

## **Working Together for Better Social Inclusion**

GRASSROOTS VOICES, SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY AND 2010

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# **EAST MIDLANDS SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY FORUM**

**Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup> 2009**  
**Leicester YMCA**



## First meeting of the East Midlands Social Inclusion Policy Forum

Over 40 people from across the region, from different sectors, and including people with experience of exclusion, attended the first meeting of the Forum with the shared interest of wanting to improve social inclusion in the region.

The Social Inclusion Policy Forum is a policy partnership initiative of One East Midlands. Its proposed aim is to help improve policy, processes and practice that operate at the regional level around social inclusion programmes. There is awareness that these affect local levels, and that national and European decisions impact on how the region operates. The Forum would therefore usefully engage at all these levels.

It was felt essential that the Forum involve people from across all sectors but with an especially strong involvement of people and their organisations with "grassroots" experience of problems of exclusion. Given that 2010 is designated as the European Year against poverty and exclusion, it was felt that this would act as a focus and spur for the Forum.

One East Midlands agreed at their 2008 AGM to support the development of a regional Social Inclusion Policy Forum and subsequently Laurie Moran, Chief Executive of CEFET, was elected VCS Social Inclusion Policy Champion. CEFET has undertaken the support of a Grassroots network across the region to feed into regional planning and into shaping the work of the Forum. It has been meeting locally this year and had its first chance to meet regionally on June 9<sup>th</sup>, when participants suggested the key questions for this first meeting of the Forum.

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### Outline of the Meeting

#### Morning – Perspectives on Social Exclusion

Laurie Moran, SIPC, opened the meeting by explaining the background context and motivation for the Forum and was followed by 3 speakers giving a short talk from different perspectives on social exclusion.

#### Equalities and Diversity perspective by Jamilah Shah of the Learning and Skills Council.

Jamilah talked about some of the challenges for the LSC thrown up by the economic crisis, their continued strengthening of inclusion, equality and diversity as central to their work, and their commitment to working collaboratively, including helping CEFET and the Forum to achieve the aims of this initiative.

#### Social Cohesion perspective by Lee Harrison of the Leicester City Council Executive Team.

Lee spoke to us about the great diversity of people in Leicester and the challenges the city's population and the local authority face around social cohesion in what is a poor city that is developing a strong shared approach to change.

#### Combating poverty and European perspective by Katherine Duffy of the European Anti Poverty Network.

Katherine's talk was wide-ranging, covering some interesting theory about poverty and social exclusion, startling evidence from European research of the UK's poverty; and updates on European processes to combat poverty and social exclusion, 2010 - European Year Against Poverty, and UK plans for marking the year.

Morning discussions focused on understanding exclusion and approaches to achieving inclusion.

#### Afternoon – Action for Inclusion

In the afternoon, two people from the grassroots network spoke and Laurie Moran gave feedback from the network meetings. The grassroots contributors spoke of their experience of social exclusion and of successful local activity.

Lubna Alvi from Kamyabi Community project in Nottingham related the exciting potential of social enterprises developed by vulnerable women to overcome their exclusion and how crucial appropriate funding was to enable this.

Judith Higgins, a community activist from the Derbyshire Peak District talked about the great potential in communities where severe poverty was hidden, and the effect of losing groups and resources that nurture potential.

Laurie Moran of CEFET reported on views & issues coming from local & regional grassroots network meetings.

Afternoon discussions covered next steps to social inclusion as 2010 approaches & the potential role of the Forum.

A report of the meeting follows, starting with a synthesis of the discussion. Our summary of the speakers' contributions are included here, and some complete speakers' notes or slides are on the CEFET website.

## Round Table Discussion: Perspectives on Social Exclusion

### Can there be a unified understanding of Exclusion?

Although many felt it might be possible to develop a single, although complex, definition of exclusion the general feeling was that it was unnecessary. The important thing to stress is that exclusion is a category that cannot just be broken up into smaller categories. "There can be a unified understanding of social exclusion, there is no universal solution" (*Table 1*)

"Exclusion" contains both psychological and relational aspects, and in many senses was self defined, and cannot usually be replaced by a demographically defined group of people. There were exceptions to this, where a group is – by virtue of their definition – excluded. The PSA 16 target groups (Care leavers; Offenders under probation supervision; Adults receiving secondary mental health services; Adults with learning disabilities) are an exact example of this. They are not typical of the excluded, though, in most people's eyes.

