



## **Local Area Agreement (2006 – 2008) Performance Reward Grant**

### **Understanding the needs of vulnerable communities in Oxfordshire**

OSCA submitted a revised proposal to the Public Service Board meeting in September for £100,000 to help better understand the needs of vulnerable and diverse communities in Oxfordshire. This would be through the setting up of a diversity forum to bring together voluntary and community sector groups representing vulnerable communities in the county representing all the strands of diversity. A worker would be employed for two years to support the forum, recruit members and give it sustainability beyond the funding period. This forum would also be a valuable single point of contact available for the first time for statutory and other partners to consult with these groups.

The PSB felt that the distinction between the work that this body would do, and the work of the Equalities Officers across the county was not clear enough, and there was a concern that this would overlap with existing structures.

At the meeting I attended on 6 October with the Bishop of Dorchester, David Buckle, Val Johnson and Paul James, it was agreed that this proposal be put on hold until the beginning of 2010. I was informed of some new work being done with the Data Observatory and the equalities officers group that would be completed by then. It was felt that the findings of that work would help build a picture of what was needed in the county and no decisions should be made until this was issued.

Since then I have met with Cheryl Reeves, Equality Officer of South Oxfordshire District Council. It emerged that the work the equality officers group want to do is to pull together all existing sources of information into one place at the Data Observatory for everyone to be able to access. This will include mapping exercises, results of consultations, surveys etc that have been carried out by various organisations and bodies across the county.

Some funding is required for them to be able to carry out this exercise and the group hoped that some LAA Reward money would be made available to them in order to be able to complete the exercise.

I am to attend the Equalities Officers group meeting on 25 November to discuss the OSCA proposal, the work that the equalities officers want to put forward and to look at ways in which the two pieces of work may be submitted to the next PSB as a possible joint bid. This will clearly define the role of the equality officers group and the role of the diversity forum and show the distinction between the two. It will also show that OSCA and the equality officers group are working closely together to avoid any overlap in their work.

Kate Hill, October 2009

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