



**Regional Leaders' Summit 2008  
on Equality and Diversity**

**West Midlands  
Regional Assembly**

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## Forward

I am pleased to be able to present a short report on the 2008 Regional Leaders' Summit for Equality and Diversity. This Summit was an even greater success than the 2007 Summit, when we had over 60 attendees.

This year, numbers rose to just under 100 people, including more Chief Executives of local authorities, the business sector and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. I know some of you made the valid point that we could still do with many more such leaders, and I agree, however, I was very pleased to see a rise in the number from the previous year and believe that we shall have even more next year.

I am very grateful to all of you who attended and for the honest feedback you gave at the workshops, which is recorded later in this short report. It will all be taken into account, although with limited resources it may not be possible to act upon it all. Probably more important to remember is that 'equalities' is something that we should all be addressing, no matter what level we may be in at work, whether an employee or employer, we all lead by our example and it is important that we ensure that we give good example to others.

I look forward to hearing more comments from you in the future.

Carmel Kerr  
Equality and Diversity Director  
West Midlands Regional Assembly



## Introduction

Like the rest of the United Kingdom, the West Midlands is witnessing wide-ranging changes that affect us all. Demographics, globalisation and migration make us aware of different identities, cultures, religions and beliefs, alongside new family patterns and fast moving requirements of the labour market as well as the shape of public services in the modern world. By paying serious attention we can try and embed positive values which are essential in an equitable and prosperous society – this is the work of the West Midlands Regional Assembly's Regional Strategic Partnership for Equality and Diversity.

Following a year-long strategic review of social inclusion, equality and diversity and related issues throughout the Region by the West Midlands Regional Assembly ending in January 2006, the Regional Strategic Partnership for Equality and Diversity was set-up in March 2006.

The Equality and Diversity Partnership, led by Carmel Kerr on secondment from the Home Office, has spent the last two years delivering on the recommendations of this strategic review and has taken a lead in the West Midlands in hosting numerous consultation events on key pieces of legislation, strategies and policy matters with stakeholders from across the public, private and third sectors from all over the Region. This has not only raised the awareness of stakeholders but also enabled them to think and act proactively and adapt accordingly.

## Regional Leaders' Summit on Equality and Diversity

One of the key recommendations from the 2006 Strategic Review was that a Regional Leaders' Summit on Equality and Diversity be held to enable leaders to speak openly and honestly about related issues and look at ways in which they can be addressed. This Summit would bring together all sectors to help share knowledge and understanding as well as look at how other sectors addressed similar issues.

The first Summit, chaired by Michael Cashman, MEP, a member of the Partnership, was held in January 2007, at the Lakeside Centre at Aston, where Meg Munn, MP, the then Deputy Minister for Equalities and Women spoke. [Further information on the Regional Leaders' Summit held in January 2007 can be found in the Equality and Diversity Partnership Report 2008.]

## Work taken Forward from the 2007 Summit

Members of the Partnership were pleased to find that attendees found the first Summit so useful that one of the key recommendations from it was that it became an annual event and this led to a second Summit in June 2008. Plans for a third Summit are now underway.

Other objectives influenced by the 2007 Summit which have been included in the Partnership's 2008/10 Action Plan include:

Objectives	Action taken by the Partnership
To continue working with the Regional Hub of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to ensure that the related needs and issues within the West Midlands are recognized and where possible addressed.	The Regional Manager for EHRC West Midlands is a member of the Partnership and supports the work of the Partnership in both the regional and national arenas.
To continue to act as the Steering Body for the SWM, Social Capital, Equality & Diversity Programme, (SCED) including ensuring that the SCED agenda is reflected in relevant regional strategies and programmes.	As part of the SCED Programme an event is being hosted looking at building social capital in the voluntary and community sector in October 2008. A second annual conference is planned for Spring 2009.
To encourage and promote appropriate consideration and inclusion of all equality strands across sub-regional partnerships in the Region and thereby reduce inappropriate differential outcomes for specific communities.	The Partnership continues to raise the profile of this agenda in all its work, whether through members speaking at conferences, joining in consultation workshops or in other ways.
To include more Chief Executives, Political Leaders and business sector representatives at the next Regional Leaders' Summit.	Although this objective remains as a recommendation from the 2008 Summit, that Summit did include a substantially larger number of leaders. It is hoped that the third Summit will include even more.
To help take forward the European strategic priorities on Social Cohesion identified by the European Strategy Board.	The Partnership has now set-up a European Social Cohesion Group which is responsible to the European Strategy Board, chaired by Cllr Sir Albert Bore, to take forward this agenda.

