

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC HOUSING STRATEGY FOR WALES

Introduction:

The National Assembly is fully committed to combating racism and to promoting racial equality throughout Wales and across all aspects of life. The Assembly works in partnership with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and other organisations to achieve this.

This consultation document describes the National Assembly's proposed strategic approach to identifying and meeting Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) housing needs, as part of its wider National Housing Strategy. The consultation document "Better Homes for People in Wales" which sets out the Assembly's proposals for housing policy in Wales makes specific reference to equality of opportunity in housing and recognises the need to take forward the BME housing agenda.

We recognise the need to improve the performance of all social housing providers in responding to the housing needs of BME people. This BME Strategy aims to help social landlords build on existing services for their clients, develop new initiatives and services where appropriate, and to ensure equality of opportunity and the empowerment of BME individuals and communities.

The BME Strategy provides a national framework capable of being applied locally by all social landlords in all areas of Wales regardless of the proportion of ethnic minority people in the local population. It can be applied equally to rural and urban areas.

The BME Strategy does not apply to asylum seekers. This policy is dealt with by the Home Office via the National Asylum Support Service. The National Assembly will develop, consult on and issue good practice and regulatory guidance on the provision of housing services to asylum seekers separately.

This BME Strategy applies to all local authorities (LAs) and registered social landlords (RSLs) (referred to jointly in the BME Strategy as social landlords) and provides a framework within which all social landlords can best meet their obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Housing Act 1996.

These obligations are reflected in the Assembly's Regulatory Requirements for RSLs which state that RSLs should ensure that there is no unfair discrimination on the basis of race, sex or disability in the provision of housing, services or employment.

Both LAs and RSLs should seek to raise their standards through the application of Best Value principles. Best Value offers the opportunity to consider the relevance and quality of services available to BME people and to make changes where necessary. Best Value performance indicators also require LAs to report on their progress in adopting the CRE's standard for

local government and whether they follow the CRE code of practice in rented housing. RSLs and LAs should also be aware that the CRE will also be developing new codes of practice to assist these bodies in carrying out their duties under the Act and they also have an enforcement role should public bodies not comply.

The BME Strategy complies with the National Assembly's duties under the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and under the Government of Wales Act 1999 in respect of discharging its functions with due regard to the principles of equality of opportunity and sustainable development. The BME Strategy is also fully consistent with the three major themes set out in Better Wales:

- Sustainable development - meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own;
- Tackling social disadvantage - the development of an inclusive society where everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential; and
- Equal opportunities - the promotion of a culture in which diversity is valued and equality of opportunity is a reality.

The Assembly is committed to partnership working arrangements across its business and this principle fully applies to the BME Housing Strategy. A partnership approach will be adopted to implement the BME Strategy, involving key agencies such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the All-Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA), the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations (WFHA), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales (CIH), TPAS Cymru and the Welsh Tenants' Federation (WTF) (subsequently referred to in this document as the "key partners").

Background:

The development of the BME Strategy has taken place against a backdrop of concerns about how well the housing needs of ethnic minority groups are currently being met by Welsh local authority housing departments and registered social landlords.

It is also timely in light of the Lawrence Inquiry report (MacPherson, 1999) which highlighted the need for an overall aim to eliminate racial prejudice and disadvantage and to demonstrate fairness in all areas of public life. The Inquiry stressed the need for all agencies to tackle the issue of institutional racism which it defined as:

“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, thoughtless and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people”.

Given the definition of institutional racism, and the many ways in which it can manifest itself, organisations should develop a comprehensive race equality strategy that addresses and promotes race equality to ensure that institutional racism is challenged and eradicated.

The BME Strategy seeks to address the findings of the Assembly-commissioned report “From the Margins to the Centre - Assessing the need for a Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy in Wales” by Mutale Nyoni and the subsequent recommendations of the National Housing Strategy Task Group.

The report highlighted a number of areas which are critical for improving access to social housing for people from BME communities. Specific concerns included the lack of involvement of BME people and organisations in the management of social housing, the continuing problems of racist harassment and the need to address specific requirements in terms of design and layout of accommodation. The report also emphasised the key role to be played by LAs in developing strategies to assess and meet BME needs, and also the importance of the Best Value regime in ensuring that LAs meet this responsibility. Also recommended is the need for further research in this area to establish an accurate picture of BME people in Wales, and in particular of local assessments of their needs.

