

# Investing in Equality / Improving Services

Report of the work by Cavan and Kildare County Councils to improve services for Black and minority ethnic (including Traveller) people

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THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY  
AN TÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS



Kildare County Council  
COMHAILLE CHONTARA CIOLL DARA



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The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Equality Authority.

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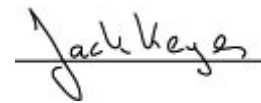
## Foreword

This report outlines a number of initiatives by Cavan County Council and Kildare County Council to enhance service delivery for people from Black and minority ethnic communities. In addition, Cavan County Council undertook initiatives to enhance service delivery for members of the Traveller community. This initiative builds on a previous project undertaken by both County Councils, supported by the Equality Authority, to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities in planning, service design and service delivery. The outcomes of that project are documented in a report “Dara has the Craic” (Equality Authority, 2007).

The success of the “Dara has the Craic” project prompted both County Councils to continue and expand their equality work. We decided that the focus of this project should be on developing ‘systems’ and ‘practices’ to enhance service delivery to Black and minority ethnic (including Traveller) communities. We are particularly pleased that the project enabled both County Councils to undertake actions which allowed our staff to get to know Black and minority ethnic (including Traveller) communities living in our local areas and to develop an understanding of their needs and concerns. Other actions were focused on developing systems and practices to ensure effective targeting of services and enhanced methods of communication with these communities.

We hope that the success of this project will encourage other County Councils to undertake actions to improve service delivery to Black and minority ethnic (including Traveller) communities living in their local areas. The project has demonstrated that much can be done, even at a time of limited resources. Action to improve services does not always involve additional resources but rather commitment from the leadership of the organisation and a willingness within the organisation to consider new ways of working. The positive feedback that we have received from participants in this project shows that focusing on equality can yield important benefits in terms of improved customer satisfaction with our services.

We are especially grateful to Wendy Davies and Ashok Ohri, OSDC, for their expertise, support, encouragement and advice in this initiative.



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# The Context

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# The Context



## The Aims of the Project

In March 2009 the Equality Authority commissioned OSDC to work with Cavan and Kildare local authorities on a project that had the aim of:

*“developing systems and practices to enhance service delivery in a manner that promotes equality, takes account and adjusts for diversity and prevents and combats discrimination.”*

The work with Kildare County Council focused on service delivery to Black and minority ethnic people and the work with Cavan County Council focused on service delivery to Black and minority ethnic people including Traveller people.

## Background

The Project was developed by the Equality Authority as part of their commitment to promoting equality in service delivery and it built on the partnerships that had been developed by the Equality Authority and the two local authorities in a previous project “Dara has the Craic”. The focus of that project was on accessibility for people with disabilities in planning, service design and service delivery. The project had been very successful and the Equality Authority was keen to build on the positive energy and enthusiasm that had been generated.

The two authorities came together and both decided, independently that issues relating to the Black and minority ethnic communities should be the next priority. In Cavan it was decided to include the Traveller community as part of the project. In Kildare it was felt that there were already a number of initiatives in place to improve service

delivery to the Traveller community and that, at this stage, it would be more useful to focus on the groups with whom they had less of a relationship.

## Legislative Context

Local authorities are covered by the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2008.

The aims of the Acts are to:

- Promote equality;
- Prohibit certain kinds of discrimination (with some exemptions) across nine grounds;
- Prohibit sexual harassment and harassment;
- Prohibit victimisation;
- Require reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities; and
- Allow a broad range of positive action measures.

It was envisaged from the outset, that this project would enhance the local authorities’ capability to promote equality and to take positive action.

The activities that were developed as a result of the project and the lessons learnt are shared in this report.

## The Project Process

In order to promote equality in service delivery in a way that is both effective and sustainable there has to be a systematic and whole organisation approach. There has to be clear leadership and public commitment accompanied by confidence in the wider staff group that they have the skills and knowledge to be able to deliver competent and sensitive services to the whole community.

With this in mind, the project process was to:

- Hold an initial meeting with senior managers in the authority;
- Bring together a multi-disciplinary staff group to deliver the project;
- Provide training for the group<sup>1</sup>; and
- Support the group to develop and deliver a range of projects that they identified.

At the end of the training day small groups, working across departments, identified the projects to take forward and these are described below.

<sup>1</sup>The programme for the training day is outlined in Appendix 2.





# The Work

## 1. Getting to Know the Communities and the Issues

09/05/2009

## Kildare Multicultural Family Fun Day

In both authorities there was a common theme of getting to know and engaging with Black and minority ethnic communities in their local areas. Community engagement and involvement is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for good practice in many areas of Council activity. Accordingly, the projects engaged with Black and minority ethnic communities in Kildare and Cavan in a number of ways. These included multicultural events (both Kildare and Cavan), information days (Kildare Housing Information Session) and targeted campaigns (Cavan Voter registration).



