



The Valleys  
Regional Equality Council

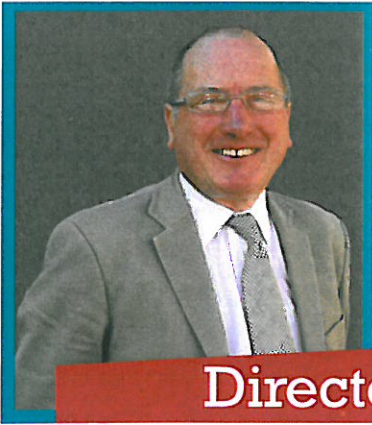


Cyngor Cydraddoldeb Rhanbarthol  
Y Cymoedd

# Annual Report 2008/2009

## Promoting Good Relations





Ron Davies, Director  
ron@valrec.org

## Director's Report

I wish to place on record my grateful thanks to the Chair of VALREC, Dr. Randhawa, the Vice Chair Elsbietta Morgan and the Treasurer Mr. Gwyn Griffiths for their continued support to myself and my colleagues during the past year. Together with the other members of the Executive Committee and observers from our partner organisations, they have been encouraging, genuinely interested in our work and unfailingly enthusiastic and available whenever called upon. We have needed this support as 2008-09 was an exceptionally difficult year, financially, for VALREC.

The Auditors' Report for 2007-08 showed that to be a very successful financial year which allowed us to make a useful contribution to our Contingency Reserve. It was fortunate that we were able to do this as it gave us some small "cushion" to deal with the succeeding year's difficulties. During 2008-09, two existing projects came to an end; there was a change in the funding regime of the Equalities Commission and the support previously promised by the Commission for Racial Equality did not materialise: the "Credit Crunch" affected us in the same way as the economy as a whole; the new funding stream promised by WAG has not been delivered and WAG decided to withhold the support given via the Communities First Programme while they re-assessed how they intended the programme to deal with equalities issues. Finally the Wales European Funding Office has been painfully slow in approving applications for Convergence funding and has still not dealt with applications submitted back in the summer of 2007. As a result we had to draw strongly on the reserve during the course of the year in order to maintain staff in post for as long as possible. Even so, by the end of the year in March 2008 we were in a position where it was no longer possible to fund these posts and we reluctantly had to make 5 staff redundant although one staff member was subsequently re-employed on a new project.

Fortunately our hard work and perseverance eventually paid off and, by winning funding for two new projects, we have been able to recruit additional staff so the complement currently stands at twelve with one further staff member on a temporary contract until the autumn of 2009. We are currently

anxiously awaiting the outcome of a number of other bids. The 2008 Annual Meeting approved some significant changes in the organisation's objectives to allow VALREC to broaden its work to cover all the mandates covered in the 2006 Equality Act. At the same time a name change was approved and VALREC is now registered with the Charity Commissioners as the Valleys Regional Equality Council. The programme of work remains substantially the same i.e. to campaign for equality and to support people who see themselves as victims of hate crime, harassment or any other form of discrimination. The case work arising from this can be very demanding in terms of financial and staff resources. The rewards can however be very satisfying and details are reported to the Executive Committee. VALREC has maintained close relationships with South Wales and Gwent Police Services with whom it has an Information Sharing Protocol and a secure e-mail connection allowing the exchange of sensitive information. There are in place Service Level Agreements with Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Councils and VALREC secured full compliance with these. In addition work was undertaken in Merthyr Tydfil and, via a paid contract, with Torfaen County Council. VALREC also has a detailed Service Level Agreement with Parc Prison at Bridgend.

During the year we have spent a considerable amount of time considering how statutory authorities can deliver on their statutory duties to promote equalities and "good relations" and how this relates to the new objective of building community cohesion. In this context the Home Office has launched a new strategy which includes the "Prevent" agenda. This is designed to ensure that minorities do not become so isolated, marginalised and alienated that they become vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism. We hope that central and devolved Government can be persuaded to understand the common links between equalities entitlements, good relations, cohesion and the "Prevent" agenda.