The report found that whilst most social landlords have adopted policies on equal opportunities, only a small number have adopted specific strategies to meet BME housing needs. The report also highlighted a number of key areas which, it recommended, social landlords need to take account of. These are incorporated in the draft BME Strategy.

Definition of BME

In the BME Strategy the term black and minority ethnic (BME) has been used as the name favoured by the Commission for Racial Equality for minority groups recognised as falling under the Race Relations Act 1976.

Consultation

BME individuals and communities must be involved in the development of this BME Strategy, and of local strategies, from the outset. As well as direct consultation with BME representatives by the Assembly, social landlords should work with their tenants and local community groups to ensure this involvement at a local level.

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Development and dissemination of guidance and good practice

- *There are many examples of good practice in the delivery of housing to BME communities. Social landlords should look to these in improving their services to their BME communities.*

The Assembly will work with LAs, RSLs and other relevant organisations to develop and disseminate guidance and good practice in the assessment of housing need and in developing local housing strategies. Results from all projects funded under the Assembly's housing management grant programme, which seeks to promote good practice and support innovation in housing management, will continue to be disseminated to all interested parties.

The Assembly will review its Regulatory Requirements for RSLs and provide, where necessary, and in conjunction with the Audit Commission, Best Value guidance to LAs, in order to strengthen the implementation of the BME Strategy.

The Assembly's conference "Breaking Down Barriers" was held in Cardiff on 25th October 2000. The conference brought together over 200 participants from all over Wales, raising the profile of BME issues amongst housing practitioners and highlighting the need for positive action to tackle disadvantage and discrimination. A conference report will be issued in April 2001 and circulated to all delegates, social landlords, BME and housing organisations in Wales.

The Assembly is providing funding for a BME housing project run by Cardiff Community Housing Association (CCHA) - one element of which is to promote good practice on (BME) housing services and needs to social landlords.

The Assembly also contributed to the CIH/Housing Corporation/Federation of Black Housing Organisations guidance "Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies - a good practice guide" which it recommends to all social landlords in Wales.

The CRE has issued codes of practice for the promotion of race equality and prevention of discrimination in the areas of employment, rented housing and non-rented housing.

The Assembly will be working with the CRE, and a number of other organisations, to develop the new codes of practice under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

Identifying BME housing needs

- *To be able to deliver effective housing services LAs and RSLs must understand and address local housing needs through effective joint-working.*

LAs have a statutory duty to assess housing need and are responsible for assessing local needs and defining priorities. LAs and RSLs should work together, and with other stakeholders such as community organisations, to establish the profile and meet the needs of BME communities at the local level.

The Assembly will continue to encourage LAs to carry out detailed local assessments of need with the aid of grant funding and advice.

The Assembly will commission research into the situation and needs of BME communities in Wales at both national and local level and review every three years to help evaluate the effectiveness of the BME Strategy. A partnership approach will be adopted to identify necessary research, involving the key partners.

General guidance on local housing needs assessment was published by the Welsh Office in 1999.

Advice on assessing the needs of BME communities is contained in the CIH/Housing Corporation/Federation of Black Housing Organisations guidance "Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies - a good practice guide".

Guidance on general housing research is published by the CIH (Robertson and McLaughlin, 1996). Specific guidance on assessing BME housing needs is available from the Housing Corporation (London Research Centre and Lemos and Crane, 1998) and in the National Housing Federation's "Race Equality in Access to Housing Services".

Development of housing provision

- *The needs of BME individuals and families should be recognised and addressed in the development and adaptation of accommodation.*

Social landlords should take account of the particular requirements of BME communities in the planning and design of new and improved social housing. They should consider, for example, the significance for BME households of the size and type of accommodation planned, the need to take account of any religious requirements, and ways of making services more culturally sensitive.

