



Federation for Community Development Learning  
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Charity no: 1087488, Reg no: 1636431

**The Federation for Community Development Learning**

**Consultation response to**

**Communities and Local Government discussion paper on:**

**Tackling race inequalities**

**May 2009**

**1. The Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL)**

FCDL is a voluntary membership organisation which provides a national infrastructure supporting the promotion, development, evaluation and dissemination of community development, community development learning and qualification opportunities. Our work both supports the development and sustainability of strong communities and community organisations and the development of the skills and knowledge required by all organisations and agencies who seek to engage with them.

The work of the Federation enables community and volunteer involvement, removes barriers to learning, participation, community self-help, and supports the development of communities and their participation in area initiatives and partnerships. We also develop the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations, and address the learning and development needs of local voluntary and community organisations.

FCDL has currently been undertaking the review of the National Occupational Standards for Community Development, commissioned by Lifelong Learning UK. The standards will provide a cornerstone and guiding framework for all community development practice across a wide range of roles, settings, levels and present and future challenges.

Community development is undertaken by a wide range of people in many different roles and settings, and some people may utilise their skills in community development in different setting – both paid and as a volunteer. These standards apply to anyone who undertakes Community development practice – whether as a generic community development or a member of another profession/occupation who is using a community development approach, and whether as a paid worker or a community activist /volunteer

The key values of community development are:

Equality and Anti Discrimination

Social Justice

Collective Action

Community Empowerment

Working and Learning Together

Further information can be obtained on our web-site: [www.fcdl.org.uk](http://www.fcdl.org.uk)

We play a unique two way role in both supporting our membership and others at grass roots and many other levels to identify and address community development learning needs. We draw on this learning and experience to inform our work at national level in providing an inclusive infrastructure to support community development learning. This includes developing policies and mechanisms to enable and support good quality community development learning at different levels and in many different settings. At the same time we make good use of our knowledge, experience and information re national developments and



policy initiatives to inform and support both our members and a diverse range of other organisations and individuals to understand and engage with current opportunities and initiatives.

FCDL has an excellent track record in successfully and effectively practising our community development values and processes in the way we work, and engaging with and involving small, marginalised and excluded communities which other organisations cannot reach. Community development and community development learning are fundamental to the success of all the government policy initiatives to bring about a more just and inclusive society which encourages and is strengthened by active citizenship, pluralism and diversity, and the growth of social capital and social enterprise.

## 2. Tackling race inequalities consultation process

As a national infrastructure organisation we focus on engaging with community groups and organisations which are often marginalised and excluded from mainstream opportunities. This means that part of our membership base has valuable experience of being marginalised or excluded themselves or working with community groups/organisations that are marginalised. For this particular reason and because some of the key values of community development are Equality and Anti discrimination and Social Justice, we have tried to think of the best way for our members to engage in the discussion paper: Tackling race inequalities.

We have found it challenging to find out about the consultation and we are wondering how organisations have been informed nationwide, especially as the consultation aims to:

*“draw on the experience of our communities: in charities, voluntary organisations, community groups, local authorities, businesses, schools, universities, and more”.*<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this we have included information about the consultation in our bulletin, encouraging our members to engage in the debate and submit responses.

However, we also recognised that the information in the discussion paper is challenging to understand in full length, especially if you are already under-resourced and have more pertinent immediate issues that need attention. Moreover the questions are not user friendly and they definitely require a certain level of literacy and understanding, which is somehow ironic, when some of the statistics reveals that part of the target group still is struggling with academic achievements.<sup>2</sup>

Founded in community development values and principles we decided to invite our members and allies to come together to be able to discuss and explore the discussion paper in depth and create a collective response to the discussion paper. We are grateful that CLG has recognised that it takes time to put on events like these, by agreeing to extend the deadline for our response.

When we read the discussion paper we saw that nationwide events were mentioned, but we were unable to identify where these events were, so we could signpost our members to attend them. By using our networks, we identified where the events were and were able to inform our members about these, especially to ensure that as many members as possible had the opportunity to participate.

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<sup>1</sup> Tackling race inequalities: A discussion paper, p 4

<sup>2</sup> Tackling race inequalities: A discussion paper, p 20,21



We were able to attend one of the listening events in Manchester, which proved that it is important to be able to debate these issues and inputs that the discussion paper is requesting. However, it was evident that “grass roots” weren’t present.

We have experience of identifying barriers to engagement and participation, as we are constantly trying to overcome these as part of the values that we embed in our work every day around community development and community development learning.

