

# Equality Exchange network Conference report June 2012

Driving Change: Achieving Impact



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Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

## Who we are

The Equality and Human Rights Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights.

Our Equality Exchange network currently has over 140 members. It is a forum dedicated to the exchange of ideas and advice for employers, service providers, trainers and consultants committed to achieving equality in the workplace and in service provision.

### Why become a member of the network?

Members of the network receive regular mailings to keep them informed about latest developments in equality and human rights issues.

They are invited to attend and take part in regular events and conferences looking at equality and human rights issues.

All network members have the opportunity to meet and share effective practice with other members who are also working in equality.

### Equality Exchange network events and conferences

Events take place three times a year and are regional; we organise the same format for north Wales, south Wales and mid/west Wales. Venues change each time as network members host these.

Our annual conference usually takes place in mid Wales and is a chance for the network to meet and hear speakers, participate in workshops and network.

**More information can be found at:**

[www.equalityhumanrights/wales/equality-exchange-network](http://www.equalityhumanrights/wales/equality-exchange-network)



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## Foreword

This year's Equality Exchange Conference explored the theme of **Driving change: Achieving impact**, building on previous conference themes of developing leadership and confidence in challenging times.

This year everyone is trying to deliver more with less money. There is increasing pressure on public services. Greater demand with few resources means we can't just carry on as we did before. It is important that equality and human rights are at the heart of any changes we make. We need to take good decisions about using money – trying to prevent problems becoming entrenched and expensive. We need to use evidence and listen to the most disadvantaged people.

So this was the challenge we set for our speakers – how can we do more for less and increase the impact of our work?

Dr Jo Farrar, CEO of Bridgend County Council who reflected on her past seven years at Bridgend, and shared with us her insights on leadership and culture change gained during that time.

Phil Bushby, Director of HR and Estates, DVLA who shared his personal insights on using Equality Impact Assessments as a driver for change.

Carmel Napier, Chief Constable of Gwent Police spoke about taking personal responsibility, doing things differently, bringing people with us, and the benefits of joined up working.



Delegates also watched a [filmed interview of Martin Henderson](#), who used an evidence based approach - and Bernie the cartoon sheep - to tackle the entrenched problem of deliberate grass fires in Tonypanydy. Martin is head of risk reduction at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

The workshops gave delegates the opportunity to discuss how they could advance equality in their own organisations based on the levers, tools and ways of using evidence they had learnt from the morning session.

Like the public sector, the Commission is managing with shrinking resources. We need to become a leaner, more focused organisation. The UK government has announced some changes to our remit but we were pleased to note that there is a commitment to a strong and distinct presence in Wales. Now we need to build on that together. We hope that all of you will work with us to help identify what that actually means in practice. And we hope this report inspires you to identify the steps you can personally take in tackling the big challenges you face.

**Ann Beynon, Wales Commissioner**  
**Kate Bennett, National Director for Wales**



## Reflections of a CEO: Identifying the levers for change

**“If you are going to bring about lasting and sustainable change, it is about bravery and saying ‘this is the right thing to do’”.**

**Dr Jo Farrar** has been the Chief Executive of Bridgend County Borough Council since 2007. She is shortly leaving Wales to take up the position of Chief Executive of Bath and North East Somerset Council. Jo reflected on her time at Bridgend and how leadership brought a culture change to the organisation and improved services for the citizens of Bridgend.

Jo spoke of the importance of finding a “burning platform” to bring about change. Leading transformational change can be daunting and particularly difficult in terms of equality as the burning platform can sometimes be more difficult to see. She said, “It helps to paint a picture of what life is going to be like if we don't change, what are the consequences?” For many organisations the burning platform is the current financial crisis. Jo said, “We need to use the financial crisis to say ‘you can save money but you can make things a lot better for people if you do things in a different way’. We need to sell this message”.



