

News release from Voice4Change England
15 November 2011



For immediate release

Voice4Change England brings together OCS Strategic Partners to develop race equality support plans

With the loss of equalities organisations as Office for Civil Society (OCS) Strategic Partners in April 2011, Voice4Change England is bringing together current partners¹ to consider how the more general infrastructure organisations can provide support to, and meet the needs of, those with 'protected characteristics'.

Building on the Big Unfair Society campaign² in the spring, Voice4Change England wants to ensure that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and the organisations that support them continue to be heard at a strategic level. The organisation has secured support from Barrow Cadbury Trust to create a space for constructive and honest dialogue, learning and reflection to find ways of meeting the needs of BME organisations. Barrow Cadbury Trust has a focus on social justice and tackling inequalities.

The event will bring together Chief Executive Officers and Chairs from the Strategic Partners with key race equality stakeholders to discuss issues and develop consensus on how to engage Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations, in policy development and programme delivery. This is the first opportunity for the Office for Civil Society Strategic Partners to collectively discuss how their status as Strategic Partners can be used to address inequalities in the Big Society.

The residential event '**Mainstreaming equalities; rhetoric or reality?**' will be held at St George's House, Windsor, on 8th and 9th December 2011.

The aim of the event is to provide Office for Civil Society Strategic Partners with a better understanding of the needs of equality-led organisations, particularly BME organisations, and to increase understanding of the issues facing the BME voluntary and community sector in the context of the Big Society.

Elizabeth Balgobin, Chair of V4CE says:

“We are delighted that most of the Strategic Partners are keen to attend the event and look at ways that they can better support equality in their work. As a result of the event, it is hoped that current strategic partners will better be able to ‘fill the gap’ left in the portfolio of previous strategic partners regarding equalities perspectives. Specifically we hope the remaining strategic partners will reaffirm and reinvigorate their commitment to actively promoting race and other equality issues at this very difficult time. We hope this will take the form of agreeing a framework of co-operation between the 9 partners and Voice4Change England.”

Speakers at the event include:

- Dr Rob Berkeley, Runnymede Trust, Director
- Ratna Lachman, Just West Yorkshire, Director
- Sanjiv Lingayah, London School of Economics, PhD Researcher
- Vandna Gohil, Voice4Change England, Director
- Imran Khan, Imran Khan & Partners, solicitor for the family of Stephen Lawrence

Two of the Strategic Partners, NCVO and NAVCA, will also be sharing their perspectives and plans.

Participants will also be joined for an evening reception to continue the discussions with other interested stakeholders, including Gareth Thomas MP, Shadow Minister for Civil Society.

Papers have been commissioned in advance to provide context and stimulate debate. A follow-up report on the agreed way forward will be also produced.

Ends

Notes to editors:

About Voice4Change England

Voice4Change England (V4CE) is a national advocate for the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector (BME VCS). BME voluntary and community organisations (BME VCOs) are a crucial part of civil society that have emerged from and work for BME communities. By supporting the BME VCS we aim to improve the life outcomes for BME and other disadvantaged communities. As the only national membership organisation dedicated to the BME VCS we speak up to policymakers on the issues that matter to the sector; bring the sector together to share good practice; and develop the sector to better meet the needs of communities. Voice4Change England has been commissioned by the Office for Civil Society to provide advice to Government on the challenges that inequalities present to the Big Society agenda and how to address them and the opportunities for tackling inequalities.

Barrow Cadbury Trust

The Barrow Cadbury Trust is an independent, charitable foundation, committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised people in society.

The Trust provides grants to grassroots voluntary and community groups working in deprived communities in the UK. It also works with researchers, think tanks and government, often in partnership with other grant-makers, seeking to overcome the structural barriers to a more just and equal society. [www.barrowcadbury.org.uk]

1. OCS Strategic Partners who are attending :

1. Association of Charitable Foundations
2. Institute of Fundraising
3. Locality
4. NAVCA
5. NCVO
6. Social Entrepreneurship Partnership
7. Social Enterprise UK in partnership with Cooperatives UK
8. Volunteering England

2. For further information on the Big Unfair Society campaign, please see <http://www.voice4change-england.co.uk/content/voice4change-england-media-centre>

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