RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION OF THE COMMISSION ON INTEGRATION & COHESION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Race on the Agenda (ROTA) and London Voluntary Service Council welcome the opportunity to respond to the Commission on Integration & Cohesion consultation. We have collected evidence from our members, which we hope will provide useful information to the Commissioners. We would be grateful if the Commission provided us with updates during the consultation, and informed us of its final outcome.

Recommendation 1: A cohesive and integrated community is a feeling of connectedness and a celebration of individual differences. By continuing to define community in official geographic and governmental terms, we lose sight of the most important ingredients of a cohesive community: Respect for the individual, equality and dignity.

Recommendation 2: Tensions should not only be the concern of government and criminal justice agencies, but of the community at large. The VCS has played a significant role in relieving community tensions and in representing marginalised groups' interests. There are important lessons to be learned from these initiatives. The example of Southwark Hate Crime Mediation Centre should be replicated in areas known for racial tensions. This case study has proved the success of mediation in resolving conflicts where racism is a component of the dispute, in particular in preventing repeat victimisation. In addition, there is a need to share the very specific skills linked to mediation in the context of hate crimes and to move away from the assumption that mediation is a 'soft' option. With the support of Safer London Foundation, ROTA is carrying out a research project to measure the impact of restorative justice on hate crime and identify best practice examples. We suggest that the Commission takes these findings into consideration[1].

Recommendation 3: The VCS's role in relieving tensions in communities – particularly in relation to racial incidents, hate crime and inequalities – should be acknowledged and encouraged. We recommend that the Commission:
- Promotes awareness raising and better linkage between VCS services in the area of hate crime and racial offences.
- Works with VCS bodies that are already working with potential perpetrators of hate crime, especially organisations from the BAME sector.
- Encourages public services and criminal justice agencies to work more closely with VCS victim organisations. Community organisations are constantly highly rated sources of support for victims of hate crime. This is particularly true for victims from BAME and LGBT communities especially those who suffer multi-discrimination on the base of their race and sexuality.

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[1] [1] For more information on ROTA's project "Restoring relationships through restorative justice" contact theo@rota.org.uk

Recommendation 4: The Commission should not try to reinvent the wheel, but learn through the numerous pockets of good VCS examples how young people can be best supported to break through the biases and misunderstanding that encourage division, and move closer to the values of dignity and respect.

Recommendation 5: The human rights values underpinning the Human Rights Act (dignity, respect, equality, freedom) could serve as a set of standards that could encourage a sense of belonging and community. The CEHR could help bring about a human rights culture and the VCS should be engaged in this process, and empowered to continue its work.

Recommendation 6: The Commission will need to investigate how it can empower communities and support them in developing community buildings that can help them work more closely together and improve the way they feel about one another.

Recommendation 7: Newer communities and new arrivals in general face additional challenges that often prevent them from integrating. These are often due to their cultural differences, unemployment and homelessness. To tackle the issue, it is recommended that VCS-led programmes – such as the TMD – are replicated to encourage cohesion and break social, economic and cultural barriers that prevent new arrivals from integrating.

Recommendation 8: The Commission should advocate for support for skills development, through Learning and Skills Councils or other means for people who want to participate in their communities.

Recommendation 9: Even small community groups can contribute to the improvement of their local areas. This can be done either through Local Area Agreements or other schemes. However, there needs to be better support and linkage of these groups. Work that is already underway by the London ChangeUp sub-groups should be consulted. Second-tier organisations – such as ROTA and LVSC – could assist in identifying the challenges that frontline, small community groups face while delivering their work.

Recommendation 10: We would like to see a better usage of the Audit Commission's framework for race equality in the delivery of public services. This should be done in conjunction with the equality work carried out by the Healthcare Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Public services need to be audited externally through the regulators and auditors, but also internally through self-assessment frameworks that are based on the Race Relations Acts and the Human Rights Act.

Recommendation 11: Schools and educational institutions in general have an important role to play in creating a sense of belonging, a sense of community to

young people. Human rights and equality values should be promoted both as a cognitive process through the curriculum, but also as a skill-based approach, advancing a whole school ethos.

Recommendation 12: The Commission will need to build positive relationships with national and regional media to ensure that it effectively manages false reports that might increase community tensions. An award scheme celebrating good media practice would be one way to build such a relationship.

INTRODUCTION

This is a joint submission by Race On The Agenda (ROTA) and London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC).