This work is likely to feature heavily in our programme for 2009-10, because of the likely tightening of expenditure during 2009 and onwards, VALREC will continue to face some difficult challenges. VALREC is the only locally based provider of equality services in the Valleys area. Unfortunately, our Area of Benefit, which is one of the greatest pockets of deprivation in Western Europe, continues to fall further behind despite the advantages of funding from the Objective one and Convergence Programmes. VALREC staff are in the front line in resisting this trend and are determined that the valuable work undertaken to date will continue.

## "A Voice In The Valleys"

By Senior Development Officer, Rez Jamal - rez@valrec.org  
and Development Officer, Darren Ralph - darren@valrec.org

My name is Rez Jamal and I have recently been employed by VALREC as the Senior Development Officer for the Big Lottery funded project entitled 'A Voice in the Valleys'. Previously, I managed my own business which was an excellent opportunity to utilise the skills I have acquired over the years. The lessons learnt from overseeing the business have proved monumental in the ways I approach challenging tasks, and responsibility and customer service



delivery was invaluable in shaping my character. Prior to this I worked for AWEMA (All Wales Ethnic Minority Association) as the Senior Development Officer, for the BBC as a radio presenter and producer and I have many years of experience working as a Manager in the retail fashion sector:

My name is Darren Ralph and I am employed as the Development Officer for the project. My academic background is centred on the study of 'World Cultures and Religions.' I graduated last summer with an MPhil in Applied Theology and Religious Studies from the 'School of European Culture and Languages'

at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Prior to that, I received my BA (Hons) in World Religions at Trinity University College, Camarthen. My special interests include; the Secularisation Thesis, the Sociology of Religion and Religion and the Media. Aside from academia, my previous work in local authority has enhanced my experience of working with the disabled public and for delivering customer service at all levels.



The project seeks to create strong lines of communication to enable voluntary sector organisations to empower people in the valleys to access their equalities and human rights entitlements. The project will support all equality mandates and work across the five boroughs of Caerphilly, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the VALREC management for giving us this unique opportunity to deliver the project and to the entire team for their exceptional warm welcome. If you would like further information on this project please feel free to contact us at VALREC. We look forward to working with you as your help and support is instrumental to ensure that our 'A Voice in the Valleys' becomes louder.

## Rhondda L.G.B.T

By Rhondda L.G.B.T. Network, Antony Dodd  
antony@valrec.org

My name is Antony Dodd, in July, last year I was unfortunately the victim of homophobic harassment. Due to the nature of the problems I was having, I had to involve the police, I was delighted to find out that South Wales Police has dedicated Hate Crime Officers within its ranks and was relieved to find someone I could communicate with who clearly had an increased understanding and empathy for what I was going through. During our conversation it became apparent that we shared very similar views about some of the problems facing L.G.B.T. people in the Rhondda and I was able to talk about my own experiences and problems. We approached Rhondda Housing Association who were very enthusiastic about the setting up of this Network and liaised regularly with them. After a couple of meetings it became apparent that for the Network to have any kind substantial impact, it would have to expand beyond the tenants of Rhondda Housing

Association and into the wider community. Well here we are now (May 2009), we are recruiting members and our steering group of Partnership agencies is working hard to put together events for our members. I am now working from the offices of the Valleys Regional Equality Council. The amount of work going on is staggering and I cannot thank enough all those who have assisted us along the way. There are in particular individuals who shine through in all they have done and rather than name them all I would like to thank the organisations who they represent. Many thanks to South Wales Police, VALREC, Rhondda Housing Association, Stonewall Cymru, R.C.T. Homes, R.C.T. Community Safety Partnership, Deep Impact, Gay Business Network, Cwm Taff N.H.S. Trust, and the L.G.B.T. Excellence Centre.



## Graffiti Project

By Diversity Initiatives Officer, Caerphilly, Sam Nawaz - sam@valrec.org

VALREC in partnership with active pathways successfully delivered a graffiti project. Active Pathways is an alternative education programme. The young people attend because they have not been succeeding in mainstream education either because of educational or behavioural issues. The young people are generally hard-to-reach young people, coming from Communities First areas and some are known to School Action Plus, Social Services, Youth Offending Teams and Mental Health Teams. They attend Active Pathways and receive support to follow individually tailored programmes which aim not only to help them achieve better educationally by studying a more vocational route but to promote and enhance their emotional intelligence, personal development and wellbeing.