At the time of Jo's arrival, the burning platform in Bridgend was obvious; the council had been widely criticised, childrens' service was in special measures and silo working was endemic. It was clear to Jo that the whole organisation needed to change in order to provide a good service to the people of Bridgend.

Firstly there was a restructure of the whole organisation including a new leadership team. This team were able to work with political leaders to create a different organisation. Jo said, “It was quite difficult for staff but really important as it mixed the very strong cultures in departments. It was unsettling for people and made them feel a bit lost. But they had to re-establish themselves new positions and that really helped us to develop a new set of values”.

The most important part of improving service delivery was

bringing about a new culture which put the citizens of Bridgend or the customer at the centre of the services. At first this focused on serving people in a way that was positive and good, and then on helping people to be independent.

Jo spoke of how council staff developed their own set of values:FACE values, standing for Fair, Ambitious, Customer-focussed and Efficient. To make this successful Jo said, “You need to involve people at all levels from the front line up; this is challenging, but involving everybody in the change programme by making sure they contribute ideas and develop the corporate values is really important”.

Change can be very complicated, but you need to ensure it’s made easy for people to understand. In Bridgend the different projects in the change programme were pulled together under one banner: “Transforming Bridgend: Making things better for customers”. Jo said, “Everybody bought into that because it took away the confusion and initiative overload. It is about creating a simple vision and messages and that way people can see it is easy and not too overwhelming”.

Quick wins are helpful in getting buy-in, but you need to be bold. Don’t waste time trying to improve existing projects or programmes when you know they need reinventing.

Jo also spoke about her personal style of leadership. She mentioned three key behaviours, the first was about being an **exemplar**. She said, “When you are a leader, you are the mirror to your organisation and I have certainly seen how much my personal style and behaviour can change my organisation. So you need to set a good example and be true to yourself, be authentic.”

The second behaviour was about being able to **articulate the future**, Jo said, “When I was talking about the vision (for Bridgend), I needed to make it compelling, telling people what it will be like if it doesn't happen. You need to articulate this so people buy into it”.

The third behavior was **sensing the situation**. Jo defined this as “listening, picking up on people’s body language, being sensitive to when things are going to change and how people are feeling”.



Jo's final personal reflections were about being true to your purpose, "decide what you are going to do and stick to it and don't be put off by the challenges, there are ways of getting there if it is the right thing to do." And believe that the change will happen – even if getting there is difficult.

Finally, you can't communicate and engage enough. Jo finished her presentation by sharing a quote she felt was particularly relevant to the equality arena "**Leadership is the art of mobilising others to want to struggle for shared ambitions**".



## Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

**“We've got to deliver some major and significant change and equality impact assessment has impacted on the decisions that we are making to modernise our services...”**



**Phil Bushby** is the Director of Human Resources and Estates at the DVLA. Phil is relatively new in post, having joined the DVLA in January. Prior to this he worked at Companies House, following 17 years within the private sector working in logistics. Phil shared his personal insights on using Equality Impact Assessments as a driver for change.

The recent downturn in the economic climate is likely to have a significant impact on public authorities. Financial constraints have already resulted in many authorities making important decisions about their operation and the services they provide. In 2011, it cost £557 million to run the DVLA, by 2015 that needs to be reduced by £100 million – a significant challenge for the organisation.

The public sector equality duty does not prevent the DVLA or other authorities from making difficult decisions such as service reductions or decisions which may affect one group more than another group. Equality Impact Assessments enable authorities to demonstrate that they are making decisions in a fair, transparent and accountable way.

Phil described the reduction in budget in Jo Farrar's terms of a 'burning platform'. He also described the UK Government's ongoing commitment to 'digital by default' in the same terms – the DVLA processes half a million customer transactions each year and at the moment only 26% of those are electronic, the rest are traditional paper transactions.

Phil stated that Equality Impact Assessments are important

because when an organisation is making decisions, "...it's not just about money and it's not just about profit, it is about how we deal with people, having concern for employees and customers".