**Kildare Multicultural Family Fun Day**

Kildare County Council held its first Multicultural Family Fun Day on June 27th. From the outset, it was an overwhelming success and was attended by more than 800 people. The highlights of the event were featured in national and local media, thus confirming the positive impact for all involved. The aim of the day was to promote awareness, discussion and interaction in a fun and inclusive environment that recognised the diversity of all participants. To maximise participation, Kildare County Council provided a transportation link from Newbridge and Athy. Held in Aras Chill Dara, the Council headquarters in Naas, the Family Day was launched by the Mayor of County Kildare.

There was a range of free activities catering for every age group including:

- A ceremony to raise the local authorities' multi-cultural flag;
- A food fair from countries around the world;
- Music and dance performances from Spain, Hungary, Nepal, Latvia and Ireland;
- An African percussion workshop;
- Arts and crafts workshops (the workshops were as follows: (1) Make a Flag (using the multicultural flag as inspiration), (2) Celtic Brooch, (3) Willow Dream Catcher, (4) African Bead Making, (5) Paper Flowers (facilitated by a local Traveller \ women's group), and (6) Face-painting);
- Storytelling : travelling across the continents;
- Film screening: short films on the theme of difference;
- Sports and physical games; and
- Traditional dress parade.

## '1000 Families: The Family Album of Planet Earth'

The Concern and Suas photographic exhibition '1000 Families: The Family Album of Planet Earth' was launched on the Family Day. Displayed in the grounds of Áras Chill Dara, it continued for the month of July.



**'1000 Families: The Family Album of Planet Earth'**

The '1000 Families' exhibition was the inspiration for a photographic project at the Multicultural Family Fun Day in Kildare. A professional photographer was engaged to take a series of portraits (both individuals and families) attending the event. An exhibition of the resulting sixty portraits will be a focus point for the Multicultural Family Fun Day 2010.

Representatives from local and national agencies and services including the VEC, fire brigade, road safety, bus services and An Garda Síochána were on hand on the day to provide information relating to health, education, citizens' rights and information. An unforeseen outcome of the event was the close cooperation and forged partnerships between departments within the local authorities which traditionally would have had little opportunity to work together. The high level of cooperation between Kildare County Council staff was an overriding factor leading to the success on the day.

The expected outcomes of the day were:

- Increased awareness among staff and the wider community of the different cultures in Kildare;
- Increased awareness of the services that are provided; and
- Increased awareness of the barriers facing Black and minority ethnic people.

All of these outcomes were achieved. The day was a tremendous success and a positive experience for all involved. The day provided a sound foundation for developing ongoing dialogue with the diverse community that makes up Kildare.



**'1000 Families: The Family Album of Planet Earth'**

The spirit of the day was captured when a Community Garda playing a trumpet accompanied a local children's brass band. The children's band, dressed in costumes from around the world, marched along the main road in an open air performance outside Áras Chill Dara.

### **Kildare Local Authorities Multicultural Month: Celebrating Diversity**

The Multicultural Family Fun Day launched a month of multicultural events held throughout the Library Service in July. All events were free of charge and attracted large audiences.

Events hosted in libraries included:

- Excerpts from the '1000 families' exhibition;
- Concerts celebrating traditional music from around the world;
- Art and drumming workshops;
- Storytelling workshops - traveling across the continent; and
- Traditional food fare from around the world.

## Cavan Multicultural Event

A Multi-Cultural Information & Food Fair was organised through Cavan Comhairle na nÓg (local youth council). Comhairle na nÓg provides a forum for children and young people to discuss local and national issues of relevance to them. This group had participated in Cultural Diversity Awareness Training some months prior to the Multi-Cultural Day and, with help from their development officer, they decided to organise this event as a follow up to their training.

The event took place on 9th May 2009 in a local community centre within Cavan Town.

There were a number of activities on the day including:

- A Lithuanian choir;
- The Hosanna House Gospel Choir;
- Irish dancing lessons;
- Face painting;
- Food tasting from various countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Nigeria, Russia & Ireland; and
- Resources and information were obtained from various embassies and were made available on the day.

**There was a great attendance with up to 100 people attending the event during the day.**



Food Tasting from across the world



Hosanna Gospel Choir



Food Tasting from across the world



# The Work

## 2. Gathering Baseline Data

In both Kildare and Cavan the project also identified the need to gather baseline data about the different service areas' engagement with the target communities.

## Kildare

In Kildare, a brief questionnaire was circulated to all departments (Arts, Libraries, Motor Tax, Roads, Planning, Water Services, Environment, Finance and HR) and to Naas and Athy Town Council.

The aim of the survey was to identify any barriers that might be experienced by Black and minority ethnic people in accessing services of these departments. The survey also asked for suggestions as to how any identified barriers might be overcome and initiatives taken.

Some departments have been very pro-active in engaging with the Black and minority ethnic communities, for example the libraries, but other departments do not specifically target any particular group. Communication was identified as problematic by all departments.

### Practical suggestions from departments included:

- Translating Council leaflets into different languages;
- Using PC software to translate conversations;
- Providing accessible English classes for Black and minority ethnic people; and
- Providing training in intercultural communication and cultural awareness/religious sensitivities for staff.

