

The Voice4Change England E-Alert returns with a wealth of news helpful to your work with the BME voluntary and community sector.



Please send this on to your contacts and do not hesitate to send us bits of news and stories to share with the sector. For breaking news from Voice4Change England, [follow us on Twitter](#).



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NEWS

ONLINE CONSULTATION!!! Voice4Change England call for views on the open Public Services White Paper consultation

Government have published a white paper setting out their plans to reform public services. They want to give people more control over the services they receive and open up delivery of public services to new providers. The Paper includes plans for greater personalisation of services, for communities to make decisions or even take over and run services, and for commissioning of previously state delivered services to be the norm.

Government is seeking views on the White Paper through a 'listening period' from July to September 2011.

How can public services be improved for BME communities

Voice4Change England will be submitting a response to the consultation. Let us know your views to help us make the BME voluntary and community sector voice heard.

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Complete our [online survey](#).

Or if you would prefer, [email Jemma Grieve Combes](#) or call 020 7843 6129 and let us know:

1. Are there any barriers for BME communities in taking direct control over services, i.e. through direct payments, personal budgets, entitlements or choices? How can they be overcome?

2. How can BME communities be better represented by local elected bodies and consumer champions?
3. What support do BME VCOs need to work with personal budgets?
4. How can a level playing field for BME VCOs be created in commissioning?
5. What minimum standards for equality does central Government need to provide?

[Or respond directly to the Government's consultation.](#)
[Download Voice4Change England's briefing.](#)

The Riots: How have you been affected?

Voice4Change England was shocked at the violent events that recently unfolded around the country. We have joined other organisations to call for communities to come together against violence and to tackle economic and social disadvantage. We want to work with Government and other VCOs to rebuild communities; investigate and tackle root causes; and to take a long term preventative approach to prevent future unrest.

Over the past few weeks we have:

- Jointly signed a position paper and set up the [‘Communities Against Violence’ Facebook page](#) as part of the BME VCS coalition. **You can add your voice to our statement and discuss the implications of the riots.**
- Spoken on BBC Local Radio Asian programmes about inequality and the riots. [Listen to Vandna Gohil, Director of Voice4Change England online.](#)
- Signed a [letter to the Guardian](#) about the lack of leadership on race equality ahead of the UK's appearance before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- Published our Chair, Elizabeth Balgobin's, [blog on the riots](#) where she demands a policy clean up to better support young people.

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FUNDING

Centres for Community Action Grant
10 October 2011

FUNDING CENTRAL

The smart guide to over 4,000 grants, contracts and loans

Bristol City Council is inviting applications for revenue funding from voluntary and community organisations that manage a community building, centre or city farm in Bristol. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they serve deprived or disadvantaged communities in need and contribute to the following outcomes:

- Access to services for deprived or disadvantaged communities is broadened and extended.
- Increased participation by VCS groups and individuals in activities that improve their quality of life.
- Centres optimise their sustainability.

[Find out more about the Centres for Community Action Grant.](#)

New Grant for Local Projects to Tackle Crime

The Home Office is launching the Community Action Against Crime Innovation Fund on 5 September 2011.

Approximately £10 million will be available over two years (2011 to 2013) to local voluntary and community groups in England and Wales to develop creative new projects that tackle local community safety problems.

The Home Office is particularly keen for the fund to be made available to grass roots community activists who are not traditional recipients of government grants.

Eligible projects should be innovative, deliver lasting benefits, involve local communities and tackle crime issues that matter to the local community.

The Home Office is providing the funding and the Community Development Foundation is administering the programme on its behalf.

[Find out more and apply for the fund.](#)

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POLICY

Best Value Statutory Guidance

The Communities and Local Government Department has published the Best Value Statutory Guidance.

The Guidance on the Best Value Duty sets out some reasonable expectations of the way authorities should work with voluntary and community groups and small businesses when facing difficult funding decisions.

