



ANNUAL REVIEW 2017/18



Phoenix Yard
Main
Entrance

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FUNDERS

Leicester City Council

Big Lottery

Lloyds Bank Foundation

Comic Relief

Avtar Sadiq Singh(13/04/41 – 28/01/18)

Farewell to Avtar – One of Our Champions



Photograph by: Ambrose Musiyiwa / CivicLeicester

Avtar received an award at our 50th Anniversary event in 2017 for challenging race discrimination for 50+ years.

Avtar was an executive member of The REC during its early years (1967), returning to the board in 2015. Avtar worked tirelessly to attack and address race discrimination and racial harassment in various roles, such as: founder member of Interracial Solidarity Campaign – 1965 on behalf of Indian Workers Association (local/national); membership of Unity Against Racism; Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL) (locally/nationally); and, trainer to public sector and trade unions.

Avtar was also an officer of the Commission for Racial Equality and the then Leicester Racial Equality Council respectively. He worked across the East Midlands in a Race Equality Officer's capacity, and was a continuous advocate for anti-racist solutions locally, nationally and internationally both physically and through his articles.

Avtar's memory will live on through his articles, his poetry, his captured speeches and more so in the lives of those his political activism touched both here and abroad.

Forward Championing Racial Justice

In its attempt to avoid explosions, TREC addresses discriminatory practices by identifying its location then devising processes and practices to address these by using targeted approaches to a holistic end. We believe unless the personal, cultural and structural overlays are addressed simultaneously we are dealing with but a percentage of the problem.

To that end, at the personal level we work with the individual victims and perpetrators to determine and dissect individual practices of prejudice, working through origins, understandings and the psychological impact through introspective reflections. This is undertaken through a blend of advocacy, support and education.

Overlaying this is the cultural element which feed the social values, norms and commonalities. This area requires addressing as it influences the individual and gathers momentum from the structural levels of race discrimination. Through community and public education activities TREC captures audiences and create spaces for whole learning. This is undertaken through exhibition material, public meetings, media debates and working with groups (at their request) to build confidence to have the discussions, create the policies and necessary follow up in practice.

The structural level of discrimination lies in the form of social divisions, institutionalised inequalities and supports social divisions thereby affecting access to resources, opportunities and outcomes. Here businesses, media, governments and the public sector all require the tools which create the means to redress imbalances historically and present.

Our work within the Equality and Human Rights legislation strives to reduce the impact of discriminatory practices on individuals as employees or the receivers of goods and services.

Our directed work with the public sector and education establishments (nationally) focus on workforce representation, equality proofing policies and learning exercises to heighten awareness.



Summary of the Work Programme Delivered throughout 2017-2018

■ Sharing & Learning Experiences

- Co-ordinate & Co-Chair Refugee & Asylum Seekers Multi Agency Forum (MAF).
- Membership of & contribution to Social Welfare Advice Forum.
- Membership of and contribution to East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership.
- Delivery of 'Life in the UK' workshops.
- Attendance, contribution and equality training to Leicestershire Equality Challenge Group and its accompanying Tasks Groups.

Race Equality Training programmes delivered: 6

Papers on championing race equality delivered: 6

Training opportunities for staff continuous professional development: 4

TREC work delivered by 7.84 FTE staff members and 15 volunteers

Goal:

Refugees/New Arrivals increase their awareness of understanding their tenancy rights and responsibilities, thus retaining their tenancy. People attending tenancy rights and responsibility workshops to improve their knowledge: 60 people per year.

People accessing support will report reduced use of emergency and/or temporary accommodation: 25 people per year.

We have seen 168 clients with housing/tenancy issues at TREC offices. However during this period we have identified that the majority of clients coming through the asylum system have very little insight into their rights and/or responsibilities when they become refugees, are rehoused and become tenants.

This led us to contact the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to discuss doing some preparation work in this area. We now work in conjunction with Red Cross and the City of Sanctuary in delivering a "Life in the UK" workshop that explains basic issues that need to be addressed when refugee status is gained, housing – how to get it and keep it is addressed on a basic level as often there is far too much information to grasp all at once. They are however informed of what services they have to budget for as many have never paid for utilities before and are quite surprised that it is even a requirement. Many clients are totally unequipped to manage a budget for utilities especially if they have been in the asylum system a long time as they have had no previous responsibility for doing so.

Shortly after accommodation is secured, clients are invited to a tenancy support group workshop where as a group we can go over any outstanding issues or hiccups and they in turn can learn from each other's experiences. To date four workshops have taken place at TREC, two at the City of Sanctuary drop in and, two with Red Cross delivered at Kennedy House (NASS property). They are assured TREC services are still here to support with further queries, but they are encouraged to become independent and slowly weaned off our services though the time limit varies due to individuals capabilities.