## 2008 Summit

The second Summit was held on 9th June, at Birmingham City Council House, with an even greater turn-out across the private, public and third sector leaders. Speakers included, Professor Carl Chinn, MBE and Cllr Diane Rayner, AWM Board. A large part of the afternoon was given up to a panel of high profile cross-sectoral leaders facilitated by Roger McKenzie, the Midlands Regional Secretary for the TUC. Work has already commenced on the 2009 Summit.

The 2008 Summit was chaired by George Marsh, Chair of Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) and the West Midlands Centre for Constructing Excellence (WMCCE). Over the last two years the Equality and Diversity Partnership has been working closely with SWM and acting as the steering body for its Social Capital Equality and Diversity Programme (SCED).

Regional Leaders from across the statutory, business, and third sectors were invited to contribute their views on what they saw as issues within the West Midlands and suggest solutions which could be taken forward.

## Speakers

This year, we were pleased to have Tim Wainright, the Director for English Regions, of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, who provided an insight into how the Commission is moving forward, since it commenced work in October 2007 and looked at ways in which the Region can engage further with Commission.

In addition, Cllr Diane Rayner, a member of the AWM Board, launched the Advantage West Midlands Regional Equality and Diversity week which will take place in the autumn. This will provide a grants programme for small organisations working in the equality and diversity field to help to raise the profile of the subject across the Region culminating in a Regional Equality and Diversity conference. Such organisations will be able to bid for sums up to £2,500 for running costs, such as venue hire, catering, publicity, to help build and promote their work within the Region.

Other speakers included Aaron Reid, Executive Director of Birmingham Professional DiverSity, a not for profit company, originally set up and funded by the Learning & Skills Council and Advantage West Midlands, it continues to provide consultancy support services to businesses within the sector. He spoke on how undertaking a health-check of existing diversity practices, putting into action improvements and making tangible changes in support of the bottom line, could help businesses improve existing organisational priorities and create a workforce which maximises economic potential and individual talent, reflecting at all levels, the multi-diversity of customers, clients and the wider community.

Cllr Alan Rudge, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Human Resources for Birmingham City Council reflected on the challenges facing Birmingham and how the Council was promoting diversity, equality of opportunity and community cohesion through a number of initiatives, in particular the Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence and Tackling Guns Programme.

Giving a historical context to the equality and diversity agenda was Professor Carl Chinn, MBE. Looking back over the years, he was able to show how issues of discrimination and lack of opportunity for some has always been the case, the people or minority groups may have changed but the issues remain real.

## Showcasing beyond Rhetoric

The Summit's workshop sought to explore through discussion and debate what those present saw as important to the social and economic agendas of the Region and how these could be addressed through equality and diversity agendas in the workplace, looking at the following key areas:

- The value of a diverse workforce
- Increase in workforce diversity across the sectors in recent years
- Equalities in the workplace
- Difficulties faced by the various sectors
- How can these difficulties be overcome
- Legal implications including both the difficulties faced and possible solutions
- How can we attract and make the most of a diverse workforce

The following comments were drawn-out from the discussion. Some are contradictory as there are of course, different issues in different parts of the Region, for example issues prevalent in urban areas are unlikely to be the same as those in rural areas and so on. Also, there is often more than one way to address the issues raised. It is very important to remember how diverse the West Midlands is and so recognise that 'one size does not fit all'. Equality is not about treating everyone the same, but rather about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances, by recognising that their needs are met in different ways.

