

# NORTH EAST

## **RACE EQUALITY FORUM**

# INFORMATION BRIEFING

## No. 12



### ***Challenging Race Hate Crime: Conference Feedback***

On June 15, more than 80 delegates from organisations across the North East region met at Newcastle University to discuss responses to ‘race’ hate crime. This was the latest in a series of conferences and events organised by the North East Race Equality Forum, a regional network involving more than 300 organisations and individuals across the region, and proceeded to a successful conclusion despite a threat from the EDL to disrupt it. This conference was supported financially by the Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal. The purpose of this Information Briefing is to summarise feedback from delegates, largely provided on an evaluation form, which was completed by half those present, but also in terms of responses and discussions during the meeting itself. The Feedback will be discussed by the NEREF Steering Group, representing the five universities in the region together with an advisory group of volunteers from across the region.

The conference programmes included

- An update on progress with the NEREF directory of organisations and best practice models: for more information email [equalityforum@Newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:equalityforum@Newcastle.ac.uk);
- Merwa Zen: spoke about recent work undertaken by the Regional Refugee Forum North East Community Safety Working Group;
- Ian Fitzgerald: reviewed recent research on the impact of Polish migrant workers in the region’s labour market;
- Vera Baird: summarised the recent work on ‘race’ hate crime undertaken by the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, including work jointly

undertaken with the Durham and Cleveland PCCs;

- Ijjou Thompson, an independent researcher: described her work over the past years building a Durham-based (but region-wide) Diverse Women's Network; and
- Rick Bowler and Amina Razak, from Sunderland University, spoke about the work of Sunderland-based Young Asian Voices and its challenge to white-dominated structures, institutions and the policy-making process.
- The event concluded with a short workshop session in which delegates were able to voice either individual or group-based comments on the event or on future work for NEREF.



### **Evaluation of the event**

Delegates were asked to rank five aspects of the event, in terms of strongly disagree, tend to disagree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to agree and strongly agree.

- *The event was extremely relevant to my work:*  
87% either tended to agree or strongly agreed;
- *The event met my expectations:*  
70% either tended to agree or strongly agreed;
- *I was satisfied with the content of the event:*  
77% either tended to agree or strongly agreed;
- *I was satisfied with the speakers:*  
74% of delegates either tended to agree or strongly agreed;
- *I was satisfied with the organisation of the conference:*  
95% of delegates either tended to agree or strongly agreed;

Overall, then, three-quarters or more of the delegates strongly supported the event and the way it was organised and structured. Thanks are particularly due to the speakers and to Jenny Johnstone of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne who took on most of the work of organisation, to NISW for funding it, and to

University Security for screening out the EDL.

Several delegates made separate comments in this part of the evaluation form. Two suggested that the most interesting and effective (and, on occasions, the most passionate)

speakers were those who spoke about the work they were actually engaged with at present. One delegate observed that there had not been enough time for workshops and delegate feedback. The organising group are aware of this issue but found it difficult to squeeze everything offered into a half-day event and will plan future events more tightly.

Speakers from the floor suggested:

1. A future event should have more community groups talking about their work;
2. The leaders of local authorities in the region should be invited to a future event to defend their work programmes around 'race' equality (if they have one!);
3. It is important to highlight the impact of everyday racism and this might be done additionally through the use of social media, and also advertising Information Briefings and Research Briefings at the same time;
4. The conference had more on examples of hate incidents but less on good practice models.

### **Ideas for future work**

In the other part of the evaluation form, delegates were encouraged to put forward ideas for NEREF and other organisations to address. The key ones from these responses, which the Steering Group and Advisory Group will address were as follows. They are summarised as far as possible and grouped under three headings.

### **Future events/work for NEREF**

- Next conference should be held in south of region to enable people there to





attend or duplicate conferences in south and north.

- Future conferences/events should be more interactive/more workshops (theme-based) and more time for them.
- More variety of speakers.
- Address Prevent, the schools agenda.
- More examples of good practice to be sent in, presented and shared .
- More opportunities for groups to link up.
- Emphasis on ensuring community groups come (including gypsy groups and young people's groups) to talk about their experiences/ Ensure statutory bodies are aware of grassroots concerns.
- Practical tips for employers, work-based groups.
- Themed meetings for the future.
- More examples of actual personal experiences (such as Ijjou Thompson's account) rather than too many statistics and figures.
- Need for a yearly conference.
- Something which looks critically at the Prevent agenda to see if it is as racist as some people claim.
- Events to be more strongly focused and with fewer speakers.
- Workshops to be focused on future action.

### **Techniques, suggestions for NEREF**

- Twitterhandle would promote picture of everyday racism.
- We should examine the impact that social media has on hate crime, both good and bad.
- More useful resource lists to be placed on the NEREF website and marketed to educators.

- More network seminars (i.e. smaller events)

### **General (for all to consider)**

- More publicity is needed to stop hate crime.
- What can be done to address a lack of funding for dealing with hate crime; equalities duty is meaningless unless funding is available for long-term strategic work.
- Having communities address hate crime at home, school and work levels.
- Better support for victims.
- Increase community confidence to report hate crime.
- Stronger focus on gender.
- Need to look at impact of hate crime on young BME people.
- Reporting is important including 'low level' crime (schools); we must empower young and old people to report hate crime.
- Organisations working with victims should also connect to organisations working with perpetrators.
- Are there too many organisations in this area of work, making it confusing for police and other professionals as well as communities and victims?
- Are there gaps in practice in social care and health care work?
- Campaign more strongly for the powers of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to be restored and ensure the Equality Act is used effectively by local public bodies.
- Hold organisations to account which are not applying the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Need for a wider campaign to promote the value of diversity.
- Need to ensure Black History in the curriculum includes something on race hate crime.



We have not been able to provide detail on every single response to our evaluation form and if those attending have other points to raise, please send them to

[equalityforum@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:equalityforum@newcastle.ac.uk) and we will incorporate them into our future discussions.

Thank you for all your comments.



**Contact:** For further information, back copies of Information Briefings or Research Briefings, or to join the Network, email [gary.craig@galtres8.co.uk](mailto:gary.craig@galtres8.co.uk)

*The North East Race Equality Forum is a Network of around 300 individuals and organisations in the North East Region committed to promoting racial equality in the context of social justice. No one organisation is necessarily committed to every idea published in the name of the Forum. The Forum is supported by the 'Race', Crime and Justice Regional Research Network, which includes researchers from each University in the region.*