

INITIATIVES AIMED AT MAKING SERVICES MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE SOMALI COMMUNITY

Since the Somali Community Development Report was issued in 2002, a wide range of initiatives have been undertaken by the Council and other service providers aimed at:

- Finding out more about the community and its needs
- Making services more responsive to the community's needs
- Helping the community to settle, integrate and develop its own networks, businesses, organisations and activities

Between 2002 and 2004 £161,000 was allocated from the NRF to four projects directly targeted at the Somali Community:

- Somali Community Integration (£35,000)
- Somali Development Service (£65,000)
- Somali Education and Community Centre (£39,000)
- Somali Media Project (£22,000)

Interpreting and Translation

- Translation of key leaflets and forms
- Additional interpreting capacity and monitoring of requests
- Significant improvement of interpreting services in NHS, particularly by Eastern Leicester Primary Care Trust

Advice

- Council's Welfare and Employment Rights Service (WERAS) and the NRF-funded Healthy Income Project have both expanded services in Highfields and St Matthews
 - WERAS has also issued benefits advice packs in Somali through its European funded New Arrivals Project
 - It has also issued a Somali language information pack on people's rights to a National Insurance number (this, together with legal challenges to the Department of Work and Pensions, has significantly alleviated the problem of delays in obtaining NI numbers)
- Creation of Refugee and Asylum Seekers Advice Project in September 2001:
 - Project jointly financed by Council/European Refugee Fund

- 25% of those who secured additional benefits through the project in 2003/4 were Somali
- Project also resolves housing problems and includes a post assisting refugees to gain employment
- Forthcoming initiatives include:
 - Council's Welfare and Employment Rights Advice Service (WERAS) to provide Somali interpreters at advertised sessions from summer 2004
 - WERAS New Arrivals Project to run benefits advice sessions for Somali community groups

Social Care and Health

- Support for unaccompanied asylum seekers and families under Children Act
- Assistance in understanding how services work in UK
- Assistance to those with disabilities, daily living and other practical issues
- Close working between Social Care & Health and the NHS to sort out access to GPs and other NHS services
- Several initiatives by Eastern Leicester Primary Care Trust e.g. development of greater understanding of the community's health needs and work to improve registration with GPs
- Launch of Somali Health Strategy in early 2004
- Provision of support for Somali Development Service work among women and children

Education

- Allocation of resources based on pupil mobility
- Translated information packs for pupils and parents
- Guidance for schools on best practice for the admission and induction of pupils
- Appointment of Somali mentors to work with primary and secondary pupils
- Commissioning of research by Education and Lifelong Learning from Staffordshire University on New Arrivals (including the Somali

Community) together with a range of actions to enhance the support provided to new arrivals

Forthcoming initiatives include:

- Education and Lifelong Learning Working Group on Admissions which will look at matters related to the admission, assessment and induction of newly arrived pupils (including those from the Somali Community)

Lifelong Learning

- Attraction of young people into existing provision e.g. Highfields Youth & Community Centre
- Ensuring that young people are supported through personal help/advisers e.g. Connexions
- Creation of Somali book and music collections in five City libraries
- Completion of Resolving Differences/Building Communities project in March 2004 (final report currently being prepared)
 - project included funding of three Somali youth organisations and Somali Development Services 2002-4
 - projects at Regent College, Babington Community Technology College and Leicester College mostly working with Somali young people (all three colleges now have Somali workers), including:
 - production of a Welcome Pack at Babington, which has included young people from other backgrounds
 - Holding of a Somali Education Conference at Regent in 2003 attracting a wide range of members of the community as well as students from other backgrounds and educators
- Project has enabled youth service to have a Somali youth worker (part of the Detached Youth Work team at St Marks)
 - It has also facilitated the training and subsequent hiring of another Somali worker as a Sports Tutor
- African Caribbean Citizens Forum having a Somali member

Forthcoming initiatives include:

- Employment by Lifelong Learning and Community Development of former Resolving Differences Project Manager as a Community Cohesion Manager within the Division – with a brief that includes issues relating to the Somali Community including accessing funding opportunities

- Re-opening of Highfields Youth and Community Centre with extensively expanded facilities including sports facilities
- Police undertaking a programme of community development activities on St Matthews Estate

Housing

- Housing needs of community recognised in Housing Strategies and Plans
- Translation of Housing Options leaflets into Somali Community languages
- Since November 2002 Housing Management have employed two Somali Support Workers for a period of two years, based in St Matthews (one has subsequently been appointed to a permanent position as a Housing Support Officer)
 - Initiative aimed at assisting the development and delivery of services to the community, and to provide employment opportunities to Somalis

Forthcoming initiatives include:

- Launch of Housing Department Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy which recognises the especial needs of Somali Community (e.g. the need for large family housing), following extensive consultation with the community
- Housing Department continuing to work with partners to address the shortage of large family housing in Leicester through 2004-2006 Affordable Housing Strategy
- Implementation of Affordable Housing Strategy priority encouraging social housing providers to work in partnership with Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Associations to increase provision for ethnic minority communities, including the Somali Community
- Housing and Regeneration and Culture Departments continuing to work with private sector landlords and Somali tenants to improve tenancy relations and housing standards (including through enforcement action if necessary)

Employment, Training, Business Development and Culture

- Provision of business support by LACBA
- Significant growth in number of Somali businesses (now nearly 40)

- Launch in May 2004 of Leicestershire Somali Business Association (Lesba) with over fifty members
- Promotion and tailoring of Council's Overseas Qualification Development Project to Somali Community, including outreach sessions at Oak Street Centre for graduates
- Training projects provided for some members of the Somali Community through the Refugee Employment Project
- PSA target to increase employment for new communities in the City
- Launch in February 2004 of Somali language slot on BBC Radio Leicester as part of *Into Africa* programme

Forthcoming initiatives include:

- New NRF-funded project aimed at improving the employment rate of target groups, including minority ethnic communities such as the Somali community (specific information for the Somali community on the project will be produced)

Community Safety

- Crime prevention work with the Somali Community in St Matthews
- Production by the Police of paper entitled 'Policing Somali Communities: Background, Beliefs and Best Practice'
- Wide range of activities undertaken by Leicester Witness Cocoon in support of Somali families