ROTA is a social policy think-tank devoted to issues that affect Black, Asian and minority ethnic[2] (BAME) communities in London. We are committed to working towards achieving social justice and the elimination of discrimination and promoting diversity, human rights, equality of opportunity and best practice. We achieve these aims by informing London's strategic decision-makers about issues affecting the BAME voluntary sector and the communities it serves and by making government policy more accessible to London's BAME organisations. ROTA is also the home of MiNet (Minority Network), a government funded network for networks. MiNet serves London's BAME organisations by providing a voice in the development of regional policy. (www.rota.org.uk)

LVSC brings London voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations together to learn and share best practice and to create a co-ordinated voice to influence policy makers. We provide up-to-date information on management and funding, advice and support for VCS groups, a library and information service, practical publications and short courses for those working in the sector. LVSC also hosts and services networks including Third Sector Alliance, Voluntary Sector Forum, CVS Network, Second Tier Advisors Network and CASCADE (www.lvsc.org.uk)

ROTA and LVSC welcome the opportunity to respond to the Commission's consultation. A 'Call for Evidence' was circulated through our databases, which are comprised of front-line and infrastructure organisations mainly from the VCS. ROTA's members include both small and large BAME organisations, networks and forums. The LVSC database serves over 3000 small and large London VCS groups and networks. However, we believe that the Commission would have enabled second-tier organisations to consult more fully with their members (especially the small, under resourced front-line organisations), if they had followed good practice as outlined in the Compact between Government and the voluntary and community sector. The consultation period between 6 November 06 – 19 January 07 was shorter than the 12 weeks recommended, and included the holiday period. None the less, we appreciate the extension that the Commission has given us to present our evidence.

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[2] We use this term to refer to all groups who are discriminated against on the grounds of their race, culture, colour, nationality or religious practice. This definition includes but is not exclusive to those people of African, Asian, Caribbean, Irish, Jewish, Roma and South East Asian.

KEY QUESTIONS TO LOCAL BODIES

1. What does "cohesion" mean to you? What does "integration" mean to you? What might a community which is both integrated and cohesive look like?

First, it is critical that the Commission defines what "community" entails. The concept of community is often attached to a geographical location which excludes the importance of a community of interest to many such as BAME and refugee communities. Community is not a place. It is a perception, a feeling of connectedness both to other individual human beings and to a group. Integration and cohesion are the responsibility of all and thus it should not just focus on Black, Asian and minority groups or faith groups, but on all members of civil society.

To build an integrated and cohesive community we need to create bonds between human beings by celebrating their differences and embracing their backgrounds. This means that though we may live in the same neighbourhood, county or nation, be governed and served by the same institutions, we may still have no sense of connection with others and hence no sense that we are part of a unified group: of a community.

Building a sense of community has proved a challenge in London, one of the most diverse and multicultural, multilingual and multifaith cities in the world and unique in the UK context. Although BAME groups now form almost 40% of London's population[3], there is evidence to suggest that race equality is not always observed. Although recent evidence shows that there is more integration among London communities (GLA 2006), social bonds are not always properly forged or promoted. Individuals from BAME groups may feel "Londoners", but are often treated in a way that suggests they do not have the right to be here. This is particularly true for BAME elders, BAME young people, BAME women, BAME disabled people and BAME Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people. Therefore, we support the submission by the Women's Resource Centre (WRC) and the Consortium of LGBT VCS organisations.

Recommendation 1: A cohesive and integrated community is a feeling of connectedness and a celebration of individual differences. By continuing to define community in official geographic and governmental terms, we lose sight of the most important ingredients of a cohesive community: Respect for the individual, equality and dignity.

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[3] The 2003 Mid Year Estimates (MYE) showed that 7,387,900 people are living in London, with more than 3 million belonging to BAME groups. It is estimated that over the next ten years BAME communities will account for 80% of the increase in London's working age population.

2. What if any are the tensions between different groups in your local area? What do you think tends to cause these and what are your thoughts about how to resolve them? What role can local leaders play in tackling them? What are the organisations in your community which would help when an incident is leading to tensions or when conflict resolution is needed?

We will not use the term "local area" in the narrow sense. This is because we see community not as a place, but as a perception, a feeling of connectedness both to other individual human beings and to a group. We suggest that the Commission moves away from the geographical understanding of "community".

Both ROTA and LVSC are London focused charities, and therefore our response will cover only tensions in the London region. Admittedly, in some areas of London different communities work together well. For example, there have been occasions where various regeneration projects brought people together to share the same vision irrespective of their race or background. The Black Renewal and Regeneration Network's work in the Croydon area is one example.

However, this does not change the fact that often there is conflict in London, for example the election of British National Party councillors in Barking & Dagenham. Tensions are caused by a number of factors including: misunderstanding about each others' cultures, bad publicity and media coverage, religious extremism, poverty and unequal distribution of wealth, lack of education, fear of crime, pursuit of wealth, racism, unemployment, direct and indirect discrimination.

Tensions are not just a phenomenon between mainstream and BAME groups, but also a reality within groups. Particularly over the last five years, there has been a noticeable tension between newer communities especially Eastern Europeans, and the settled BAME and mainstream population. Black on black racism is also a reality.

Violence in all its forms is a matter of concern. However, violence that also corrupts our ability to function and live together as a society, and denies our humanity and value as human beings is a cause for even greater concern. Hate crime is one example. It is defined as any criminal offence motivated by the offender's hate against people because of their sex, race, religion, disability or sexual orientation. In 2005, the CPS prosecuted 4,660 defendants for racially aggravated offences, up by 29% from 3,616 for the previous year. The Metropolitan Police alone reported 11,799 incidents of racist and religious hate crime and 1,359 incidents of homophobic hate crime in the 12 months to January 2006.