Through working closely with the young people concerns arose about their negative attitude towards race and as a result of this attitude a project around the holocaust was delivered which I was involved in delivering. Through this project the young people not only learnt a vital piece of history that has shaped our society today but also gained knowledge and understanding of the dangers of ignorance towards other ethnic groups.

Through this project other issues were tackled such as prejudice and stereotyping, citizenship and responsibility, bullying and discrimination and segregation. The graffiti project was discussed with the young people and they were keen to be involved with this and they came up with a design for a graffiti board that would have a visual impact in their community with the theme 'Together as One'. As a result the young people felt proud of their achievement and they felt they had gained a greater understanding of culture and race. The graffiti board was also positively received by members of the community who commented on the success of the project.



## Casework - Mr Bashir

By Senior Development Officer, Economic Inactivity Programme, Wayne Lee - wayne@valrec.org

Mr Bashir is a local business owner from Glyncoch in RCT. He has been a repeat victim of hate crime targeted around his business. Incidents have ranged from racist graffiti including swastikas to verbal abuse. VALREC, Glyncoch Communities First and South Wales Police have been working in partnership to eliminate this recurring problem. After several inter agency meetings, VALREC took the lead to organise a football tournament. As many young people from Glyncoch had never been to Cardiff we decided to link in with Communities First in Butetown, Riverside & Grangetown. The tournament was held in Grangetown, Cardiff where more than 50 people took part including a team from South Wales police. The teams from Glyncoch were exposed to people from a diverse range of communities and had the opportunity to interact and communicate with one another. The tournament was sponsored by VALREC, Glyncoch Communities First & Mr Bashir. A buffet was provided as well as a trophy for everyone who took part. The tournament had a positive impact on the



shop owner, Mr Bashir and the local community. Mr & Mrs Bashir said "Since this tournament (football) the kids have been friendlier. They have helped to unload the van when I have deliveries to the shop; they have also been thanking us for sponsoring the tournament. There are still some young people causing us some problems but it is less than it used to be. There is still more work to be done but we are grateful for the help VALREC have given us"

## Sobia Iqbal - Development Officer

By Development Officer, Economic Inactivity Programme,  
Sobia Iqbal - sobia@valrec.org

My name is Sobia and I have been with VALREC since June 2009. Prior to this I worked as a support worker in a homeless hostel for young people. My background is mainly in working with young people and I am a qualified youth and community worker. My decision to move away from working specifically with young people and into the role I am doing now came after I heard about some of the work VALREC were involved in.

VALREC are instrumental in challenging prejudice and inequality through the work it delivers at grass roots level, for example via

the diversity workshops in schools, community projects etc. By being involved in this I feel that I am learning something new everyday and as someone who is committed to promoting the importance of justice and equality I feel that I am part of an organisation

that can nurture me and take me in a direction where I can make a real difference to both individuals and communities through the project that I am involved in.



## Increasing BME Employment & Tackling Economic Inactivity

By Senior Development Officer, Economic Inactivity Programme, Wayne Lee - wayne@valrec.org and Development Officer, Economic Inactivity Programme, Sobia Iqbal - sobia@valrec.org

This is an ESF funded project covering Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff & Torfaen. The aim of the project is to identify people of working age from BME communities and assist them to become more employable or access employment. Since the project began in May 2009, Sobia and I have been working closely with organisations that have access to the minority communities across the six boroughs.

We have been networking with employers and organisations geared towards employment to set up referral systems, promote the project and identify opportunities to access job vacancies. Several participants have received help so far with the

following: CV Writing, Completing Application Forms, Job Search and Interview Techniques. We are currently in the process of setting up free ESOL classes in Merthyr with free access to childcare. ESOL classes are oversubscribed in Merthyr so many individuals remain isolated until they can overcome language barriers. Other support the project provides includes: Help to set up a Social Enterprise, support to become Self Employed, support to convert overseas qualifications, help to gain new qualifications to access the labour market and support individuals into accessing vacancies within Social Care. Although the ultimate aim of the project is to assist individuals to access employment we believe that participants will improve their social network, improve their confidence and motivation and become less isolated.

