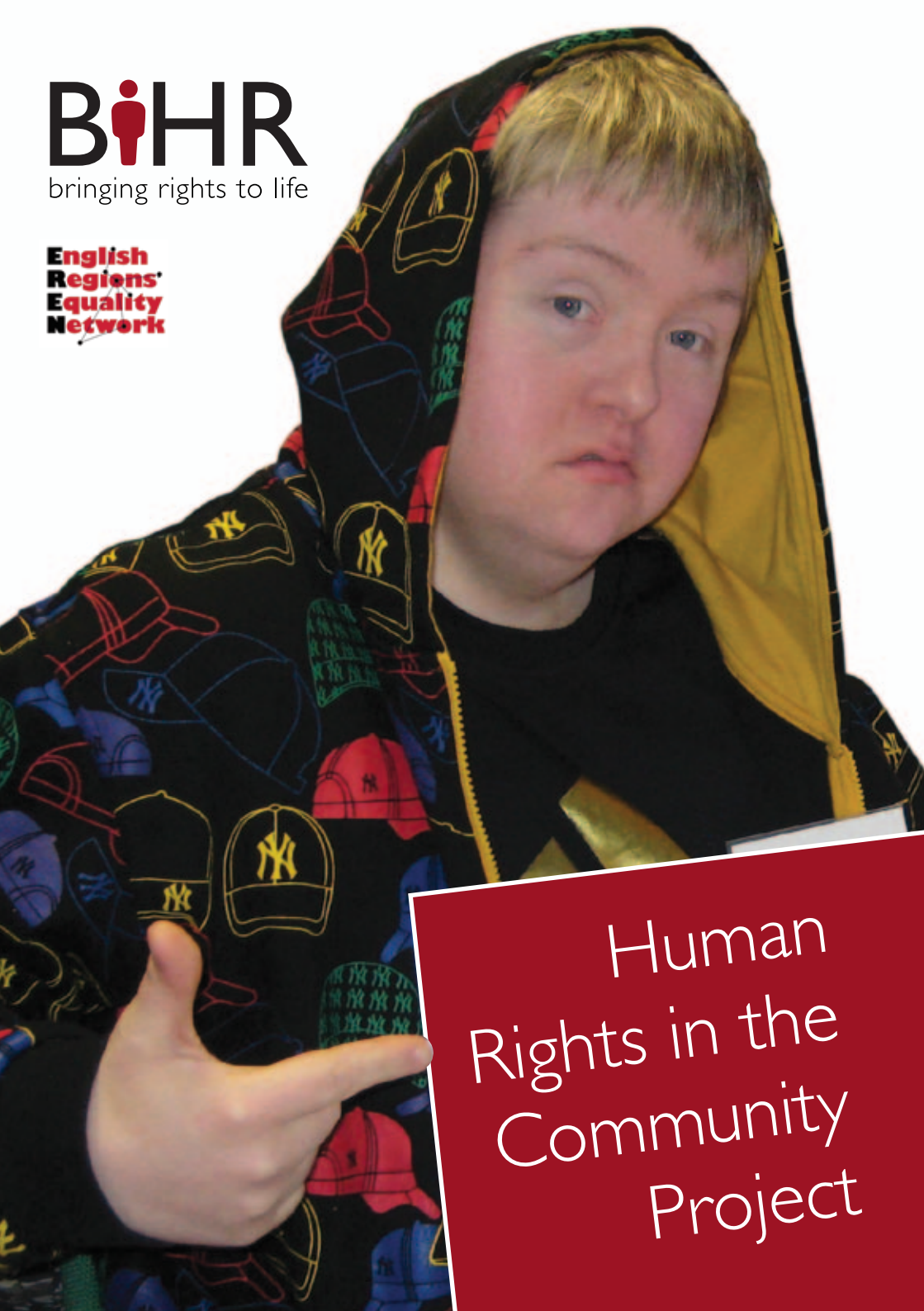


BHR

bringing rights to life

**English
Regions'
Equality
Network**



Human
Rights in the
Community
Project

This short brochure provides an introduction to the Human Rights in the Community Project, an innovative initiative bringing human rights to local communities. The project is led by the British Institute of Human Rights in partnership with the English Regions Equality Network. It is funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Human Rights in the Community Project

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This brochure is available in large print and electronic disc formats. Please contact us on info@bihr.org.uk or 020 7549 0550 if you would like to receive the brochure in an alternative format.