Although the information gathered has been condensed, it is still quite lengthy but the points raised were considered too important not to mention in this report. Below are some of the key issues and possible solutions put forward by those present:

### Policies and Procedures:

- Equalities is not HR – should be with service delivery
- Equality Standard is not helpful – not in hearts and minds needs to be simpler framework and it often encourages resistance to equality and diversity issues
- Equality indicators have a tick box mentality - people have become mechanical in delivering equality schemes
- Important to measure the benefits of EIA, however, the process should be simplified
- Needs to focus on over arching policy areas linking national to local need
- Less bureaucracy, make it simple and be creative
- Need to change hearts and minds - goes way beyond legislation
- Equality and diversity is the responsibility of all individuals/ employees – shouldn't be a separate post but a mainstream activity
- Need more dedicated roles in equality and diversity – not just tagged onto existing roles
- Equalities affects all not just specific groups
- Each work stream should have equalities outcomes
- People have structures in place, need to be realistic – need to focus on outcomes, engagement and be accountable
- People need to see benefits to help them start to think differently - examples of good practice help speed-up change
- Equalities can be learned, should look at behavioural competitiveness standards and address what matters
- Often contradictions between various messages from government, legislation, media etc.
- Occasionally policies and procedures exclude the people they are trying to include
- Easy to reflect diversity in the workplace through policies but difficult in practice.

## Leadership:

- Leadership from the top is key
- Chief Executives and Senior Managers should be leading the way in promoting equality and diversity in the workplace – they have the power to effect change
- Disappointment at the lack of LA Chief Executives present, although there was a greater turn-out than last year
- The Assembly should spend more time targeting Chief Executives.

## Organisations / Employers:

- Diversity is often good in terms of numbers and stats but still needs to be embedded at all levels within the organisation
- The outward face of the organisation should reflect the customers it serves - if not external facing how do you attract a more diverse workforce?
- Need to measure what is important to customers
- Employers need to be more inclusive- bringing people together and breaking down barriers
- Engagement – learning how to engage with young people in a language they understand
- Not just about minority groups – young people not wishing to engage in work
- Education around diversity is still an issue
- Present the organisation as one that can be trusted and people would want to work for, e.g. be proactive, sponsoring others such as disability networks
- Ensure accountability is there through monitoring, reviews, evaluation – measure the impact of equality and diversity policies and be able to demonstrate it
- Look at holistic skills set of the organisation
- Employers need skills to draw-in excluded groups
- Organisation should reflect the community it serves – leads to better communication with customers and improved ways of working
- Difficult for employers to become more diverse in recruitment when the skilled potential employers are not diverse or there is a low turn-over of staff
- Use organisations who support SMEs to train and educate them in the benefits of diversity

- Link to winning contracts to evidence commitment and action not just policy - public sector procurement can help deliver message to others
- Business sector is better at capitalising on diversity - public sector could learn from business sector
- More engagement with trade unions.

## Workforce:

- A diverse work force does not necessarily mean that the organisation has the right skills – needs to be supported
- If turnover is low, how can the organisation change?
- Myth-busting to break down barriers in both recruiting and encouraging applications from people of different backgrounds
- Recognition of 'baggage' of young people, encourage through public image, monitoring programme - already tapped into school fairs etc
- Positive action and discrimination needs to be revisited and debated more in UK
- Value of a diverse workforce has not yet got through to organisations; many don't know how to engage with a diverse workforce – or what it is
- How assess what minority means in the first place – minority labour survey required
- Minority groups needs to take responsibility themselves
- Some of those with non-British backgrounds find it difficult to engage – regardless of qualifications
- Concern about BME people entering into the workplace but not progressing
- Difficulty in attracting and retaining BME people if low numbers in the area
- Trans persons highly motivated to work but find it difficult due to lack of understanding by employers
- How measure if staff are any good? Balanced scorecard around staff
- More involvement of design of training courses from those who complain
- People make mistakes often unwittingly – lack of understanding
- Personal skills – helping people to help themselves
- Staff networks – although people do not want to be labelled.