### What do we mean by exclusion / inclusion?

This above being so, the general view in the meeting is that Exclusion ought to be dealt with in a unified way in its own right, rather than being broken up by target groups or by being subsumed under other perspectives: jobs and skills; community cohesion; equalities... These perspectives are important but they should be considered as aspects of the problem of exclusion not the other way round.

### What's the best approach to achieving inclusion?

In line with the above: there is not a single answer, but we could develop a strategy, or – more precisely – a *methodology* that recognised that a variety of small scale local actions could be collected under an umbrella that supported that variety and self-definition of the excluded.

In this context many speakers appealed for "joining-up" of initiatives and a unification of funds, as so many excluded groups are – temporarily – picked up by an initiative or funding stream and then let go again. In many cases this actually exacerbates the problems of exclusion and poverty.

In many cases exclusion is best tackled at a community level, rather than through individual-focused approaches. "Statutory programmes tend to target services at individuals. However this doesn't address the wider environmental and social circumstances that person is experiencing." (*Table 5*)

### How do we get the voices of excluded people involved?

"People suffering exclusion aren't 'hard-to-reach' - it's just that the approaches and mechanisms aren't the right ones..." (*Table 6*) This quotation seems to capture the consensus on this issue. With a little resource and sympathetic and experienced co-ordination, it is easy to engage the excluded and to distill issues and approaches that could be used to shape action. Once that cycle has proved successful, trust and participation spiral, for as long as the engagement can be seen to effect change.

## Round Table Discussion: Action for Inclusion

### As we head towards 2010, what are the next steps towards achieving better social inclusion?

The overwhelming message from discussions on this issue was to give effective voice to excluded people themselves in shaping actions. Consultation is not enough – there needs to be a channel for the *bottom* to effectively change the *top*, at the design stage.

Stripping out the layers and complexity of systems would help this, as could a forum for effective listening.

### What's the scope for the Forum to help shape a better direction?

There was some discussion on the question of whether the Policy Forum should aim to be the voice of the excluded to practitioners or policy makers, or should aim to be the place where the excluded, practitioners and policy makers formally listen to each other and jointly influence change.

Most people thought the latter, as the Grass Roots Network already stands to unify and articulate the view of excluded people and their own organisations. The general view was that the Forum should try to be a genuine partnership of all relevant interests and try to agree joint strategy.

Several felt that a formal *Terms of Reference* for the Forum would be helpful in ensuring all sides contributed and gave the Forum the weight it deserved (following partly on the PSA sounding board example). A snappier name for the Forum would work better.

A Forum discussion paper, formally developing the ideas aired at the first meeting (and reported here) might also be helpful to sharpen thinking at the Forum and in 2010.

### What do we want to achieve for EU 2010 year against poverty and exclusion?

Generally the 3 headline aims were enthusiastically supported:

**POVERTY AWARENESS    GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION    LASTING LEGACY**

And participants felt we should endorse these and organise our activity in line with them.

It is clear, however, that the specific budget for 2010 activity is far too small to actually do work to affect Inclusion or combat poverty. Its aim, and the purpose we want to see it used for, is to raise the profile of the issues and bend larger funding streams and make the case for new streams to develop longer-term, bottom-up structured interventions against exclusion.

In this context one speaker suggested "tithing" (i.e. 10% slicing) programmes (e.g. skills programmes) to sustained, long term, engagement of those that are not engaged. Others suggested reforming commissioning for inclusion work to a model that took account of the appropriate methods and delivery bodies that could be successful.

In addition many considered the grass-roots involvement and legacy aspects of the year to be intertwined. An appropriate legacy would be to have the voices of the excluded both heard and acted on in scoping action that was aimed at them. This effective listening would need to be guaranteed and resourced, but would be good value as it would make interventions much more effective.

## Perspectives on Exclusion - Morning Speakers

### An Equalities and Diversity perspective

from the Learning and Skills Council given by Jamilah Shah.

Jamilah talked from an Equalities and Diversity perspective about some of the challenges for the LSC thrown up by the economic crisis, their continued strengthening of inclusion, equality and diversity as central to their work, and their commitment to working collaboratively, including helping CEFET & the SIPF to achieve the aims of this initiative.