The community must be prepared to become involved in the resolution of conflicts, as controlling and dealing with tensions cannot be delegated entirely to

the state and to professionals. Therefore, VCS groups are often vital in reducing such tensions. Diverse and vibrant civil society organisations provide various local activities, ranging from dance groups to community centres, from youth groups to older people's lunch clubs, from supplementary schools to mental health self-help groups. These groups bring local people together, build communities and support community cohesion. This is particularly important in London where so many different communities live.

For example, work by Barnet Council has explicitly linked community cohesion in this London borough with their work with VCS organisations (Building a better picture of community cohesion, Home Office, 2003). In addition, a report on the Thames Gateway regeneration by the Institute for Public Policy Research suggests that the Government should "give greater priority to community development and invest in increasing the capacity and skills of local authorities and the community and voluntary sector to address community cohesion issues" (Gateway People: the aspirations and attitudes of prospective and existing residents of the Thames Gateway, 2006).

Many VCS organisations provide information, support and representation to people in relation to their civil rights and responsibilities. These groups provide an important service, from representing those who have suffered discrimination to helping those threatened with homelessness. Many people suffer unexpected events and traumas and need advice agencies to help them with complex legislation and inefficient bureaucracies.

There are concerns among VCS organisations in London about a move away from funding and resourcing community-specific organisations. For example, the Big Lottery Fund Advice Plus programme does not cover smaller, specialist community-based advice providers who provide general advice but who are often not able to apply for the higher-level quality marks now being awarded by the Legal Services Commission. Again the lack of appropriate advice to specific communities could lead to their isolation, lack of involvement in generic services and an increase in tensions between different communities.

Case study No 1: Southwark Hate Crime Mediation Centre

This is a community based centre that trains and empower members of our community to address issues of anti-social behaviour and crime in partnership with the education authority, the police and local and national Government agencies. It provides a conflict resolution service that works in partnership with enforcement agencies. It is a service which is accessible to all members of the community in order to resolve conflict, reduce aggressive behaviour and assist the community to improve their quality of life, enabling them to feel safer; by reducing crime and the fear of crime. It enables those who are involved in anti-social behaviour and crime, take responsibility for their actions so that Victims feel the conflict has been dealt with in a constructive way. A 2003 evaluation of

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the project by Goldsmith University showed that it reduces incidents of repeat victimisation from 1 in 12 to 1 in 4. The project was also included as a best practice example in the 2004 Runnymede Trust "Preventing Racist Violence" handbook and the 2005 ODPM Toolkit on hate crimes.

Recommendation 2: Tensions should not only be the concern of government and criminal justice agencies but of the community at large. The VCS has played a significant role in relieving community tensions and in representing marginalised groups interests. There are important lessons to be learned from these initiatives. The example of Southwark Hate Crime Mediation Centre should be replicated in areas known for racial tensions. This case study has proved the success of mediation in resolving conflicts where racism is a component of the dispute, in particular in preventing repeat victimisation. In addition, there is a need to share the very specific skills linked to mediation in the context of hate crimes and to move away from the assumption that mediation is a 'soft' option. With the support of Safer London Foundation, ROTA is carrying out a research project to measure the impact of restorative justice on hate crime and identify best practice examples. We suggest that the Commission takes these findings into consideration[4].

Case study No 2: Enfield's Hate Crime Forum

Enfield's agencies and local groups joined forces to create the 'Hate Crime Forum', destined to become the leading group dealing with hate crime in Enfield. Taking in racial incidents, homophobic crime and disability abuse, Enfield's Hate Crime Forum expands the range of incidents that can be reported to the police, Enfield Council, Victim Support, Enfield Disability Action and Enfield LGBT. By reporting to third parties, such as these voluntary and community sector organisations, more people are encouraged to come forward to report hate crime. The Hate Crime Forum monitors incidents and offers support and advice to victims. The idea is to expand services to all victims of hate crime and is based on a model developed over ten years by Enfield's Racial Incidents Action Group (RIAG). This project saw the number of racial incidents reported increase by more than 70% between 2005 and 2006.

Recommendation 3: The VCS's role in relieving tensions in communities particularly in relation to racial incidents, hate crime and inequalities should be acknowledged and encouraged. We recommend that the Commission:
- Promotes awareness raising and better linkage between VCS services in the area of hate crime and racial offences.
- Works with VCS bodies that are already working with potential perpetrators of hate crime, especially from the BAME sector.

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- Encourages public services and criminal justice agencies to work more closely with VCS victim organisations. Community organisations are constantly highly rated sources of support for victims of hate crime. This is particularly true for victims from BAME and LGBT communities especially those who suffer multi-discrimination on the base of their race and sexuality.