Some of the issues raised have implications that go beyond the county. The issue of translated information about policies and

procedures is one that may be shared with other councils. If procedures and processes are statutorily defined it may be possible to develop web pages in other languages that explain the processes jointly with other councils.

## Cavan

In Cavan, the Social Inclusion Unit compiled a baseline data report in order to identify where the county council is pro-active in terms of service delivery to Black and minority ethnic groups. It also suggested possible actions which could be initiated within particular sections of the Council to improve on service delivery to this particular target group in the future.

The information was drawn from an audit carried out by the Social Inclusion Unit. The Unit had undertaken detailed interviews with key staff members in supervisory positions throughout the various sections of the Council as well as completing desk-top research into relevant policies/procedures/documents issued through the sections. The baseline report compiled all the findings from the Social Inclusion Audit in relation to service delivery to Black and minority ethnic groups.

This exercise was a worthwhile process. The information had not been compiled and disaggregated in this way before and the document will be a useful tool for raising awareness about Black and minority ethnic groups for staff members of the Council. It is intended that the document will be used internally by Cavan County Council in order to highlight good practice and to encourage learning as to how services can be delivered in an inclusive manner for the benefit of Black and minority ethnic customers.

# The Work

## 3. Targeting Services



## Cavan Voter Registration Campaign

This campaign sought to promote voter education and awareness raising among new immigrant communities in advance of the local and European elections in June 2009. This project was run in conjunction with Integrating Ireland and Breffni Integrated Ltd.

A number of actions were initiated under this project, including:

- Two staff members from Cavan County Council (a Social Inclusion Analyst & the Register of Electors Officer) attended a 'Train the Trainer' Day around Voter Education organised through Integrating Ireland in April 2009.
- The voter registration form was literacy proofed to ensure that it was easy to read and understand.
- A 'Register to Vote' Information Evening took place in May 2009. Posters were put up throughout the town in key locations such as ethnic food shops, libraries, the Institute of Education, and at VEC adult education classes. Posters were also e-mailed to all members of Black and minority ethnic community groups within the county (using a database held by Breffni Integrated Ltd.). Information was also put into the local newspapers to advertise the event.
- A hustings meeting took place in May 2009 in the Bridge Street Community Centre in Cavan Town. This event was advertised using the same channels as outlined above. Letters of invitations to attend the meeting were sent out to all the local candidates running for election Cavan County Council. Fifteen members of Black and minority ethnic communities and five local candidates

attended the meeting. Publicity around the event was published in the local newspapers after the event.



**Left: Hustings meeting, Right: Advertisement used in the local newspaper. Courtesy of Yellowstone.**

A number of 'Are you Registered to Vote?' articles were placed in local papers which covered information on how to check if you are registered to vote, how to register to vote and it reminded people of the date that they needed to register by in order to vote. The articles were aimed at the new communities and appropriate images were used in the advertisement. In one of the articles a sample ballot paper was included with step by step instructions. This information was also translated into Russian, Romanian, Polish and Irish.

The campaign was successful in creating an awareness amongst Black and minority ethnic communities living within the county of the need to register to vote and to come out on voting day to vote. More work will be undertaken before the next elections which will build on this work and there will be more time to deliver voter education workshops to ethnic minority representative groups and also through other mechanisms such as the VEC English classes.



## Kildare Housing Information Day

In a report prepared by Kildare Network for Interculturalism Today (KNIT) entitled 'Here to Stay', several difficulties were cited in relation to the service provided by the housing department. The department developed a working relationship with KNIT and agreed that where gaps in information were identified, they would respond positively within the parameters laid down by legislation and policy.

As part of their response, the housing department decided to hold an open information session on a Saturday morning to provide information to clients (and prospective clients) about the way that the housing application process worked.

Fifteen members of the housing staff volunteered their time and expertise and as part of the preparation for the day they attended training from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm every evening for the two weeks preceding the event. The sessions covered all housing initiatives.

A great deal of thought and preparation went into the event including:

- Preparing and circulating a flyer to all outlying offices and libraries, shops etc;
- Copying application forms and information leaflets for distribution;
- Setting up the training room so that each visitor would have privacy; and
- Creating a welcoming environment by arranging for a group of Romanian musicians to play music during the event and providing scones, coffee, tea and drinks for children.

The Director of Services also attended to thank the volunteers.

The housing IT system was linked up so that those who had specific

queries about their own personal applications were able to have their queries answered.

The attendance on the day was low but there were some interesting lessons. The volunteers felt:

- The training that they had received had been very useful;
- The questions that were raised, by those who did attend were dealt with satisfactorily;
- Staff had an opportunity to listen and empathise and, in the follow up meeting, there was time to share the case histories of the enquiries and to develop greater awareness of the housing concerns of the target group. As a result, current processes and procedures in the customer service area were discussed and ideas were put forward for improvements.