From the outset, the LSC saw promoting inclusion, equality and diversity as being at the heart of their responsibilities with their work informed by their national Single Equality Scheme; "As we move towards the challenges set out in the Leitch review, our strategy is designed to place inclusion, equality and diversity at the heart of what we do so that we develop a system in which all can benefit and no-one is excluded". They are promoting equality of opportunity by outreach, by improving access to good, diverse experiences of learning and measures of success.

The effects of the economic downturn are still being felt in the region, but there are signs that planning for recruitment (especially in retail) is starting to increase, however, unemployment continues to rise (for example, since May 2008 Leicestershire claimant count has increased by 96.8% and Northampton by 130%). It was noted however that the number of incapacity benefits claimants is continuing to decrease (7% drop) spurred by the new Employment and Support Allowances (ESA) benefit, Pathways to Work and initiatives such as Skills for Jobs. Migrant workers numbers are decreasing in the region.

The economic downturn is also having an effect on delivery of LSC funded programmes with employment outputs. Skills for Jobs is looking at volunteering and work experience as interim measures. Train to Gain is prioritising support to tackle threats of redundancy, whilst Skills Pledge, LAA work and Apprenticeships are all struggling. Making the JCP Next Steps programme work flexibly and effectively to meet people's needs is a major priority and challenge in the region.

There is still a strong link between levels of deprivation, with issues of exclusion, and underachievement of young people. The current 14-19 reform programme is expected to have an impact on this situation as will the proposed changes in the Single Equality Bill with new duties to reduce socio-economic inequalities, age discrimination in services banned, and extension of equality duties reflected in providers' contracts.

The LSC contributes to achieving the Public Service Agreement targets for PSA 16 – number of socially excluded adults (chiefly care leavers, offenders, those receiving secondary mental health services and those with a learning disability) in settled accommodation and employment, education and training; and PSA 15 - addressing the disadvantages that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It has supported the development of Emshed, the new East Midlands Strategic Hub for Equality & Diversity.

Given the challenges noted above and those of reduced public spending, and changes in their organisation and the future arrangements for learning and skills, the LSC see working together, a collective approach, as necessary to achieve their aim of more-than-meeting their Equalities duties.

### A Social Cohesion Perspective on Social Exclusion

by Lee Harrison of the Leicester City Council Executive Team.

Lee spoke to us about the ethnic mix in Leicester and the potential and challenges the city's population and the local authority face around social cohesion. Leicester, in the centre of the UK, is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest city with a population of 300,000, nearly half of whom have an ethnic minority background. 60% are white, nearly 30% Indian and the remainder constitute many different ethnic origins and cultures. The City Council sees Community Cohesion as an issue across all of the community. Leicester is a poor city, with deprivation and poverty on both outer estates and

amongst newly arrived communities. Two-thirds of the population can't read or write English easily, there are high levels of unemployment and poor health.

Lee outlined the needs and barriers involved in cultural adjustment that affect social cohesion like language barriers, trauma of some personal histories, health issues, and the need for advice, advocacy and appropriate approaches across education and employment systems.

Leicester City Council sets out to understand the communities living in the city by finding out who they are and what they need, anticipating tensions, working with the media, and understanding perceptions and myths. They are building trust through cross community activities and special projects to bring young people together. They are working with mainstream services and community leaders to build capacity and strengthen understanding, cohesion and inclusion.

Finally, Lee pointed out that to succeed this social cohesion work requires political will and leadership. It is complex, challenging and changing; affected by new migrant communities, international events and the threat of violent extremism but that it's all about learning to live together in 'One Leicester'

### **Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: a European and anti poverty perspective from Katherine Duffy of the European Anti Poverty Network.**

Katherine works on social inclusion policy with EAPN and with the UK government, through the Social Policy Task Force. This is particularly around the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion where she works to bring the voices of people with experience of poverty into European and UK policy development. Her talk was wide-ranging and covered some interesting theory about poverty and social exclusion, evidence from Europe, updates on European processes to combat poverty and social exclusion, 2010 - European Year Against Poverty, and UK plans for marking the year.