3. **What activities help bring people together, build friendships and get a better understanding of people from a different background? Where do these activities take pace – at school or college, socially, at work or in the neighbourhood? What are the shared spaces in your community where people can come together? What celebrations are there of local traditions in your area?**

This question is particularly relevant to young people as information, education, awareness raising and constructive dialogue can have a significant impact on peoples' feeling of connectedness, particularly if begun at an early stage. This is also the age group that creates most tensions. For example, according to the Home Office, the typical hate offender is a young white male (most homophobic offenders are aged 16-20, and most race hate offenders under 30) who lives locally to the victim. According to a 1997 study carried out by Sibbit for the Home Office, factors of deprivation and youth inactivity can encourage racist responses in those who are frustrated or insecure in their physical and social settings.

However, "the views held by all kinds of perpetrators towards ethnic minorities are shared by the wider communities to which they belong" (Sibbit 1997). Therefore, this 'wider perpetrator community' needs to be confronted and understood if racist harassment is to be reduced

Numerous projects run by the VCS have proved to have a significant impact on the way young people think about each other, making them see what unites them rather than what divides them. Some examples are:

Case study No 3: The Impetus award scheme

Impetus is an award scheme for young people in schools or other community groups, which aims to develop a culture of shared ethical values and human rights across the UK. Certificates are awarded to every project. It is supported by the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Citizenship Foundation, and it is run by the Institute for Global Ethics. This is a registered UK charity whose vision is "a world where shared moral values shape relationships, determine decisions, and guide actions for every individual, institution, and nation". The Institute aims to promote ethical behaviour in individuals, institutions, and nations through research, public discourse, and practical action. A 2002 evaluation of the programme showed that participation had increased the pupils' self-esteem and

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personal confidence. They acquired skills, including the development of social, communication, vocational and creative skills. There was a s strong involvement in active citizenship, which had a significant bearing on their local communities and environment. In some cases where projects had involved working with communities outside the school, pupils felt that they had benefited from meeting adults, especially those involved with the Local Voluntary Panels. The Award also flagged up rights and responsibilities within the schools through projects that emphasised school improvement over school effectiveness and attainment over achievement. The projects presented for the Award had helped to build social relationships across and within peer age groups and with teachers and other adults. A great strength of all the programmes surveyed was that they allowed pupils to deal with authentic social and organisational issues. It gave pupils a voice and saw them as active citizens operating within an authentic culture of youth.

Case study No 4: The Building Bridges Project

The Building Bridges Project (BBP) is carried out by young people (16-25), and is hosted and managed by Race on the Agenda (ROTA) and two other VCS organisations. BBP mentors and trains a group of young BAME and White British people (16-25 years old) to conduct fieldwork with young BAME and White British Londoners who live in deprived London areas high in gun/ knife crime. BPP aims to raise the group's awareness of ethics and human rights (i.e. respect, dignity, fairness, equality) and engage its members in research, diverting them from harmful activities. BBP also gives both of these two young groups a voice in the policymaking of an issue that involves them and their lives. While doing so, the young people involved : (a) conduct fieldwork with qualitative methodologies (b) receive human rights training (c) receive ethical fitness training (d) learn how to develop their thoughts in a written format (final report) (e) present their work in an audience and (f) produce a short film recording their findings. Ultimately, BBP helps all young participants to see things from a new perspective, promoting diversity, respect and community cohesion.

Case study No 5: Independent Academic Research Studies

Independent Academic Research Studies (IARS) is a scheme that was set up by a group of young academics to develop social science research capacity through support for researchers in the early stages of their careers. IARS is a London-based charity that works with its members to prevent and combat antisocial behaviour and violence in all its forms and promote equality, human rights, respect and community cohesion. IARS is a voluntary organisation that is values driven, motivated by the desire to further social purposes. They aim to provide free policy and research support and expertise to their voluntary and community sector partners as well as public and private organizations to improve the academic and practical knowledge in these fields. They hope to advance a

restorative ethos by implementing targeted actions that promote rejection of violence and encourage attitude change towards victims

Recommendation 4: The Commission should not try to reinvent the wheel but learn through the numerous pockets of good VCS examples how young people can be best supported to break through the biases and misunderstanding that encourage division, and move closer to the values of dignity and respect.

Furthermore, in consultations with London VCS groups, ROTA and LVSC noted the importance of equalities groups[5] to the effective integration of communities. Such groups enable the voice of groups to be heard, provide recognition of these groups to be included in service delivery planning and provide more choice in the range of services provided. Funding and supporting diverse community organisations does not mean that these groups will not work together, but can enable diverse communities to come together around common themes and issues and provides a unique setting for conflicts between communities to be resolved. Equalities groups are about building the capacity of individuals and offering support to ensure that people can engage with broader issues at a later date.

A recent report from the London Regional Consortium ChangeUp Equalities and Human Rights sub-group, itself a partnership of different equalities groups, recommends a human rights model with increased partnership working between a range of different organisations, including those associated with particular equalities issues. An example is the work Stonewall has done with different faith groups to address homophobic attitudes. Rather than segregation, this approach has been shown to produce vibrant equalities groups working in partnership with each other and the mainstream.