## Culture and Change:

- How keep up with continual change in communities?
- Strategic culture needs to change, build equality and diversity targets into performance appraisal
- Intelligence and research need to focus on this and what change will mean
- The right culture is more important than legislation
- Human experience cannot be blotted out need to equip people to change their thinking
- Big challenge defining what equalities looks like
- Embrace thinking from wide dimensions - one size does not fit all
- Think about the social impact, e.g. eco towns, opportunity to shape a community or social engineering
- Challenge behaviour and language – changes all the time.

## Other issues raised:

- Equality and diversity tends to rely on energy and commitment of individuals
- The need for more resources to be put behind equality and diversity on a long-term basis
- The need to meet political agendas even when they do not fit the organisational one
- A request for more information and clarity about the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Changing demographics of the Region, such as the rapidly ageing population, from 2028, 45% will be over 65yrs; also rural isolation is a big issue with 80% of the Region being of a rural make-up
- How to promote the community and the perception the community may have and how to deal with intra-community prejudice.

## Way Forward:

### Examples of good practice included the work of:

- West Bromwich Building Society reflecting the diversity of the community in its staff
- Sandwell MBC employment pledge – outcome based i.e. a number of places for particular groups to assist with return to work and apprenticeships linked to LSC. LA initiative taken forward by LSP
- LSC addressing pre-employment work, although making it happen is hard
- Tesco which gives a percentage of jobs to local people
- West Midlands Police which holds events solely for, and to help promote, women in the workforce
- Community driven disability schemes have had some success.

### Focus should be on:

- Personal stories
- Positive messages and achievements, celebrating success
- Getting an improved evidence based
- Improved communication and dissemination of information – need to share weaknesses as well as good practice
- Raising profile showing interest in communities
- Preparing young people for real work, how to mix with others through sport, play
- The exclusion of the economically inactive, as well as the inclusion of the economically active
- Partnership working – making connections about what equality and diversity means to organisations and people
- How it all fits with WMES, LAAs etc.
- Too many networks not working together – central data base needed, region-wide website.

It is interesting to note that many of the groups came up with similar points, which shows that although not always obvious, there is often an understanding of what the issues are. However, it is perhaps that leaders do not always demonstrate this understanding or act upon these issues for numerous reasons. Also, there appeared to be some frustration felt at a lack of understanding as to why these issues are not being addressed or at the individual's lack of power to address these matters themselves. It is important therefore, that regional leaders grasp these issues and demonstrate what actions they are taking to improve matters and encourage and inspire others to do so too.

The workshops also took a brief look at the work of the Equality and Diversity Partnership, its future and what they would like to see in future Summits.

## Future of the Equality and Diversity Partnership

### The Partnership was seen as:

- An honest and independent broker
- An enabler on behalf of the whole region
- Focuses across all areas and should perhaps have a scrutiny role
- Unique and not duplicating with other regional bodies
- Has credibility and respect
- Helps link across the Region and gives the VCS and others a voice
- Working with EHRC, LAs and Regional agendas.

### Future work of the Partnership was seen as:

- Essential as it provides a conduit to get better up to date information and drive issues forward
- Needs to sit in a strategic organisation
- Needs to better understand the functions it should do – what cannot be driven at a local level at a time of efficiency
- Should have a scrutiny function
- There needs to be more focus on outcomes and forward planning in how its work will be taken forward in the light of SNR.

## Future Summits

### Future Equality and Diversity Summits should:

- Target the wider population
- Have more chief executives across all sectors in attendance
- Balance new people with the same old faces
- More feedback from last year
- Include more people who control policies and procurement

## Conclusion

The 2008 Summit on Equality and Diversity has provided an opportunity for many to have an input into improving the West Midlands, meet others from across various sectors, listen to and explore different practices and issues as well as suggest possible solutions.

The findings from the 2008 Summit will be used to support and assist in the Equality and Diversity Partnership's work on the agendas of equality, diversity and social cohesion in both national and regional policy and practice, contributing to the Equality and Human Rights Commission as well as the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and the West Midlands Economic Strategy.

As it moves forward, the Equality and Diversity Partnership is developing its role in the area of economic inclusion, where it has begun to raise the profile of the social inclusion and social exclusion agendas and how they affect the economy of the Region. The Partnership was pleased to be offered a seat on the West Midlands Economic Inclusion Panel and asked by AWM to act as an advisory body to the Panel on equality and diversity issues.