■ Tenancy Support



A large neglected area of support needed is to assist with mental ill-health issues and loneliness. Many of our clients have suffered horrendous experiences and it is often when they are finally settled that post-traumatic stress (PST) kicks in. Loneliness too is a big issue after sometimes spending years in groups with other Asylum Seekers and never having their own space or being totally alone. These feelings have been described as traumatic as the journey here itself. This area requires a lot more input.

Volunteers have been a great asset in helping to deliver tenancy support mainly to help with the administrative side but also in thought storming sessions to overcome areas that TREC have faced difficulties in. Connecting utility services requires meter readings and some of our clients have no idea whatsoever in how to do this. From numerous issues of troublesome resettlement we are discussing attempting to recruit a volunteer group of support workers to help with meter readings, DIY jobs, and to help familiarise new tenants in new areas.

Case Study 1

One of our achievements has been working with a client suffering from post-traumatic stress and who presented himself almost daily to start with in a severe state of depression. He had been known previously to speak some English but he had slipped so deep that he was hardly communicating in his first language of Farsi. All we could fathom out was that he wanted a flat. Upon further investigation and support from colleagues who had worked with him previously it was discovered he was living in a shared house with people who did not understand his depression or symptoms of stress. His application for housing had been cancelled by the housing department as he did not attend an appointment arranged by them. We attempted to get it reinstated but they were adamant that his case was closed. It was only after working with him very intensely and gaining his trust that we managed to get to the bottom of his situation.

He had in fact missed his appointment with the housing department due to the fact that his appointment time had coincided with the same time his mental health was in havoc and he was receiving support from the mental health crisis team.

This was ironic as he was attempting to get rehoused on mental health grounds. With support from TREC's Snr. Officer his housing application was eventually reinstated and he was rehoused in an individual flat. He was then supported in all areas of setting this tenancy up and as is currently still living there. Another area of support was when it was discovered he hadn't submitted his sick note to the DWP and therefore had gone for many weeks without benefit and, due to his withdrawal and depression no one had realised. This resulted in us getting him a back payment of over £1000. We liaised with his GP and mental health services on many occasions to ensure this client was supported effectively in all areas and it was only with everyone putting in their complete dedication that we managed to get this vulnerable clients life turned around.

A further success was achieved (with the support of the team) in gaining accommodation and all benefits to resettle a homeless client within 13 days. This was due again to good team working and co-operation from the client in being guided through the intricate system of housing and benefits.

Opening bank accounts and collecting Community Support Grant vouchers are another essential area that has required support. These processes which should be somewhat straightforward are often complicated by organisations not grasping that the transition from asylum seeker to refugee is often hampered by delays in government documentation. However good relations are being built up with NatWest bank in particular who appear quite supportive of refugees as new customers when others are not quite so accommodating.

Employability

Goal:

Refugees/New Arrivals overcome barriers into employment.

People enter into full time, part-time or self-employment: 20 people per year.

People register for further learning or volunteering to gain qualifications and skills to assist them in getting employment: 30 people per year.



We have provided one on one employment related support to a total of 409 individuals in the programme year. This has resulted in 76 people into employment, 3 into training and two into voluntary work.

We have seen a significant rise in the number of clients approaching us for help with applications for licences to work in the security industry. In the programme year we have handled 45 applications and 30 licences have been issued to our clients. This work is time consuming and fraught with difficulty from the point of view of a refugee applicant given the Security Industry Authority's (SIA) strict requirements. However, as a result of the rise in volume in this area of work we have been able to enter into an arrangement with the SIA which has enabled us to speed up the process and cut the waiting time for our clients. In one particular case, a client had been offered a job subject to confirmation that he would be issued with a licence. In normal circumstances it would not have been possible to resolve the matter sufficiently expeditiously, but through our new relationship with the SIA we were able to ensure the client got his licence on time and, as a consequence, the job.

Case Study 2

Samuel (a pseudonym) is a 28 year old refugee from Eritrea. He began life as a fisherman but was then called up for National Service in the Eritrean Army. National Service in Eritrean terms means an indeterminate period of service during which you can be called upon to engage in various tasks not necessarily related to military activities. Like many Eritreans, Samuel fled from this 'bondage' and sought asylum in the UK where he was subsequently given leave to remain.

He was eventually able to get a job working on a food production line through an employment agency but the hours were very limited and he was becoming depressed doing a job which stood in stark contrast to his work as a fisherman or even his military career. He was desperate to find alternative work and was intent upon working at Amazon as many other Eritrean refugees were already doing.

