire and North Staffordshire have been able to achieve the necessary change and strategic involvement within their existing (model) constitutional framework and may not need to formalise stake-holder representation in the manner suggested here. Nevertheless, the failure of race equality organisations elsewhere in the region can be attributed at least to some extent to their inability to meet the changing demands of local

stakeholders. Most race equality organisations have already explored the implications of registering as companies or charities. Many also recognise that the constitution to which they are operating is insufficiently flexible and needs to be reviewed.

(7) Core competences and critical success factors

Vacuum when local race equality organisations fail

When a local race equality organisation fails, public authorities, local communities and individuals will either attempt to acquire race equality services elsewhere or, more likely, in the absence of a local driver, continue with business as usual within existing institutions and cycles of inequality.

With the introduction of the new statutory duty to promote race equality, public authorities may be inclined to hire private consultants to assist them with their race equality schemes and policies. While a private consultancy may deliver a high-quality service, it is often external, unfamiliar with local conditions, short-lived, and not responsible for the consequences of its recommendations. There are strong arguments, therefore, for the collective funding of a purposeful, professionally-competent race equality agency that adds value to services delivered locally.

As already mentioned, Race Equality West Midlands is conducting an audit of the resources and competencies of current race equality organisations and intends to produce a comprehensive statement of the human and other resources and competences needed for successful local race equality work. Nevertheless, it is essential to set out briefly in this document some of the core competences required to deliver the functions described above.

Two perspectives on race equality knowledge and skills

Traditionally, there have been two perspectives on the kind of knowledge, values and skills required to undertake race equality work. These may be termed the intuitive or experiential approach, and the rational-bureaucratic approach, with the former dominating, until recently, in the selection procedure for race equality officers.

The intuitive approach places great weight on the experience of ethnic minority status and of being at the receiving end of racism. These experiences are regarded as an essential means of generating insight into race relations in order to take effective action against discrimination. Certainly, instances of discrimination need to be identified and highlighted.

The alternative view is that in order to provide expert advice to public authorities seeking to improve their services to ethnic minorities, or to intervene successfully where race relations are in danger of breaking down, it is necessary to access the vast reservoir of objective knowledge, both theoretical and practical, on organisations and race relations. The job of promoting race equality is seen as requiring specialist knowledge and expertise. In this context, race equality work is not only about identifying and highlighting instances of discrimination, but of joining with public authority partners to provide solutions to 'institutional racism'.

Essential knowledge and skills

What kinds of knowledge, values and skills are needed to arrive at solutions to the perceived inadequacies and inequalities in the delivery of public services? Race Equality West Midlands undertook an audit in 1999 of the skills and skill requirements of race equality officers. (The 2003 audit is due to be completed shortly.) Race equality officers identified the following knowledge and skills as essential to their work: management and business-related, law and legal representational, sociology (and, more broadly, social science) of race relations, community development and regeneration. There was also a recognition of the need to improve information technology skills.

The kind of race equality worker needed to deliver in the partnership organisation envisaged above must possess the intuitive knowledge necessary to identify and highlight racism, but will, in addition, require a sophisticated knowledge of management issues in complex organisations. Competence in race equality and other law, the social science of race relations (including research skills), community and regeneration matters, are all important.

More specifically, in the light of the environmental analysis provided above, high levels of knowledge, skill and experience in the following areas would seem essential if the new organisation is to add value to partnership activities or individual partner service delivery:

- social and economic regeneration.
- housing.
- criminal justice, criminal justice agencies, and the police service.
- the legal profession: tribunals and county court representation.
- education: primary, secondary, further and higher.
- youth work (including Connexions and careers).
- employment, careers and training (including further and higher education programmes).
- community development.
- community care, health and social services.

The need for a team of staff with core skills

Traditionally, local race equality organisations have been built around the idea of a membership and forum of ethnic communities and groups, with an officer to undertake the tasks identified by the forum. The idea was to identify and highlight issues of community concern, and perhaps, to negotiate with the sources of that concern in an effort to put matters right. This model saw staff as servicing the forum