Case study No 6: Interlink Foundation

Interlink Foundation is based in the north of the London Borough of Hackney, supporting the needs of Charedi (Orthodox Jewish) organisations. This part of Hackney has the highest concentration of Charedi Jews anywhere in Europe and also houses a sizeable religious Muslim community.

The two faith groups have developed an excellent relationship over the years, even in times of political tension in the Middle East and have worked together at a local level on common issues such as ritual slaughter, faith schools, funding and health.

Interlink started to develop its working relationship with the North London Muslim Housing Association and North London Muslim Community Centre in 2001 when

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[5] By equalities groups we mean those that support specific communities including Black and Minority Ethnic and Refugees, disability organisations, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and transgender, youth, older people, women's and faith organisations.

leading a Sure Start partnership in Stamford Hill, Hackney. The Muslim community, in the words of one of their leaders "were encouraged by Interlink to take the leap and build our capacity". Interlink gave them the opportunity to engage in the local Sure Start programme and they have now moved on to configure their own highly successful Children's Centre to meet the needs of specific groups who otherwise would have been left out.

All this has led to good partnership working at the organisational level and warm community relations at the community and individual levels.

Celebrations of local traditions have been another way in which both the public and VCS have worked together to promote community cohesion. Such celebrations are often useful in increasing understanding of different cultures and bringing communities together. It is important that the wider community is involved from the beginning to ensure partnership in the organisation and delivery of such celebrations.

Case study No 7: Camden Bangladesh Mela

Camden Bangladesh Mela started in 1992 at the Calthorpe Project, a community garden in King's Cross, as a local community event. It has now developed to a borough / London wide festival attracting up to 10 000 people. The Mela is a forum to showcase talents, skills, creativity and innovations and brings the whole of Camden together in celebration.

The Mela is co-ordinated by the Mela Planning Committee consisting of local people and workers from different organisations in Camden. Building on the experience of working for the local community, the Mela Committee works to engage and involve the Bangladeshi community in Camden to promote and share Bangladeshi culture to the wider community. It provides young British-Bangladeshis with the opportunity to experience, appreciate and understand Bangladeshi arts and culture, as well as access these through involvement and participation in the event. This celebration of traditional culture uses the arts to challenge the negative perceptions of Bangladesh, promoting diversity and respect.

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4. **What schemes in your community build a sense of belonging to your neighbourhood or community? What schemes in your community try to build or teach a set of values or "ground rules" about how to live together? What schemes to address poverty, crime and anti-social behaviour in your local area have improved how people feel about one another?**

ROTA and LVSC believe that to encourage a sense of belonging and a sense of community, individuals need to have a set of common values. This set cannot be

based on individual moral codes or paradigms that apply only to certain members of a community. We believe that the values underlying the Human Rights Act can serve this role. We are referring to the core human rights values of dignity, respect, equality and fairness to which everybody can subscribe. These values can become the core ingredients of a human rights culture in the UK.

In 1999, the then Home Secretary Jack Straw said: "Culture is one of those words that gets used to mean a whole of different things – and sometimes nothing at all. What do we mean when we talk of building a culture of rights and responsibilities in the UK? These aren't empty words or mere jargon. It's what we want the whole public services in this country to move towards" (Straw, 1999). He then explained that 'culture' encompasses the habits of mind, the intellectual reflexes and the professional sensibilities, which are historically ingrained and typical of the behaviour of a particular group of people.The Human Rights Act was introduced in the hope of gradually contributing to development of a new framework where individuals' human rights are better protected and respected.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) went a step further by identifying the elements, which they believe, comprise a culture of human rights. In particular, they said that this culture has two dimensions – institutional and ethical. "So far as the former is concerned, it requires that human rights should shape the goals, structures, and practices of our public bodies. In their decision making and their service delivery, schools, hospitals, workplaces and other organs and agencies of the state should ensure full respect for the rights of those involved… Achieving that requires public authorities to understand their obligations not only to avoid violating the rights of those in their care, or whom they serve, but also to have regard to their wider and more positive duty to secure everyone the rights and freedoms which the Human Rights Act and the other instruments define" (JCHR 2002/3).

More importantly, the Committee said, to make a culture of human rights a reality, individuals need "to understand what their rights are, and [be] able to seek advice, assistance, redress and protection if they believe that their rights have been violated or are threatened with violation. It also requires that they understand their responsibilities for upholding those rights in their dealings with others". So far as the moral or personal dimension is concerned, "a culture of human rights could be characterised as having three components:
- First, a sense of entitlement. Citizens enjoy certain rights as an affirmation of their equal dignity and worth, and not as a contingent gift of the state.
- Second, a sense of personal responsibility. The rights of one person can easily impinge on the rights of another and each must therefore exercise his or her rights with care.
- Third, a sense of social obligation. The rights of one person can require positive obligations on the part of another and, in addition, a fair balance will frequently have to be struck between individual rights and the needs of a democratic society and the wider public interest" (JCHR, 2002/3).

