

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Cheshire REC was inaugurated on 13 November 1995. The aims of the REC are to work towards the elimination of discrimination, especially racial discrimination and to promote good relations between persons of different groups. It is non-political and non-sectarian.

The REC works under 4 primary functions:

- **Policy Development** – advising private, voluntary and public sector regarding the implementation of best practice equality policies
- **Complainant Aid** – advising and supporting complainants of discrimination
- **Community Development** – working with Black and Minority Ethnic led community organisations and assisting their development
- **Public Education** – raising awareness of equality issues through campaigns, conferences and training

We also carry out various projects that fall in line with our aims and objectives and in the past these have included research into racism in schools, an oral history project on BME communities settling in Cheshire and positive action getting BME people into Home Office services.

The Unity Centre

We currently manage the Unity Centre, which is West Cheshire's Multicultural Hub as part of our community development and awareness raising role. Here we offer a variety of activities and services, including language and fitness and leisure classes. We are looking to develop the Centre further to make it a focal point for BME communities in this area.

Discrimination Casework Service

The casework service was originally funded by the Commission for Racial Equality and later the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The Government withdrew the EHRC's grant function in April 2013 and as a consequence the REC had to reconsider how it delivered its casework service. After securing some funding from Lloyds TSB we decided to pilot the idea of a chargeable service, agreeing to take a percentage charge from successful cases. We also opened the service up to anyone in England and Wales and developed a separate website for casework which was promoted through Google Adwords.

We currently employ a part time caseworker who deals with all of the casework from initial enquiry through to representation, supported in part by volunteers from the University of Chester. We have recently decided to restructure the organisation and as part of this we identified that the caseworker needs more

support in order to enable him to work with cases that have merit. We agreed to change two aspects of the service:

1. Introduce a specific casework helpline for all new enquiries, operating as a sort of 'triage' system for the caseworker. This also assists with an ongoing problem we have faced where reception staff at the entrance to the Centre have had problems dealing with both callers to reception and phonecalls about a potential claim. New claimants will have to be directed through the helpline or contact via the website.
2. Introduction of a specific support worker for the service. This post is a new post created for this purpose and will require the person to work closely with the caseworker and any volunteers.

Current Situation

The REC is currently operating with a staff team of a Director, Caseworker, two reception staff and various volunteers.

The Post

As stated above, this is a brand new post introduced to try and make the service more effective and allow the caseworker time to pursue cases with merit, thus generating funding for the service.

Because the post holder will be expected to staff the helpline (or generate volunteer support for it), they will need to work over a minimum of 3 days, although we are flexible about how that operates. One out of hours session will be required as part of this, to appeal to those who are working and can't phone during that the day. This is however a pilot and will be regularly reviewed to determine its effectiveness.

Further information about the organisation can be found at www.chawrec.org.uk and www.theunitycentre.org