Originally, the day was to be targeted at Black and minority ethnic communities and there was a proposal to advertise the event on the local radio station and the local papers. However, as there are 4,000 families on the housing waiting list, there was a concern that unless the initiative was broadened to include all applicants, the local authority could be accused of positive discrimination in favour of Black and minority ethnic families. This highlights the need for clarity about the difference between positive action and positive discrimination and the delicate balance that public bodies have to strike between addressing "the uneven playing field" and guarding against allegations of discrimination from the wider community.

On the positive side, despite the low turnout, the event demonstrated another way of working and of getting information to the public. Perhaps the biggest outcome is that the housing department is now considering "taking the show on the road." Although the information

sessions will be aimed at everyone, it is recognised that there needs to be some targeted publicity to ensure the presence of people from Black and minority ethnic communities.



# The Work

## 4. Communicating with the Community

09/05/2009

## Website Development

Perceptions of Cavan, as elsewhere, are increasingly shaped by electronic media. Cavan County Council's website aims to provide all citizens of County Cavan with quality information on legislation, rights and links to other (local) equality organisations.

Equality/diversity Information is collected and organised on the intranet and contains:

- News items;
- Links to related organisations;
- A document library;
- Contact details for advisory group members;
- Contact details for the project team; and
- A calendar of events.

The Cavan Council website will contain a selection of this information and is being developed to have:

- **Jargon-free and clear information**  
People with limited English language skills or people coming from an oral tradition may have difficulty accessing written information.
- **Browsealoud to read web pages aloud**  
Browsealoud makes using the Internet easier for people who have English as a second language.
- **Pictures and images with which people can identify**  
Images can assist people with limited literacy as well as help to promote a positive image of people from Black and minority ethnic communities.

A dedicated equality/diversity website may be developed in the future.

## Ethnic Diversity Advisory Group

In Cavan, it was agreed to explore the establishment of an Ethnic Diversity Advisory Group. The purpose was to have a means of communicating with customers to find out if Council services could be improved for members of Black and minority ethnic communities.

An initial meeting was arranged in July 2009 and was publicised in the regional press. All of the publicity was translated into Russian, Polish and Romanian, the most commonly used languages among minority ethnic groups in Cavan. It was also advertised through multi-lingual posters in ethnic food shops in the county, branch libraries and social welfare offices etc. A direct mail shot went to groups already known to the County Council, including members of the Foreign National Steering Group.

The aims of the initial meeting were:

- to find out from Black and minority ethnic groups about their main areas of interaction with the Council and of any services that could be improved; and
- to gauge interest in establishing an 'Ethnic Diversity Advisory Group' to help to improve services by providing ongoing feedback.

Twelve people attended the meeting including representatives from African, Polish and Russian communities as well as an employee in the local development sector. There was a lively discussion on the evening with many positive ideas proposed, such as producing a booklet of translated phrases for staff to use, administering a questionnaire to customers to find out about language needs, holding

meetings to explain documents to people, hosting information events, and using sports to promote integration.

Several individuals who were Gaelgeoirí (Irish speakers) attended the meeting, wishing to raise concerns relating to the Irish language and its importance for new communities. They would like to see the new communities being encouraged to learn Irish. They also wanted to be able to conduct their business with the Council in Irish.

Further meetings took place in October and November. One of the suggestions that the group had for improving services to minorities was to hold an information event about Council services (see below).

### **Cavan County Council Information Event**

Cavan County Council hosted a special Information Evening in December 2009 in the Johnston Central Library Events Space. This was the first event of its kind to be hosted by the Council. The purpose was to provide information on the wide range of Council services to all members of the community. There was a particular focus on making the information accessible to foreign nationals living in the county who may not be very familiar with the role of the local authority. A number of language interpreters were available on the evening to assist foreign nationals to find out about the different services.

Staff were present from housing, planning, motor tax, waste, library, arts, fire & emergency, corporate affairs, sports partnership, community and enterprise, and the community and voluntary forum. The Citizens Information Service and Breffni Integrated Ltd. also had stands and were able to provide information for people with queries about social welfare or other issues. Breffni Integrated Ltd. offers

particular supports for foreign nationals and for people interested in setting up businesses.

A number of children enjoyed the storytelling sessions that took place in the main library building at the same time. A storyteller entertained them with stories and songs and read an excerpt from Dickens' 'Christmas Carol' (storytelling was in English and Polish).

Members of the Polish Association in Cavan brought homemade biscuits and cakes to share with the wider community. The event was a great opportunity for people living in County Cavan to meet staff in the County Council, and for people from diverse ethnic backgrounds to meet each other.

The idea for this information event came about through the Council's work with its newly established 'Ethnic Diversity Advisory Group', who also helped out with the organisation of the event.