Human Rights in the Community: an introduction

What is the project all about?

Human rights begin with human beings: individuals becoming neighbours and neighbourhoods becoming communities. Driven by this vision, Human Rights in the Community is an exciting three year project that seeks to equip communities with human rights language and tools, supporting them to challenge poor service provision and resolve everyday problems and inequality at a local level.



Who is involved in the project?

The project is led by the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) in

partnership with the English Regions Equality Network (EREN). It is funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. We are working with three pilot groups:

Arcadea: a disability arts organisation based in the North East of England

Capacity Global: an environmental justice charity based in London

Lancashire Consortium for Advocacy and Partners:

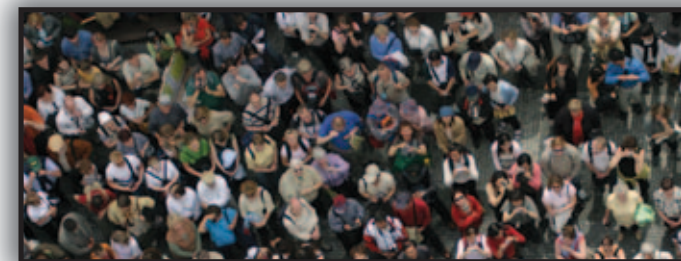
a group of organisations providing advocacy services to individuals and their carers across Lancashire.

You can find out more about the pilot groups on pages 6 – 11. We also have a project Advisory Board made up of community activists, human rights specialists and voluntary and community sector representatives.

How is the project bringing human rights to local communities?

The pilot groups are receiving an intensive human rights advocacy training programme, and road-testing a wide range of innovative tools and resources. The groups all work directly with their local communities, and are exploring creative ways

to communicate about rights such as through photography, art, music and film. Awareness raising events, resources and policy-influencing activities are making sure that the learning is shared with the wider community sector.



What difference will the project make?

From BIHR's experience of working with communities, we know that human rights knowledge can be dynamite in the hands of individuals. Human rights shift the balance of power – they increase people's confidence to challenge decisions, negotiate solutions and have a greater say in the provision of public services in their community.

Over the next few pages we show how the project is starting to have an impact for the organisations we are working with. The project is being independently evaluated by Community Links and their initial evaluation of the project will be available in early 2011.



Pilot project: Arcadea

About Arcadea:

Arcadea is an arts organisation based in the North East of England that promotes and supports the cultural equality of disabled people. They use the arts to explore, understand and advance the position of disabled people within the community, with the aim of contributing towards creating an equal, inclusive and accessible environment for disabled people.



“Each individual’s human rights are of paramount importance, whether at work or in our private lives, and the country we live in should support and respect this.”

Some human rights actions and solutions:

- Using human rights language to positively raise awareness about disabled people – doing this in creative ways such as a themed arts week dedicated to human rights or creating human rights poems
 - Communicating the unifying message of human rights – emphasising what other groups have in common with disabled people through human rights issues such as access to information, participation in the community etc.
- Using the rights in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to challenge the UK government and public bodies
- Looking internally – creating a human rights based governance policy for Arcadea’s Board

The group: the group involved in the project is made up of disabled artists including poets, rappers, visual artists and actors. Many of them have mental health issues or learning disabilities. They started off with fairly low levels of human rights awareness but they have a huge appetite to find out more!

Some key issues:

- Access to public arts spaces such as theatres
- Reduction of arts funding generally, and in particular for disabled people
- Reduction of public spending in other areas such as housing, and how this will affect disabled people
 - Hate crime and discrimination
 - Lack of accessible information

“I am a disabled artist concerned about government spending cuts and how the government seem to be overlooking human rights and social deprivation.”



“Human rights are very important in the work place as we all are equal and have a right to be seen and heard.”

"I was amazed by how little I knew of the potential impact of human rights on my work area. It opened a whole new dimension I had never previously considered or given much thought to."