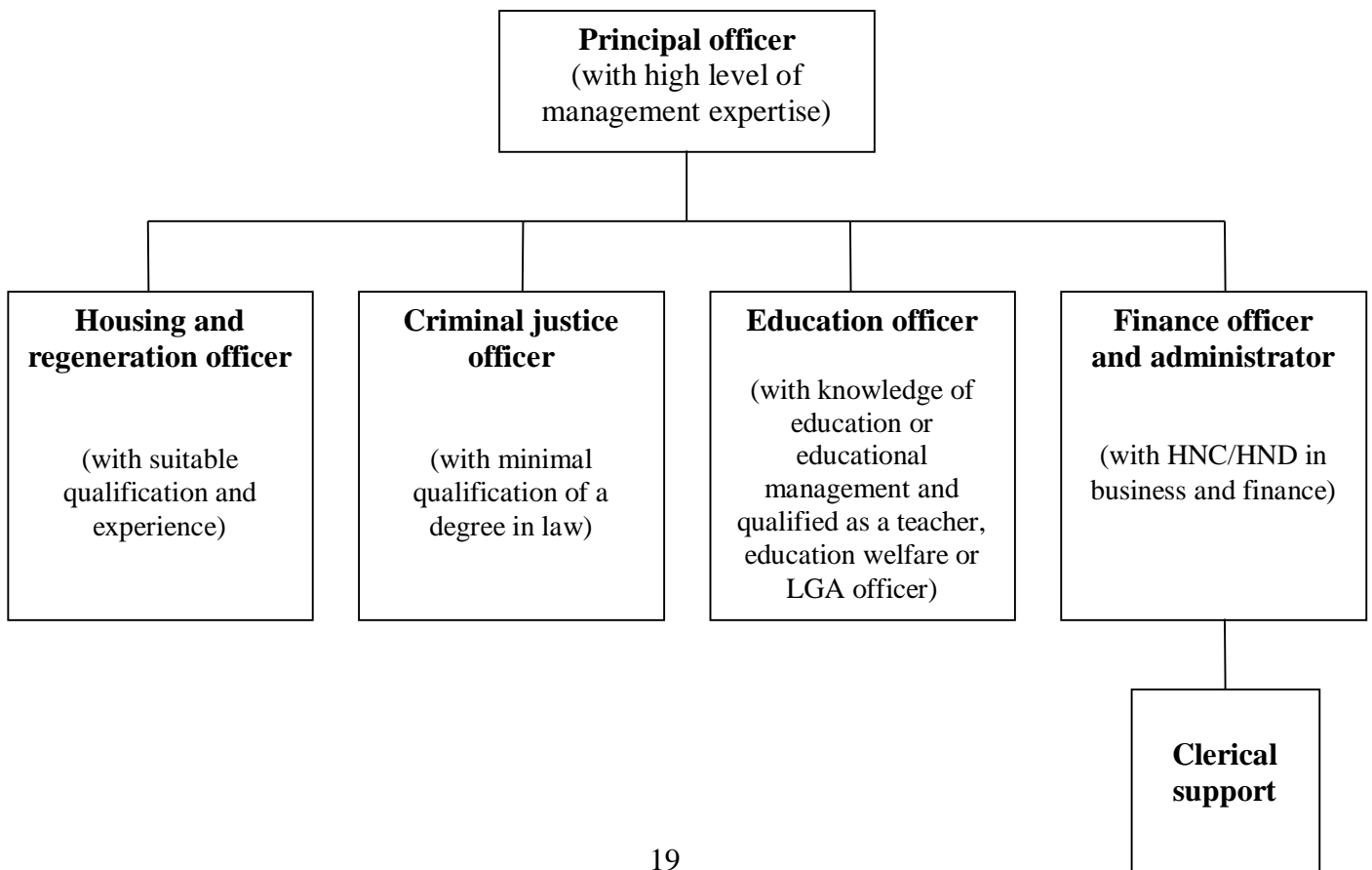
and, possibly, in consideration of this approach, many local race equality organisations had very few core staff (those with only one officer being described as ‘singletons’). Core staff were expected to undertake a wide variety of tasks and had to act as ‘Jack (Gill) of all trades’. These organisations often increased their staffing temporarily by taking on the management of time-limited projects.

The new organisation envisaged here shifts emphasis away from the provision of support for a central executive forum to the delivery of specific race equality services, either indirectly, through public sector agencies and community networks, or directly, through funded (mostly community) project work. What is required, therefore, are permanent staff with acknowledged expertise in specific areas of work. (The fewer the employees, the greater range or higher level of skills required of individuals.)

Without the expertise and range of skills, the organisation will not be able to add value to the local strategic partnership and runs the risk of becoming an irrelevance (unless it focuses more narrowly on specific tasks: thus, with only a criminal justice officer in post, it would deal only with community safety, crime reduction and criminal justice matters).

Core staffing structure

Ideally, the new race equality organisation envisaged here would be grant-aided in such a way that it would have the minimum of five staff: a principal officer (with extensive and proven management experience) and four other specialist officers covering some of the areas listed above. Officers would not necessarily have to be directly employed by the new organisation, but could be seconded in on a full or part-time basis from other agencies. A possible, minimal structure might be as follows:



New posts, dealing with other areas of expertise, might be added as agreed strategy required and funding arrangements permitted.