So, how would we know when a human rights culture has been successfully created? Maybe when there will be a "widely-shared sense of entitlement to these rights, of personal responsibility and of respect for the rights of others, and when this influences all our institutional policies and practices. This would help create a more humane society, a more responsive government and better public services, and could help to deepen and widen democracy by increasing the sense amongst individual men and women that they have a stake in the way in which they are governed" (JCHR 2002).

ROTA and LVSC believe that a culture of respect for human rights can be created and successfully enjoyed through the parallel engagement of the following three mechanisms:

i. the letter of the law as this appears in the clauses of the Human Rights Act and other domestic and international human rights and equality Acts/ treaties;

ii. the jurisprudence of both the European Court of Human Rights and domestic courts. It is through their case law that the principles enshrined by the Convention/Act are interpreted in practical terms;

iii. a pattern of a human rights friendly behaviour that is created not on a piecemeal basis or because of fears caused by past litigation, but through an automatic triggering of ethical standards that reflect the principles and spirit of the Act. Professor Francesca Klug sees this as a framework "which emphasises tolerance, privacy and autonomy on the one hand, and concern for the rights of others and the needs of the wider community on the other" (Klug, 2000).

Case study No 8: ROTA, LVSC, BIHR, LCF Commission for Equality and Human Rights awareness raising project

ROTA and LVSC along with two other partners from the VCS (British Institute of Human Rights and London Civic Forum) are carrying out an awareness raising and consultation project on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). The project includes events and consultations with London's VCS. Some preliminary findings include:

- The promised human rights culture has not yet materialised.
- There is low awareness among the VCS about human rights, the Human Rights Act and the CEHR. This needs to be addressed through education programmes and the CEHR's work.
- The CEHR could help bring about a culture of respect and a sense of community.
- The CEHR will need to work closely with the VCS, especially organisations working within the equality strands and human rights in order to raise awareness and maximise its effectiveness.

Recommendation 5: The human rights values underpinning the Human Rights Act (dignity, respect, equality, freedom) could serve as a set of standards that could encourage a sense of belonging and community. The CEHR could help bring about a human rights culture and the VCS should be engaged in this process, and empowered to continue its work.

Furthermore, creating a sense of belonging or community requires people to have some sense of ownership over their area. They need to feel they have sufficient funds, influence over local services and help from others to maintain and develop the area in the ways they want. There are many examples where community groups have involved those who were previously vandalising an area, in a new building or clean up project, with a reduction in subsequent vandalism.

Having community buildings or meeting places is often important in developing a sense of belonging. A report by Paul Marriott in 1997 "Forgotten resources: the role of community buildings in strengthening local communities" estimated that 4.4 million people used England and Wales' 18 800 community buildings at least once a week. This report suggested that greater investment in community buildings could considerably enhance community links. The ODPM's 2006 report on the ownership of community assets is also another example.

Recommendation 6: The Commission will need to investigate how it can empower communities and support them in developing community buildings that can help them work more closely together and improve the way they feel about one another.

5. **What schemes in your community help new people when they arrive? What schemes in your community aim to counteract people's negative perceptions of and attitudes to people from different backgrounds? In what ways can communities steer people away from extremism?**

Following riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, many recommendations were made in the Cantle Report (2001) on how to counteract people's negative perceptions and attitudes to people from different backgrounds. This present consultation reflects the national debate that report called for.

However, the issue of faith schools is not part of the remit of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. The Cantle Report recommended that at least 25% of places in single-faith schools should be given to children of alternative backgrounds, but this recommendation has been dropped from recent legislation, to be replaced by a voluntary agreement with faith groups. The consultation about the establishment of the Commission, with the opportunity it provided for further debate with both faith and non-faith groups, should not have limited discussion on this key issue, particularly in light of research that has found

racism to be more prevalent in schools with a less culturally mixed student population (Roger Green & Rebecca Pinto, Researching Community Cohesion, ARVAC).

The Cantle report also highlighted the "less than positive" role played by the local media and extremist political groups in ratchetting up racial tension and the failure of leadership among local councillors and other public servants to promote diversity as a positive value. The report notes that people felt more involved with their community where councils took a stand against racism, quickly tackling issues such as racist graffiti and involving VCS groups in decisions about funding. All these issues need to be addressed by the Commission if it is to reduce negative perceptions of people from different backgrounds.

Newer communities – such as those from Somalia and Eastern Europe – face serious integration issues that are not only due to their different backgrounds and culture, but also to unemployment and often homelessness. Negative media coverage promotes the false impression that new arrivals "steal" jobs and benefits that are originally allocated to the locals. This creates tensions and often hatred. Positive promotional work, such as the Mayor of London's Press Awards, which recognise good practice in coverage of asylum issues need to be built on and replicated.

