

Case study:

British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) Pre-conference Capacity Building Day

Ensuring conference participants are empowered to have a voice is a challenge for all organisations. If you are planning a conference or event this case study explores challenges and successes, and provides excellent guidance on good practice for frontline organisations and support providers.

1. Summary

The British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) Capacity Building Day was held on 27th January 2009 at The British Library in Euston Road, London. The capacity building event was for any voluntary community sector organisations working on equality, social exclusion or poverty. Participants were provided with a bursary to cover travel, over- night accommodation and child care where necessary and a free place at main BIHR annual conference. In total 35 individuals attended the pre-conference event and were provided with a bursary, this number included support workers and carers for some of the participants. The budget was £15,000, the bulk of which was provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The aims of the Capacity Building (CB) day were first of all to enable the most marginalised groups and communities to attend by dealing with any practical issues and secondly to build their capacity around human rights, the relevance to their work and other skill based topics such as how to ask questions, so that when participants actually got to the main conference they felt confident enough to make their voices heard and join in. The CB day set out to provide participants with the following:

- Information and training on human rights (the ideas, the law, the practice), the UK context and links to community empowerment
- Knowledge and skills around how human rights/human rights based approaches can positively influence public services
- Ways of having 'more of a say' on public services - being an active member of your community
- Skills based training: e.g. campaigning, presentation and questioning skills, working with the media, working with local public representatives
- A space to explore the conference agenda and content, and an opportunity to identify ideas/suggestions on how to 'change the face of human rights'

- The opportunity to take part in/ speak on the short video about [‘changing the face of human rights’](#).

BIHR is a human rights organisation that is committed to challenging inequality and injustice in everyday life in the UK. BIHR aims to achieve this by bringing human rights to life, supporting people to use human rights principles and standards to improve their own lives and as a tool for organisations to develop more effective public policy and practice. BIHR provides infrastructure support to frontline Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations and groups by:

- Providing a range of [information and other resources](#) (including briefings and toolkits)
- Developing and delivering [training and consultancy](#) for the voluntary and community and public sectors on both practice and policy
- Leading and/or collaborating on [demonstration and pilot projects](#) across the voluntary and community and public sectors
- Undertaking [research and policy analysis](#)

In its work BIHR often asks voluntary and community sector organisations to try and talk about the issues they are working on as human rights issues. This approach can give voluntary and community sector advocacy teeth and help the organisation to successfully hold the public sector to account. It can also help those experiencing the issues to think of themselves as rights holders, changing the way they think and feel about the issues they face and their ability to make a change.

This case study has identified that the CB day made a difference in a number of levels:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of human rights
- Cascading learning to others after the event
- More voice and influence
- More confidence and effectiveness in asking questions
- Networking at the BIHR conference and beyond
- More influence at the BIHR conference

It was brilliant because some people stood up and asked questions that took 20 minutes and everyone was ‘that’s too long, they’re going to shoot you down’ and then somebody asked ‘well I’d like to ask this but I don’t know how to phrase it’. What was amazing, the next day I would say 70% of the questions asked at the conference were from the pre-day’ people.

The success of the CB day is attributed to the following factors:

- Providing bursaries

- Diversity of the groups represented and how well a range of different needs were accommodated
- Providing networking opportunities
- Good quality trainers and facilitators

BIHR faces a number of challenges in organising and delivering the CB day and had developed a range of responses and ways to deal with the issues and problems in the future.

Challenge	Response	What could be done differently in the future
Planning and practicalities	Invested a lot of staff time in practical detail of meeting the support needs of individuals	3 months lead in time to the event and least a month to manage the logistical support to participants Streamline the organisation of the pre-capacity building day in with the process of organising the conference
Receiving late confirmation of funding	Short and very intense period for marketing and promoting the CB day	Seek to get funding at least 4 months before
Difficulty in attracting some diverse groups	Promoting the CB day and bursaries through known national and regional infrastructure and networks	Better links with national, regional and local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual groups and from older and younger peoples groups and organisations
Confidence level of participants	A lot of hand-holding of participants by BIHR staff, particularly in the lead up to the CB day Increasing the number of bursaries to meet the support needs of participants	
Managing over-confident people in group work	Doing a lot of work in small groups Ensuring that ground rules are established at the beginning of the day Trying to be as participatory as possible.	

