



# Compact

for Havering

*Draft Code of Good Practice*

*BME and Socially Excluded  
Communities*

*March 2008*

supported by



**havco**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Guidelines for BME and Socially Excluded Communities**

This section should be read in conjunction with other sections of the Code of Good Practice, in particular the Consultation, Information Sharing and Participation Guidelines.

The purpose of this Part of the Code is to suggest ways to improve understanding and communication with people who have been excluded or marginalized in Havering. Addressing issues of exclusion has particular implications for the relationship between the Council, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and faith organisations - groups that often provide services to the most vulnerable and hard to reach members of our community.

The most successful services result from building partnerships between service providers and service users. Although public and VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) organisations are taking steps to ensure that residents of the Borough are offered services to which they are entitled, there are some groups who are not reached or who

choose not to be reached in the usual way. Such groups often include people within minority ethnic communities, women, the homeless, travellers, drug users, gay, lesbian or bisexual people, those with a disability or mental health need, or disaffected young people. Many of these 'excluded' groups face multiple disadvantages and have personal concerns such as the fear of losing benefits, distrust of official networks or lack of access to advice and guidance. Traditional advisory services often fail to meet the complex needs of socially excluded groups.

Although identified as 'hard to reach' by definition, with greater consideration these people can be contacted and included. With increased experience, improved working practices and expanded contact networks the number of hard to reach will decline. Service providers must ensure that the development of the capacity and confidence of individuals and communities is supported so that hard to reach groups can make informed choices about how their needs are met. Regular evaluation and monitoring processes should be in place, with feedback received from users used to improve the delivery of services.

The Compact for Havering (March 2004) notes that Voluntary and Community Organisations working with black, minority ethnic, faith and socially excluded groups have a number of important roles to play, for example:

They empower service users through the involvement in the design and delivery of services; advocate community needs; help alleviate poverty ; improve the quality of life for many socially excluded people and communities.

At present these guidelines focus on two areas – black and minority ethnic communities and faith communities. More work is needed to develop guidelines and priorities for action involving other socially excluded groups e.g. those with disabilities and those who are gay, lesbian and bi-sexual

## 2. BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) COMMUNITIES

There is an increasing body of evidence to show that black and minority ethnic communities experience greater direct or indirect discrimination than the majority white community.

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the role of BME groups as partners in promoting race equality, tackling exclusion, racism and deprivation. Under the Race Relations Amendment Act, public bodies have specific duties to promote race equality and good race relations, and to eliminate unlawful discrimination. This includes assessing and consulting on new policies and monitoring the impact of its policies. The BME voluntary sector has a considerable role to play in helping public bodies assess the impact of their policies and services.

### *Why Involve BME Groups?*

- **They are encompassing.** Ethnic minority disadvantage cuts across all aspects of policy making. They can ensure that culturally specific needs are taken into account.
- **They provide services.** A major strength and value of the BME sector lies in its potential to support and deliver services to local communities.
- **They are influential.** Every community may have its own particular health and social needs. Minority ethnic groups may be able to offer advocacy, information channels, lobbying potential and expertise in pursuing these needs.
- **They provide positive role models.** BME community groups provide many personal development opportunities. In particular, they can offer young people their first experience of life outside home and school.
- **They provide a varied range of services to local people,** particularly to those with significant social and economic needs. They tend to be led by and serve mainly, but not exclusively, people from minority ethnic communities.
- **They often play an active role in advocating change in policies and practices of mainstream service providers.**
- **They have a good record of contacting 'hard to reach' members of our community, alongside faith communities.**

### *Points to note*

- Despite having strong community links, many BME organisations continue to be excluded and remain on the edges of local policy debates.
- In Havering many of the BME groups are still quite new and relatively inexperienced. Mechanisms of support need to be found to ensure that their essential contribution is heard.
- The BME voluntary and community sector looks to the Council to influence its partners, positively particularly in the public sector. Supporting the establishment of forums is one way of ensuring ongoing involvement where BME groups are able to discuss issues of common interest and to be consulted by others.
- BME communities are not a homogeneous group and will need to be understood according to the specifics of their needs.
- It is important to be aware of the cultural traditions of various ethnic minority groups particularly when organising consultation events, group discussions or survey work. This may relate to religious festivals, as culture and faith are closely linked. (see appendix 2)

## **Faith Communities**

76.8% of the United Kingdom population regard themselves as having some religious affiliation (2001 Census).

While many of these people may not actively be involved in the worship component of a faith community, a substantial number are committed members of faith groups whose teachings to a greater or lesser extent guide their values and beliefs.

Together, the faith communities make an extremely significant contribution to the richness and strength of the community.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the role of faith groups is being increasingly recognised by Government bodies and the wider VCS (voluntary and community sector). Working with faith communities is a means of ensuring that public policy meets the needs of citizens and promotes social inclusion. Faith communities deliver 'social action' projects and their representation of community interests requires everyone to work effectively together. The advancement, teaching and practice of religious belief are central activities for faith-based groups. Respect of their right to express and preserve, within the law, their beliefs and convictions is important in a cohesive society.