He came to us in early June 2017 and we were able to assist him by helping him to complete an application form for the company, while at the same time we strongly advised him to consider other alternatives in case he was unsuccessful. With this in mind we helped him to develop his job search skills and he started applying for other similar jobs. Eventually he did receive a positive response from Amazon but unfortunately it was an offer of work on the daytime shift which he was not interested in. By this point Samuel was becoming despondent but we continued to encourage him to apply for other jobs and six weeks later he successfully applied for a job at Neovia Logistics. Keen to continue expanding his skills he has since participated in a security training course and is currently applying for his SIA licence with our assistance. The key here is that it is very easy for someone to give up hope particularly if they have endured the life that many of our clients have. Often all they need is someone to believe in them and support them.

ESOL into Employment

Goal:

Refugees/New Arrivals increase their English and literacy skills, improving and resulting in further education/training/volunteering opportunities.

People feel less isolated and afraid because they can communicate in English: 25 people per year.

People can participate in everyday conversations and can access mainstream services on their own without requiring an interpreter: 35 people per year



We worked with 99 learners and 14 volunteers. A further five people have indicated an interest in volunteering within this area of work. The regular involvement of volunteers has meant that group work is consistently supplemented by personalised one-to-one support designed to meet individual learning needs.

Reflecting the current wider TREC client cohorts, most of the learners have been from Sudan and Eritrea, although there have been others, including people from Kurdistan and one from Venezuela.

In conjunction with our Tenancy Support Officer we have organised regular “chill and chat” sessions, a craft session and attended events including a mental health seminar and an exhibition at a local library. We are currently working with a representative of the local museum service to organise tailored guided visits to museums. We have also developed links with local sporting providers to facilitate the engagement of learners with local sporting activities.

We have established connections with the two Leicester universities and two local FE providers. This has enabled learners to avail themselves of further learning opportunities.

Various individuals and organisations have donated learning resources and we have developed an Amazon “wish list” to obtain further resources. This is being circulated via mailing lists and social media.



Coffee & Chat Session



Mosaic Making Craft Session



Donated Resources

Racial Minority Voluntary Sector Assembly (RMVSA)



Goal:

RMVSA influence and have a voice with policy and decision makers: Responded to Phase 2 of the development of Leicester's Local Plan (covering areas such as housing, employment, neighbourhood facilities, green space, public and retail areas, heritage and transport).

Developed draft manifesto put together by Assembly members to highlight areas where policy, planning and practice need to address race inequalities in areas such as health, education, employment, housing, services for old/young people etc.

Goal:

Build the capacity of Assembly members: Co-ordinated a special funding fair event for Assembly members - 62 individuals representing 43 racial minority voluntary sector organisations attended.

Targeted capacity building support to 9 members. Produced and distributed 17 Assembly e-newsletters.

Casework

Casework in a Nutshell

Area of Activity	Numbers
Accommodation/Tenancy Issues	168
Accommodation Gained	76
Employability Support	409
Employability Gained	76
ESOL Support	99
Race Discrimination Casework	73
Successful Outcomes	44
Immigration Support	223
Case Type at Levels 1, 2, and 3	2548
Number of Matters Addressed	8508
Benefits Generated (Overall Annual Total)	£1,793,962.48
Telephone & Website Enquiries	2517
Footfall	4500

Race Discrimination Casework



Case Study 3

RACE DISCRIMINATION – A SUCCESS STORY?

At a time when funding contracts are coming to an end, the challenge against race discrimination has never been more relevant. In the year April 2017 to March 2018 The Race Equality Centre assisted 73 clients with their race discrimination issues which occurred at their workplaces, in education or goods and services. Under the limited service jurisdiction TREC had to function under, the organisation was unfortunately unable to deal with 18 cases from concerned individuals who were resident outside the city of Leicester. In such instances, referrals were made to other REC's depending on the location of the complainant(s). One thing we are yet to comprehend is the lackadaisical attitude with which some employers, including local authorities, treat their BME staff and/or clients less favourable in terms of improper induction and training to pay and promotion. Our case study below is one such bizarre occurrence. Mrs Kizito (not the client's real name) attended TREC at the beginning of 2018. She had just received her disciplinary outcome letter which upheld the allegation against her. As a result her employers decided to impose disproportionate

sanctions against her, including issuing a final written warning valid for 12 months (noting here that the client had not received any previous oral or written warning). The allegation held against Mrs Kizito was that she had had serious absences during her probationary period in breach of the company's holiday policy.