**Cavan County Council Information Event**

## “Experiences of Multiculturalism” Workshop: Facilitated by Kildare County Council

A workshop entitled ‘Experiences of Multiculturalism’ was held as part of the Multicultural day on June 27th in Áras Chill Dara, Naas. James Connington an experienced IPA facilitator coordinated the workshop. Approximately 25 participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds attended. The participants were divided into three main groups and asked to consider the following:

- In the Kildare community in general, where has support been particularly strong for minority ethnic communities and their concerns and needs?
- What have been the areas of most positive experience and interaction?
- Where was support and help expected and hoped for but not forthcoming or received?
- What concerns or worries are strongest now in the difficult economic situation facing Kildare and Ireland?
- Are any of these issues relating to the difficult economic situation particular to ethnic background?
- What kind of initiatives do you think would particularly promote harmony and advancement in the future?
- What in your view should be the primary focus of a Multi-cultural forum in Kildare for consulting and involving black and minority ethnic communities?

### Positives from workshop

There was very positive reaction to the Multi-cultural day being organised and how it was run. Satisfaction was expressed with the housing department in Kildare County Council, particularly on approaches taken since 2005. Positive views were expressed about

the friendliness of towns of Newbridge, Naas and Kildare. Newbridge Asylum Seekers’ group was also singled out for praise.

### Challenges expressed at workshop

There were a number of challenges experienced regarding access to information on health, education – higher education grants system etc. Childcare costs also were an issue and dissatisfaction was expressed at the housing list and the waiting time for housing.

Suggestions for future initiatives:

- Intercultural/diversity awareness initiatives for Irish people which would foster a greater understanding of multiculturalism;
- Encouragement to service providers to appreciate cultural differences;
- Clarity of information and raising awareness of entitlements;
- Provision of an opportunity for people to volunteer and contribute to society.
- Provision of more recreational services e.g. soccer in Kildare; and
- Development of a Multi Cultural Forum in Kildare for consulting and involving Black and minority ethnic communities.

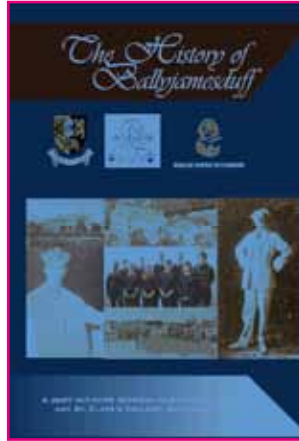
### **Ballyjamesduff Booklet**

Cavan County Museum worked with eleven students from St. Clare’s College. The students, who were studying English, were from diverse backgrounds - five from Lithuania, two from Brazil and one each from England, Romania, Latvia and South Africa. The group started to visit the Museum with their teacher on a regular basis in January 2009.

The Museum is a centre of history and heritage and it has always enjoyed a good working relationship with the College. It has undertaken other projects with students in the past but this was

the first time there was an opportunity to work specifically with an international group. The staff welcomed the opportunity and challenge and were keen to engage with the group.

**The group decided they wanted to learn about the history of Ballyjamesduff - the area they now call home. The students researched and put together various important topics relating to the history of Ballyjamesduff. The work was gathered into a booklet and printed.**



The Museum funded the publication of the booklet and the launch event. The launch event was attended by the children, their school principal, teachers and families. The initiative offered the Museum an excellent opportunity to engage with foreign students and their families and this was achieved at a relatively low cost.

The Museum plans to build on this process and to approach other schools from Cavan and invite their students from a diverse international background to take part in similar projects.

### **Good Practice Guidelines: Getting to Know the Community**

The guidelines below might be helpful for other councils who are looking at the issues relating to community mapping.

### **Mapping the Community**

At the outset it is important to know about the communities that you hope to engage with or involve as potential members / supporters of a Forum. Developing a community profile is an important first stage.

The purpose of developing a community profile is to enable you to analyse the social, economic and political factors that impact on the community and to identify ways that your services meet their needs.

The following framework may be helpful:

#### **Location**

What are the boundaries of the area – which geographical areas are covered?

#### **Statistical Analysis of the Black and Minority Ethnic Community**

Population (size, location);

History of settlement (new arrivals, established communities, refugees, economic migrants etc);

Ethnic composition;

Languages spoken;

Age structure;

Gender composition.

#### **Economic factors**

What is the current and historical economic base of the area?

What is the contribution of the Black and minority ethnic community to new and existing economic activity?

## Unemployment

Statistics;

Local patterns – and how are they reflected in the black and minority ethnic communities.

## Employment

Local patterns;

Impact of migration.

## General documentation about the area

What public documents exist about the area and do they offer any insight into the experience of Black and minority ethnic communities (and if not, why not)? (For example documents such as local plans, community directories, various strategy documents on housing or education or social care etc.)

## Groups/Organisations

Which Black and minority ethnic community groups and organisations are active in the area?

What issues are they concerned with?

Who runs them?

Who are the community leaders? How are they viewed and by whom?

To whom are they accountable and how?

Who supports them in the community?

Are there any conflicts within the community?

Are there informal networks and support systems?

Where do people meet – informally and formally?

## Making contact with the community

There are a number of ways in to make initial contact with the community

- Use the Council's own service delivery mechanisms;
- Use the skills and expertise of existing staff (including staff from a black and minority ethnic background);
- Use the local press and media;
- Use existing voluntary and community groups.

## Establishing a Forum

Establishing a multi-cultural forum will have many benefits both for the community and the Council.