Engagement of the Deaf community	British Sign Language Signers and information sent out beforehand	Involving Deaf communities in the planning of the event and holding a pre-CB Day
Content of the event (more time on specific aspects of human rights)	This was raised in the final evaluation	More time to be provided for participants to talk about their specific areas of work More acknowledgement of the value of different people's experiences More time for networking in the programme of any similar event.
Accessibility of the conference itself	BIHR producing internal guidance on accessibility for events and conferences	Look more closely at how participation in the conference itself is encouraged so those dealing directly with/ or experiencing human rights issues have equal access to those in more powerful positions.

There is agreement at BIHR that the pre-capacity building day is a good model and there are plans underway to make it a feature of future annual conferences. The following actions for frontline organisations and support providers emerge from the learning from this case study:

5 actions for frontline organisations	5 actions for support providers
Move from a 'needs' to rights approach, try to see your issues through a human rights lens.	If you are organising an event, think about systems for paying support costs and expenses in advance.
International human rights documents, as well as our own UK Human Rights Act, could be useful to you in networking and influencing	Be realistic about how much staff time needs to be dedicated to planning the event, particularly to respond to all the different support needs of individuals.
Cascade the Human Rights information through your organisation and networks to raise awareness about rights and trigger debates.	Try to ensure that funding is in place at least four months in advance to allow for a good lead in time to do marketing and promotions.
Think about ways you can promote awareness of human rights with the people you work with in an accessible way	The most marginalised groups need to be involved in the planning process for events

Look at your own organisational practice through a human rights lens to see whether you are also taking a human rights approach to your work.

It is a really brilliant idea to have a pre-conference CB day but it might mean having to change the main conference to ensure participation and learning for all.

2. Outline of project

The BIHR CB Day was held on 27th January 2009 at The British Library in Euston Road, London. The capacity building event was for any voluntary community sector organisations working on equality, social exclusion or poverty. Those who attended the pre-conference day were provided with a bursary to cover travel, over-night accommodation and child care where necessary. As well as a free place at the main BIHR annual conference. The criteria for the pre-conference event and bursaries were as follows (all three criteria needed to be met):

- a) Voluntary and community groups in the UK working directly with/ or representing members of the local community; and/or specific groups including but not limited to black and minority ethnic people, disabled people, faith groups, Gypsies and Travellers, lesbians, gay men, migrant workers, older people, refugees and asylum seekers, transgendered people, women, young people, carers and people who experience poverty.
- b) Organisations and groups working on issues around equality, social exclusion, poverty or community empowerment; and
- c) Organisations and groups with an income of under £20,000 per year.

The aims of the CB day were first of all to enable the most marginalised groups and communities to attend, by dealing with any practical issues and secondly to build their capacity around human rights, the relevance to their work and other skill based topics such as how to ask questions, so that when participants actually got to the main conference they felt confident enough to make their voices heard and join in. As one of the conference organisers puts it:

Often the smallest voluntary community sector organisations don't get the opportunity to go to these conferences because they can't afford [it]. And even once you get rid of all of the practical barriers, when conferences are full of high level... speakers... quite often the people working more at a community level don't feel confident enough to input, such as ask a question...

The bursaries were intended to cover:

- Approximately £80 for travel
- Overnight accommodation and breakfast near the conference venue
- Evening meal (lunch provided at events)
- Free place at BIHR conference on 28th January
- Help towards childcare costs

The CB day set out to provide participants with the following¹:

- Information and training on human rights (the ideas, the law, the practice), the UK context and links to community empowerment
- Knowledge and skills around how human rights/human rights based approaches can positively influence public services
- Ways of having 'more of a say' on public services - being an active member of your community
- Skills based training: e.g. campaigning, presentation and questioning skills, working with the media, working with local public representatives
- A space to explore the conference agenda and content, and an opportunity to identify ideas/suggestions on how to 'change the face of human rights'
- The opportunity to take part in/ speak on the short video about '[changing the face of human rights](#)'.

The CB Day and bursaries were promoted using existing equalities and voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations that support front line organisations. It was intended to provide 30 places and bursaries; however in total 35 individuals attended the pre-conference event and were provided with a bursary. The number grew mainly to accommodate people's support workers and carers. There were over 60 applications in total. The conference organisers at BIHR worked to ensure that those who were selected for places and bursaries were representative of both different geographical locations across the UK and a wide range of diverse equalities groups.