Case study No 9: Tackling Multiple Disadvantage EQUAL DP

The 'Tackling Multiple Disadvantage in London by Improving Employability' (TMD) programme is run through a cross-sector partnership led by the charity Off the Streets and Into Work (OSW). The core partners include Cardboard Citizens, Connection at St Martin's, Depaul Trust, Greater London Authority, Groundswell UK, Prospect Us, Race on the Agenda, St Mungo's and Thames Reach Bondway. The programme is funded by Equal and is replicated in other European cities.

The TMD programme targets individuals facing multiple disadvantage in the labour market who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, in temporary accommodation, or have been recently resettled. Running until the end of 2007, it intends to test routes out of economic inactivity and worklessness. It will provide innovative and individual options, in a city with current and projected skills shortages, but where there is less incentive for those on benefits to work than anywhere else in the country, and where mainstream measures have had the least impact. There is special emphasis on BAME homeless groups and socially excluded people particularly from newer communities. The project is being evaluated by external professionals and the findings will be presented in a conference this summer.

Recommendation 7: Newer communities and new arrivals in general face additional challenges that often prevent them from integrating. These are often

due to their cultural differences, unemployment and homelessness. To tackle the issue, it is recommended that VCS led programmes such as the TMD are replicated to encourage cohesion and break social, economic and cultural barriers that prevent new arrivals from integrating.

6. What schemes in your area aim to get people involved in local decision-making? What role do representative organisations for communities have in building communities in your area? How are you encouraging the formation of such organisations? How are people encouraged to get involved in your local community to make a difference?

Building communities requires traditional community development skills. These have been undervalued in recent years and there are a lack of opportunities for training and qualifications in community development and participation. This has been exacerbated by government emphasis on skills training for employment and for the younger age groups, which has been a barrier for colleges and training providers wishing to offer qualifications to older people who want to be active in their community. The government should invest in community participation skills, through Learning and Skills Councils funding or other specific funding sources.

The National Community Forum's report "Removing the Barriers to Community Participation" (2006) recommends that local and central government should "invest in training in community participation skills for community members" and that "a community participation qualification should be open to community activists to improve their personal development opportunities". The Home Office Civil Renewal Unit's report in 2004 "Firm Foundations" also recommends promoting "learning for community development workers and their managers (in Government Offices and local authorities) based on National Occupational Standards for Community Development".

Case study No 10: London ChangeUp research into community development work learning in London

Over the past few years, the Government has included a community engagement aspect within many of its policies. This has led to a growth in jobs requiring community development work skills and knowledge. The consortium charged with delivering London ChangeUp wanted to establish that there was sufficient community development training in London to meet these demands, so commissioned a mapping project. The key findings were:
-- There was a poor understanding of what community development work was. Although many respondents said they were undertaking community development, they were only increasing individual skills or improving a group's organisation. There were only a few organisations in London that were working with communities to determine their agendas and to take action to meet those needs.

-- At the sub-regional level only the East London sub-region has a good range of programmes at different levels and with different kinds of learning.
There were very few community development taster type sessions being offered to people in the community.
-- The National Open College Network Community Development award is only available through Tower Hamlets, Greenwich and Newham Community Colleges. There are no NVQ assessment centres for community development within London.
-- There is little work-based learning, although in East London there are mentoring schemes for residents and tenants and a number of support groups.
Very few organisations had heard of, or knew about, occupational standards or the Community Development Work National Occupational Standards, but most were interested to find out more about them and their applications.

Recommendation 8: The Commission should advocate for support for skills development, through Learning and Skills Councils or other means for people who want to participate in their communities.

Case study No 11: The London Regional Consortium's ChangeUp Neighbourhoods sub-group

The London Regional Consortium's neighbourhood sub-group is composed of various London VCS organisation and is headed by the Scarman Trust. One of its objectives is to look at how small community groups in London, including BAME bodies, can be better linked up and supported to deliver their work. The sub-group aims to ensure that the concerns of communities of interest are not lost in the devolution to neighbourhoods. The group believes that small community groups and networks, whether legally formatted or not, can contribute to the development of their local areas especially in relation to the delivery of Local Area Agreements (LAAs). The group aims to develop strategies to enhance community involvement in LAAs; visit and be proactive in London boroughs and help communities get engaged and their voices heard.

In addition, the development of skills for civic engagement needs to be supported. Statutory sector organisations with an interest in increasing civic engagement have been shown to be unsuccessful, as evidenced by recent electoral turnouts, and new approaches are required. Further work needs to be done to assess the different needs, to establish gaps and to ensure effective and appropriate provision. Civic skills are often not part of the standard capacity building package provided to VCS organisations and there has been a decline in the membership of organisations where these skills might have been developed in the past, such as trade unions and political parties. London Civic Forum has undertaken research to establish where and how today's active citizens have

gained their skills and have identified a lack of provision to support the extension of these skills to other Londoners.

Recommendation 9: Even small community groups can contribute to the improvement of their local areas. This can be done either through Local Area Agreements or other schemes. However, there needs to be better support and linkage of these groups. Work that is already underway by the London ChangeUp sub-groups should be consulted. Second tier organisations such as ROTA and LVSC could assist in identifying the challenges that frontline, small community groups face while delivering their work.