For the council this might include:

- Providing a positive link between the Council (and other service providers) with the wider community
- Developing greater awareness of actual or potential barriers to the take up of Council services – and a mechanism to discuss ways of overcoming these;
- Providing a way of consulting with the wider community – and contributing to policy development;
- Providing a mechanism for monitoring service delivery to the minority ethnic communities.

For the community this might include:

- Providing a positive link between the wider community and the Council and other service providers;
- Providing an opportunity to articulate concerns about the ways in which services are delivered and a mechanism to discuss ways of overcoming these;
- Providing an opportunity to be consulted on new and existing policies;
- Providing an opportunity for community skill building.



### The Process for Establishing a Forum

Identify the aims and objectives of a forum.

It may be useful for the first meeting to discuss some draft objectives. The key issue to clarify at the beginning is the extent to which the Forum is an independent body that sets its own agenda or a body that exists to meet the Council's agenda.

- Does it aim to make existing service provision more responsive to the needs of the Black and minority ethnic communities?
- Does it present a challenge to the way things have traditionally been done?

Possible aims could include:

- Promoting racial/community harmony;
- Promoting good relations between people from different communities of origin;
- Promoting better understanding between different faiths and cultures;
- Increasing awareness and understanding aimed at contributing to making the county an inclusive community;
- Providing access to information and networks;
- Encouraging social contact amongst different communities by organising social and cultural events;
- Providing a forum for different communities to raise issues of concern;
- Establishing links and relationships with a range of service providers including different departments within the county as well as some of the voluntary and community groups.

### Identifying Job Descriptions for the Members of the Group

What are the skills you are looking for?

Is there support/capacity building to help people to develop those skills if necessary?

### Membership

How will membership and structure be determined?

Will people from the voluntary sector who provide services to the community be involved? e.g. specialist agencies.

Will there be a committee? If so, is there a need to ensure a balance of people from the community and those representing agencies?

Will meetings be open to all interested parties?

### The Way the Group Functions

Formal roles – chairing meetings, taking minutes, servicing the group etc. - who will do this – and on what basis? Should it be chaired by a Council officer?

How often will it meet?

Will there be contact people for the group from the different agencies involved?

Will the group need a formal constitution (this may be useful particularly if it wants to raise funds for activities)?

### Supporting a Forum

Is it possible to offer capacity building/support to members of the forum?

Is there a contact person/named officer with responsibility within the Council?

Is there easily accessible and well publicised information about the forum and its role available to both the community and Council officers?

Have the Council staff supporting the forum received diversity training?

Have they experience in running community-focused events?



# The Work

## 5. Learning Events for Staff

## Staff Study Trip to Traveller Centres

The Social Inclusion Unit organised a study trip for Cavan County Council staff to visit two Traveller Centres in Navan in October 2009. This helped to raise awareness about Traveller culture and projects which are being undertaken to support Travellers. The group met with staff and with members of the Traveller Community who were undertaking a variety of accredited courses in Navan Travellers Education Centre. The group was also hosted by Michael McDonagh and staff from Navan Traveller Workshop who gave them an overview of Traveller history and culture. Navan Traveller Workshop is involved in training people to build traditional Traveller wagons. One such wagon, which was made and decorated entirely by hand, is on display in the centre. It is brought around schools as an education tool and it has also taken part in St Patrick's Day parades to promote and celebrate Traveller heritage.



**Cavan County Council staff inspect a traditional Traveller van that is completely handmade by participants in the Navan Traveller Workshops.**

Among other activities, Navan Traveller Workshop operates a Mobile Information Unit, which is a Citizens Information Service van that can travel to different locations to provide people with information on their

rights and entitlements and answer queries about social welfare and other issues. This is a confidential service that can be used by everyone but it is particularly useful in being able to travel to halting sites.



**The mobile information service provided by Navan Traveller Workshop.**

## Workshop for Staff on Ensuring Traveller Equality

The Equality Authority and the Irish Traveller Movement delivered a workshop for staff in Cavan County Council on exploring equality and the Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2008 with a specific focus on the Traveller ground in December 2009. The workshop provided staff with an opportunity to explore and gain an understanding of:

- The concept of equality;
- The link between stereotyping, identity and discrimination;
- The Equal Status Acts 2000-2008 and case law on the Traveller ground;
- Traveller culture and the history of prejudice against Travellers; and
- What local authorities can do to prevent and address discrimination against Travellers.



# The Conclusion

Overall, the project achieved its aims in that a number of initiatives were taken to develop and improve services for Black and minority ethnic communities. There were positive outcomes from the activities and the relationships that were developed will contribute to an ongoing dialogue and partnership between the Councils and the local community.

In Kildare, the success of the multi-cultural day will lead to an ongoing positive relationship with people from Black and minority ethnic communities. Cavan is now undertaking to produce an Anti-Racism and Anti-Sectarianism Plan for the county, with support from the Peace III Programme. This plan will further address the needs of Black and minority ethnic communities by carrying out consultation with them and agreeing actions to be implemented across a range of agencies.