3. Background

BIHR is a human rights organisation that is committed to challenging inequality and injustice in everyday life in the UK. BIHR aims to achieve this by bringing human rights to life, supporting people to use human rights principles and standards to improve their own lives and as a tool for organisations to develop more effective public policy and practice. BIHR lobbies national government and Parliament, conduct [media activity and campaigns](#) and occasional [strategic legal interventions](#) around human rights and also provides infrastructure support to frontline voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and groups by:

- Providing a range of [information and other resources](#) (including briefings and toolkits)
- Developing and delivering [training and consultancy](#) for the voluntary and community and public sectors on both practice and policy
- Leading and/or collaborating on [demonstration and pilot projects](#) across the voluntary and community and public sectors
- Undertaking [research and policy analysis](#)

This is how BIHR put a human rights based approach into practice:

¹ The programme for the pre-conference event is in appendix 1 and the workshop outlines are in appendix 2.

Step 1 - providing access to information and training about human rights, to enable those working to tackle inequality and social justice issues in the voluntary and community sector such as poverty, domestic violence, discrimination towards disabled people, to understand the relevance of human rights to their work.

There is no point in talking about human rights in a theoretical sense. [Those] working with the most marginalised, need to understand how they are relevant to their work and what they are trying to achieve and how they can be used practically

Step 2 - ensuring that organisations understand how they can use human rights in the different areas of their external facing work such as campaigning, advocacy or advice – work that would be generally hold the public sector to account. And how a human-rights based approach can be used internally to improve services, decision making and which groups are prioritised.

It's not about us saying to organisations, "Look, this is how you should be using human rights " it's more about us providing information, training and guidance and then organisations deciding the most useful way for them to use human rights in their work and context.

BIHR work at both ends of the spectrum; with the voluntary and community groups who work with those most likely to face human rights abuses; and with public bodies whose duty it is to respect, promote and protect human rights.

Importantly people in the public sector need to consider human rights in relation to every aspect of their work from developing policies to the direct delivery of services and we work with public sector organisations to support them to do this.

The work that BIHR does is often a revelation for voluntary and community sector organisations and groups, because they have often developed a 'needs based' way of working, or as a member of staff from BIHR said, *'the sector is used to telling sad stories.'* Taking a human-rights based approach is often a very different way of working for VCS groups and organisations. In its work BIHR often asks voluntary and community sector organisations to try and talk about the issues they are working on as human rights issues.

For example instead of looking at the issues facing a particular client group for example, women experiencing domestic violence need to be protected, you present this as a human rights issue, women experiencing domestic violence have a right not to be treated in a degrading and inhuman way.

This approach can give voluntary and community sector advocacy teeth, and help the organisation to successfully hold the public sector to account. But really importantly it can help those experiencing the issues, to think of themselves as rights holders, changing the way they think and feel about the issues they face and their ability to make a change.

4. Funding and resourcing the Pre-conference Capacity Building Day

The total budget for the pre-conference capacity event was £15,000, the bulk of which was provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (ECHR) with further funding from the campaigning and effectiveness programme led by National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and funded by Capacity builders.

Two staff were allocated from BIHR to plan and deliver the Capacity Building Day; they were the Third Sector Development Officer and the Poverty and Human Rights Officer. These staff worked on this project for almost all of December 2008 and January 2009.

5. What difference did the Pre-conference Capacity Building Day make?

5.1 Increased knowledge and understanding of human rights

The comments from the evaluations and the interviews show that the event provided participants with information and training on human rights, and that they were able to link this to their everyday work:

- *It broadened my understanding of human rights issues and made it more real and tangible within our work place.*
- *It will assist in improving communication about the Human Rights Act to those in the traveller community.*
- *Learning about using the legislation in everyday work*
- *Feeling empowered to claim my rights*

5.2 Cascading learning to others

Some of participants stated that they would cascade this learning to others:

- *Feeling empowered to do our own mini-training*
- *I want to cascade the information to colleagues to raise their awareness*

5.3 More voice and influence

There is also evidence of an increase in knowledge and skills, around how human rights based approaches can positively influence public services, as the following comments from the evaluations show:

- *The realisation that we are entitled to human rights will assist in advocacy and networking*
- *We will refine our organisation's message and are now clearer about what our work should be.*

An objective of the CB day was to explore ways of having 'more of a say' on public services and being an active member of your community. Two of the participants

said the event would enable them *'to be more confident in their work'* and another commented that they felt *'as if they have the tools to combat discrimination.'* Three of the participants at the capacity building day said that they would take their learning away from the event *'to be more effective and get their message across in a better way.'*

5.4 More confident and effective in asking questions

Had I not been to the capacity-building event, I may have still asked a question, but not that particular one. It was helpful to get pointers from the BIHR communications worker on how to make a greater impact, what language and words to use etc.