Pilot project: Capacity Global



Images courtesy of Capacity Global
www.capacity.org.uk

About Capacity Global:

Capacity believes that everyone has the right to live in a clean and healthy environment and participate in decisions that affect their lives. That's why they work with communities and people in urban areas who suffer most from environmental injustice, to ensure their voices are heard and to create opportunities for positive change. Capacity works with a diverse range of people from excluded groups and individuals to low income, ethnic minorities, disabled, young and the elderly.

About the group: those involved in the project are staff from Capacity Global and three Black and Minority Ethnic community groups: Sparkbrook Caribbean & African Women's Development Initiative (SCAWDI) based in Birmingham; Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society based in Manchester; and Mayville

Community Centre based in London. The group hope that the project will equip them with human rights principles and legislation to tackle local environmental justice concerns, as well as



improving their confidence and ability in campaigning for environmental equality and influencing MPs, local authorities and governmental bodies.

Some key issues:

- Lack of green spaces and parks in council areas meaning that the health of the community suffers
- Environmental discrimination, for example Black and Minority Ethnic groups being excluded from green living initiatives
- Lack of green energy choices due to poverty, for example not being able to afford insulation, solar panels etc.
- Lack of healthy food choices due to not having gardens or access to green space to grow fruit and vegetables, and not being able to afford organic food

"This needs to be taken nationally in other topics as well as environmental issues."

"It makes my work easier, relevant and protected knowing that all human beings, no matter what situation they find themselves in, their rights come first."

- Differences in cultural attitudes to the environment, for example some Black and Minority Ethnic communities have a culture of not complaining or not expecting adequate standards of health, so don't feel it is their place to challenge things

Some human rights actions and solutions

- Using the Human Rights Act to challenge local council decisions around environmental facilities, creation of safe green spaces, allotment areas and other issues
- Using the rights in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to challenge environmental poverty in local areas
- Gathering information to contribute to a shadow report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Using human rights to raise communities' awareness of their right to influence decisions about their local environment

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Pilot project: Lancashire Consortium for Advocacy and Partners

“Human rights have to be considered when legislation is applied by government, and are important in promoting community cohesion.”



About the Lancashire Consortium: the Consortium is a group of organisations (lead organisation n-compass) providing a range of advocacy services to individuals and their carers across Lancashire. They aim to support individuals within their local communities to say what they want and obtain services they need – to improve and enhance their health, well-being and life opportunities.



About the group: the partner organisations involved in the project are n-compass, ELAS, Central Advocacy and Blackpool Advocacy. Each organisation is represented in

“I can now apply the human rights articles to advocacy practice, to our organisation and also look for further opportunities to develop this kind of work further.”

the project by a group of staff, advocates and full time carers. The human rights awareness in the group is mixed – some are already quite familiar with human rights language, while it is totally new for others. They are all very passionate about human rights and are keen to use them in their advocacy work more confidently.

Some key issues:

- Respite for carers
- Clients with mental health issues or disabilities not being listened to or consulted
- Inadequate care assessments and decisions about care packages
- Decisions about care of children

Some human rights actions and solutions:

- Using the rights in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to challenge the government on the spending review, especially in relation to respite care
- Raising awareness of the responsibilities of public authorities under the Human Rights Act to carers
- Raising awareness amongst care staff of their clients' rights to be heard and respected
- Skilling up advocates in using human rights arguments to support their clients as well as raising their clients' awareness of their rights

“This has given me more confidence to use human rights when supporting people with issues around health and social care.”

Human Rights in the Community

November 2010
Blackpool

Sarah Ormer



Working beyond the pilots

In addition to the pilot projects we are also working to make sure that we bring human rights to local communities in a variety of ways:

“I’m all fired up and see the relevance.”
Learning event participant



“I now have more knowledge and I believe will be more aware of and confident in tackling human rights violations.”

Learning event participant

Learning events

In Summer 2010 BIHR and EREN ran a series of Human Rights in the Community learning events in London, Manchester and Newcastle. The main aim of the events was to stimulate interest and enthusiasm around human rights and the project among potential pilot groups. We also wanted to learn from participants – we were keen to find out what the key issues are for local communities, and how they felt human rights could be relevant for them.