Facts

At the time of the alleged acts Mrs Kizito was an employee of Company X serving a three-month probationary period for a permanent position. She had previously been hired in that role as an agency staff for a period of two years. Mrs Kizito had applied for a vacant position as a permanent staff and had accepted an offer conditioned on a three month successful probationary period. During this period Mrs Kizito had been on "leave" four times (one to two days on each occasion). The company operates an electronic staff attendance system whereby staff members are required to punch in their leave requests prior to proceeding on holiday. On each of those four occasions Mrs Kizito would enter her details onto the system, sometimes on the day before the proposed holiday. She will then not report to work believing that she was on leave. This occurred four times over a three-month period. She was never cautioned.

On the day of her probationary supervision meeting Mrs Kizito was informed that Company X will not be confirming her as a permanent staff because there were serious absences during her probationary period. Her manager then proceeded to explain that on four occasions Mrs Kizito had proceeded on leave without due authorisation. He further explained the company's leave policy at this point which required staff to file their requests for leave at least seven days prior to the intended leave date. The staff will then receive electronic notification that the requests had been granted or refused. Apparently, Mrs Kizito's requests were all refused. She was presented with a print out of the electronic records to prove this. To her utter surprise, she was suspended from working pending an investigation and possible disciplinary hearing which later resulted in a final written warning being placed in her file with strict deployment limitations.

Mrs Kizito was dumbfounded! She had never received any notice or warning of any sort, not least from her manager. She had worked extra hard to prove to her employers that she was capable of doing the job and was really looking forward to being confirmed as a permanent staff. Mrs Kizito came to TREC for assistance because she perceived she had been treated less favourably because of her racial origin.

TREC identified the issues raised as direct race discrimination by reason of Mrs Kizito's racial origin manifesting in her limited knowledge and understanding of the English language which led to her alleged offence. As such, TREC assisted Mr Kizito to prepare an appeal against the decision, citing race discrimination, pointing out the company's failure to give Mrs Kizito a proper induction and negligence in failing to identify or query her use or misunderstanding of Company X's leave policies after her first or even second absence. The company was requested to overturn its decision and reinstate Mrs Kizito's status. The appeal panel agreed with Mrs Kizito and overturned the disciplinary panel's decision.

The final notice was removed from her records & she received proper induction & training on the leave policies which has improved her understanding of the systems. She has now been confirmed as a permanent staff member.

Whilst to some this case may be seen as a success story, to TREC it is not. Unlawful discrimination has long since been outlawed in England and Wales and more recently by the implementation of the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, having to experience any form of unlawful discrimination in the 21st century, especially in a so-called civilised society is a disgrace to humanity. What is obvious to the affected minority is that there is a shifting from the obvious and blatant to a more subtle

system of discrimination with artificial decorations. Our great forefathers fought the fight; our fathers continued the fight; we are still fighting for equality and I foresee our children fighting this same fight. When will it end?

Conclusion

The road to promoting and seeking to implement a racially just, fair and equitable society which will enhance the quality of life for all citizens of Leicester & Leicestershire has been long and arduous. And to those who champion the debate, we salute you. Nonetheless, the race for "equality of arms" and opportunity/outcomes continues. Despite funding challenges which threaten this line of work, TREC looks optimistically into the future as it continues to educate, advocate and challenge for a just and fair society for all.

Immigration Casework

Case Study 4

Mr C was referred to us by the Red Cross as all his welfare benefits had been suspended for over three months and he was relying on a food bank as his immigration leave to remain had expired. Mr C had applied for further leave to remain three months ago and his application remained pending.



TREC wrote to the Home Office to get an update on the pending application and also contacted DWP requesting the benefits get unsuspending

TREC wrote to the Home Office to get an update on the pending application and also contacted DWP requesting the benefits get unsuspending as legally, Mr C's rights still remain the same while his immigration application was being processed. TREC also contacted Housing Benefits Department at Leicester City Council as he was threatened with eviction as well as the Housing Benefit section to make sure the rent was paid. Within two weeks of TREC contacting the Home Office, Mr C received a decision granting him further leave to remain.

All Mr C's benefits have been backdated.

Integration Casework

Case Study: 5

Mrs A suffers from severe depression and anxiety and her dependent sons are her carers. The family were granted leave to remain and were asked to move out of their NASS provided accommodation.

TREC assisted the family to register on the Council's waiting list and a referral was made to the Housing Options team at Leicester City Council. Due to a shortage in council accommodation they were offered a private 2 bed house and they moved in.

We assisted Mrs A to claim employment support allowance, child benefit, child tax credits and a community support grant. There was significant delay in the child benefits and tax credit being

processed, which were due to her younger son not receiving his Biometric resident card (BRP) to prove his immigration status.