This participant is commenting on the BIHR Head of Policy and Public Affairs' session, at the capacity building day, on asking questions at conferences in preparation for the BIHR conference the next day. The participants decided upon the question they wanted to ask, then stood up and asked it, and then everyone critiqued it. One of the event organisers estimated that *'70% of the questions asked at the conference were from the pre-day' people.'*

5.5 More influence at the conference

A wider impact of the CB day was that it improved the content of the conference itself, and potentially built the capacity of the other conference delegates and speakers:

...it meant that the issues that the people or the community groups they were representing, were facing really got heard at the conference rather than the usual voices.

It wasn't just to build the capacity of participants; there was also recognition that their presence would make the discussions at the conference more informed and more fruitful. By the end Jack Straw had a list of people that he had to talk to about their specific issues, so having people there representing marginalised groups even helps to inform government policy,.

5.6 Networking at the conference and beyond

The CB day provided a space for the participants to explore the conference agenda and content, but more than this, it created a peer support network for the conference attendees. The following is the perception of one of the conference organisers:

When we turned up at the conference the next day, these 35 people...they'd not known each other before but they just had this massive support network... Usually you go to a conference and you're worrying that you don't know anyone

There is also evidence that the networks forged at the capacity building day, have extended beyond the conference, in an email to BIHR one of the participants says:

I just wanted to let you know that I have started working closely with another delegate that I'd never met before. We're both working on disability and we just want to thank you for that because we've now got a really good working relationship.

One of the participants that we interviewed told us that she had kept in contact with another participant who was working on domestic violence issues for Muslim women in another part of the country.

6. What made the Pre-conference Capacity Building Day Successful?

6.1 Providing bursaries

One of the key contributions to the success of the capacity building day was providing the bursaries as this gave people an opportunity they simply would not have had otherwise, one participant put it like this:

This gave me an opportunity to attend the conference as well. I got travelling expenses, overnight accommodation; it added up to a few hundred pounds and my organisation would have been unlikely to be able to fund this, so I could not have gone otherwise.

6.2 Diversity of the groups represented

Another key to success noted in the evaluations was the '*diversity of the groups represented*' at the capacity building day. The participant we interviewed said:

The capacity building event was able to successfully bring together a cross-section of individuals from different fields, e.g. gay men in the arts sector, an asylum seeker doing a PHD on the impact of domestic violence on Muslim women in Newcastle... all wanting to bring human rights to life in their work in different perspectives.

This in itself provided indirect awareness raising amongst participants, of a wide range of issues, and brought together people from different cultural backgrounds, that, due to social demographics, may not have had the opportunity to meet and really talk to. For example, two women from the North of England commented that they had never met a Somali woman, and how interesting it was to talk about women's issues from a Muslim perspective. The diversity of the CB day was made possible by accommodating a range of different needs:

Everyone's needs were accommodated, two people were Deaf, there were blind and partially sighted with someone to guide them. It was really good.

6.3 Providing networking opportunities

Several of the evaluations mention *'meeting different people'* and *'networking'* as being what worked well about the day. Building upon this, 'the interaction' and 'the interactive format of all the sessions' was also noted.

One of the participants said that the capacity building event was *'a really good opportunity to network with like-minded individuals where human rights are an issue in their organisations.'* One of the ways that this networking was promoted was to provide a post-capacity building day, pre-conference dinner for the participants, which consisted of booking a large table at a Greek restaurant.

6.4 Good quality trainers and facilitators

Many of the evaluations commented upon the calibre of the trainers in particular:

- *Very easy to engage and interact with*
- *Was impressed with how they handled it when some of the discussions went off tangent*
- *They opened my brain!*

Others commented upon the quality of the whole experience:

The entire day was inspirational, educational and motivating

7. Challenges faced and how they were overcome

7.1 Practical Issues

One of the main challenges cited by one of the conference organisers were the practical issues involved in organising the event, particularly the small but important detail of finding a way of paying expenses. This proved time consuming for the staff:

We had a complete logistical nightmare, for example, people coming from Newcastle or wherever, because it was so late, it meant that their train fares were really expensive. Obviously, we were paying their train fares, but some people...it kind of got to a situation where we were just booking peoples trains or they were booking it and claiming back, so we ended up in this messy process.