The Equality and Diversity Partnership has been able to take this work forward and engage across the sectors because of its unique make-up of members from all sectors. Perhaps more importantly, the Partnerships' ethos of independence and simply the personal commitment of those involved in wanting to improve equality matters within the West Midlands and beyond, has made it so successful and will help take it forward in the future.

Of course, there is always room for more experts, both individuals and organisations – so if you wish to learn more about the Partnership, obtain a copy its annual report or become involved in its work please contact Carmel Kerr, the Regional Assembly's Equality and Diversity Director who oversees the work of the Partnership on [c.kerr@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:c.kerr@wmra.gov.uk)

## Programme

- 09.30 - 10.00 Registration and Coffee
- 10.00 - 10.05 Welcome by George Marsh, Chair
- 10.05 - 10.25 Introduction by Cllr Alan Rudge
- 10.25 - 10.45 Speech by Tim Wainright, EHRC
- 10.45 - 10.50 Introduction to workshop – George Marsh
- 10.55 - 11.40 Workshop
- 11.40 - 12.00 Coffee
- 12.00 - 12.20 Feedback from workshop
- 12.20 - 12.40 Aaron Reid, Birmingham Professional DiverCity
- 12.40 - 13.00 Cllr. Diane Rayner
- 13.00 - 13.05 Close of morning by George Marsh
- 13.05 - 13.50 Lunch
- 13.50 - 14.10 Prof. Carl Chinn, MBE
- 14.10 - 14.25 Introduction to Panel by Roger McKenzie
- 14.25 - 15.25 'Question Time' Panel
- 15.25 - 15.45 Close and summing-up by George Marsh

