

NEW GROUP TO TACKLE THE BME CHALLENGE

A joint initiative aimed at improving life for the black and ethnic minority population has been launched in the North West.

The Black and Minority Ethnic Advisory Group (BMEAG) will look at developing a more engaged relationship between public sector agencies in the region and the community. The Group will work together to give regional coherence and a BME perspective to work that is already being undertaken on key areas such as health, education and employment. It will also look at key issues of BME leadership in the region.

Set up by Government Office North West (GONW), and supported by the Northwest Development agency (NWDA) and 4 North West (4NW) group members are drawn from a wide range of organisations from both the private and public sector.

Members – all experts in their field and giving their time voluntarily - are committed to giving everyone the same opportunities irrespective of their background, ethnic origin or their postcode.

Liz Meek, GONW Regional Director and BMEAG chair said:

“I am delighted we now have the BME Advisory Group. Something like this – bringing a BME voice into the heart of the region’s decision making - has been needed for a long time. The expertise that members can provide will have an impact on the lives of the region’s BME community. A better understanding of their needs, the challenges they face and how they can be tackled will benefit both individuals and the North West as a whole.”

Evelyn Asante-Mensah, Head of Equality and Diversity for the NWDA, said:

"This joint initiative is an important step on the road to improving the lives of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in the Northwest. We will pool intelligence and gain a better understanding of the region's BME community with the aim of improving health, education and employment."

Councillor Sir Richard Leese, Chair of 4NW, said: "4NW has long championed the fact that diversity should be recognised as an economic as well as social and cultural asset to

the region and long lamented the fact that employment amongst BME communities is well below the average in the North West. It is clear we are not utilising the potential of all the region's people and 4NW - the Regional Leaders Forum - hopes this new group will assist in understanding these issues better, finding innovative and constructive solutions and encourage the region to make real progress over the coming months and years."

The group has been set up initially for 12 months with three priorities agreed for the first tranche of work: Leadership, supported by GONW and 4NW; Worklessness and Social Exclusion, supported by GONW; and, Health Inequalities, supported by NWDA.

Notes to Editors

BMEAG Members

Adrian Carridice –Davids	Managing Director A&A Enterprises Ltd
Ebrahim Bassa	Director of Development, International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion
Ekaete Assiak	Account Manager, Race for Opportunity, Business in the Community
Gulab Singh	Principal Public Health Specialist, NHS Central Lancashire
Kirit Patel	Race Equality Programme Co-ordinator, UK Poverty, Oxfam
Lenford White	Regional Development Manager, Network for Black Professionals
Mohammed Shazad Sarwar	Managing Director, Versor Research Ltd
Priscilla NKwenti	Chief Executive Officer, Black Health Agency
Sayyed Osman	Director for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services, Blackburn Town Hall
Taher Ali Qassim	Public Health Neighbourhood Manager, Liverpool PCT
Liz Meek	Regional Director GONW, Chair

Notes to Editors

Photographs of the group are available on request.

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