



'Championing social inclusion across the South East Region'

PRESS RELEASE

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SOUTH EAST SOCIAL INCLUSION STATEMENT

The Social Inclusion Partnership South East (SIPSE) wants social inclusion to be at the centre of decision making in the region. SIPSE wants to ensure that regional policy and funding makes it easier to develop and sustain the local work that reduces exclusion of people and communities. Leading the work is the review and updating of the region's 'Social Inclusion Statement'. A new draft 'Social Inclusion Policy Statement' will be available in Autumn 2006 and will highlight the problems faced by social exclusion in the region in order to influence key regional strategies and local planning.

SIPSE champions awareness of social inclusion across the region and the partnership is made up of each of the key regional organisations. Through the 'Social Inclusion Statement', first published in 2002, partners have made commitments about the way in which we will work together to make social inclusion a priority and reduce deprivation in the South East region. The South East was the first region to create and endorse a shared inclusion goal with buy-in from a wide variety of regional agencies.

The South East is one of the most successful UK regions, with prosperity built upon a robust, innovative economy and high levels of employment. However, the region has the largest number of excluded or deprived people of any UK region. Many people experiencing social exclusion live dispersed amongst apparent affluence. Exclusion isn't just a problem affecting individuals – it also affects society as a whole which means that the 'Social Inclusion Policy Statement' has a key role to play in the region.

Robert Jones, Chair of SIPSE, explained the purpose of the review saying that "The individuals and organisations working in this area know that social exclusion is a much bigger problem in this region than most people know or understand. This review, with the supporting evidence, is intended to bring social inclusion further into the light so that we all understand the challenges, the extent of the work that is needed and have clear plans to sustain that work".

Social exclusion:

- prevents the full use of human resources, a key issue in the region;
- may lead to people being prevented from enjoying a fulfilling life;
- in communities generates costs for everyone in welfare, health services and benefits.

SIPSE's Action Groups have focused on older people, young people with a disability, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, people facing financial exclusion and community development. This work has included:

- producing a resource pack called 'Don't Leave Me Out' explaining how to meet the needs of children and young people with a disability;
- holding a conference and producing a report titled 'Ageing Assets' on the implications of an ageing region;
- producing a statement of commitment on race equality in the region.

SIPSE will be producing the draft 'Social Inclusion Policy Statement' for Autumn 2006. Organisations, businesses and individuals will be asked to consider how the draft statement can aid them in their work and their input will influence the final published version. SIPSE will also be collecting together information and statistics on the extent of social exclusion in the region and publishing this as the 'Evidence Base'. The consultation on the policy statement will continue into Winter 2006/7 with the final version published in Spring 2007 alongside a 'Statement of Commitment' and 'Action Plan'.

The revised 'Social Inclusion Policy Statement' will reflect national, regional and local policy changes and new ways of working. It will be a challenging statement which, as well as providing the means to influence high-level strategies in the region, is intended to inspire and support action at a local level.

For further information please contact Simon Plummer, SIPSE Policy and Development Officer Tel: 01483 501343, E-mail: simon@raise-networks.org.uk or visit the SIPSE website at www.raise-networks.org.uk/sipse .

Notes to Editors:

The Social Inclusion Partnership South East (SIPSE) is a high level partnership within the region which was established in 2002. It has a role to promote social inclusion and through partnership working offer 'SIPSE Products' that can support organisations within the region to tackle or prevent social exclusion.

SIPSE comprises fifteen regional organisations. It has a main committee with high level cross sector regional representation, chaired by Robert Jones from the voluntary / community sector – a member of the RAISE Board and the Regional Assembly.

SIPSE includes the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), Government Office for the South East (GOSE), Regional Action and Involvement South East (RAISE), South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), Housing Corporation, Commission for the Social Care Inspection, Learning and Skills Council, South East Regional Public Health Group, Culture South East, Legal Services Commission, Big Lottery Fund, Community Development South East, Citizens Advice South East and Job Centre Plus.