LAs and RSLs should liaise closely with the Assembly on new build programmes in this respect, particularly with regard to the development of larger accommodation. Joint working between LAs and RSLs should provide the opportunity to discuss the mix of homes provided on sites and any

possibility of providing suitable homes for BME groups. To address the specific needs of the BME community a sensitive approach to the detailed design of the houses and the way they fit in with their surroundings is essential.

The National Assembly is committed to the inclusion of BME housing needs when setting design standards for social housing.

Guidance to RSLs on accommodating ethnic diversity requirements will be reflected in the Assembly's Development Quality Requirements (DQR).

Advice on culturally sensitive design is also given in the NHF/Home Housing Trust's report "Accommodating Diversity (Housing design in a multicultural society)" 1998.

Service delivery

The Assembly expects social landlords to have in place allocations systems which are fair and accessible to ethnic minorities and which are periodically reviewed to ensure that they are not discriminatory.

Social landlords should review their current policies to see how they affect BME communities and ensure that new policies or models for allocating housing are assessed thoroughly to avoid discrimination against BME people. Eligibility requirements and procedures that grade applicants for allocations should not directly or indirectly discriminate on the grounds of race.

Social landlords should jointly review and monitor nomination arrangements to ensure fairness and equality of access.

Social landlords must ensure that people in housing need are made aware of the housing and other services they offer, via a range of information methods.

Social landlords should encourage BME applicants to make informed choices and decisions on offers of accommodation. Applicants should not be penalised for refusing accommodation in areas with which they are not familiar and which they fear may leave them isolated or prey to harassment.

The National Assembly for Wales is undertaking a topic audit examining the extent and nature of social housing provider policies which can be used to exclude applicants from housing waiting lists for reasons such as anti-social behaviour, rent arrears etc. It is investigating whether certain groups in society are being disadvantaged by such policies and within this, is considering whether a racial element exists. As part of the audit the Assembly will identify the gap between policies and practices with regard to service delivery.

The National Assembly will bring forward proposals for wide-ranging discussion on future allocations policy and will establish a Sounding Board involving external organisations, including those charged with promoting equality, to ensure that full consideration is given to this issue.

Guidance on equality in the allocation of housing is given in the CIH/Housing Corporation/Federation of Black Housing Organisations guidance “Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies – a good practice guide”.

The CRE’s has issued codes of practice for the promotion of race equality and the prevention of discrimination in the areas of employment and rented housing. The Assembly will be working with the CRE, and a number of other organisations, to develop the new codes of practice under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

Local BME housing strategies

- *All social landlords should have in place a clear, written, flexible and locally sensitive BME housing strategy*

Local BME housing strategies should:

be developed with other relevant social landlords and with voluntary and other statutory organisations;
fully involve all appropriate stakeholders and local BME communities;
link into wider local authority policies on regeneration and social exclusion;
set out the roles of the landlord and partner organisations; and
be periodically reviewed and, where necessary, improved.

BME communities and individuals and other stakeholders must be involved at the outset in the development of local strategies. This will establish “ownership” of the strategy at an early stage and will ensure that issues which matter to the community are included. These same stakeholders must also be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

LAs and RSLs operating in the same geographical area should consider how their organisation’s BME strategies will complement each other in an effective and mutually supportive way. Multi-agency strategies may be considered.

Social landlords should enable BME applicants to make informed decisions on offers of accommodation. Allocations policies should be sensitive to racist harassment issues in lettings and maximise the potential for applicants to live in areas they are familiar with or that would minimise isolation.

The Assembly, in reviewing the Housing Strategy and Operational Plan process, will consider how local housing strategies can best address the housing needs of socially excluded, vulnerable and minority groups.

Detailed advice on designing a local BME housing strategy is contained in the CIH/Local Government Association good practice guide “Designing Local Housing Strategies” and the CIH/Housing Corporation/Federation of Black Housing Organisations guidance “Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies – a good practice guide”.

Tackling racist harassment

- *The area of racist harassment is one which requires particular efforts by social landlords and other organisations to work to current models of best practice*

All social landlords should have, as part of their overall BME policy and as part of their wider strategy for tackling anti-social behaviour, robust and effective racist harassment policies in place, which should also include support for victims of harassment. This applies to all social landlords regardless of whether or not there is a perceived racist harassment problem in their areas.

