



SUMMER ISSUE

# NEWSLETTER

FOR THE ORGANISATION OF BLIND AFRICAN CARIBBEANS

JULY/AUGUST 2002

## MEMBERS' PAGE

Welcome to the summer edition of OBAC newsletter, we would like to use this to update you on development of the first six months for the year.

During the past few months OBAC has been growing from strength to strength ensuring that we offer a first class service to our members. To ensure we maintain the level or standard of work, we have set up systems, which are compliant with the Community Legal Service Quality Mark and in April of this year an audit was carried out by CLS to measure our performance against the CLS Quality Mark standard, I am pleased to announce that we have been successful in achieving the Preliminary Award of the Quality Mark.

During the past six months we have been carrying out an overview of our Development Plan in terms of our service provisions for the last three

years, identifying areas for development and those areas where we do not feel we have the necessary expertise to work in. The review of our Development Plan ending 2002 involved all staff writing a strategic overview of their work, OBAC monitoring and evaluation process of our different work streams and taking into account new government initiatives, all these formed the basis for discussions and the way forward at a Strategic Planning Away Day in Littlehampton. The day was very useful and we have been able to develop a Strategic framework, which will be our driving vision for the next five years, this will be presented to you at the next AGM.

### *Premises*

We have finally been able to renew the lease for our present premises for the next 20 years. It would be useful in hearing your views on securing our own premises/land in the near future.

During the last AGM members raised interest in organising social activities in order to fully utilise the use of the mini-bus. The management committee have set up a sub-group for this purpose; the chair of the subgroup is Joyce Williams. It has been agreed by the group to publicise the hire of the minibus to members and other

agencies and also she would like information from members of any activity i.e. play, concert etc so that this can be arranged if possible for members to attend.

Please contact the office if you or you know of anyone who will like to hire the minibus.

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# ***OBAC Annual General Meeting***

The date for our next AGM will be 30 November 2002. Please note this date in your diaries. This year there will be an election of new officers to govern and carry the agenda forward.

We have already started planning for the day, letters and forms to complete will be sent to you very soon. In the meantime you can indicate if you like to attend by phoning the administration team on 020 7735 3400. This will enable us to plan ahead for transportation and catering.

## ***SUPPORT SERVICES UPDATE***

The government is in the process of extending carers allowance to people over the age of 65, these changes will come into effect from November 2002.

The RNIB are planning a campaign to ensure the take up of the new carers allowance between October and November 2002.

To ensure our members are fully informed and benefit from the new allowance if eligible, OBAC is planning to hold two consultation meetings for our members and service users to promote the new carers allowance and provide details of eligibility. This meeting will be held in September, a date will be communicated to you.

The support service team are planning an open discussion meeting about OBAC's existing service provisions with the aim of identifying unmet needs. This meeting will be held on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 2002 at 11.30 am – 3.00 p.m. Please contact the office on 020 7735 3400 if you would like to attend the meeting.

## ***TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT***

Over the past three years OBAC has been able to develop and deliver a more comprehensive training programme with our grant from the Community Fund and support through our partnership with Action for Blind People on a SRB6 project (Single Regeneration Budget Fund) and most recently accessed further funding from the ESF (European Social Fund Objective 3). OBAC training is based on the achievement of OCR Clait and IBT II.

The course content is Basic, Soft and Key skills training in Literacy, numeracy, communication, personal development, motivation, orientation,

jobsearch and interview techniques. We would like to inform members that to date 21 beneficiaries have registered for the training programme and a number of those who took part in the programme have had positive outcomes such as gaining employment, self-employment and success in their examinations. We are currently designing an intensive training programme for those who have been on our training programme, but have not accessed work; this will run for 20 weeks.

We are currently recruiting for the next programme, which will commence in September 2002. If you are interested in enrolling please contact the administrative team at OBAC giving your name, address and telephone number, you will then be invited for an interview and assessment. Please be informed that there are limited places.

There is a Meal Allowance and Beneficiaries may be entitled to childcare and travel allowance. The European Social Fund supports beneficiary costs.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

### ***Having a Voice***

You may be aware that the government has set strategies for engaging with the local communities, especially targeting the most deprived communities in the country, this will be achieved through Neighbourhood Renewal, which is aimed at:

Improving the quality of life of local people and close the gap between those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

To ensure that within a borough, the neighbourhoods with the greatest needs receive the most attention.

