



**Service Level Agreement 2014-15
6-Monthly Casework Report
(April – September)**

**Prepared for Bridgend CBC
By Elaine Clayton, Chief Executive**

As part of our Service Level Agreement with Bridgend County Borough we are expected to produce regular reports. This is the 6-monthly report which focuses on the Casework/Advocacy work we have carried out since January 2014.

VALREC are aware that a lot of time and money is invested in working with victims and perpetrators of **'hate crime'** and we would ask Members to recognise that while we provide this service in partnership with other organisations such as Victim Support and South Wales Police, the highest demand for our service is Casework/Advocacy support.

The provision of Casework/Advocacy support has the largest impact on our limited resources and while there is an expectation that other organisations should provide the service, it is unfortunate that they feel they do not have the experience or knowledge required and often results in them referring people back to us.

VALREC continue to identify gaps in service provision and unfortunately on occasion a lack of commitment by some service providers within the Borough to actively support certain groups of people. When we experience this, we address work with the organisation involved to find an amicable resolution.

VALREC define Casework as;

- Work involving direct consideration of the problems, needs, and adjustments of the individual case (as a person or family)

VALREC define Advocacy as;

A method of ensuring that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to:

- Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them.
- Defend and safeguard their rights.
- Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

- Express their views and concerns.
- Access information and services.
- Defend and promote their rights and responsibilities.
- Explore choices and options

Casework – Our casework figures for Bridgend show that since April 2014 a total of 32 case files have been opened.

Feedback from service users show a 100% satisfaction rate while also showing that much work still needs to be done for people with 'protected characteristics' to feel safer and to develop a more inclusive and cohesive Borough.

Please note the above figures are casework specific and do not include the number of people who have accessed the same services through VALREC's individual projects. Taking this additional information into account increases the overall casework figure to 69 since January 2014.

Advocacy – Since January 2014 VALREC have supported 151 people who are recognised as having 'protected characteristics' (chart attached). This does not include the separate casework figures. These people either live or work in Bridgend and fall between the ages of 7 through to 60+. The support is currently being provided either through direct engagement; provision of advice and advocacy services or casework and is part funded through the Service Level Agreement that we have with the local authority.

VALREC continues to successfully demonstrate its multi-strand approach and expertise across all protected characteristics. In relation to casework in Bridgend, the majority of cases continue to be racist although we are starting to see an increase in disability referrals. The following are some examples of our casework:

- An Asian Shopkeeper in Bridgend who continues to experience high levels of racism has been supported by VALREC who have worked with him and the perpetrators to establish a better understanding of '*each other's*' cultures/backgrounds.
- A man with learning disabilities and serious health problems has been supported by VALREC to rebuild his confidence and self-esteem which had been knocked by years of abuse by neighbours which he was too afraid to do anything about. The man is now able to leave his home and has even started driving again.
- VALREC are currently supporting 3 transgender people through the transition process and have worked closely with the families to ensure they are also supported.

- A female with learning disabilities has been receiving support from VALREC due to concerns by her housing provider. The female does not have any support and based on the 'capacity' test is not eligible for any. Not wanting to leave the home has been one of her biggest fears and we are currently addressing this by taking both the female and her dog out for walks to build her confidence back up.

Details of past and on-going casework across the Borough of Bridgend must remain private and confidential at all times to protect the organisations and individuals involved.

Partnership working has been undertaken with the following, either through training; direct referrals or guidance/support;

- Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People
- Bridgend Deaf Club & Bridgend Deaf Association
- Bridgend People First (casework/advocacy referrals)
- ABFABB (casework/advocacy referrals)
- South Wales Police (casework/advocacy referrals)
- Bridgend College (training and casework/advocacy referrals)
- Bridgend County Borough Council
- LHB – Arc Mental Health (casework/advocacy referrals)
- North CMHT (casework/advocacy referrals)
- Social Services (casework/advocacy referrals)
- United Welsh Housing
- Valleys 2 Coast Housing

VALREC continues to attend and actively contribute to the following groups/forums;

- Hate Crime Review Group
- Bridgend Equality Forum Steering Group
- Bridgend Equality Forum
- LGBT Bridgend Forum
- Community Cohesion Group

Finally, you may be aware that the Minister for Local Government has announced that he is ending the Welsh Local Government Association's Improvement Grant from March 2015.

Areas that will be affected include the closure of their equalities unit and all support programmes around equalities and diversity. As an organisation, VALREC has over 20 years' experience of delivering the equality and diversity agenda in Wales and we know we can support Bridgend County Borough in maintaining and developing the excellent standards already achieved.