## Delegate List

**Asif Afridi**, Deputy CEO, brap

**Mashuq Ally**, Birmingham City Council

**Mohammed Al-Rahim**, CEO, Freshwinds

**Ian Angus**, Government Office for the West Midlands

**Adrian Atherley**, Chief Inspector, Diversity and Community Cohesion Unit

**Nichola Balmer**, Director, West Midlands Employer Coalition, Working Ventures UK

**Mike Barnes**, Chairman, Regional Action West Midlands

**Paul Birch**, Equality and Diversity, Wrekin Housing Trust

**Farah Baksh**, Business Development Director, PWC

**Sandy Bannister**, Disability Equality Adviser, Worcestershire County Council

**Steve Blick**, Regional Manager, Age Concern

**Jagdev S Boparai**, Sikh Community Forum

**Barbara Bowers**, Central England, Citizens Advice

**Jeremy Bruce**, Sustainability West Midlands

**Shane Bryans**, Government Office for the West Midlands

**Prof Carl Chinn**, MBE

**Eddie Clarke**, Director of Adult and Community Services, Worcester

**Alfie Coglianesi**, Equality & Diversity Manager, Acas West Midlands

**David Darlaston**, Business in the Community

**Stephna Davis-Watts**, Regional Policy and Partnerships Officer, Big Lottery Fund

**Gurbachan Dhinsa**, MBE, Vice Chair, Greets Green Partnership

**Kevin Dicks**, Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council

**Jerry Doherty**, Assistant Director Chief Executive's Office, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

**Helena Duignan**, West Midlands Regional Observatory

**Olwen Dutton**, Chief Executive WMLGA & WMRA

**Bill Fearnough**, Communities Team Leader, Natural England

**Claire Felton**, Head of Legal, Equalities and Diversity, Bromsgrove District Council

**Ciaran Gannon**, Regional Director for Natural England, West Midlands Region

**Clare Gough**, Head of Equalities and Diversity Service, Wolverhampton City Council and Chair, WMLAEN

**Karen Grant**, Equality and Diversity Consultant, Solihull, MBC

**Sandie Granville**, WM Minority Business Forum

**Marie Greer**, Director, Advantage West Midlands

**Parveen Hassan**, Crown Prosecution Service

**Juliet Herbert**, Children and Young People's Services, Sandwell MBC

**Roger Herrington**, MD, Rhino Incorporated

**Rahiel Hussein**, UEFA Hat-trick Officer, Aston

**Kate Jerwood**, National Treatment Agency, Government Office West Midlands

**Cllr Jo Jones**, West Midlands Regional Assembly

**Amir Kabal**, Director, East Staffordshire REC

**Shantose Kaur**, Managing Director, Enigma Consulting

**Julie Kaya**, Diversity

**Matt Kendall**, UEFA Hat-trick Officer, Aston

**Alex Kennedy**, British Humanist Association

**Carmel Kerr**, Director Equality and Diversity, West Midlands Regional Assembly

**Anjum Khan**, Managing Director, Basic Training Centre

**Rukshana Koser**, Corporate Diversity manager, Worcestershire County Council

**Suranjana Lall**, Performance & Development Directorate, Warwickshire County Council

**Paul Lankester**, Chief Executive, Stratford-upon-Avon

**Robin Mace**, Community Outreach Officer, Wychavon District Council

**George Marsh**, Chair, Sustainability West Midlands

**Rauf Mirza**, Chair, Sport England West Midlands

**Roger McKenzie**, Regional Secretary, TUC

**Zahid Nawaz**, Regional Manager, EHRC

**Cllr J Oates**, Leader, Tamworth

**Kwaybena Osayande**, Policy Manager (Equalities & Diversity) AWM

**Cllr Mike Owen**, Portfolio Holder, Shropshire County Council

**Patrick O'Malley**, Head of Development, Children's Safety Education Foundation

**Stephen Packham**, Regional Finance Director, Learning and Skills Council

**Sharon Palmer**, Regional Action West Midlands

**Rico Paris**, Gender Advisory Bureau

**Trish Poole**, Mid-Counties Co-op

**Kal Prakash**, Shropshire County Council

**Aftab Rahman**, Government Office for the West Midlands

**Dr Baljit Kaur Rana**, Birmingham City University, Business School

**Cllr Diane Rayner**, AWM Board

**Frank Reeves**, Rights and Equality West Midlands

**Aaron Reid**, Chief Executive, Diversity

**Nicholas Robinson**, WM Area Director, West Midlands Employer Coalition, Working Ventures UK

**Philip Rose**, Birmingham City University, Business School

**Cllr Alan Rudge**, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Human Resources, Birmingham City Council

**Helen Ryman**, RegenWM

**Lakhy Sahota**, Regional Manager, Play England

**Hans Schlappa**, Research Contract Manager, Aston University

**Preet Shergill**, Vice Chair, WMREAB

**David Silvera**, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

**Balbir Singh**, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

**Pal Singh**, Vice Chair, Council of Sikh Gurdwaras, Birmingham

**Kieran Smith**, South Staffordshire Council

**Sarabjeet Soar**

**Joyce Springer-Amadedon**, Birmingham City Council

**Jackie Stevenson**, Commissioning Manager, WM Regional Offender Manager's Office

**Sybil Sutherland**, Diversity & Community Cohesion Manager, Midland Heart

**Charlotte Taylor**, East Staffordshire Borough Council

**Steve Town**, Sport England

**Jenni Venn**, Corporate Policy and Research Manager, Coventry City Council

**Tim Wainright**, Director English Regions, EHRC

**Cllr John Waring**, Equality and Diversity Champion, Malvern Hills District Council

**Barbara Watkins**, TAEN Consultant in the Midlands

**David Weatherly**, Chief Executive, Tamworth Borough Council

**Simon Weaver**, Senior Policy Support Officer, North Warwickshire

**Dave Webb**, Head of Revenues and Housing, Stratford District Council

**Peter White**, Director, Fresh Life Consulting

**Shan Williams**, Policy Manager, Sandwell MBC

**Rebecca Windle**

**Paul Winterbottom**, Director Health, Living Well West Midlands

**West Midlands Regional Assembly**

Regional Partnership Centre  
Albert House  
Quay Place  
92-93 Edward Street  
Birmingham  
B1 2RA

Tel: 0121 245 0200

Fax: 0121 245 0201

[www.wmra.gov.uk](http://www.wmra.gov.uk)

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