In assessing the success of this, or any other project, it is important to have a framework for assessment. The guidelines below may be helpful.

### Good Practice Guidelines: Identifying Good Practice

#### What does good practice look like?

As a minimum, good practice meets the requirements of the legislation and addresses the issues of discrimination as identified by the Equality Authority's research<sup>2</sup>.

#### Good practice would include work that:

- Demonstrates fair treatment in employment and service delivery;
- Is proactive in challenging and eliminating discrimination and harassment;

- Promotes equality of opportunity on the grounds of race;
- Promotes good race relations.

#### To achieve this the organisation needs to ensure:

- Leadership and governance arrangements to deliver change across the organisation;
- Consultation, engagement and involvement of Black and minority ethnic people in the development and delivery of policy and services;
- Effective monitoring of service outcomes leading to improvements as a result;
- Analysis of statistics/improved use of statistics - greater disaggregation of data, improved analysis of data, or identifying gaps in the type of data collected;
- Action to improve workforce diversity at all levels;
- Action to deliver equality in procurement processes;
- Accessible and informative public reporting on progress and convincing demonstration of positive organisational attitude towards the equality agenda.

### Factors Identified as Contributing to the Success of the Project

Those involved in the project came together to review the project. The factors that they identified as contributing to the success of the project were:

#### Support from the leadership and senior management

- The commitment of the leadership and senior management has to be made explicit. While the activities to promote equality do not always require additional resources, they may require

<sup>2</sup> The Equality Authority has commissioned a series of research reports to analyse discrimination in Ireland, most notably, Helen Russell, Emma Quinn, Rebecca King O'Riain and Frances McGinnity, The Experience of Discrimination in Ireland, Equality Authority / Economic and Social Research Institute (2008).

organisational commitment and an openness to explore new ways of working to meet new challenges.

### Partnership working

- Partnership working benefits everyone. It may involve cross-departmental partnership, partnership with external agencies or partnership with the beneficiaries of services. Some council departments already have strong connections with the target groups. Other departments can utilise those connections to develop their service provision.

### Information about the community

- There is a need to have information about service users and potential service users. There are many external organisations and agencies that have strong links with the target communities. A constant information exchange with those agencies is essential. It may be that the problems of a few may be replicated by many and it is important to identify unmet needs in order that resources can be targeted effectively.

### Communication with the community

- In order to communicate effectively with the target audience, it is important to use a variety of different media and mediums. Some communication can be done informally as well as formally.

### Positive action initiatives

- Positive action to improve service delivery to Black and minority ethnic communities has to be seen in the context of the council's commitment to improve services for everyone. This contributes to mainstreaming the equality agenda which requires that the diversity of the community and their needs is recognised.

### Training for staff

- It was recognised that ongoing equality training is an essential part of the process of improved service delivery.

### Establishing a steering group

- The establishment of an equality project team to steer the project was an asset as it provided an opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other. It also provided a supportive peer group for those involved. The project team can play a role in ongoing development and provide a framework for reviewing progress.

### **Recommendations**

The following actions would contribute towards the effective development of services to the Black and minority ethnic communities and the Traveller community in all councils.

- The leadership and senior management of the organisation should make their commitment to the equality agenda explicit. There are a number of ways that this could be achieved:
  - public statements about the importance of mainstreaming equality in the successful running of the organisation;
  - the development of organisational clarity as to what an organisation with a strong commitment to equal opportunities would look like;
  - the inclusion of an equality dimension in targets or outputs; and
  - the provision of resources to pursue actively any actions required.
- The council should map the population of the county every 5 years to ascertain the details of the ethnic and national composition of the

population it serves. This should include a breakdown by age, family composition and geographical location. This will enable councils to plan their services more effectively.

- The council needs to develop a process for collecting and analysing data on service users that would track patterns of usage by Black and minority ethnic communities and could act as an early warning system in cases of low service usage by Black and minority ethnic communities relative to the size of their community, their socio-economic status or family type.
- The council needs to develop service user feedback mechanisms with a focus on Black and minority ethnic communities that would monitor the user's experience of the service accessed and would identify both good practice and potential problems.
- Services provided specifically to the Black and minority ethnic communities by the community and voluntary sector should be audited with a view to establishing what exists, what the needs are and what the gaps are.
- A variety of mechanisms, both formal and informal, should be established to link in with Black and minority ethnic communities. This could include multi-cultural events and more formal working groups.
- Links should be developed with the organisations that have contact with or provide services to Black and minority ethnic communities and the Traveller community.
- The issue of communication in languages other than English should be addressed:
  - Thought should be given to working jointly with other local authorities to translate council leaflets which may be standard (apart from the local address or telephone number) into the main languages that are used by the community. Thought should be given as to ways of making this cost effective by using on-line translations; and
  - There should be opportunities for new communities to learn Irish.
- Community development work should be undertaken with the communities with a view to furthering the integration agenda and to empowering people to articulate their own needs.
- Training or briefings should be provided for all staff so that they can respond sensitively to the needs of the whole community.
- Further positive action and targeted initiatives should be developed to increase the engagement with Black and minority ethnic communities and the Travellers community.
- Structures should be established within the organisation to ensure accountability for continuing to promote the equality agenda in relation to service delivery. For example, an equality project team, chaired by a senior manager, should act as a catalyst for ongoing development of equalities initiatives.
- The Local Government Management Services Board should include a regular focus on diversity and on supporting local authorities to respond to the needs of Black and minority ethnic communities in their learning events for local authority staff at all levels.