Given that this was the first time that BIHR had held a pre-conference capacity building day, there were no systems in place to deal with the practicalities of supporting participants to come to the event. This meant that things took more time to organise than had been envisaged and far more of the two BIHR staff's time than had been anticipated. Ultimately this placed an unreasonable amount of pressure on the staff and they ended up working long hours.

BIHR have learnt from some of the difficulties and challenges faced in delivering the CB Day and foremost of the things that they will do differently in the future, are around planning and practicalities. BIHR have recognised that to run a similar event

in the future we would need to ensure at least three months dedicated to the event, particularly as the applications process requires time, and must be followed by at least a month to manage the logistical support to participants (e.g. travel bookings). Due to many people's financial situation, the organisers will need to be prepared to book people's travel in advance, rather than rely on reimbursing at a later stage. Plans are in place to streamline the organisation of the pre-capacity building day with the process of organising the conference so that the practical and logistical issues are dealt with by the internal events team at BIHR. BIHR will also develop systems around the application process for the event.

7.2 Receiving late confirmation of funding

The timing of the event was also cited as challenging. BIHR did not hear that they had funding for the event until December 2008, that meant with the Christmas break there, was only a matter of weeks to promote, recruit and plan for the capacity building event. In future BIHR would seek to get funding in place at least four months before, to leave more time for marketing, promotion and practical arrangements:

We would hopefully get funding four months before, we would have it planned four months before, we'd get all of the promotional material done, and we would just have agreed things like booking their travel [from BIHR].

7.3 Difficulty in attracting some diverse groups

Although BIHR had promoted the conference through known VCS infrastructure organisations and networks, there was difficulty in getting participation in the CB day from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual groups and from older and younger peoples groups. This is something that BIHR recognise the need to address this at future events, perhaps by making sure there is better links with regional and national networks.

7.4 Confidence level of participants

Another challenge was the level of confidence of the participants, many of who needed quite a lot of hand-holding to get to the event:

We were refunding people for childcare, taxis, trains, buses...we had these ridiculous conversations over how to get three taxis, then get a train, sorting out how people got here...which is really necessary, because we have to support that process, and even just people's confidence around asking to refund their taxi, and us going "look, we will refund your taxi", if you have to get a taxi to the train station, you have to do it...but even that was a negotiation process.

The increase in the number of places and bursaries provided was to meet the support needs of individuals, whereas BIHR had not intended to fund more than one individual from an organisation or group, in some cases this was found to be

necessary. One of the conference organisers describes the dilemmas they faced in short-listing:

One of the things that we didn't want to do, we didn't want to give people from the same organisation a place because we wanted to give more organisations the opportunity to come but the issue was that there were people that didn't feel confident coming to London unless they were with someone else, for example, female asylum seekers travelling from Manchester and participants who needed some kind of support such as someone who was partially blind and disabled who needed their colleague to attend.

7.5 Managing over-confident people in group work

At another level, there were challenges on at the capacity building day itself in making sure that everyone was able to participate, ensure that those who were less confident in speaking were given a chance to input. This was addressed by doing a lot of work on the capacity building day in small groups and ensuring that we established ground rules at the beginning of the day and trying to be as participatory as possible.

7.6 Engagement of the Deaf community

Some particular challenges were noted by the conference organiser in relation to ensuring the participation of deaf people balanced with equal participation of other groups. It was noted that ideally, if funding permitted, the challenges encountered around accessibility and participation, would be addressed through a pre-capacity building event and more involvement of Deaf people at the planning stage.

I think a pre-session with some participants to ensure they understand the purpose and scope of the event and also I think they need to be included in the planning of the event so they need to be brought on board and own some of the process.

This was thought to be particularly important for Deaf groups who may not have fully understood the purpose of the day due to the fact that the only information they had received before the event was written, which is not necessarily clear for people who use British Sign Language (BSL). It is also important to note that with BSL interpreting (like any type of simultaneous interpreting) things can get lost in translation.

7.7 Content of the Capacity Building day

Most of the evaluation comments relate to the events covering more specific aspects of human rights such as carers, health rights, the rights of disabled people and the rights of people in rural areas. One of the participants felt that less time should have been spent on question preparation and several thought that more time should have been spent talking about their areas of work and in small group discussions.