Minimum costs of supporting a core staffing structure

Staffing costs of this structure (five plus clerical support) are minimally estimated at £180,000. If 70 per cent of the annual budget is spent on staffing, the new race equality organisation would probably need in the region of £260,000 a year to sustain it. Core competences do not come cheap. By comparison, the present level of funding provided through the Commission for Racial Equality's *Getting Results* programme is far too small in the competitive job market to attract or sustain the core competences and key skills necessary to add value to local race equality work.

(8) Explanatory notes

Neighbourhood Renewal

Neighbourhood Renewal is a major government strategy first set out by the Social Exclusion Unit in April 2004. Its aim is to halt and then reverse the decline of deprived neighbourhoods, with success measured in the narrowing of the gap between those neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. The strategy is to revive local economies, help local communities, improve services, and develop leadership and joint working. Many of the proposals are of central relevance to the policy and community development work of local race equality organisations, for example, helping people from deprived areas into jobs, promoting small business, tackling anti-social behaviour, building community capacity, and involving community and voluntary sector organisations in service delivery.

At the heart of the strategy is a recognition that not only are the problems of deprived areas linked into vicious cycles which have to be broken, but that solutions have to be conceived in terms of joined-up working between major institutions, with mechanisms in place to respond effectively at different levels.

The Government Offices (GOs) for the regions, working with Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), are essential to the process. In order to ensure better joint working in deprived neighbourhoods, local strategic partnerships (LSPs) have been put in place. At neighbourhood level, neighbourhood management schemes would enable residents to be given a say in service quality and effectiveness, opportunities to run services, and somewhere to turn when things go wrong.

In December 2001, the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions set out its vision for local government in the white paper *Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services*. While recognising that responsibility for community leadership rested with the councils, the government stressed that leadership had to be earned through democratic legitimacy, sound governance, effective partnerships, real community engagement, and improvement in services.

Local Strategic Partnerships

In regard to partnership, the white paper saw the need to marshal the contribution of the public, private and voluntary sectors and of the communities themselves to tackle the most challenging social problems of health, crime, education, transport, housing and the local environment.

The government pledged itself to establish effective local strategic partnerships as the key element in developing integrated approaches to local service delivery and tackling policy priorities in a joined-up way. The government saw the councils as the prime movers in instigating LSPs where they did not already exist, but once established, the partnership would decide who led.

The local strategic partnership (LSP) is a cross-sectoral, cross-cutting umbrella partnership aimed at improving the quality of life and governance in a particular locality. It brings together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to provide an overarching coordination framework within which other more specific local partnerships can operate. It is intended to improve local public services by bringing those who deliver or commission different services together with those for whom services are provided. The aim is to exercise a broad strategic oversight across service providers and other partnerships in an area, to ensure activities are compatible and mutually supportive. Within the overarching framework of the LSP, other pre-existing and new partnerships may be situated. LSPs are expected to build a clear working relationship with the following kinds of partnership:

- Regeneration Partnerships
- Early Years Development and Childcare Provision
- Learning Partnerships
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- Local Agenda 21
- Health Action Zones
- Sure Start
- Community Legal Service Partnerships

LSPs are also expected to forge links and involve organisations and partnerships that operate at a regional and sub-regional level such as the Regional Assembly, the Regional Development Agency, Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, the Benefits Agency, the Employment Service, the police, and fire services.

Community Empowerment Networks

In recognition of the diversity of the voluntary and community sectors, LSP advice stresses the need to be aware of and responsive to the nature, scale and support needs of groups when establishing the mechanisms for their involvement. ‘Too little attention has been paid to building the capacity of communities to participate in programmes and services to improve local conditions.’ Efforts should also be made to engage women, the disabled, older persons, faith and youth groups, and people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.

One way of ensuring this engagement takes place is to build on existing community networks. Specific mention, for example, is made of race equality councils, councils for voluntary service, volunteer bureaux, community development agencies, and multi-faith forums.

The government has encouraged local communities and voluntary groups to participate in neighbourhood renewal decision-making by providing a Community Empowerment Fund (CEF) to support community and voluntary sector involvement in LSPs in the 88 areas eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The money is disbursed directly to the community and voluntary sectors and the wider community to help them to participate. It is intended to ensure local people, in particular, minority ethnic and faith communities, women, older people, young people and children, and disabled people are made aware of opportunities for participation and are helped to participate. A framework for assessing the progress and development of CENs was published in August 2003. It set out to establish how the recently-formed CENs were performing in relation to the dissemination of information, organisational capacity-building, inclusivity, representation and accountability. It also raised questions about the extent to which the CEN has improved voluntary and community representation on, and input to, the LSP.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires public authorities to promote race equality in relation to their policy, service delivery and employment practices. This legislation has the potential to make a fundamental and lasting contribution to race relations.