The Guidance reaffirms the government's commitment to [Compact principles](#), and states that local authorities must honour the commitments set out in local Compacts.

The Guidance also states that local authorities 'should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate reductions' in funding, and that authorities should consider overall value – including social value – when reviewing service provision. It also reiterates the Compact principle that local authorities must give at least 3 months' notice of the actual reduction in funding, and that the authority must actively engage organisations and service users as early as possible.

[Read the Guidance.](#)

[Visit Voice4Change England's Compact webpages.](#)

Visit our policy pages to find out more about engaging with the policymaking process. If you have a query or need support on a particular issue we would love to hear from you. Contact [Ravi Chauhan](#) on 020 7843 6130.

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SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

LCRN's REalise Training into Employment Programme

The REalise programme is a two year training and work placement programme funded by Trust for London which aims to improve employment opportunities for disadvantaged people aged 16-24, whilst simultaneously providing high quality volunteers for our member organisations. It has been developed in response to needs identified by LCRN members with respect to increasing the diversity, skill quality and numbers of volunteers working within their projects. We are looking to recruit volunteers for this programme through your organisation.

The programme will take on its first volunteers in October 2011 and will involve 1 month's training at LCRN in both basic working skills and specialist knowledge such as green marketing, environmental auditing and social enterprise theory as well as work experience at the LCRN offices. This will then be followed by a 1 month work placement in a membership organization.

LCRN is looking to work with organisations capable to referring young people to us and who can spread the word about this opportunity for young people to get involved in the community resource management sector in London. The programme has a heavy emphasis on increasing BAME representation within the community resource sector but is not exclusively limited to minority communities.

If you are interested and would like to know more please get in contact with project coordinator stephanie@lcrn.org.uk or call 020 7324 4705.

[Find out more about the programme.](#)

FREE training for BME VCOs on how to use Compact and Public Law to challenge unfair decisions made against you by public authorities. V4CE are looking for organisations which would like to host training workshops in their local area in partnership with V4CE. If you would like to host a training workshop, contact [Ravi Chauhan](#) on 0207 843 6129.

What would you like to see included in the new V4CE portal? Tell us and you could be the first to feature on the site and raise your profile in the sector. Our Networks and Communications Officer would love your views. [Email her](#) or call 020 7843 6131.



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Charity Commission Equality Act guidance

On 31 August 2011, new guidance was issued by the Charity Commission which sets out its views on the application of the new charities exception in the Equality Act and the circumstances in which a charity may restrict its benefits to a group defined by reference to a protected characteristic.

Previously a charitable organisation benefited from a series of wider exceptions which provided that so long as its constitution set out the class of people which it could benefit, and that class was not defined by reference to skin colour, then any consequent discrimination would not be unlawful. The Equality Act 2010 has narrowed the scope of that exception. Now, any restriction as to who may benefit by reference to a group who share a protected characteristic, even if it is set out in the governing documents, must also be justified.

The new guidance recommends that all charities check that they comply with the Equality Act 2010 and suggests that they take the following three step approach:

- Charities should review their governing document and identify whether it restricts those who may benefit on the grounds of a protected characteristic, for example the visually impaired, followers of a particular religion, students from a particular country.
- If there is a restriction, they must establish whether the restriction can be justified using either the charities exception or another permitted exception by the act. If it can, no further action will be needed.
- If none of the exceptions in the act applies, then the charity may not be complying with the law and its charitable purposes may no longer be capable of being carried out for the public benefit. In this case, a charity must apply to change its charitable purposes.

[Read the guidance.](#)

CERD report on UK Government and race equality

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has published its report of concluding observations on the UK Government's 18th and 19th periodic reports, showing how the Government has complied with the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

In the report, the Committee 'welcomes the enactment of the Equality Act of 2010 as a landmark improvement in anti-discrimination legislation' and 'notes with appreciation the establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission under the Equality Act of 2006'.