### ***Why Involve Faith-Based Groups?***

- **They are sizeable organisations.** Collectively they represent a considerable proportion of the community from varying social and economic backgrounds. Faith groups are a significant component of the community sector and its development, many act as anchors for voluntary organisations at national and local levels.
- **They are influential.** Faith groups play an important role in promoting community cohesion, social justice and reaching excluded and minority groups. They help to address local need for a wide variety of members and others in the community. They also ensure that their members are able to play their part as residents in decision-making and to take up their rights. Recognising faith groups as influential partners can boost involvement in communities, develop citizenship to faith traditions and, in particular, provide gateways to socially excluded communities who would otherwise be left out.
- **They are multicultural.** In many groups, members are drawn from different ethnic backgrounds which is significant in view of the racial tension being experienced elsewhere in the country. Diversity of faith groups reflects the diversity and complexity of community life. Faith and ethnic identity is often close. For many, their faith is part of that identity which brings confidence, a means to relate to the nature of existence and a secure place to express their diversity. Even without the resources of a building, finance etc., faith groups still provide mutual support and a sense of belonging, which might not be present elsewhere for them e.g. immigrant and minority groups.
- **They are beneficial.** While the central purpose of faith groups is based on the religious belief of a particular teaching or set of tenets, its practice advocates social and moral responsibilities. These attributes not only provide the fundamental values for a just, cohesive and inclusive society, but fulfil many of the Government's own shared aspirations i.e. citizenship, social cohesion.

- **Specifically they contribute to:**
  - spiritual experience
  - moral values
  - the provision of resources
  - the provision of `Social Services`
  - self esteem.
  
- **They are resourceful.**

Faith groups offer community assets and resources: local networks and gateways to other sectors; leadership and management capacity; employment; buildings with potential community use and development; volunteers.

The provision of resources often includes volunteers and premises (which can be used for community activities). Examples of 'social services' include youth groups, activities for older people, counselling and support, life skills courses, sports facilities, venues for child contact.

### **3. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION INVOLVING BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC, FAITH AND SOCIALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES**

#### **Together we will:**

- prepare a list of BME groups in the Borough and the services they deliver;
- develop a directory of faith organisations and places of worship in the Borough;
- work to develop the capacity and confidence of individuals and communities;
- explore opportunities for buying/using services from a wider range of community providers,
- take forward the race equality agenda in policymaking and service delivery.
- Promote events to increase greater understanding of all cultures and religions
- review Council and public sector policy and procedures to ensure that they do not discriminate against community organisations, including faith groups;
- actively involve Black and Minority Ethnic, Faith and Socially Excluded Communities in the planning and delivery of services and assist the sector to secure funding for social action initiatives;

#### **The Council will:**

- implement and review its Race Equality Scheme,
- undertake equality impact assessments of all its policies and services.
- Promote the need for consultation in the most appropriate format with BME/faith groups amongst its staff and public sector partners

#### **All public sector partners will**

- ensure that elected representatives, staff and volunteers are aware of the traditions, values and beliefs of their service users and develop those services accordingly, and
- provide training opportunities for staff to help them understand the unique nature of faith communities and their practices.

#### **Voluntary and community organisations will:**

- work more closely together so that small or inexperienced groups will learn from more experienced groups
- develop a more joined up approach to service provision.
- Develop and promote the use of supportive networks and forums

#### **Faith groups will strengthen their role in the VCS by:**

- opening their buildings for community use;
- learning from others and sharing good practice;
- taking up opportunities to build partnerships, working with each other, the Council and other community groups to address community needs;
- participating in community consultations
- having in place effective organisation and management processes and structures to deliver social action projects.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Involving the Hard to Reach**

- Bring services to the clients, and deliver them within an atmosphere of trust and respect.
- Provide services which offer equality of opportunity for all, and respect for different cultures and ways of working.
- most successful services gain the support of the wider community, involve individuals from the target groups, and are embedded in local provision.
- Try to build the confidence and capacity of individuals and communities to make informed choices about their environment.
- Offer clients choices in your delivery.
- Proper evaluation should be a fundamental part of your provision.

Adapted from *Advice and Guidance for Hard to Reach Groups*, Employment Support Unit

## APPENDIX 2

### **Good practice for engaging with faith groups/groups with varying cultural traditions**

This has been adapted from *The Local Inter Faith Guide* Published by the Inter Faith Network for the UK in association with the Inner Cities Religious Council of the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions.

<http://www.interfaith.co.uk/localguide.pdf>

It is advisable to consider the following points.

#### **Planning**

- Be clear about why you wish to engage with faith groups, what is being done, what is expected of them and what is being offered so that they can consider how it meets their theological understanding and interests.
- involve faith representatives in the planning to take into accounts the needs and sensitivities of different faiths. Consider:
  - the differences between and within faith groups
  - that it can be more effective to invite more than one representative of the faith to meetings on issues that effect the sector
  - that if you want a group of men and women, explain carefully and ask tactfully - seeking advice, help and feedback from those you are inviting.