There is an overlap and difference between the two core concepts of poverty - as material, and social exclusion - as relational, and a similarity in how we can understand them. Katherine stressed that people's perceptions of their own exclusion were key. She explored 3 different conceptual approaches to the social exclusion of people and groups; exclusion from administrative structures of the state, from labour markets and through biographical "break off" and then spoke about the processes, economic and political dynamics and policy around social exclusion, and asked who and where is "at risk of exclusion". There are different perspectives on causes - by the poor and the "not-poor" and there are areas of contention including whether exclusion is a condition or a process, overlaps of definition and agenda, how we measure, and the social cost of poverty and exclusion.

Some interesting and troubling statistics presented were that the UK has one of the lower rates of unemployment in Europe, but also one of the highest rates of "in work poverty" and one of the lowest rates of unemployment benefit compared to average wages. With 19% of the population at risk of poverty, the UK is closer to the economically least advanced EU countries and is also grouped with those that are rated as the most unequal in a measure of rising income inequality.

We saw information from a special EU survey on the causes of poverty that showed the poor and not poor having contradictory opinions about the relative impact of low benefits and lack of education. Katherine introduced the 4 As of exclusion proofing benchmarking concepts - adequacy, accessibility, affordability and accountability.

Current European initiatives to tackle exclusion include money in the Structural Funds; good practice examples in the Progress programme; the Open Method of Coordination and the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion as policy process; the Active Inclusion Recommendations that bring together adequate income, access to services, and active labour market integration; and to raise awareness, 2010, the European Year against poverty and social exclusion.

In the UK, the DWP leads the EY2010 programme national implementing body (the NIB) of civil servants with a NIB advisory group including EAPN England and the SPTF (and CEFET). UK aims for the year are poverty awareness, stakeholder engagement including grassroots, and lasting legacy. There are 4 priority themes of child poverty,

working age, socially excluded adults, and older people. The UK budget for 2010 activities is a total of £1.2m (EU plus UK government match). The timetable is currently: bid guidance issued in August 2009; call for proposals in September 2009; decisions in UK November 2009, and in EU February 2010, for activity starting in April 2010.

The plans for 2010 activity include 12 regional events and a local activity programme under the 4 priority themes. All should involve people from grassroots, raise awareness of poverty and good practice and contribute to a lasting legacy from the year. There will also be a communications strategy that includes myth busting. Other activities that are not funded by the programme can be "badged" as 2010. The SPTF are lobbying also for 'bending' of mainstream budgets to the goals of EY2010. People can sign up to the EAPN manifesto on adequate income (see [www.eapn.org](http://www.eapn.org)). Contact details for Katherine and the DWP team, and more on 2010 and the SPTF can be found on our website or contact CEFET.

Morning speakers were followed by the round table discussion reported on Page 3.

## Action for Inclusion - Afternoon Speakers

### Lubna Alvi from the Kamyabi Community project in Nottingham

Lubna talked passionately about how important the project was in helping vulnerable women, mainly from ethnic minority communities, to make the connections and get the skills and support they needed to overcome problems of isolation, poverty and dis-empowerment. A small grant from the Tiger programme had enabled them to start up a job club with peer support that has opened up lots of different opportunities for the community. She told us about social enterprises in catering, crafts, cleaning and training that the women wanted to develop but they are finding it hard to fund resources for the core support to develop these. Lubna stressed the need for funding to be truly responsive to what communities want and where they're at, to ensure strong ideas can develop into successful action.

### Judith Higgins, a community activist from the Derbyshire Peak District

Judith spoke to us about her personal experiences of tackling problems of exclusion and poverty by trying every day to stay engaged positively with people and ideas, contribute to developing collective responses in community projects, and by encouraging people to speak out about their needs through channels like EAPN. She told us that the Peak District is a mixture of great wealth and hidden poverty; beautiful open spaces but also isolation, frustration and lack of opportunities. Judith showed her resilience and sense of humour as she spoke about how difficult it is every day bringing up children whilst battling the stigma and practical problems of poverty, exacerbated by rural isolation and disability. She talked about the wealth of ideas and energy at local level, the importance and effectiveness of the now closed Peak District Rural Deprivation Forum, its Amethyst project for rural women, and the many exciting local ventures (like a community newspaper, new social businesses, networks, training and groups) set up by Catalyst local social capital funding, but with many of these now lost to the community because of the lack of appropriate funding and adequately resourced local infrastructure.