However, the Committee raises a number of concerns, including concerns relating to:

- the UK Government's response to the riots and acts of vandalism that took place in August 2011;
- reports of an increase in virulent attacks and negative portrayal of ethnic minorities, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees by the media;
- the austerity measures adopted in response to the current economic downturn, and the so-called 'Red Tape' challenge, including scrutiny of measures envisaged under the Equality Act to prune those deemed 'bureaucratic or burdensome';
- the potential impact of measures in the Localism Bill to enhance decision-making powers at local level;
- proposed budget cuts to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which may have negative effects on the execution of its mandate;
- the lack of a race equality strategy that includes an action plan, targets and monitoring provisions.

The Committee recommends that the UK Government 'should implement all of the provisions of the Equality Act and ensure that there is no regression from the current levels of protection'.

The report also states that the Committee 'deeply regrets the State party's insistence on proceeding immediately with the eviction of the Gypsy and Traveller community at Dale Farm in Essex before identifying and providing alternative culturally appropriate housing for members of these communities'. A separate 'Statement on Dale Farm' was also published on 1 September.

In June 2011, Runnymede Trust and other race equality organisations submitted a report to CERD highlighting the key challenges faced by ethnic minorities in the UK and where the Government could be doing more to tackle inequalities in BME communities.

[Read the full report.](#)

[Read the CERD statement on Dale Farm.](#)

[Read the report submitted by Runnymede Trust and other race equality organisations.](#)

Working with Roma in the North West

This report follows an information gathering exercise undertaken by the North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership over a number of months.

The North West Strategic Migration Partnership provides a framework within which issues pertaining to inward international migration and migrants can be discussed, and information exchanged. An important part of its function is to represent the views of North West England to government.

The report highlights areas of good practice across the North West and provides insight into the number of Roma people living in the region, along with the issues this gives rise to, and the work undertaken by statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure positive community relations.

[Read the full report.](#)

EVENTS

European Diversity Awards

22 September 2011

Savoy Hotel, London

The first ever European Diversity Awards is being launched in September this year.

The European Diversity Awards are independent awards that recognise and celebrate those organisations and individuals that have shown innovation, creativity and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion during 2011.

The awards recognise excellence in the areas of gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, race, culture and religion across Europe.

[Read more on European Diversity Awards](#)

Community Matters Annual Conference

Saturday 15 October 2011

9.30am - 5.00pm

Kingsway Hall Hotel, London

The Community Matters conferences are the setting for those with an interest in the community sector, to get together and network and discuss issues that are really having an impact on the way you work and hear from others what solutions they have found.

[Find out more and book a place.](#)

VSNW Annual Conference: National policy, regional issues and the role of the VCS in an age of Localism

4 October 2011

King's Conference Centre, Manchester

VSNW's annual conference will explore the opportunities and challenges for the VCS in the North West, amidst current government policies on Big Society, health, the economy, employment, volunteering, and VCS infrastructure.

With a strong focus on national policy and its implementation in the North West, attendees will learn more about the emerging agenda, how it will impact their organisation and those they support, and how they need to respond. Attendance is free for VCS organisations and lunch will be provided.

[Find out more and book a place.](#)

V4CE MEMBER BLOG

URGENT NEED: A USP for the BME sector!

In our second member's blog, Bryan Teixeira from [Naz Project London](#) argues that, in these bleak times, the BME sector needs to find its USP more than ever.

[Read and comment on Bryan's blog.](#)

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SPECIAL INTEREST STORIES

[British public 'are more prejudiced against minorities after riots'](#) (*Guardian Society*, 5 September 2011)

[Citizens Advice cuts threaten the most vulnerable](#) (*Guardian Society*, 3 September 2011)

[EDL Humiliated in Tower Hamlets](#) (*MPAC UK*, 5 September 2011)

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Our next e-alert will go out on 19 September 2011.

If you have any questions or would like to contribute to the e-alert please email [Ravi Chauhan](#).

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