## VALREC Staff List

Chair – Dr. R S Randhawa

Director – Ron Davies - ron@valrec.org

Deputy Director – Elaine Clayton - elaine@valrec.org

Finance/Office Manager - Cathy Monk  
- cathy@valrec.org

Assistant Director of Development  
– Christine Protheroe - christine@valrec.org

Caseworker - David Brownutt - david@valrec.org

Senior Development Officer, Economic Inactivity  
Programme – Wayne Lee - wayne@valrec.org

Development Officer, Economic Inactivity Programme  
- Sobia Iqbal - sobia@valrec.org

BME Young Persons Officer - Mirco Cordeiro  
- mirco@valrec.org

Diversity Initiatives Officer, Caerphilly - Sam Nawaz  
- sam@valrec.org

Criminal Justice Service Diversity Officer, Rhondda Cynon Taff  
- Laura Richards

Senior Development Officer, Voice in the Valleys Project  
- Rez Jamal - rez@valrec.org

Development Officer, Voice in the Valleys  
Project - Darren Ralph - darren@valrec.org

Rhondda L.G.B.T. Network - Antony Dodd -antony@valrec.org

Volunteer – Humaira Iqbal



## Statement Of Financial Activities

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 31/03/09 £	Total funds 31/03/08 £
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>				
<b>Incoming Resources From Generated Funds</b>				
Voluntary Income	179,715	195,406	375,121	700,244
Activities For Generating Funds	26,090	-	26,090	36,767
Investment Income	28,915	-	28,915	11,568
<b>Incoming Resources For Charitable Activities</b>				
Promotion Of Equality And Elimination Of Discrimination Projects	15,836	-	15,836	20,147
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>250,556</b>	<b>195,406</b>	<b>445,962</b>	<b>768,726</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>				
<b>Cost Of Generating Funds</b>				
Cost Of Generating Voluntary Income	16,295	-	16,295	12,909
<b>Charitable Activities</b>				
Promotion Of Equality And Elimination Of Discrimination Projects	276,986	267,538	544,524	613,668
Governance Costs	1,926	1,870	3,796	4,544
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>295,207</b>	<b>269,408</b>	<b>564,615</b>	<b>631,121</b>
<b>NET INCOMING/OUTGOING RESOURCES before transfers</b>				
	(44,651)	(74,002)	(118,653)	137,605
Gross Transfers Between Funds	(41,079)	41,079	-	-
<b>Net Incoming/(outgoings) Resources</b>	<b>(85,730)</b>	<b>(32,923)</b>	<b>(118,653)</b>	<b>137,605</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>				
<b>Total Funds Brought Forward</b>	<b>210,145</b>	<b>34,691</b>	<b>244,836</b>	<b>107,231</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>124,415</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>126,183</b>	<b>244,836</b>

### VOLUNTARY INCOME

- Grants
- Membership Fees

### SUPPORT COSTS

- Promotion Of Equality And Elimination Of  
Discrimination Projects

### STAFF COSTS

- Wages And Salaries
- Social Security Costs
- Other Pension Costs

### MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

#### Unrestricted Funds

- General Funds

#### Restricted Funds

- Community Fund/Big Lottery Fund
- Communities First-RCT
- Cymorth YOT Project-RCT
- Cymorth YOT Project - CCBC
- BME Young Persons Officer
- Communities First-CCBC
- Digital Story Telling (Project 1)
- Digital Story Telling (Project 2)
- AWEMA

### TOTAL FUNDS

Net Movement In Funds, Included In The Above Are As Follows:

#### Unrestricted Funds

- General Funds

#### Restricted Funds

- Community Fund/Big Lottery Fund
- Communities First-RCT
- Cymorth YOT Project-RCT
- Cymorth YOT Project - CCBC
- BME Young Persons Officer
- Communities First-CCBC
- Digital Story Telling (Project 1)
- Digital Story Telling (Project 2)
- AWEMA