7. **What role do local schools, workplaces and faith groups have in building communities in your area? What role do local authorities, public services and charities have in building communities in your area? How can the media help to build communities?**

Using traditional community development skills, local schools, workplaces, faith groups, local authorities, public services and charities can all have an impact on building communities in an area. There is considerable evidence that this is best done in partnership, thorough the empowerment of communities themselves and working with VCS groups that have already developed trust and relationships in the area, as discussed in the previously mentioned report from Barnet. The involvement of specific equalities groups or community-specific organisations working within this partnership setting ensures that the voices of minority groups are included and that they feel their concerns are acted upon.

Case study No 12: Community Cohesion in West London

Concerned residents in Brooke Avenue, South Harrow contacted Harrow Council when groups of men began to gather at the end of the street for several hours a day. Some residents did not understand why the groups were constantly there, and found their presence threatening.

Local police started to monitor activity in the area, and soon established that men were gathering in numbers to visit a nearby shop to purchase and chew Khat, a legal substance that can produce a temporary "high". This is a social pastime in Somalia, akin to drinking alcohol in the UK.

At first owners of the building denied the activity was going on, and progress was only made when representatives from the local Harrow Association of Somali Volunteer Organisations (HASVO) got involved, offering to act as mediators.

Harrow Council and police set up a meeting for Brook Avenue residents, Somali community representatives and local traders. HASVO was able to reassure the owners of the building that the council and police were coming to talk to them,

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but were not looking to threaten or alienate anyone. Feedback from the meeting was that matters had improved significantly and that a better understanding of each other is beginning to result in greater tolerance on all sides.

ROTA and LVSC believe that the regulators and auditors have an important role to play in ensuring that public services and local authorities deliver their services within the human rights and equalities frameworks. For example, the Audit Commission has developed a plan to ensure that Local Authorities respect and promote the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. In their report "The journey to race equality", the Commission says: "People from black and minority ethnic communities experience multiple inequalities: 70% live in the 88 most deprived neighbourhoods of the UK and they are more likely to be poor, with lower incomes spread across larger household sizes. They also continue to experience discrimination, stereotyping and racism … Race equality is critical to delivering good-quality public services and better quality of life for everyone. The drive towards citizen-focused delivery recognises that the needs of individuals vary according to their particular circumstances" (Audit Commission 2004).

Recommendation 10: We would like to see a better usage of the Audit Commission's framework for race equality in the delivery of public services. This should be done in conjunction with the equality work carried out by the Healthcare Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Public services need to be audited externally through the regulators and auditors but also internally through self-assessment frameworks that are based on the Race Relations Acts and the Human Rights Act.

Recommendation 11: Schools and educational institutions in general have an important role to play in creating a sense of belonging, a sense of community to young people. Human rights and equality values can be promoted both as a cognitive process through the curriculum but also as skill based approached advancing a whole school ethos.

The media is one of the critical pieces of this jigsaw. In many cases, it can encourage scare-mongering, perpetuate myths and deepen tensions between communities. Recently many national media headlines have been misleading about the consequences of passing the Human Rights Act in the UK. For example, the case of Anthony Rice, a convicted rapist, who murdered a woman while released on life licence by his Parole Board, was blamed on the Human Rights Act. Actually it was the result of a series of management and administrative failings. This led some national papers to dub the Act a "Charter for Criminals" (Defending Human Rights, British Institute of Human Rights, 2006). When there is such misreporting around equalities and human rights issues, there will always by calls by some for abolition of some of the safeguards that ensure that everyone in this country is treated equally.

Some of the misinterpretation, misunderstanding and misinformation can be addressed by using local community media, such as community magazines and radio. It is vital that local people are involved in creating, developing and marketing this type of initiative.

Case study No 13: Camden Central Community Radio

Camden Central Radio is a collective made up of individuals and community groups from the Camden Central area. All those engaged in it are committed and enthusiastic about using community radio as a medium for urban regeneration. The radio is lively and informative and addresses issues of concern in the local area. It includes spoken word and music. It provides a forum for community building across the diversities of age, race, faith, gender and culture and encourages creative activity on a local level. There are many beneficial off-shoots from the project. These include developing skills and employability, increased community cohesion, self-expression (especially for young people), a sense of community, knowing about available services and entertainment.

Negative media coverage can also promote the false impression that new arrivals "steal" jobs and benefits that are originally allocated to the locals. This creates tensions and often hatred. Positive promotional work, such as the Mayor of London's Press Awards, which recognise good practice in coverage of asylum issues need to be built on and replicated

Recommendation 12: The Commission will need to build positive relationships with national and regional media to ensure that it effectively manages false reports that might increase community tensions. An award scheme celebrating good media practice would be one way to build such a relationship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[6] For a copy of these documents contact theo@rota.org.uk or visit www.rota.org.uk