

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

23 MAY 2011

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE - PERFORMANCE

THE WORK OF VALREC IN BRIDGEND: DELIVERY AGAINST THE SLA

1. Purpose of Report.

The purpose of this report is to introduce a report that has been developed by VALREC which sets out activities undertaken in the Bridgend area in line with the service level agreement. This report is attached as Appendix A.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 VALREC is a key local partner for the authority in the delivery of elements of the Equality Scheme. The Equality Scheme is a statutory scheme and a cross-cutting issue that impacts upon the work of the whole Council.

3.0 Background.

3.1 VALREC is an equality and human rights council. The objective of the service level agreement is to assist the Council to deliver on its corporate commitments to promote equality and community cohesion through the provision of services that include:

- Engagement & community cohesion
- Casework
- Training

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 The Authority has a service level agreement (SLA) with VALREC and in 2010/11, provided the organisation with a grant of £10,730. Within the service level agreement VALREC are expected to:

- Submit a half-yearly report to the local authority on activities set out in the service level agreement and the performance of these.
- Submit an annual report on activities set out in the service level agreement.
- Submit copies to the local authority of the quarterly Director reports to the VALREC Executive Committee and Minutes of the relevant meetings.

4.2 The annual report from VALREC is attached as appendix A and provides summary details of the casework undertaken to support local people experiencing race and hate related issues.

- 4.3 The report also sets out progress with projects including:-
- BME young persons
 - BME economic inactivity
 - Migrant workers
 - Newday project with offenders and ex-offenders
 - Valley voices project that was the subject of a report to the last cabinet committee – Equalities.
- 4.4 VALREC continues to work closely with the authority to provide training and workshops with schools and will work with the authority to develop training on the new Equality Act 2010.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 Whilst no equality impact assessment has been carried out, this report provides the Committee with information which will positively assist in the delivery of the Authority's equality duties.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 There are no financial implications as the report is part of the monitoring arrangements under the service level agreement.

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 The Cabinet Committee - Equalities receives and considers the information contained in the attached report.

David MacGregor
Assistant Chief Executive – Performance

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Contact Officer: Helen Hammond
Policy & Performance Management Officer

Telephone: (01656) 643383

E-mail: Helen.Hammond@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

Background documents:

Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Equality Scheme 2009-2012.



REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE – EQUALITIES

DATE: MONDAY 23rd MAY 2011

THE WORK OF VALREC IN BRIDGEND: DELIVERY AGAINST THE SLA

1. VALREC (THE VALLEYS REGIONAL EQUALITY COUNCIL).

VALREC is an equality and human rights council that actively promotes engagement with equalities groups across five local authority areas, including Bridgend. VALREC support individuals and groups subjected to prejudice and discrimination through casework. VALREC challenge and educate by delivering innovative training from school pupils to professionals. VALREC work with the police and local authorities to combat hate crime and harmonise community tensions.

2. CASEWORK.

All VALREC officers undertake casework in Bridgend. In 2010/11 officers have supported 52 individuals across the Borough. While experiences of racism still remain high, particularly in the Maesteg area, experiences of homophobia; transphobia and disability hate crime have steadily risen and are most prominently experienced in and around the town centre. While each case is confidential, the Community Cohesion group and Hate Crime review group are informed of any trends identified in Bridgend by VALREC. Some current cases include:

- Supporting a young person who is undergoing a gender transition (local comprehensive school).
- Supporting a *Mental Health Matters* user with a housing problem (Sarn/Tondu area).
- Supporting a man who is experiencing racism in the workplace (Porthcawl area).
- Supporting a lady who is a survivor of forced marriage and her partner who is receiving honour-based death threats (Maesteg area).

VALREC consider that the steady increase of cases in Bridgend is a result of its ongoing promotional work in the Borough. South Wales Police and various council services have also played in a part in referring clients to VALREC.

3. TRAINING.

VALREC provides training particularly to schools in Bridgend and VALREC is often requested to deliver assemblies as part of the schools attempt to challenge inappropriate behaviour.