It was recognised by the BIHR event organisers that more time should have been provided for participants to talk about their specific areas of work and noted the invaluable nature of hearing and discussing the progress others have made as well as the challenges they were facing. The organisers agreed that they would schedule in time for networking in the programme of any similar event.

7.8 Accessibility of conference itself

Several of the evaluation comments about what should be done differently seem to relate to the conference rather than the capacity building day, such as, too many presentations and speeches. One of the participants that we interviewed suggested that the BIHR conference itself is not geared to those working directly with people facing human rights issues and that there are barriers to participation such as the language used:

In truth, if I had not been to the capacity building event, it would not have changed my experience of the conference. It was so different to the capacity building day. The conference was geared up for a key target audience. Some of the speakers and the terminology and the jargon went right over my head. It was very separate from the capacity building event... it did not seem relevant to my area of work. It was targeted at senior managers, directors, CEOs and policy officers rather than those working at the grass roots.

This participant was not convinced that the pre-conference event had any impact upon the conference itself other than the session on raising questions with the panel:

The only thing that linked in with the conference was the work that we did at the capacity building event on raising questions to the panel and this was done in a slot at the end of the day at the event.

These comments suggest that BIHR need to look more closely at how participation in the conference itself is encouraged so those dealing directly with/ or experiencing human rights issues have equal access to those in more powerful positions.

During the course of conducting the case study, we did ask BIHR if in addition to providing the CB Day, if they had done anything else to increase participation at the conference and clearly this had been considered in the practical arrangements for the event, such as:

- Giving strict briefing papers to workshop leaders and facilitators to ensure that people get enough time to speak and participate
- Small group work
- Making sure that presentations were not too long
- Making sure that people got time to raise their questions
- Making sure that the chair, was fully briefed to make sure that she gave as many different people the opportunity to ask questions

BIHR are also producing internal guidance on accessibility – attempting to proof everything that it does (events, publications, internal organisation amongst other issues) in line with guidance they have received from the Manchester Disabled People’s Access Group (www.mdpag.org.uk). However, they recognise that becoming a fully accessible organisation is not going to be immediate; and whilst there are changes that can be achieved quickly and inexpensively some changes need much more forward planning, and often relate to ensuring that all accessibility costs are included at the stage when project plans and budgets are developed. Some advice given by the organisers is to ensure:

- Information is written in plain English
- All information needs to be in 14 point and a clear font
- Ensuring that different learning styles are covered when delivering information or training
- Book BSL Interpreters even before you know there are deaf people attending (they generally have to be cancelled 3 weeks to 10 days before)
- Booking only accessible venues recognising that most venues need to be checked out even when they say they are fully accessible (there is generally no such thing as a fully accessible venue. If a venue is advertising that they are fully accessible it usually means they have a limited understanding of accessibility, we found this out the hard way!)
- Providing expenses such as travel and child care costs to prevent exclusion of people who not be able to afford these expenses and to ensure women are able to access events/training opportunities

The organisers state that these things are just the beginning and generally what is needed is a solid commitment by organisations alongside advice and support from organisations that are experts such as the Manchester Disabled People’s Access Group to make real changes.

8. Future plans

There is agreement at BIHR that the pre-capacity building day is a good model and there are plans underway to make it a feature of future annual conferences.

Suggested actions based upon learning from this case study

9.1 Five actions for frontline organisations

- i) Move from a ‘needs’ to rights approach. Give it a try, where possible, try to see your issues through a human rights lens.
- ii) International human right documents, as well as our own UK Human Rights Act, could be useful to you in terms of; the power of the language used, the international networks you could become part of and also offer other ways of feeding in your organisation’s research such as by sending information to committees who are due to scrutinise the UK government.

- iii) Cascade the Human Rights information from the pre-day and conference and other events through your organisation and networks to raise awareness about rights and trigger debates.
- iv) Think about ways you can promote awareness of human rights with the people you work with in an accessible way
- v) Look at your own organisational practice through a human rights lens to see whether you are also taking a human rights approach to your work. From how you involve beneficiaries, how you facilitate their participation in decision making that affects them, whether you empower those you work with and for to know about their rights, how representative your staff and board/trustees are and how accessible your premises are etc.