Mrs A had been chasing this up with her solicitors for months but was told on every occasion to wait.

Mrs A was becoming more anxious and this was having an effect on her health so we decided eventually to email the Home Office directly and the BRP card was delivered in 7 days. Having a well-established long term relationship with the Home office team has helped us move on our clients cases faster.



Financial Activities

Statement of Financial Activities (including summary income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2018

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2018 Total Funds £	2017 Total Funds £
Income & Endowments From:					
Donations & Legacies		770		770	50
Charitable Activities		112,563	147,014	259,577	187,125
Other Trading Activities		4,639		4,639	1346
Investments		3		3	7
Total Income	2	117,975	147,014	264,989	188,528
Expenditure On: Charitable Activities	3	110,130	139,597	249,727	203,952
Total Expenditure		110,130	139,597	249,727	203,952
Net Expenditure		7,845	7,417	15,262	(15,424)
Transfers Between Funds	13				
Net Movement In Funds		7,845	7,417	15,262	(15,424)
Reconciliation Of Funds:					
Total Funds Brought Forward		40,006	258	40,264	55,688
Total Funds Carried Forward		478,851	7,675	55,526	40,264

Company Number 03140691 Balance Sheet at 31 March 2018

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2018 Total Funds £	2017 Total Funds £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible Assets	9	(6,000)	7,675	1,675	1,426
Current Assests					
Debtors	10	11,435		11,435	3,892
Cash at Bank & in Hand		80,483		80,483	86,682
		91,918		91,918	90,574
Liabilities					
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due Within One Year	11	(38,067)		(38,067)	(51,736)
Net Current Assets		53,851		53,851	38,838
Total Net Assets		47,851	7,675	55,526	40,264
The Funds Of The Charity:					
Unrestricted Funds				47,851	40,006
Restricted Funds				7,675	258
Total Charity Funds:				55,526	40,264

Affiliated Organisations/Individuals & Partners

AAA Strike 4 Success Limited
Afro Innovation Group
After 18
Antigua & Barbuda Association
Association for Bengali Communities
Association of Afghan United in Britain
Bangladesh Youth & Cultural Shomiti
Brit Bangla Progressive Society
City Rooms
CivicLeicester
Confederation of Indian Organisations
East West Community Project
Consortium
Leicester Brahma Samaj
Leicester Caribbean Carnival
Leicester Caribbean Cricket Club
Leicester City of Sanctuary
Leicester Civil Rights Movement
Leicester Ethnic Elderly
Advocacy Project
Leicester Irish Forum
Leicestershire Asian Business Association
Leicestershire & Distric Trades Council
Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living
Leicestershire Constabulary
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust
Leicestershire & Rutland County FA
Moat Community College
National Association of Youth Justice
Nirankari Advice Centre
NUT, Black Teachers Network
Octavian Continental Limited
One Building Solution Ltd
Polish Mums and Children's Centre
Pride without Borders
Progressive Writers Association
Emery Johnson Astills
Employees United Union
Federation of Iraqi Refugees
Federation of Sikh Organisations
Fosse Health Trust
General Federation of Trade Unions
Global Hands
Highfields Community Association
Hindu Religious & Cultural Society
Indian Womens Association
Indian Workers Association
Leicester Black History
Pakistani Youth & Community Association
Ramgaria Board
Regent College
Rezonarts
Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign
Riverside Housing
Savera Resource Centre
Shama Women's Centre
Shree Sanatan Mandir
Soft Touch Arts
Sported
South Asian Health Action Charity
St Albans Community Centre
St Matthew's Tenants Association
Telehealth Africa
Telehealth Aspire
Transport & General Workers Union
Union of Communication Workers
Unison Leicester
Voluntary Action Leicestershire
West Indian Senior Citizens Project
Westley Hall Community Centre
Youth Offending Team

Affiliated Individuals

Ajay Aggarwal
Faizan Arzbegi
Rohini Corfield
Carlton Howson
Jennifer Finlayson
Sirdeep Singh Flora
Colin Green
Garry Guye
Abhilash Gupta
Arthur Dion Hanna

Julian Harrison
Kathryn Hart
Anu Jalota
Robert Lee
Rachel McGinty
Mr B Manek
Kulbir Minhas
Kirit Mistry
Ashok Mohindra
Israel Ndlovu

Suzanne Overton-Edwards
Mr D Patel
Professor Raghu-Raghavan
Arthur Rowe
Surinder Sharma
Harbans Thiarey
Ghartey Vardon
Mr D Wehner



*We are more alike,
my friends,
than we are unlike.*

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