The public authorities (listed in schedule to the Act) are required to fulfil both specific and general duties. The general duty is to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. Specific duties are also placed on many authorities to make special arrangements to help them meet their general duty.

The CRE has produced a code of practice with statutory force. This means that it is accepted as evidence in legal action and taken into account in courts and tribunals, although on its own, it does not impose legal obligations.

Various practical steps have to be taken to meet the general duty. Race equality will be more relevant to the performance of some public functions (eg. raising educational standards) than to others (eg. highway maintenance). Public authorities must identify which functions are relevant to the duty, set priorities based on the relevance to race equality of the functions, assess how the relevant functions affect race equality and consider how policies might be changed where necessary, to meet the general duty.

A requirement is placed on public authorities under the Race Relations Act (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 to produce a Race Equality Scheme (RES). Public Authorities must set out:

- the functions, policies and proposals that are relevant to the performance of their general duty to promote race equality.

- their arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely adverse impact of their proposed policies.
- their arrangements for monitoring their policies for any adverse impact on race equality.
- their arrangements for publishing the results of any assessments, and the consultations and monitoring that they do to identify any adverse impact on race equality.
- their arrangements for making sure that the public has access to the information and services they provide,
- their arrangements for training their staff in connection with general and specific duties.

Most public authorities have to meet specific duties in relation to employment. Public authorities must monitor by racial group the number of staff in post and applications for employment, training and promotion. Where more than 150 full-time staff are employed, training, performance assessment procedures, and cases of grievance, discipline, and of staff leaving employment, must also be monitored. Monitoring outcomes have to be published on an annual basis.

The Commission for Racial Equality has the legal responsibility for enforcing the specific duty. Local race equality organisations have an important role to play in making these procedures effective. They may offer advice and guidance to public authorities. They should expect to be consulted on the impact of authorities' functions and policies. They have a function in scrutinising and monitoring race equality schemes for any adverse impact on race equality.

Race Equality West Midlands Publications

Race Equality Digests (RED)

1. *Community cohesion, Bradford, Burnley and Oldham: four significant reports* (January 2003).
2. *The draft statutory code of practice on the duty to promote race equality* (February 2002).
3. *Ethnicity and religious affiliation in the West Midlands region: information from the 2001 Census* (Spring 2003).
4. *The success of the British National Party and other extreme right-wing parties in the local elections on 1 May 2003* (May 2003).
RED Supplement: *From BUF to BNP: a concise chronology of extreme right-wing activity in Britain and of the responses to it* (May 2003).

5. *How should local race equality work be organised? Developing and positioning race equality organisation in the context of Neighbourhood Renewal and the statutory duty of public authorities to promote race equality* (October 2003).
6. *Race Equality Councils and Partnerships: their strengths, needs and aspirations. The 2003 audit of the resources of West Midlands race equality councils and partnerships* (February 2004)

Reports

1. *Race equality: the significance of working with local communities. A strategic review of West Midland racial equality councils and partnerships* (August 2001, revised November 2001).
2. *West Midland Race Equality councils' development project. End-of-project report* (August 2002).
3. *Promoting race equality and community cohesion through local strategic partnerships. Report and recommendations based on research into local strategic partnerships in West Midland NRF and local management pilot areas* (Race Equality West Midlands in association with Government Office for the West Midlands and the Commission for Racial Equality, Birmingham office) (November 2002).
4. *Local authority race equality schemes 2002 and their preparation. How local authorities in the West Midlands have responded to their duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000* (Race Equality West Midlands in association with Government Office for the West Midlands, the Commission for Racial Equality, Birmingham office and West Midland Race Equality Councils and Partnerships) (December 2002).
5. *Community cohesion: concept, policy, implementation and theory. An introduction to recent community cohesion initiatives, with reference to West Midlands pathfinder programmes* (Race Equality West Midlands in association with Government Office for the West Midlands, the Commission for Racial Equality, Birmingham office and West Midland Race Equality Councils and Partnerships) (October 2003).
6. *Impact assessment as a means of improving race equality schemes, eliminating institutional racism and promoting race equality. Scoping the tasks involved with a view to underlining further analysis of method and providing guidance.* (Race Equality West Midlands in association with Government Office for the West Midlands, the Commission for Racial Equality, Birmingham office and West Midland Race Equality Councils and Partnerships) (December 2003).

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