

Progress Towards Equality 2007 to December 2008

Progress Towards Equality was an innovative multi-agency UK-wide partnership one-year project supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – Progress (2007 –2013) that was one of the first advice sector initiatives to raise awareness of rights and resolution under anti-discrimination, equality and human rights legislation. The project included:

- Hosting a well used and valued discrimination website www.advicenow.org.uk
- Producing *Dealing with discrimination* flyer, three detailed documents: *Sort it* magazine, *is that fair?* How to recognise discrimination and *You don't have to put up with it* covering how to deal with discrimination. Also two sound files '*I cant let it go on*' and '*Doing something about it*' that were widely distributed and cascaded to a diverse range of advice providers and community groups
- Delivering five one-day conferences across the UK that were attended by 423 delegates in all and resulted in a reported increase in awareness of and engagement with discrimination and human rights legislation
- Creating a Project Management group that achieved an excellent working relationship between partners and was led by a highly valued project coordinator
- Building steering groups in the North of England, South of England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland that ensured regional and national dimensions of anti-discrimination and human rights were owned and integrated into conference delivery.

Partners in the project were: AdviceUK, AdviceNI, Advice Services Alliance Advicenow, British Institute of Human Rights, Citizens Advice England, Citizens Advice Cymru, Citizens Advice Scotland, Law Centres Federation, Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

The stated aims and objectives for Progress were to:

1. Raise the general public's awareness of rights and resolution under anti-discrimination, equality and human rights legislation, through the provision of a range of printed and web based materials.
2. Raise awareness of rights and resolution under anti-discrimination, equality and human rights legislation for generalist and specialist advisers, through the provision of conferences.
3. Build networks and platforms of advice givers at a national and regional level for future work, through the development of Steering Groups in North of England, South of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

ADP Consultancy conducted an evaluation that found that these objectives were met:

- The '*Is that discrimination*' website provided a well respected public face for the project and encouraged individual members of the public to pose enquiries
- The public information materials were well received and valued by the individuals and organisations that used them during the course of the project
- Generalist and specialist advisers attending the conferences reported a raised awareness and post conference evaluations demonstrated a commitment to addressing anti-discrimination and equality and human rights
- The project succeeded in developing national and regional networks and steering groups advised on conference content, speakers, workshops, publicity and distribution. They ensured public legal education reflected the differences in UK legislation and highlighted the key groups experiencing discrimination
- The Partner Project Management Group was a successful feature of the project and membership of the group provided a profile for human rights legislation along side anti-discrimination and ensured effective project delivery led by a highly valued Project Co-ordinator.

Learning points

In consultation with partners and stakeholders, the evaluation identified a number of learning points in relation to public legal education:

- Projects aiming to raise public awareness need to be resourced. Agencies with an interest in the topic need to be fostered and supported to carry out work in their, and with their, local community.
- The public information resources, including the website provided valuable materials for generalist and specialist advice workers to use in their work and were also accessed by members of the public via the website and advice and community agencies that received the materials. If supported with resources to a mass media campaign resourcing front line agencies could have achieved a higher level of public awareness.
- However the public information materials were used by organisations that requested materials rather than those received them at conferences and events. Organisations need support to gain public information skills and move from viewing public information as only an 'add on' to legal advice.
- The organisations that requested materials tended to have a strong track record of working with the community, e.g. having existing working and partnership relationships with community groups or involving service users in the planning of events and talks.