9.2 Five actions for support providers

- i) If you are organising an event, think about systems for paying support costs and expenses in advance.
- ii) Be realistic about how much staff time needs to be dedicated to planning the event, particularly to respond to all the different support needs of individuals.
- iii) Try to ensure that funding is in place at least four months in advance to allow for a good lead in time to do marketing and promotions.
- iv) The most marginalised groups need to be involved in the planning process for events
- v) It is a really brilliant idea to have a pre-conference CB day but it might mean having to change the main conference to ensure participation and learning for all.

10. Contact details:

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This case study was developed through an interview with one of the organisers of the Pre-conference Capacity Building Day (CB Day) from BIHR and with one of the participants. The intention was to interview more than one participants but those contacted did not respond despite several attempts. Other evidence was taken from participants evaluations conducted immediately after the CB Day.



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Appendix 1: Programme for CB Day

Changing the Face of Human Rights Pre-conference Capacity Building Day: 27th January 2009

- 10.00 Registration, refreshments and displaying of materials
- 10.30 **Introductions and welcome-** Ceri Goddard, Acting Director, BIHR
- 10.40 **Rights at the grass roots** - Margarita Sanchez, Executive Director - Amnesty International Puerto Rico (2002 – 2008), Human Rights Activist, Church Minister and writer
- 11.00 **Outline of the day**
- 11.10 **Getting to know each other better** – Footsteps activity
- 11.20 **Human rights – awareness raising session on the ideas, the law and the practice** - Sonia Omar & Roisin Cavanagh, BIHR
- 11.45 **BREAK**
- 12.00 Awareness-raising session continued
- 12.30 **Rights in action-** looking at case studies and applying the Human Rights Act 1998. - Sonia Omar & Roisin Cavanagh, BIHR
- 13.00 **LUNCH**
- 14.00 Workshops:
- Workshop 1:** Human Rights and campaigning- How can human rights add 'bite' to campaigns- Rosalind McKenna, Amnesty Ireland
- Workshop 2:** How to make your voice heard- presentation skills and effective campaign messaging - Nick Bird, Urban Forum
- 15.00 **BREAK**
- 15.15 **Conference preparation-** a chance to explore your thoughts and ideas on how we can 'change the face of human rights' – Jean Candler, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, BIHR
- 16.00 **Collective voice** – Your messages, an opportunity to collect your opinions, thoughts and ideas in a Vox Pop
- 17.00 **Close and finalise arrangements**
- 17.15 **End**

Appendix 2: Workshop outlines

1. Human rights- an introduction: *Sonia Omar and Roisin Cavanagh, BIHR*

This workshop's purpose was to provide a broad overview of what human rights are and how they are protected in the UK by the Human Rights Act. The workshop explored the origins of human rights, and some of their key features, which include the fact that rights belong to everyone, and that they are about how government and public authorities treat people. The workshop explored the principles of fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy and how they underpin human rights. The workshop then focused on the Human Rights Act and how it aims to bring most of the rights in the European Convention into UK law as well as to create a new culture of respect for human rights. The workshop took an even deeper focus on particular rights in the Act in a bid to explain how some rights are absolute and some are non absolute. Sonia and Roisin then explained how rights can be legitimately interfered with in certain circumstances. The workshop then ended with a chance for the delegates to explore some case studies in order to see how human rights can be applied practically to help the lives of everyday people.

2. Human Rights and Campaigning: *Rosalind McKenna, Amnesty International*

The workshop explored some of Amnesty Ireland's campaigns and demonstrated how relying on a human rights approach strengthened them. The aim of the workshop was to encourage the participants to start using human rights based approaches in their work and how this can improve the service they provide. Rosalind explored the importance of the principles of empowerment, participation, non-discrimination and accountability and emphasised that attention needed to be paid to them if the delegates wanted their own campaigns to have a real impact. She showed some examples from her own experiences of small organisations that used human rights based approaches in their work and the positive impact that this had.

3. Put your message across loud and clear: *Nick Bird, Urban Forum*

This was a practical workshop with took the participants through a step-by-step approach to communicating campaign messages to a range of audiences. It helped the participants to think about clarifying the key messages they wanted to put across and identifying ways to increase the power of messages. He had the delegates thinking about the kinds of messages that they wanted to send either for campaigning or in order to acquire funding or strategic support. He stressed the importance of increasing the power of the message through a range of options that included the use of credible statistics, the use of personal stories and other examples of good practice. In conclusion the workshop discussed questions to consider when mapping out campaign issues.