At the DVLA senior managers lead the diversity action group and ensure diversity and equality matters are driven throughout the organisation. Staff networks also provide advice and inside information from the point of view of protected groups.

With the two 'burning platforms' in mind, the DVLA announced its intention to close 39 regional offices across Great Britain in December 2011, resulting in job losses for staff employed at these locations.

The DVLA has carried an Equality Impact Assessment on this decision, looking at potential impact on staff as well as customers. Phil said, "...it's been really interesting thinking about how impact assessments can really help a process like this, it has given management some common ground with our trade union. So together we've been thinking how does this impact on customers and particular customer groups? And what

should we do to adapt those services to make sure we meet the needs of particular groups?"

Phil felt that the process allowed him to listen to some of the 'quieter voices' and enabled him to **challenge common assumptions** organisations or trade unions may have about particular groups – for example consultation responses to the proposed office closures suggested this would have a disproportionate impact on older people, however the EqIA found that older people were no more likely to use the regional offices than any other age group.

Phil also learned that "we don't always know what we don't know" and how the EqIA process had highlighted **gaps in organisational knowledge** about which disabled people had been using the regional offices.

To date, no final decisions have been made about the future of the 39 regional offices, but the DVLA is **committed to learning lessons** from the Equality Impact Assessment, to ensure services will be developed to mitigate the impact of any office closures, and to give staff some certainty about their future.



## Film: 'Dare to be different': Using evidence to achieve impact

**"I'm proud that we dared to be different and that I'd convinced the Welsh Government to support us. The bit I'm really proud of is that the kids love it... ...But the big bit for me isn't just about stopping hillsides burning, it's about making sure we don't deploy crews to a mountainside when someone is trapped in a car. If you save a life there, you can't put a price on that."**

Deliberate grassfires cost South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) £7 million annually. Years of conventional educational initiatives had not decreased grassfire incidents, which continued to cause serious problems for communities, SWFRS, the Police and Forestry Commission.

**Martin Henderson** told us how he used evidence and statistics to identify ways to tackle this long-standing problem which creates havoc over large areas endangering lives and property;



impacting local businesses, tourism and the countryside; and destroying wildlife and forestry resources.

Martin said, "We see crews deployed to mountainsides for extended periods of time, but when they are on a mountainside they are not able to attend other incidents. We are still confronted with road traffic accidents and house fires. So for me, it was about someone may potentially die here."

SWFRS had been collecting data on deliberate grass fires for years, but the problem had always seems intractable. It was only when the data was analysed that clear patterns of where and when the incidents were taking place emerged.

Tonypandy and Aberdare were two communities which had almost identical numbers of grass fires, so SWFRS chose Tonypandy as a pilot area for an intervention and Aberdare as the control group, with which to

compare results. The campaign aimed to reduce grassfires in the Tonypandy target area by 15% during the 2010 Easter period.

Prepared to investigate a different approach, SWFRS developed a project to change public behaviour, reduce grassfire incidence and pioneer a new approach to fire-related behavioural change. They used in-depth research into the attitudes, behaviours and knowledge of potential arsonists and other stakeholders to understand the behaviour, and then developed an intervention project in partnership with them.

The project promoted more positive alternative behaviours by involving youngsters through a Youth Advisory Board of teenagers drawn from Tonypandy Community College. They helped develop and test the project's messages and outputs. The resulting intervention brought together a range of partners to combine educational efforts, better law enforcement and appealing alternative activities.

College students devised the project's cartoon mascot (Bernie the Sheep) and strapline 'Grass is Green, Fire is Mean'. These were used to build the Bernie brand and develop a range of communications.

The young people worked with SWFRS to plan a programme of Easter activities including bush-craft skills, DJ skills, abseiling, film-making, 'Fire-fighter for a Day', and graffiti workshops. These activities integrated the key messages about valuing your local environment and preventing fires.