### TOTAL FUNDS

## Financial Statements

Total Funds  
31/03/09  
£

375,111  
10  
375,121

31/03/09  
£

314,605  
30,883  
23,012  
368,500

Total funds  
31/03/08  
£

699,994  
250  
700,244

Management  
£

87,405

31/03/08  
£

350,599  
35,296  
24,395  
409,750

At 1/4/08	Net	Transfers	At 31/3/09
£	Movement	£	£
210,145	(44,651)	(41,079)	124,415

15,250	(14,389)	-	861
3,481	(2,574)	-	907
-	(2,210)	2,210	-
-	(4,406)	4,406	-
-	(27,020)	27,020	-
-	(2,042)	2,042	-
9,593	(10,236)	643	-
6,367	(6,420)	53	-
-	(4,705)	4,705	-
34,691	(74,002)	41,079	1,768
<u>244,836</u>	<u>(118,653)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>126,183</u>

Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Fund Movements
250,556	(295,207)	(44,651)

2,008	(16,397)	(14,389)
52,644	(55,218)	(2,574)
41,779	(43,989)	(2,210)
42,499	(46,905)	(4,406)
12,288	(39,308)	(27,020)
45,180	(47,222)	(2,042)
(992)	(9,244)	(10,236)
-	(6,420)	(6,420)
-	(4,705)	(4,705)
<u>195,406</u>	<u>(269,408)</u>	<u>(74,002)</u>
<u>445,962</u>	<u>(564,615)</u>	<u>(118,653)</u>

## Detailed Statement Of Financial Activities

31/03/09  
£

31/03/08  
£

### INCOME RESOURCES

#### Voluntary Income

Grants	375,111	699,994
Membership Fees	10	250
	<u>375,121</u>	<u>700,244</u>

#### Activities For Generating Funds

Sponsorship	21,500	32,417
Sundry Income	4,590	4,350
	<u>26,090</u>	<u>36,767</u>

#### Investment Income

Donations	27,100	10,500
Deposit Account Interest	1,815	1,068
	<u>28,915</u>	<u>11,568</u>

#### Incoming Resources From Charitable Activities

Management Fees	15,836	20,147
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#### Total Incoming Resources

	<u>445,962</u>	<u>768,726</u>
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### RESOURCES EXPENDED

#### Governance Costs

Auditors' Remuneration	1,730	2,344
AGM & Trustees Meeting Costs	2,066	2,200
	<u>3,796</u>	<u>4,544</u>

#### Charitable Activities

Wages	258,280	295,648
Social Security	25,054	29,657
Pensions	23,012	24,395
Rent, Rates, water	24,988	25,652
Insurance	2,567	3,231
Telephone	12,507	13,152
Postage & Stationery	7,963	17,565
Advertising	11,988	20,365
Travel & Subsistence	39,410	35,301
Subscription & Journals	186	1,117
Staff Welfare & Hospitality	3,307	2,874
Training Fees & Conferences	23,508	33,430
Room & Equipment Hire	3,757	3,334
Computer Expenses	4,897	13,177
Recruitment Fees	-	2,191
Project Consultancy Fees	4,485	-
Digital Story Telling	4,162	750
Other Costs	7,048	1,545
	<u>457,119</u>	<u>523,384</u>

#### Support Costs Management

Wages	41,632	40,070
Social Security	4,227	4,071
General Overheads	1,429	-
Accountancy	3,182	2,879
Legal & Professional Fees	4,996	2,221
Management Fees	15,835	20,147
Bank Charges	57	47
Fixtures & Fittings	2,298	2,356
Computer Equipment	13,749	15,493

#### Total Resources Expended

	<u>564,615</u>	<u>631,121</u>
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#### Net (expenditure)/Income

	<u>(118,653)</u>	<u>137,605</u>
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## Ethnic Minority Young People

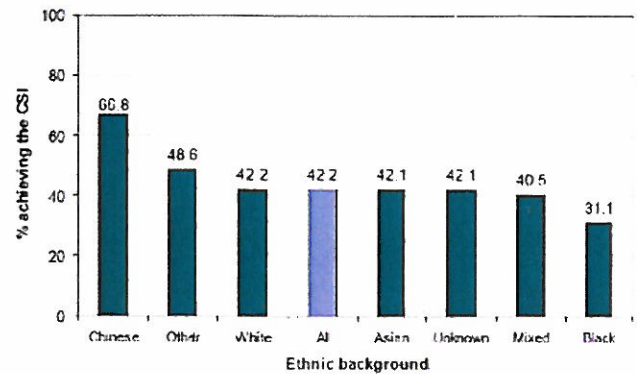
By BME Young Persons Officer, Mirco Cordeiro - mirco@valrec.org