Darren Ralph met with Sue Evans of BCBC on Thursday 28th April to discuss future training needs. VALREC is in the process of tailor-making equalities training packages for elected members; senior managers; and various service areas which is hoped to be delivered over the next 12 months and beyond. EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) training was also discussed.

4. VALREC PROJECTS DELIVERED IN BRIDGEND:

ESF (PRIORITY: 1) YOUNG PERSONS PROJECT

This project seeks to raise the aspirations of young BME (Black Minority Ethnic) people. The project works with the schools across Bridgend to reduce isolation and increase participation in sport, social activities and education.

ESF (PRIORITY: 2) BME ECONOMIC INACTIVITY PROJECT

This project works with BME people who are unemployed and are seeking employment. The project supports participants by for example, identifying jobs that suit their individual skills and qualifications; assisting with the writing of CV's and application forms; training and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. This project began in June 2009 and to date, has supported 19 people in Bridgend.

ESF (PRIORITY: 3) MIGRANT WORKERS PROJECT

This project supports migrant workers and since the practical start of the project in January 2011 has supported 14 participants with; progressing in employment; gaining new qualifications; converting overseas qualifications; accessing ESOL classes; and setting up a business.

The project is responsible for setting up the Bridgend international café which will run from *Solid Rock* in Nolton Street every week. This is an opportunity to learn English, socialise, partake in activities and all internationals are welcome (the Bridgend International Café also has its own website).

This project has strong links with the Catholic Churches in Bridgend and officers attend the Mass regularly having made good links with the Philippine and Catholic leaders. Project officers also have excellent links with Bridgend College and have set up ESOL classes and working skills for adults which includes the undertaking of NVQ's in the workplace.

(WORKING LINKS) NEWDAY PROJECT

Working Links has the contract with The National Offender Management Service to deliver the Newday Project. The project works with ex-offenders, offenders and those at risk of offending. The project aims to:

- Increase economic activity of offenders and ex-offenders
- Provide support to participants both in the community and custody and include those who fall into the 'at risk' category
- To 'add value' and not duplicate any existing provision; bridging the gaps between services.

VALREC is a sub-contractor on the project and delivers across Gwent; South Wales and all prisons in Wales including Parc prison, Bridgend.

(BIG LOTTERY FUND) A VOICE IN THE VALLEYS

A Voice in the Valleys seeks to strengthen lines of communication between those voluntary sector organisations with an interest in equalities and human rights. It has involved an extensive mapping exercise; the construction of a data-base and the setting up of voluntary sector equality forums in each of the five local authority areas. A Voice in the Valleys is part-responsible for taking VALREC from a race specific equality council to an all encompassing, regional equalities council. It is also responsible for the Valley Voices forum which is in the process of being established in Bridgend.

4. VALLEY VOICES

Thanks to the Cabinet Committee's recent approval of Valley Voices, a small steering group was established on Thursday 5th May 2011. This group is responsible for creating the terms of reference; for managing the forum and for setting the agendas. It is hoped that Valley Voices will inform the Bridgend Equalities Forum of the needs of the diverse communities in Bridgend and this might be done with regular presentations to the Forum by service users.

5. VALREC REPRESENTATION AND SUPPORT IN BRIDGEND:

- Bridgend Equality Forum
- Bridgend Community Cohesion Group
- Bridgend Ant-Bullying Task Group
- Bridgend Coalition Against Racism
- Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People
- South Wales Police Hate Crime Review Team
- Bridgend College Management Meeting (Equalities)
- Comprehensive schools across the Borough
- HMP & YOI Parc
- Bridgend Community Safety Partnership
- Bridgend Mental Health Matters
- Bridgend People First
- Various faith groups including; Christian, Islamic and Hindu.
- Bridgend SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education)

The high quality services delivered by VALREC depend on its strong relationships with the Police and local authorities. VALREC's success rate for tackling prejudice, discrimination and hate crime in Bridgend is testament to working with a multi-agency approach. VALREC continue to depend on the support of, for example; Bridgend's Community Safety Partnership; voluntary sector organisations; and Bridgend County Borough Council.