Involve local people in developing and delivering services, and to create inclusive and sustainable communities. And improve the quality of basic public services in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Community Empowerment Networks have been set up in each of the boroughs, the aim is to determine (a) how the community will be informed (b) how the under represented groups will participate (c) how the community networks will be organised and administered and finally how these networks will be governed.

OBAC has been looking at how we can proactively participate and engage in these networks by developing a training project to encourage the participation of our members at different levels through a Citizenship Training programme; this will cover training in Representation, Negotiation skills, mapping exercise etc. We are awaiting a decision on our application to Bridge House Trusts. And if successful we will be contacting members who would like to be involved in future external focus groups and wish to register for training.

## ***DISABILITY UPDATE***

The Metropolitan Society for the Blind are holding their annual church Service and Tea on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002. The venue will be at St George's Cathedral, Southwark, which is at the junction of Lambeth Road and St George's Road. Tea will follow the service in the Cathedral Hall. In attendance will be the Mayors and Mayoresses of 12 boroughs.

To help with planning for seating and catering arrangements, if you are interested in attending, please contact OBAC Admin. Team before 16 August 2002 so that a booking form can be completed and sent off on your behalf.

### ***Guide Dogs on track to get minicab bill passed***

Minicab owners who refuse to let guide dogs accompany visually impaired passengers could soon be breaking the law.

The existing Disability Discrimination Act obliges licensed black cabs to take guide dogs but says nothing about minicabs. Now a private members bill that fills in the gap has passed its second reading in Parliament and stands a very good chance of becoming law. Since Autumn 2000, Guide Dogs for the Blind have been lobbying local authorities as a part of its Access for All campaign.

Identification, notification & registration:  
Consultation on new proposals

The Department of Health has been reviewing the formal processes by which blind and partially sighted people are identified, referred and registered in England. The aims of the review are as follows:

- Early identification of social care needs.
- Collection of more accurate data about the incidence.
- Increased take up of registration
- Improved clarity to patients and others about the process and benefits of registrations

- Evaluation and if necessary change to current terminology.

Three new forms are proposed to replace the current BD8. Names of each form will be agreed at a later stage of the consultation. The forms will cover (a) An Identification letter or leaflet available from Optometrists – high street opticians to give to customers who are found to have significant sight problems, this will be used as a self referral for social care assessments.

(b) The second form will be completed by an eye clinic staff and sent direct to social services or other agencies formally requesting an assessment of social care needs where registration is not immediately planned.

The third form will be the simplified version of form BD8 concentrating on registration – specifically to establish eligibility for benefits and concessions.

Also, consultation, feedback and proposed classification and terminology for visually impaired people are as follows 'blind or severely visually impaired' or partially sighted or moderately visually impaired.

OBAC is involved in the consultation process, so if you have any comments on this you can contact the OBAC office and speak to the Director, who would be happy to discuss this with you.

## **SYMPATHY CORNER**

Some of our members are not enjoying the best of health; we at OBAC would like to extend our sympathies and best well wishes for the future.

## **OBAC NEWSLETTER**

*Recorded by  
Alwyn Stephenson*

FIRST FLOOR GLOUCESTER HOUSE.  
8 CAMBERWELL NEW ROAD. LONDON SE5 0RZ.  
TEL: 020 7735 3400 FAX: 020 7582 8334  
Email: [orglindafricanib@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:orglindafricanib@ukonline.co.uk)  
website: [www.obac.org.uk](http://www.obac.org.uk)

**OBAC exists to ensure blind and partially sighted African and Caribbeans access relevant services, influence decision and policy makers, to enable them to overcome barriers that prevent them becoming active members of the community.**

### **OBAC's frontline team are:**

#### **Management & Administration**

Ibukun Olashore  
John Gakpe  
Bintu Barley

#### **Transcription Service**

Alywn Stephenson

#### **Supported Services**

Amal Jama  
Grace Foster  
Francisca Akanya

#### **Training & Employment**

Henry Nicholson  
Pius Aigbogun  
Petrit Jaka  
Albert Bowen

**Office hours 9.30 am – 5.30 pm**

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Should any member/user wish to make a complaint concerning any aspect of the organisation work, she/he should approach a member of staff. If the complainant remains unsatisfied the matter should be raised with the Operations Manager. Or if this is not appropriate she/he may raise this matter with the Chair of the Management Committee. A full copy of the Complaints Procedure can be obtained from OBAC.

OBAC is funded by Association of London Government, Community Fund, European Social Fund (Objective 3), London Borough Southwark and other charitable Trusts.