The ethnic minority young people's project, despite the turbulence cause by the current financial uncertainty we all face, was still able to develop and achieve key projects in 2008/2009 to guarantee the young people's achievements were recognised and to keep raising their self confidence so ethnic minority young people can aim higher, achieve more, and to encourage the high flyers to be able to support others who are under achieving.

According to the latest National Statistics on Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics produced by the Welsh Assembly Government released on 24 March 2009, there are significant differences between ethnic groups, for example, Chinese or Chinese British pupils perform always above Wales's national average from Key Stage 1 to 4 – from 7 years old to 15 years old. On the other hand, pupils from a Black ethnic background performed below the national average.

Economical crisis tend to widen existing gaps, and with significant financial cuts to both formal and informal education (Schools and Youth Clubs) in the Valleys, it will be difficult to provide the same service and opportunities for all young people in the Valleys as in the urban areas. Vulnerable groups such as ethnic minority young people are more exposed to the consequences of the current financial situation, which can widen the gap between the high flyers and the under achievers. Therefore, to better support a growing vulnerable group, to tackle prejudice which is increasing due to the economical crisis, projects like the Young Achievers Awards are crucial to celebrate good positive contribution from ethnic minorities to our local communities, to reward and publicly recognise their achievements as well as to showcase good positive peer role models to other ethnic minority young people.

Chart 8: Percentage of pupils achieving the CSI at KS4 by main ethnic group, 2006-2008



In Caerphilly we were able to celebrate the achievements of 17 ethnic minority young people, and Hadeel Maksoud the Overall winner, said "I was absolutely thrilled to win the Student of the Year and the Overall Winner Awards. I am very thankful to VALREC, my sponsors, County Cllr John Evans Caerphilly's Deputy Mayor, Judge Wyn Rees and Sue Cumpston from HMCS - Her Majesty's Courts Service, and all those who were involved in this process. The Young Achievers Project recognises people's achievements and commends them for it, which is vitally important in any area. I am lucky to have been part of such a great cause!"



Hadeel with His Honor Judge Wyn Rees



Caerphilly BME YAA 09 - Group Photo

The event took place at Caerphilly's most esteemed venue, Caerphilly Castle. Venus suggested by previous winners to increase the event's prestige, since there isn't a better venue to celebrate Caerphilly's diversity, as Hadeel said "the venue was perfect, it merges welsh tradition and history with new cultures".



## Ethnic Minority Young People Continued

In Rhondda Cynon Taff we had 11 young achievers, and Jiabo Wang as the Overall winner. Unfortunately Jiabo wasn't able to be present at the ceremony since he was



Samuel Akintoye and Sarika Watkins-Singh with Sue Phillips.

preparing to move to Cambridge University. To tackle stereotypes and to raise diversity awareness, workshops have been delivered throughout the year in partnership with schools such as Mountain Ash Comprehensive and Porthcawl Comprehensive. The workshops were of great value and participants appreciated the knowledge gained. With 94% VALREC was rated the highest in the Porthcawl Comprehensive diversity self awareness days, evaluation report. During this last year, we also saw the official launch of the Rhondda Cynon Taff Single Plan for children and young people in October. A long term project to which VALREC is a keen and active partner, which gives the opportunity to all young people to design, develop and deliver the young people's version of the single plan.

## Volunteering At VALREC

By Volunteer – Humaira Iqbal

Volunteering at VALREC has, so far, truly been an inspiration. It is rare to find such a service in any community that is operated with heartfelt enthusiasm, and it is this infectious enthusiasm that has pulled me in and refuses to let go. There has not been a single day where there is little or boring work to do. Indeed, the work ethos is always bustling with energy and creativity. The casework that I help with is incredibly diverse and demands innovation and initiative in order to achieve a successful case and my observation of this has instilled in me a respect for those who work at VALREC with the passion that is required for positive change in our community.

