



Annual Report of People in Harmony

2004 - 2005

A Positive, Friendly, Interracial, Anti-racist Organisation

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About the Charity

People in Harmony, a charity and company limited by guarantee, was set up some 34 years ago to support people living in mixed race families. Over the years attitudes to and experiences of mixed race people have changed, although the need to join together for support is as important as ever. The charity provides advice, support and information on a range of mixed race issues to the members, the public, voluntary and statutory organisations as well as the media and researchers. We also sell a range of resources including books and videos. The number of resources that we have available for sale has increased again this year

We have worked on redefining the focus of the charity's work during the year the year but there is much to be done in developing People in Harmony and reshaping its mission. It is an exciting time to become involved in this redevelopment work using new ideas and new ways of thinking about mixed race issues.

Annual Conference

The AGM in 2004 had talks from Toyin Okitikpi, a social work Educator from South Bank University and editor of a recent book on working with mixed race children, and Simon Barth, leader of the Multiple Heritage Project in Sheffield. Rob Worrall, who chaired the event spoke about his journey to trace and meet his birth father and we also listened to a performance of poetry from Anthony Joseph. The event was lively with a great deal of interested discussion.



Rob Worrall

Activities and Education

An important activity this year was the decision to hold 2 away days for members and committee. The plan was to take stock of where the organisation is at present and to plan future directions for the charity.. Outcomes are presented in the Business Plan for the next 3 years. Perhaps the most pressing need identified is to raise funds for a paid worker to enable the charity to realise its potential. Another requirement is to spread responsibility and work between a higher number of volunteers and trustees who will have scope to shape the organisation and its future directions. We are sure that they can make a real contribution to the way in which mixed race people and families can represent themselves in society and its institutions.

People in Harmony provided a facilitator for a Family Rights Group conference this year and two speakers for a presentation at Reading Secondary Behaviour Support Services. This is an area of work which could be developed much further with suitable volunteers willing to go into schools and other places to discuss the care and education of mixed race children (and other topics of course). Another similar event is a conference arranged by Bath Race Equality Council where People in Harmony will provide another presentation. We also had delegates at the

much publicised conference in Sheffield this year organised by Simon Barth and the Multiple Heritage Project in the city.

Research

A very important piece of research report from DfES was published during the year. 'Understanding the Educational Needs of Mixed Heritage Children'. The research was undertaken in Bristol and Birmingham and shows a picture of missed opportunities and misunderstanding of the backgrounds and cultural needs of mixed race pupils. The report praises the work of People in Harmony and suggests that the charity should be consulted in future attempts to address questions of mixed race and education.

We have sent a précis of the findings to local education authorities and MPs in an attempt to get this topic discussed more widely. In addition we have also chosen education as the theme of the annual conference with one of the Bristol researchers, Caballero, as one of the key speakers.

Another area of study is the preliminary consultation on the next census. The 'mixed race option' will inevitably be reviewed and perhaps refined and this will need some serious thought from our membership.

Volunteers

There has been increased volunteer activity involvement at our Slough premises. The centre has been repainted and the database of resources expanded. A great deal of scope for volunteer activity remains and it will be much easier to offer support and co-ordination of volunteers with a paid worker on site. Volunteer work will remain the backbone of the organisation, however and there is a strong need for members to come forward and help shape the organisation into a relevant and up to date charity which addresses need and sets the agenda on mixed race issues. The present group of trustees is acutely aware of the need to attract more active people into the organisation who are prepared to share work and ideas and to reshape People in Harmony to meet current needs.

Communications

Communication with the membership and the public remains a primary concern of the charity.

The newsletter continued to be produced quarterly with articles, book reviews and other information. It is now circulated to a wider range of organisations which helps to raise our profile.

The People in Harmony website received many visits throughout the year and was a main point of contact, particularly for people and organisations outside UK. In the last three months there have been 3,500 visits per month which makes the website

a very valuable form of outreach. We have ideas for the extension and development of the site, including a research page to include information about research concerning the mixed race community as well as calls from researchers and students for people to participate in research. Matt Hoskins, a volunteer, does much of the maintenance of the site at present and additional volunteers to manage this aspect of the charity are always welcome.

The telephone is also a main means of communication with calls from people needing immediate support, enquiries from the media, students requesting information and contacts and other enquirers requesting a range of information and giving orders for publications sold by the charity.

There are also two email groups – one for committee business and another for the members group. The latter has been active with a broad range of discussion topics and the sharing of advice and support on mixed race matters.

Although our Slough premises are useful for informal meetings and small events not all members live near enough to attend. The aim is to develop local groups in different parts of the country which are affiliated to the main charity but which can meet local needs for contact. This really needs co-ordination and a dedicated volunteer would enable this aspect of the work to get off the ground and to receive contact and support from the centre. During the year the management committee meetings, held once a month in Slough, have been attended by several members who are interested in assisting the organisation.

An updated leaflet for general use has been produced. This gives outline details of the charity and contact information as well as a slip that can be completed to obtain further information.

Income

Our income comes from membership fees, donations and sales of publications but these sources do not cover our core costs and we rely on additional income from events and from grants.

We were successful with 2 of our grant applications for funding and would like to thank Allen Lane Foundation and Slough Social Fund for their support.

The Allen Lane Foundation awarded us £6,000 over 3 years towards core operational costs of the charity. This has enabled the charity to 'break even' and develop a new leaflet and increase our work with volunteers.

Slough Social Fund awarded us a grant of £1000 towards the installation of a new central heating boiler. A donation from a member also helped with the cost needed to replace the old boiler.

We have developed presentations for talks and workshops and this is an area that has raised a small income.

The charity is now registered to reclaim tax on any Gift Aid donations and this includes membership subscriptions.

Plans for forthcoming year

In the next year we hope to develop the information giving and educational work that has been successful this year. Presentations in schools and other sites are a valuable means of supporting mixed race people.

Application for funding for a paid worker will progress. The committee will use the 3 year Business Plan for funding applications and anticipates more success during the coming year.

We will assess the quantity and quality of the response of the campaign to make the DfES research report more widely known and develop this kind of campaigning if this is thought to be of value.

A priority is to recruit more trustees and committee members and to encourage greater numbers of people into activity for the charity. People with ideas that they are prepared to make their lead responsibility are particularly welcome if we are to develop new ideas and activities. There is scope for projects on arts, oral history, web maintenance and all manner of new directions given the skills and imagination of members.

We would stress the importance of people with ideas and time to get involved to come forward and help develop the organisation. Special skills are welcome but goodwill is just as important in developing People in Harmony.

Thanks to all who have worked and supported the charity during the year. We hope to be thanking many more people at the end of the year.

Management Committee for 2004/2005

Krishnan Iyer, Wendy Taylor, Amos Hurst, Val Hoskins, Jill Olumide, Melanie Gabbi, Louise Barker, Darren Chetty.

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