Social landlords should ensure that all stakeholder organisations are involved in drawing up and implementing their racist harassment policies. They should also be involved in any multi-agency initiatives on tackling racist harassment and racist crime such as local crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Strategies should contain the key elements of: support for people suffering harassment and the need to act in accordance with their priorities; action against the perpetrators; and the prevention of further incidents.

Guidance on tackling racist harassment is given in the CIH/Housing Corporation/Federation of Black Housing Organisations guidance "Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies - a good practice guide".

The Assembly has provided financial support to establish and run free of charge in 2001-2002 the Lemos and Crane RaceActionNet website. The website, aimed at organisations and individuals tackling racist harassment, provides access to a range of contacts, up-to-date information and good practice.

Other useful sources of information on dealing with racist harassment include Lemos (1993/1997), Seager and Jefferey (1994), Chahal and Julianne (1999).

Empowering people from BME communities

Social landlords should review their policies on employment, training and contracting and consider what action can be taken to achieve change and evaluate progress. Social landlords should engage with BME communities via capacity building and training programmes to ensure participation both in employment and service delivery.

The National Assembly will review the equal opportunities policies of all RSLs via the audit process. The Audit Commission will monitor compliance with the requirements of race relations legislation via best value inspections.

The Assembly and the Welsh Local Government Association are in the process of agreeing generic equalities standards which will include a comprehensive equalities policy. This will require each service area - including housing - to develop clear objectives and to establish structures of responsibility at departmental level to progress action plans.

- **Management**

RSLs should review the composition of their Boards, to ensure they represent the ethnic diversity of their local communities.

Where necessary, RSLs should take action to encourage more, appropriately-skilled BME members onto their Boards, and for ongoing support and training to both encourage and retain their involvement.

The Assembly will monitor the level of BME representation on Boards and any barriers. We will identify best practice which encourages BME representation and will consider ways to increase representation, issuing good practice guidance as necessary.

As a first step towards this, a review of the composition of all RSL boards will be undertaken by the Housing Directorate's regulatory team in the first half of 2001-2002.

- **Staff**

LAs and RSLs should review their recruitment, training and career opportunities for BME staff at all levels, to ensure, as far as possible, that they represent the ethnic diversity of their local communities. Particular consideration should be given to the recruitment and development opportunities available to enable staff to progress to senior level and to providing training opportunities to overcome traditional barriers.

The National Assembly will monitor recruitment levels and career development opportunities of BME staff as appropriate. The National Assembly will also review the effectiveness and applicability of positive action programmes such as Positive Action Training in Housing (PATH).

The National Assembly will work with the CRE and others to ensure that appropriate diversity training is accessible to all social landlords.

- **Contractors**

Social landlords should review their contracting procedures and follow good practice in ensuring equality for BME contractors. Contracting and appointment procedures should not directly or indirectly discriminate on the grounds of race.

Social landlords should require all contractors to comply with basic equality

standards in their employment practices and, where necessary, raise awareness of such issues with them.

The Assembly will work with other stakeholders to identify and promote good practice in the employment of BME contractors.

The National Assembly will consider supporting initiatives to identify BME contractors to ensure that information on and awareness of them is widely available.

The Assembly funded BME housing project, run by Cardiff Community Housing Association, aims to facilitate increased ethnic minority representation in housing organisations. The project aims to be fully inclusive across Wales, and all BME groups and representatives will be asked to contribute.

Social landlords should consider the guidance on the legal framework for race equality in employment as contained in the CRE's Race Relations Code of Practice in Employment and the CRE's report on standards for race equality for employers. Landlords should also be aware of the CRE standard "Race Equality Means Quality" which provides local authorities on the recruitment, retention and progression of BME staff.

Local authorities should also take into account the CRE's standards for local government.

Guidance on training can be found in the CRE's curriculum guide on race equality training.

Social landlords should consider signing up to the CRE Leadership challenge. The initiative invites people with positions of influence in all sectors of society to give a personal commitment to promote racial equality.

Further advice on equality issues relating to the selection of contractors is available in the CRE's publication "Racial Equality and Council Contractors" 1995.