#### **The time, the day, the place**

- Avoid major festival times as this may exclude some faith representatives. Regular days set aside by the faiths for worship are:
- the Sabbath (sacred to Jews and begins at sundown on Friday until sunset on Saturday)
- Juma Prayer, (midday on Friday, a special time for Muslims)
- Sunday (most Christians and some other faiths worship on Sunday, and some meet to worship on a Saturday)
- Ramadan (Muslims fast during this month)
- 2-20th March (Bahais fast during this period).
- Remember also that some faith groups pray at regular times of day.
- If you are holding a day-long event, it is helpful to set times and a location aside for those who wish to pray or meditate taking into consideration suitable washing facilities and separate accommodation for men and women.
- A neutral venue should be selected unless the meeting is exclusively with those of a single faith group.

#### **Catering requirements**

Observe the religious practices around food. The following points should be helpful:

- vegetarian food is likely to be acceptable to people of most faiths and tastes and should enable most people to share a meal (labelling dishes is a good idea) alcohol should not be used in the preparation of any food
- some Hindus and Jains avoid eating egg, garlic, onions and for some root vegetables Jewish people may ask for Kosher food
- don't be surprised if people enquire who has prepared the food and where it has been prepared
- provide fruit juice, water or herbal teas (tea and coffee as stimulants are avoided by certain traditions)
- consider whether anyone will be fasting.

## APPENDIX 3

### Funding and faith communities

- It is important to note that faith groups often differ from other community groups in respect of funding arrangements. This is an area where such groups have historically run into difficulties. The failure of funders to understand the distinction between the social contribution of faith groups and their promotion of religion has led to discrimination in the funding of faith group activity, particularly for those groups seeking to recruit staff who are followers of the faith.
- Where a group provides services on behalf of, or funded by, a public body (Council or Health Trust), the statutory duties that apply to the public body are transferred to the provider. Faith groups must comply with all relevant legislation for example, requirements under Health and Safety, Race Relations, Sex Discrimination and Employment law
- There has been a recent European Directive (December 2003) that makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment on the basis of religion. For faith organisations, the new law gives exemptions to recruit on grounds of religion or belief where there is "a genuine occupational requirement". At the time of writing, there has been no case law to test this.
- A number of faiths prohibit their members from applying for funding from money derived from gambling and borrowing. Since the lottery funded Community Fund, in particular, is seen as a major alternative source of funding for many voluntary and community groups, public bodies need to give attention to how they can support organisations that are prohibited from applying for these funds.
- New thinking is being encouraged and in this respect, decisions on whether to fund a particular activity should be made on the basis of need, rather than on whether it has a religious or secular culture. Where faith groups are providing for community needs, they should be able to access funding on the same terms as any other community group. Assistance may be required to help faith groups see how they fit the criteria for grants and other sources of funding, or how they can adapt to qualify.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Involving and Communicating with Hard to Reach Communities**

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT UNIT, 2000 – Advice and Guidance for Hard to Reach Groups (Summary Report)

### **Involving and Communicating with Black and Ethnic Minority Groups**

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE REGIONS, 2002 – Reflecting the needs and concerns of BME Communities in supporting People

HMSO, 2000 – Race Relations(Amendment) Act  
*www.cre.gov.uk*

HOME OFFICE, 2003 – Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations: a Code of Good Practice, National Compact Working Group

POLICY STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2001 – Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations: Their role and future development in England and Wales

### **Involving and Communicating with Faith Groups**

CHURCH URBAN FUND, 2002 – Building on Faith – Faith Buildings in Neighbourhood Renewal

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE REGIONS, 1997 – Involving Communities in Urban and Rural Regeneration: a Guide for Practitioners

FAITHWORKS, 2002 – Faithworks Unpacked – A Practical Manual to Equip Churches for Community Involvement

GREATER LONDON ENTERPRISE, 2002 – Neighbourhood Renewal in London: The Role of Faith Communities

HOME OFFICE, 2003 – Compact Code of Good Practice on Community Groups, National Compact Working Group

HOME OFFICE, 2004 – Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities

INTERFAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK AND THE DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE REGIONS, 1999 – The Local Inter Faith  
Guide

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION, 2002 – Faith and Community: a Good  
Practice Guide for Local Authorities

THE PRINCES TRUST, 2004 – Reaching the Hardest to Reach: Breaking Barriers?  
[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

This Code is now ready for Consultation.  
If you would like to make any comments please contact

Michael Dunlop, the Codes of Practice Administrator  
At  
HAVCO  
19/21 Eastern Road  
Romford  
RM1 3NH

01708 742881

[Michael.dunlop@havco.org.uk](mailto:Michael.dunlop@havco.org.uk)

The BME Sub-Group is open to all sections of the Community to join. And the more people who are part of it, the more effective we can be.  
New members are welcome in order to continue making the Compact work.  
Please contact the Sub-Group Chair Mr Sethi, for further details.  
Email: [sethi\\_bal@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sethi_bal@yahoo.co.uk)