The project reduced grassfires in the target area by 46% - three times its original target. It also led to a wider decrease in anti-social behaviour. The success of Bernie means that the project was extended to a further three Unitary Authorities in South Wales during 2011 involving an expanded range of partners.

Watch the filmed interview on the Commission's website:  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com/bernie](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/bernie)



## Workshop sessions

Delegates used the ideas and thinking from the morning's presentations to inform their discussions.

They looked at advancing equality within their own organisations by utilising different levers, techniques and ways of using evidence. Also discussing how these new ideas could be used across Wales.



**Ideas** highlighted in workshops were:

- Organisations should use **local** data and statistics to engage local stakeholders and representatives such as councils and health service professionals.
- Delegates said there was a need for organisations to **share** data, evidence, ideas and resources to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure decision-making is robust.
- The challenges posed by reduction in resources should be seen as an **opportunity** to dare to be different, to reconfigure and better target actions.
- Success and effective practice should be **celebrated** and shared. Delegates thought that organisations should develop storytelling skills to ensure lessons learned could be passed on effectively.
- Leadership should be **authoritative** and leaders commitment should be authentic. Effective leaders should communicate using simple and clear messages to set out a vision. Engagement should be transparent and open.

**Feedback** from evaluation forms showed delegates benefited from having the opportunity to discuss these challenges with each other.

Delegates particularly **value** workshop discussions and are keen this should be a significant part of the conference day.

## Doing more for less

**“For me, equalities and human rights are the golden threads that run through everything that we do - whether it is people, processes or resources”.**

In 2010, Carmel was appointed as the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead in England and Wales for Domestic Abuse, Honour Based Violence, Stalking and Harassment. She is the Chief Constable lead in Wales for: Community Safety, Professional Standards and Specialist Crime.

Carmel spoke about taking personal responsibility, doing things differently, bringing people with us, and the benefits of joined up working.

Firstly Carmel stated the importance of really **understanding the problem** you are trying to solve; what is the



scale of the problem and what does it actually look like?

She spoke about how the current economic climate and austerity has focussed minds, mobilising and pushing people together to **develop partnership working**. However, within partnerships leadership is vital, “personal responsibility and accountability makes things happen.”

She also stated how important it was to **learn from partners** – and other organisations’ mistakes, “Why aren’t you looking at lessons learned from the independent police investigations complaints, the lessons learned from the serious



case reviews? Why are the same lessons coming up? It is not acceptable..." She also urges partners to look out for duplication of effort and inconsistencies.

Carmel feels strongly that one of the challenges facing the public sector is clearly putting the needs of the public first. We should be **providing the services that the public actually want**. She cited an example of domestic abuse occurring predominantly at evenings and weekends, but with the majority of support services

only available during standard office hours.

Carmel also spoke about the importance of **leadership at all levels** of an organisation. She said, "It's about being really clear, precise and operationally succinct about what we want people to do and how we do it. It's about doing the right thing and delivering what we promise. It is about creating an ethos of excellence of service in public service, and being proud of serve."



## **Network next steps**

### **Using the evidence base to drive change**

Delegates expressed their commitment to gathering and using robust data in decision-making, to ensure policies and practices are increasing equality and access to human rights. The emerging findings of the 2011 Census Data will provide useful insights as we take decisions on priorities and resources.

### **Making the most of the new specific duties for Wales**

The specific duties are a real opportunity to drive change and achieve impact. Delegates were keen to identify and share case studies as a powerful way to influence change. These are so critical in encouraging other people to make the most of this opportunity.

### **Partnership working across organisations**

Building the network and partnership working across boundaries to share effective practice and learn from each other were seen as essential in securing change and in delivering more with less resources.

### **A strong and distinct equality agenda for Wales**

We have listened to your suggestions for future network events and look forward to members using the events as a forum for sharing ideas and effective practice. Regional events will focus on defining a strong and distinct agenda for Wales.



## Contact us

The Equality and Human Rights Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights.

This report and more can information be found at:

[www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales)

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