- The Equality Authority could facilitate and encourage other local authorities to share good practice from their areas either through conferences and seminars or through publications including web-based publications.



# Appendix 1

## Experience of Discrimination in Ireland

Carried out by The Economic and Social Research Institute on behalf of the Equality Authority

### Wider Picture

Overall, 12.5 per cent of the Irish population aged 18 years and over said that they had been discriminated against in the preceding two years. Of the eligible population, 9 per cent of respondents reported discrimination in accessing services and 7 per cent reported work-related discrimination. In 71 per cent of cases discrimination was experienced on more than one occasion.

### Non-Irish Nationals / Minority Ethnic Groups

Some 24 per cent of non-Irish nationals felt that they had been discriminated against over the preceding two years, just over twice the rate for Irish nationals. The higher likelihood of reported discrimination among non-Irish nationals persisted in both of the work and four of the service domains (housing, shops/pubs/restaurants, financial services and transport), but was particularly pronounced in relation to job search.

Respondents of Black ethnicity had the highest “raw” risk of discrimination among the four ethnic categories – White, Black, Asian or ‘Other’ – identified in the survey, with 40 per cent of those surveyed reporting experience of discrimination. This compares to 12 per cent of the White respondents and 25 per cent of the Asian group. Ethnicity is more strongly associated with discrimination in services than work. The survey also shows that Black respondents were particularly at

risk of discrimination in shops/pubs/restaurants, financial services, housing and transport, the ‘Other’ group were at risk in shops/pubs/restaurants and housing and the Asian group in transport. It was also found that Black respondents were more vulnerable to repeat discrimination than White respondents.

### The Impact of Discrimination and Taking Action

Of those who reported discrimination in the previous two years, some 26 per cent said that it had a serious or very serious effect on their lives.

Only 40 per cent of respondents reported that they had taken any action (formal or informal) in response to perceived discrimination. The most common form of action taken was verbal, with 26 per cent saying they had taken such action. A further 4 per cent made a written response, with only 6 per cent making a formal response by making an official complaint or taking a legal action. This result suggests that the cases that make it to the Equality Tribunal represent a very small fraction of all cases of discrimination.

The social groups who reported experiencing the highest levels of discrimination were the least likely to take action. Responding to discrimination requires a range of resources such as language skills, confidence and knowledge of one's rights and entitlements. It appears that more marginalised groups who are subject to higher levels of discrimination may also lack some of these resources.

### Policy Implications

The results of this study suggest that accessing financial services and housing, along with recruitment and the workplace, are areas that may require particular monitoring for discriminatory practices.

In relation to work, the response of the unemployed and the economically inactive, non-Irish nationals and people with disabilities suggest that these groups are particularly at risk.

In relation to services, disabled people, non-Irish nationals and Black and minority ethnic groups reported greater likelihood of consistently experiencing discrimination.

The findings regarding reported discrimination in the workplace and in service domains suggest that these groups need particular supports. Employers and service providers need to be aware of situations in which reports of discrimination are high and should be conscious of the groups which are vulnerable to discrimination.

The finding that the most highly discriminated against groups are the least likely to take action indicates the potential benefit of proactive third party interventions such as information campaigns, advocacy and legal supports, along with initiatives by employers and service providers to implement good practice.

# Appendix 2

## Equality and Diversity Training

### Aims

- To develop a shared understanding of some of the key concepts in race equality (including prejudice, discrimination and racism);
- To ensure that there is a basic knowledge of the requirements of the legislation;
- To identify short-term pilot demonstration projects in each directorate which will improve service delivery to Black and minority ethnic people;
- To identify a project management team to drive the pilot projects over a three-month period.

### Programme

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 9.30  | Welcome and Introductions – to each other and the programme  |
| 9.40  | Why is race equality an important issue for the local authority?   |
| 10.00 | What do we mean by race equality? – some of the key concepts   |
| <hr/> |  |
| 11.00 | Break  |
| <hr/> |  |
| 11.15 | Discrimination - how it operates and impacts on all of us  |
| 12.00 | What does the legislation require?   |
| <hr/> |  |
| 12.45 | Lunch  |
| <hr/> |  |
| 1.30  | Talking the talk - the thorny issue of language  |
| 2.00  | Identifying projects to improve service delivery to the Black and minority ethnic communities  |
| <hr/> |  |
| 3.00  | Break  |
| <hr/> |  |
| 3.15  | Identifying projects to improve service delivery to the Black and minority ethnic communities (continued – including presentations to the group) |
| 4.00  | Next immediate steps   |
| 4.30  | Close  |

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