**The Grassroots Network.** Laurie talked about how CEFET is supporting the growth of a grassroots network across the region to enable people involved in community level activity to get together, share ideas and information and then meet at regional level and develop input to policy and programmes that aim to address social exclusion. He spoke of the immense frustration expressed by people at grassroots, but also the continuing commitment that people felt and their hope that their voices and experiences would get heard and acted on.

The main issues that came up time and again at local meetings of the network were that social exclusion can't be reduced to, typified by, or effectively tackled through an "individual target group" approach, and that programmes and funding needed to be more joined up and appropriate. At the first grassroots regional meeting, everyone who attended knew of really imaginative community projects that were working well and changing people's lives but were unable to continue because of a change in funding priorities or systems that excluded them. Local issues were discussed at the regional meeting, which then compiled the discussion questions for this meeting. After speaking to note-takers over lunch, Laurie reported that these same issues had been echoed in the morning discussions.

Afternoon speakers were followed by round table discussions reported on Page 4.

**PEOPLE ATTENDING THE MEETING:**

Parvin Ali-FATIMA Women's Network  
 Lubna Alvi-Kamyabi, Nottingham Grassroots  
 Lawrie Anthony-Leicester Moneyline  
 Louise Ashby-Big Lottery Fund  
 Mary Campbell-Derbyshire Grassroots  
 Sandra Casey-One East Midlands  
 Clare Caves –CEFET, EAPN England  
 Dawn Crawford-Northants Learning Disability P'ship Board  
 Paul J. Di Mambro-Leicester Money Advice  
 Naomi Diamond-Development Trust Association  
 Kirtikumar Doshi-Equality Human Rights  
 Katherine Duffy-European Anti Poverty Network England  
 Carol Evans-Derbyshire Grassroots, EAPN England  
 Simon Feneley-EM Further Education Council  
 Lesley Flint-Government Office for the East Midlands  
 Peter Gaskin-Inspire member, Nottingham  
 Rob Hanlon-A.I.M. Derbyshire Grassroots  
 Lee Harrison-Leicester City Council  
 Judith Higgins-Derbyshire Grassroots, EAPN England  
 Elaine Hill-Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living  
 Howard Hughes-Derbyshire Grassroots  
 Steve Hunt-esp – Employment, Skills & Productivity P'ship

Dion Antony Hunt-Corby Community Partnership  
 Gordon Hunter-Lincolnshire Community Foundation  
 Alex Hunter-Lincolnshire Community Foundation  
 Rachael Johnson-Nottinghamshire County Council  
 Dawn Manners-Movers & Shakers  
 Di Martin-Corby Community Partnership  
 Stuart Miller-CEFET  
 Janet Mills-Government Office for the East Midlands  
 Laurie Moran-CEFET  
 Andrea Nesbitt-Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service  
 Rawshana Noor- Cooperative Community Action Ltd  
 Mary O'Riordan -Age Concern and Help the Aged  
 Ian Pearson-Leicester Grassroots, EAPN England  
 Rachel Quinn-One East Midlands  
 Eileen Redpath-E M Mentoring & Befriending Foundation  
 Caroline Salzedo-CEFET  
 Sandy Schofield-FVLHS, Derbyshire Grassroots  
 Jules Sebelin-Osmaston Park Community Centre, Derby  
 Jamilah Shah-Learning and Skills Council  
 Kevin Shanahan-Inspire member, Nottingham  
 Debbie Sheppard-Inspire, Nottingham Grassroots  
 Simon Taylor-Nottinghamshire County Council  
 Jayantika Vyas-Equality Human Rights

## Feedback

The aim of the event was to start the process of helping people work together to achieve better social inclusion in the region. 79% of participants who gave feedback thought the event achieved this, 11% with reservation, 5% thought not and 5% did not know.

63% of participants felt committed to continued involvement, only 5% did not want to participate, 32% were undecided, mainly wanting to await development of activity by, or a clearer function for, the Forum.

## Next Steps

CEFET, in consultation with One East Midlands and the Grassroots Network, will set about drawing up a draft Terms of Reference for the East Midlands Social Inclusion Policy Forum, including alternative names.

CEFET will adapt, from OEM documents, a Social Inclusion Policy Paper to form a basis for discussion and to inform developing common ground – through the SIFP – for all interests affected by, and acting to combat, Social Exclusion in the region

**Note for your diary:**  
**September 24<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Leicester**  
**National event on “Preparing for 2010”**  
**and the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Social Inclusion Policy Forum.**