On a more personal note, I have found the work that I am doing and experiencing at VALREC is incredibly valuable to my chosen career path in law. I can see that the work of VALREC mirrors that of true professionals themselves; research, analysis, diagnosis and problem solving. There are few communities that can boast of such a privilege. So far, I have had the opportunity to research for different cases and have realised that this part of the casework can be vital to the success or failure of the case. I have also experienced how strong support for the 'client' is



incredibly important too, indeed even after the case has closed, VALREC offer ongoing support which I have realised to be of significant value to the 'client', perhaps it is this part of the process that builds deeper trends of trust within our community.

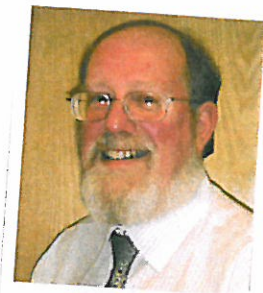
What I have found most attractive about volunteering at VALREC is the great feeling that comes with finding a solution to someone's problem, a solution that allows them to breathe a sigh of relief and puts a smile on their face, this feeling I am sure many at VALREC will agree with me is, priceless. Thus, I hope to continue to volunteer with VALREC and if I were to be successful at a career in law, then to be of greater assistance to this organisation that is worthy of praise and recognition for the work that they do.

## Caseworker - David Brownutt

Casework is a vital strand of VALREC's work. It is where we engage directly with community members who have suffered from discrimination in all its forms and seek to provide them with the support they need. Sometimes our clients contact us directly; at other times Government organisations such as the police or charity groups like Shelter contact us and ask us to offer help to their clients. This can lead to challenging relationship when we are sometimes working in co-operation with an organisation and at others helping people complain about them. Building robust relationships that can withstand such tensions is an essential part of our work. I've been in post now for almost three months. I am married to Jane, we have a grown up family and have lived in the Rhondda for eight years. I've spent 12 years in teaching and 20 years as a Baptist minister. I have been chair of Governors of a school with around 42 nationalities and an ethnically diverse staff which is useful preparation for working with VALREC. These have been three challenging satisfying months, of

By Caseworker, David Brownutt - [david@valrec.org](mailto:david@valrec.org)

seeking to build contacts across 6 Boroughs and a whole range of organisations and individuals, while being the link person for those in need. Sometimes it means helping people myself, or referring them to colleagues or other organisations including the LGBT Network whose chair, Tony Dodd and I share an office. My work would be impossible without the range of people with different skills, from different backgrounds, that we have within the office and who are committed to providing help to each other to help the community. Our reactive casework gives us an insight into the real issues hurting our communities. This helps us identify needs, and sometimes potential partners to engage in proactive preventative work. As we are both reactive and pro active we contribute to the greater community cohesion that strengthens our society



## Laura Richards New Starter

My name is Laura Richards and I am the newly appointed Criminal Justice Service Diversity Officer, employed by VALREC and seconded to the Youth Offending Service in Rhondda Cynon Taff. My previous post was in The Probation Service and prior to that I worked with "Looked after Children" and for a community project which promoted Social Inclusion. I have a degree in English Literature and I am a qualified youth worker.

The main aim of my role is to prevent young people from offending and re-offending and repair damage caused by crime as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The intended outcome of the post is that children and young people will respect each other's cultural identity. There will be a reduction in racially motivated crime, an improvement in race relations and an understanding of diversity issues in R.C.T. The skills that I hope to bring to the role incorporate an approach grounded in theory and effective practice, gained during my recent studying towards my B.A (hons) Community Justice

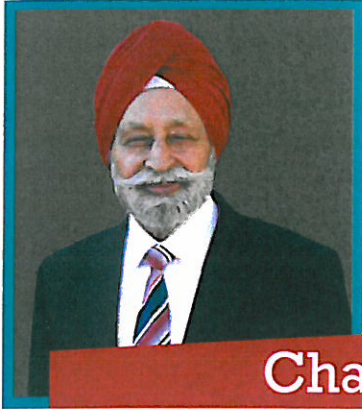
By Criminal Justice Service Diversity Officer, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Laura Richards

degree. During my studies I took a particular interest in developing my skills in working with Racially Motivated Offenders, linking in with developments in legislation including the introduction of Racially Aggravated Offences for the first time in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