Communication and consultation

- *Few BME tenants are involved in tenant participation initiatives or are aware of opportunities to get involved.*

It is a clear principle of Best Value that service users, and potential users, are consulted. Social landlords should give particular consideration to engaging those individuals and groups who have traditionally been under-represented.

Social landlords should publicise their housing services to local BME groups as part of their wider public information strategy. Consideration should be

given to information being produced in a variety of mediums and minority languages and to the ways in which the information can be channelled to reach the target audience. Social landlords should explore, with BME communities, non-eurocentric models of communication to ensure inclusiveness and genuine commitment. BME communities should be consulted on the development of all relevant information.

In establishing Tenant Participation Compacts, social landlords should review their existing tenant participation strategies and adopt good Practice. Social landlords should take positive steps to ensure the inclusion of BME people. Compacts will need to be developed to reflect these distinct experiences.

RSLs and LAs should, in reviewing their tenant participation structures, take into account good practice in promoting the involvement and empowerment of BME tenants. In developing tenant participation strategies within an ethnically diverse neighbourhood, social landlords should establish which different ethnic groups are resident in the area. The results of the 2001 Census should assist RSLs and LAs in this.

Social landlords should consider the extent to which tenants' and residents' representative bodies are representative. They will need to work proactively with tenants' organisations to ensure that BME tenants are encouraged to join in with tenant participation processes. Landlords should also encourage tenants' organisations to undertake diversity training, regardless of the proportion of BME people in the community.

The Assembly will work with RSLs, LAs and other relevant organisations to develop and disseminate guidance and good practice in the participation and empowerment of BME tenants. The Assembly will also initiate and fund good practice tenant participation initiatives which empower BME tenants.

In developing guidance on "recognition criteria" for tenants' and residents' groups, in conjunction with the Welsh Tenants' Federation, the Assembly will ensure that due regard is given to the inclusion of equal opportunities.

The Assembly will consider supporting projects that can be replicated across the social housing sector in Wales under its housing management grant programme e.g. diversity training for staff, RSL boards and LA members; capacity building for both staff and tenants; mentoring schemes for staff; production of culturally sensitive information on housing.

Advice on involving BME people and stakeholders is contained in the CIH/Housing Corporation/Federation of Black Housing Organisations guidance "Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies - a good practice guide". Further advice on the involvement of BME tenants is available from the CRE and TPAS.

Developing networks and forging partnerships

Social landlords should seek to deliver local policies via a co-ordinated approach, in partnership with other key local agencies (such as Race Equality Councils) and community organisations. This multi-agency approach should begin with the development of local consultation methods.

The Assembly funded BME housing project, run by Cardiff Community Housing Association, aims to increase awareness of and engagement with relevant groups and communities.

The Assembly will initiate and support the establishment of a Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy Review Group. The Group will comprise of key agencies such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the All-Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA), the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations (WFHA), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales (CIH) - the "key partners". As well as reviewing the implementation and progress of the BME Strategy, the Group will provide a forum for discussion on BME housing issues in Wales.

The Assembly will consider funding appropriate national and regional events which seek to promote equality of opportunity and endorse the benefits of multi-agency, partnership working.

Supporting BME-led housing organisations

A BME RSL is defined as one with 80% or more of its governing body drawn from BME communities. There are currently no BME RSLs in Wales.

A fundamental element of the Assembly funded BME housing project is a study on the feasibility of establishing a black-led housing organisation in Wales.

The Assembly will consider new registrations of BME-led RSLs where applicants meet the specified registration criteria, which includes standards for viability and evidence of support from the local authority in whose area they wish to operate.

Reviewing the BME Strategy

Progress will be reviewed and improvements made to the BME Strategy in the light of experience.

The BME Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the BME Housing Strategy Review Group. The membership of the Group is at annex A. Membership will also be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its continued independence, that it remains representative and has relevant expertise.

In future years baseline research will assist in the evaluation of the BME Strategy. This data will be used to inform any changes that may be required to strengthen or reinforce the policy.

The National Assembly will consult on the development of Performance Indicators which will assist in monitoring progress in the implementation of equality standards, including those included in this BME Strategy.