The events were well attended, with approximately 80 participants in total. Participants were from a wide range of backgrounds, ranging from refugee community organisations and faith groups to community arts projects. The venues reflected the diverse nature of the participants – with one taking place in a local sports hall, one in a community theatre, and one in a rather nice room near to Buckingham Palace! The events were participative and interactive, and included plenty of lively debates and discussions.

The main findings from the events were:

- There was a general appetite and enthusiasm for human rights among participants, and a keen desire to find out more
- Levels of awareness of human

rights were mixed, but there was a general lack of awareness in the sector of how human rights can be applied to communities

- There were some concerns around using human rights related mostly to lack of confidence, and also to worries about the political climate in relation to human rights
- Even in just a three hour ‘taster’ session, there was a marked change in attitudes and raised awareness levels among participants
- Human rights really seemed to resonate with the community groups involved and the sessions left people feeling energised and inspired about using human rights
- However, people also left the sessions with an appetite for more – people need more than three hours to feel confident in using human rights and there is a clear need for longer term learning models such as the Human Rights in the Community Project

For more information about the events, view the report at: www.bihr.org.uk/documents/general/human-rights-in-the-community-learning-event-report.

Resources and tools

BIHR has developed ‘Human Rights in Action – a toolkit for change’ – an interactive, online resource that provides a basic introduction

to human rights. The pilot groups are road-testing this resource and providing us with feedback on how we can develop some more community-focused chapters for the toolkit. We are producing a wide variety of practical tools, factsheets and exercises that will be added to the toolkit. We plan for the toolkit to become a ‘one-stop-shop’ of information on human rights for voluntary and community organisations. The toolkit is available at www.bihr.org.uk/human-rights-in-action.

Working with the voluntary and community sector

We recognise that community work cannot thrive without the support and influence of local, regional and national infrastructure support. Therefore, in addition to our direct work with community groups, we are also working with infrastructure organisations, with the support of EREN and building on the foundations and successes of BIHR’s recent Principles to Practice project. Through our project Advisory Group we are identifying further ways of ‘rooting’ human rights across the voluntary and community sector. This includes looking at how to develop the funding streams needed to continue to stimulate human rights learning at the community level for the long-term.

Future plans

Finding out more

If you are interested in finding out more about the project and how you can be involved, please visit our website at www.bihhr.org.uk/project/human-rights-in-the-community. Here you can sign up to our project mailing list to receive regular updates about the project.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact Sonia Omar on somar@bihhr.org.uk or 020 7549 0557.



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The funding

The project is currently funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Although it is a three year grant, the funding is currently only guaranteed for the first year until March 2011, due to financial cuts at the Commission. We may therefore be seeking alternative sources funding after March 2011. The project has been very much designed with a three year model in mind, and we are therefore very keen to ensure that the project can continue beyond March 2011. During the first year we have been generating a great deal of enthusiasm and momentum for the project; to have a real and lasting impact we believe it is essential that it continues into its second and third years.

The pilots

For the remainder of year 1 and continuing into years 2 and 3 of the project, we will continue to work with our pilot groups, providing them with ongoing support and training. In the longer term we hope that the pilots will

become human rights champions – using human rights throughout their own work as well as empowering and inspiring others to do the same.

Beyond the pilots

In years 2 and 3, we plan to really open up the project to wider community groups, through open training courses, online resources and other innovative methods of learning. In year 3 we will showcase the learning from the groups and other aspects of the project through a series of national events. We will also continue to work with the wider sector through our Advisory Group, attending events and forums, and policy influencing-activities.

The resources

We will continue to produce a wide range of innovative, practical and engaging resources during the project. Once they have been road-tested by the pilot groups they will be made publicly available.

The evaluation

The project is being independently evaluated by Community Links. Community Links is working alongside BIHR to build an effective and



participatory evaluation framework, exploring:

- Effectiveness: How effective was the project overall in achieving its aims and outcomes?
- Impact: How effective are human rights for community groups in the UK?
- Wider learning: What are the wider policy and practice issues?
- Future developments: What are the key lessons and how can they be built on?

The evaluation will provide evidence of lessons learned and good practice models that will be useful for the wider application of human rights across the community sector.

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