I have experience in working with Equality legislation and intend to promote diversity, equality and anti-discriminatory practice. My planned approach is to use Motivational Interviewing to work with young people and focus on issues such as identity, peer influences, developing victim empathy, challenge distorted thinking and to identify other criminogenic factors linked to offending behaviour such as alcohol as a dis-inhibitor. I hope to develop an assessment tool specific to this post in order to assess the effectiveness of my intervention and to monitor changes in young people. I am looking forward to starting this exciting role and working towards making a difference.

## Contact Us

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Chair  
Dr. R S Randhawa

## Chair's Report

It was a great pleasure for me to be re-elected at last year's Annual General Meeting. I regard it as a great privilege to Chair an organisation as auspicious as VALREC and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all our members for giving me the opportunity to serve as Chair.

I would like to thank also my Vice Chair Elsbietta Morgan, our Treasurer Gwyn Griffiths, Mr Ron Davies our Director and all our VALREC staff for their loyal and enthusiastic support over the last 12 months. I have thoroughly enjoyed the last 12 months of office and especially being able to see at first hand the excellent work being done by our staff in supporting victims of harassment or discrimination and helping to build a more cohesive society.

Last year at our AGM we made a number of changes to our constitution in order to broaden our remit. These changes allow us to work across all the equality strands identified in the 2006 Equality Act and which are now covered by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. We have had some interesting presentations at our meetings on the way these changes have impacted on our work. There is no doubt in my mind that life can be made very difficult for some people solely because of their "difference" – real or perceived. The challenges of working across new strands such as religion, disability and sexual orientation will require new skills and new partnerships and I hope that all our existing partners will continue to support us as we develop our new identity.

The Charity Commissioners have now approved our new constitution and I know that Mr Davies and his staff are anxious to develop the best possible relationship with all those working at the EHRC.

At our Executive Committee and All – Member Meetings we have enjoyed excellent turn outs and some very interesting debates. In particular we were pleased to welcome the newly appointed Chief Superintendent Sue Hayes from South Wales Police who spoke to our members about her

vision for community cohesion and at a later Executive Committee meeting Chief Superintendent Jon Burley from Gwent Police briefed us on the Home Office's new, "Prevent", strategy which is designed to help stop minorities becoming isolated and alienated.

As Mr Davies will make clear in his report, we have had a very difficult year financially. We substantially depleted our financial reserves in retaining a number of staff in employment after the expiry of their contracts. Eventually, however, we had no alternative and, with great regret, had to make them redundant at the end of the financial year. I hope that we have turned the corner and with finance becoming available for 2 new projects we have made a number of excellent new appointments of staff who are all now in post.

I said in my report last year, "Unfortunately we live in a society where bigotry, intolerance, prejudice and discrimination still occurs." That remains the case and I hope that all of us will take the opportunity of this Annual General Meeting to renew our determination to oppose these injustices.

## Christine's Update

By Assistant Director of Development Christine Protheroe  
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It has been a busy and interesting year at VALREC. We dealt with over 300 cases last year and the statistics for this financial year show that we have already received over 80 referrals. In May this year The Rhondda Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Support Network (LGBT) joined VALREC to work in partnership on homophobic hate crime across R.C.T. VALREC is in the process of setting up a Partnership Agreement to facilitate this work.

There is a continuing large demand for our services particularly in respect of requests to deliver workshops to schools, training to public service providers and advice on equality matters generally. Although we have the skills and dedication to deliver these demands the challenges of funding resources remain. Due to the current economic climate the process of applying for funding has become increasingly restricted. The application process is a complicated process to embark upon with no insurance of a positive outcome.

The progress that VALREC has achieved over the years and more recently with its holistic approach to equality issues has become an invaluable asset to the communities it serves. VALREC is now widely recognised throughout the vicinity and has become the talk point of many organisations that refer much of their work to VALREC not forgetting the close cooperation VALREC has with South Wales and Gwent Police and Parc Prison.



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