Some of the barriers to engagement from “grass roots” at the listening event, would have been: the fact that people had to give consent to have their picture take and to be filmed – this can be intimidating for people who are already exposed and discriminated against or who work to combat such issues. Furthermore the time of the events, this will automatically exclude people who are not professionals/employed by organisations to participate in such listening events. Also, even though that the listening events were located in different regions, all participants would most likely have incurred some kind of cost, and community groups/organisations who are already struggling financially might, for this particular reason, be excluded.

We are raising these points as the discussion paper clearly tries to be inclusive as:

*“No one should feel left out of this debate, because we all have a role to play in making this country fairer and stronger”.*<sup>3</sup>

Moreover an equality impact assessment (EqIA) had not been conducted when the discussion paper was released and it would be interesting to see what the outcome of any EqIA would have been.<sup>4</sup>

Tackling race inequalities fund is now open for submissions, however we would have thought that the criteria would be decided after the responses from the discussion paper had finished, so that the responses would inform future practice.

### **3. FCDL’s response**

We invited our members and allies to input into the consultation at our own event, as we wanted to ensure that we were as inclusive as possible. Before our event on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009, we sent out a digestible summary of the discussion paper as well as reformulating the questions.

On the day of our event the focus changed, to generally being around working with excluded and marginalised community groups/organisations rather than being solely focused on race inequalities. Our response builds on our years long experience and expertise within the field of community development and community development learning, which is reflected in our response.

We have focused on some of the questions. We have written the response to particular groups of questions below a box with the questions.

List of all questions:

*How can we make sure that race equality maintains a distinct profile within a wider*

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<sup>3</sup> Tackling race inequalities: A discussion paper, p 5

<sup>4</sup> Tackling race inequalities: A discussion paper, p 5



*programme of work to address multiple disadvantage?*

*How should a race equality strategy focus on addressing disadvantage linked with race and ethnicity, as opposed to mainstream programmes?*

*Can we disentangle the role that race and ethnicity plays in driving disadvantage from other factors, eg socio-economic status?*

*Is there a need for a separate strategy to tackle race inequality? If so, what should the priorities be?*

*How can we focus more effectively on ensuring that mainstream policies meet the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups?*

*How can we encourage more people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to get involved in public life and in volunteering?*

*What are the main barriers to civic participation and representation that need to be addressed?*

*What more can the Government do to help communities recognise and celebrate the strengths that come from diversity and the values we have in common?*

*How can we ensure that our approach meets the needs of different regions, and Scotland and Wales?*

*Do you agree with the approach of a long-term vision and a short-term action plan?*

*What role does the voluntary and community sector have to play in prioritising race equality at the local level?*

*How can we best work with organisations such as Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices and local authorities to deliver on race equality?*

We agree that there still is a need for a Race Equality Strategy, partly based on the data in your discussion paper i.e. from the citizenship survey 2007-08, Higher Education Academy Equality and Challenge Unit, Statistics on Race and Criminal Justice System 2006/09 and the experiences and expertise from our members and allies.

How can we make sure that race equality maintains a distinct profile within a wider programme of work to address multiple disadvantage?

How should a race equality strategy focus on addressing disadvantage linked with race and ethnicity, as opposed to mainstream programmes?

Can we disentangle the role that race and ethnicity plays in driving disadvantage from other factors, eg socio-economic status?

Is there a need for a separate strategy to tackle race inequality? If so, what should the priorities be?

How can we focus more effectively on ensuring that mainstream policies meet the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups?

How can we encourage more people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to get involved in public life and in volunteering?

What are the main barriers to civic participation and representation that need to be addressed?



What more can the Government do to help communities recognise and celebrate the strengths that come from diversity and the values we have in common?

How can we ensure that our approach meets the needs of different regions, and Scotland and Wales?

Do you agree with the approach of a long-term vision and a short-term action plan?

We recognise that some individuals or groups can be faced by multiple disadvantages, but we are worried that new legislation such as the Equality Bill are concerned about moving away “from single group funding” as sometimes specialist services is needed and required to meet needs or address issues.

It is unclear to us what definition is being used to identify racial discrimination, if it is the definition from the “Race Relations Act 1976” it is defining it as unlawful for a person to discriminate on racial grounds against another person. The Act defines racial grounds as including race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

We are concerned with the definition that the discussion paper uses to describe people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds: BAME. In the discussion paper the definition is explained as to include people from “visible” ethnic grounds such as Black, South Asian and Chinese people and also Gypsies and Irish Travellers. The term “visible” makes it unclear what is being referred to, is it people’s colour, which will be excluding certain minority ethnic groups, such as i.e. white Eastern European, however people or groups might be facing racial discrimination, based on the definition in the “Race Relations Act 1976”.

