



RCD Women's News

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Southall Black Sisters - the struggle to maintain funding for specialist services

By Pragna Patel, Chair of Southall Black Sisters

"An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be." (Lord Justice Moses quoting the chairman of the Equalities Review in the final report 'Fairness and Freedom' 2007)

SBS was established in 1979 to meet the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) women experiencing violence and abuse. We offer specialist advice, information, casework, advocacy, counselling and self-help support services in several community languages at our resource centre in West London. For almost thirty years, we have been at the forefront of challenging domestic and gender violence locally and nationally, and campaigning for the provision of support services to enable women and their children to escape violent relationships.

Last year, Ealing Council decided to withdraw funding from our charity, (the only specialist provider of domestic violence services to BME women in Ealing), and proposed instead to fund one domestic violence service for all women in the borough – moving away from much needed targeted services.

However, it is crucial to stress that having targeted services does not mean that social cohesion is threatened in anyway or that it creates segregation. Our extensive work with BME women has shown that not all women experience domestic violence in similar circumstances. Issues of racism, culture, language and immigration status, for example, make the task of accessing services much more difficult for BME women. There is therefore a greater need for specialist resources and staff to reach out to these women and help them overcome these barriers.

On 18 July 2008, at the High Court, we won an important case against Ealing Council for their failure to have proper regard to the equality legislation, in particular the Race Relations Act and their own equality duties when making this decision. The Judge highlighted some key principles in his judgement about equality which will have wider consequences for all those struggling to sustain funding for specialist services and for equality more widely:

- There is a clear duty on local authorities to assess the negative impact of any policy or change in services on different racial and/or other groups **before** the policy is adopted.
- It is unlawful for local authorities to carry out equality impact assessments to justify policies that have already been implemented.
- Targeting services to specific racial groups and positive action to eliminate racism does not undermine the principles of cohesion or the Race Relations Act.
- Specialist services are entitled to give themselves a name which reflects the specialist nature of their purpose and work.

Ealing Council agreed to pay the costs of our legal representation and also the costs of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which intervened in the case as an interested third party. The Council has also agreed to continue to fund SBS at the previous level until it completes the process of commissioning based on any new decision on domestic violence services. We hope that this successful judgement will help other less well resourced charities to pursue any similar future legal challenges relating to equality and cohesion.

For more information call **020 8571 9595** or e-mail southallblacksisters@btconnect.com or visit www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/

Funding news

Help A London Child

Help a London Child (HALC) funds community based organisations that work with young people in London up to £3000. HALC funds eight categories of organisations including:

- community groups activities such as play schemes
- disability and illness projects such as support to young people with disability and special needs
- health and counselling projects
- language and literacy projects
- playgroups and toy libraries
- refuge and/or homeless projects
- social and leisure groups
- and youth projects such as clubs and projects focussed on young people aged 11 to 18.

Deadline: **5 November 2008.**

For more information: **020 7054 8395/8396** or email: **halc@capitalradio.com** or visit **www.capitalradio.co.uk/charity/how-halc-works/apply-grant-help-a-london-child/**

Conference

Child sexual abuse and exploitation

Date: Tuesday 21 October 2008

Time: 9.30 am – 4.30 pm

Venue: NCVO, Regent's Wharf, London N1 9RL

A conference for professionals covering issues such as best practice in working with children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse or exploitation, listening to survivors, supporting mothers/carers and working with young perpetrators.

Speakers include: Diane Abbott MP; Prof Liz Kelly, chair of the End Violence Against Women Campaign; and NSPCC

Who should attend?

- Professionals working with children, young people and families
- Domestic/Sexual Violence co-ordinators
- Organisations working with children and young people

Email **info@niaproject.plus.com** or call **020 7683 1270** for more information.

Training

Cambridge Women's Resources Centre are running a six week course for women only on how to develop the skills and confidence to run their own business.

Date: 3 October 2008

Time: 9.15am – 3pm for six weeks

Venue: Cambridge Women's Resources Centre, Hooper Street, Cambridge CB1 2NZ

Cost: £95 (£65 concessionary). A bursary towards the course fee may be available.

A crèche for pre-school children is available

Contact CWRC on **01223 321 148** or email **admin@cwrc.org.uk** or visit **www.cwrc.org.uk** for more information.

The Women's Design Service are offering free training sessions to support the launch of a new online resource for gender and the built environment: **www.gendersite.org**.

Everyone involved in the built environment world tries to meet the needs of their clients. Child-sized furniture is designed for nurseries, disabled parking bays are located next to entrances, sheltered housing sites are planned near post offices and shops. However, people are often unaware of the needs of women. With the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty there is now a legal obligation to consider those needs.

Date: 9 October 2008

Time: 2.30pm

Venue: The Building Centre, Store Street, London WC1E 7BT

To book, register at **www.gendersite.org** or email **gendersite@wds.org.uk**.

Rights of Women have developed this popular course: *Removing the barriers: domestic violence and securing women's position in the UK*, to enable participants to support women who have an insecure immigration status and are experiencing domestic violence. It offers a practical overview of immigration law and procedure.

Email **training@row.org.uk** or call **020 7251 6575/6** or visit **www.rightsofwomen.org.uk** for more detailed information.