BME HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW GROUP

John Bader	Director, Housing Directorate, National Assembly for Wales
Alun Morgan	Housing Directorate, National Assembly for Wales
Charles Willy	Equality Policy Unit, National Assembly for Wales
John Duggan	Equality Policy Unit, National Assembly for Wales
Dr Mashuq Ally	Head of the Commission for Racial Equality
Peter Verma	Chair of the AWEMA Housing Committee
Mutale Nyoni	Vice-Chair of the AWEMA Housing Committee/ BAWSO
Keith Edwards	Director, CIH in Wales
Representative	WFHA
Representative	WLGA
Representative	BME community
Representative	WTF
Representative	TPAS Cymru

Useful contacts

Commission for Racial Equality in Wales
14th Floor
Capital Tower
Greyfriars Road
Cardiff
CF10 3AG

Tel: 029 20388977
Fax: 029 20399680
www.cre.gov.uk

All Wales Ethnic Minority Association
14th Floor
Capital Tower
Greyfriars Road
Cardiff
CF10 3AG

National Assembly
Housing Directorate
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Tel: 029 20826793
Tel: 029 20825136
www.wales.gov.uk

BME Housing Project
c/o Cardiff Community Housing Association
2 Ocean Way
Ocean Park
Cardiff
CF24 5TG

Tel: 029 20462142
Fax: 029 20468444

Black Association of Women Step Out
109 St Mary Street
Cardiff
CF10 1DX

Tel: 029 20343154
Fax: 029 20390061
e-mail: Bawso@btinternet.com

Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales
4 Purbeck House
Lambourne Crescent
Cardiff Business Park
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5GJ

Tel: 029 2076 5760
Fax: 029 2076 5761
www.cih.org
Wales@cih.org

Welsh Federation of Housing Associations
Norbury House
Norbury Road
Fairwater
Cardiff
CF15 3AS

Tel: 029 20303150
Fax: 029 20560668
www.welshhousing.org.uk
e-mail: wha@welshhousing.org.uk (first_name-surname@welshhousing.org.uk)

Welsh Local Government Association
10-11 Raleigh Walk
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF10 5LN

Tel: 029 20468600
Fax: 029 20468601
www.wlga.gov.uk
e-mail: first name.surname@wlga.gov.uk

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru
2nd Floor
Transport House
1 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF10 9SD

Tel: 029 20237303
Fax: 029 20345597
E-mail: enquiries@tpascymru.demon.co.uk
www.tpascymru.org.uk

Welsh Tenants' Federation
2nd Floor
Transport House
1 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF10 9SD

Tel: 029 20645168
Fax: 029 20342627

e-mail: welshtenantsfed@cardiffw.freemove.co.uk

Federation of Black Housing Organisations
Basement Offices
137 Euston Road
LONDON NW1 2AA

Tel: 020 7388 1560
Fax: 020 7383 0613

www.fbho.co.uk
e-mail: fbho@teleregion.co.uk

Housing Corporation
149 Tottenham Court Road
London
W1P 0BN

Tel: 020 7393 2000
Fax; 020 7393 2111 or 2011

www.housingcorp.gov.uk
e-mail: first name.surname@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk

Race Equality First
The Friary Centre
Cardiff
CF10 4AA

Tel: 020 2022 4097
Fax: 029 2022 9339

e-mail: race.equality@enablis.co.uk

Valleys Race Equality Council
Pace Building
Tyfica Road
Pontypridd
CF37 2DE

Tel: 01443 401 555
Fax: 01443 403 111

e-mail: valrec@valrec.freemove.co.uk

Swansea Race Equality Council
2nd Floor
37-38 The Kingsway
Swansea
SA1 5DF

Tel: 01792 457035
Fax: 01792 459374

e-mail: sb.rec@virgin.net

South East Wales Race Equality Council
124 Commercial Street
Newport
NP20 1LY

Tel: 01633 250 006
Fax: 01633 264 075

e-mail: sewrec@ukonline.co.uk

North Wales Race Equality Network
11-13 Wynnstay Road
Colwyn Bay
LL29 8NB

Tel: 01492 535850
Fax: 01492 539801