At the same time the discussion paper is addressing challenges faces by disadvantaged White communities, and we agree that there needs to be resources in place to support all groups who faces discrimination, marginalisation or exclusion. One of our concerns is that community groups or organisations will start to compete against each other for scarce resources which will enforce segregation and further exclusion in the communities and nationwide. Nationwide and globally we are faced by an economic downturn and a rise in the support to the BNP<sup>5</sup>. From history (WW2) we have learnt that such combinations produced alienation and hatred towards a particular group and had devastating consequences. We need to remember this when we in current time are looking at a Race Equality strategy.

We recommend that there is an overall strategy for Race Equality that takes into consideration some of the multiple disadvantages that communities might face. This means that the effort and the success lies within the skills and experience held by the community groups/organisation to successfully identify their own needs and strategies rather than conforming to a top down structure or a “one size fits all” approach.

Infrastructure organisations are vital in successful support of community groups/organisations in lots of different ways. As mentioned above one of the ways to address needs or issues is by identifying these from a “grass roots” level. Based on best community development practice, communities should be supported in being able to do this themselves as the result will be much more effective, as they are connected to their community, whereas external consultants will be removed from actually fully understanding and reaching out to communities they are not part of. The advantage of this type of research can be understood from Birmingham University, who has recently conducted such a project.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/alarm-over-rise-of-bnp-1628227.html>



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The process itself is empowering for the community and it creates a sustainable platform for communities to be able on an ongoing basis to address issues – to have a voice if you will.

Any such research can support vital data that can influence policies and activities of Government and other service providers, this is backed up by some of recommendations in the Fairness and Freedom – The Final report of the Equalities Review – A Summary from 2007 states: *“The old approach of a top-down state which pulls levers to improve outcomes for particular groups is no longer appropriate or effective. We must take into account of the ways in which an enabling state operates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and ensure that we focus on ends and not means. We must acknowledge the multi-dimensionality of inequality and tackle change across economic, social and political spheres. Our approach must empower people in local communities to promote equality in ways most suited to their own needs, and be based on shared rights and responsibilities of government, employers, public services and citizens”.*

What role does the voluntary and community sector have to play in prioritising race equality at the local level?

How can we best work with organisations such as Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices and local authorities to deliver on race equality?

In other words there need to be a national Race Equality strategy which allows for regional or local needs and issues to be addressed from a “grass roots” level. At the same time there is a need for third sector organisation to communicate and strategise how to work together, so there is an understanding of different needs or issues being met by different service providers. Third sector organisations often have the links with various community groups and have build expertise within certain areas. However, there is a need for more communication around practice and values to ensure that organisation are not “reinventing the wheel” or duplicating work, possible through regional networks.

Voluntary and community sector organisations working at community level are in a position to work with communities to critically assess how changes in each setting or context can affect discrimination and exclusion at various levels.

Voluntary and community sector are well placed to work with communities and policy makers to use community development approaches to continually ‘watch’ our wider settings in order to look for opportunities to promote working and learning between communities. At the same time community development approaches can help to identify and positively address the effects of any increases in underlying tensions and conflicts between communities.

Voluntary and community sector organisations are well placed to encourage and promote local public policy makers and planners to be ‘active listeners’ who are responsive to needs of communities facing the complex and multi-dimensionality aspects of inequality. Through working with communities to develop strategies and implement changes in the local infrastructure cross sector approaches can be taken to tackle the negative impact of change across economic, social and political spheres on communities.

With the appropriate level of support and resources lessons from community based actions and strategies will be better placed to inform local, regional and national policies and action. Much of this relies on local communities having access to workers who are able to support the continual learning and development approaches that promote and demonstrate racial equality, challenge all forms of discrimination and empower communities to establish and maintain their roles as key actors in these strategies .



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Investment in local development programmes and initiatives across settings and contexts can promote cohesion and sustainable approaches to challenge discrimination. There is already a body of evidence that illustrates the value Government support for demonstration models for locally led change. Such initiatives could include community small grants funds, community empowerment courses, exchanges and visits between communities.

FCDL has gained positive experiences of using flexible and community led approaches to changes. Through our involvement in initiatives such as Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC), LSC funded Community Development Learning programmes, Research into Black and minority ethnic workers learning and development needs, Every Action Counts and Improving Reach we are confident in our role of working with our members, other allies and partners to harness cumulative community development learning and experience to inform our anti discrimination based work at local, regional and national levels.

We are aware that there are certain National Indicators which include Race Equality and equal opportunities monitoring forms, that reflects the diversity of employers. But we want to emphasise that it is not fair to leave the responsibility of dealing with racism or discrimination to the person that is being discriminated against. This means that it would be beneficial to look at how greater understanding around exclusion, discrimination and diversity could be implemented in organisations or institutions (including schools), as it will create understanding around behaviours and consequences of behaviours as to eliminate these.