



# WHEMAG!

## What is WHEM Group All About?

It all started in 1997 when Mrs Carmen Dillon was the Executive Officer of the CVS. Through her work Mrs Dillon had observed that the social life of a significant number of Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) people who live, work or school in Welwyn Hatfield was limited. Even though there were clubs and leisure centres in the area many BME families did not access such provisions. Carmen embarked on a research to find out why BME families were not using existing social clubs and whether the clubs served the cultural needs of ethnic minority communities in the area. (cont'd on page 4)



### PROFILE CORNER

#### MRS CARMEN DILLON

*"Obstacle is what you see when you shift your focus from your target"* This sums up the ingenuity of the elegant, gentle glamorous lady called Carmen Dillon who we have selected for our first edition profile column. Carmen is a highly motivated, ambitious and focused career lady with nineteen years experience of working in the Voluntary Sector with fifteen years of that in a managerial position. She is also a family lady with two highly educated grown up "children" Wayne and Davinia, who have both left home, but are still close by to take inspiration from their parents every now and then. (cont'd on page 2)



Michal Siewniak

I am Michal Siewniak. I came to England in June 2005. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know how to find a job. I didn't know how to go about most simple things that you can possibly imagine. I didn't know what it meant to live in a diverse and multicultural society.

Well, I was lucky, my English was good enough to find me some employment. It may not be a great job but it is something that is giving me and my family regular income. My ability to speak English also helped me to make friends and I had to rely on others, but I still didn't find it easy. So if I who could speak English did not find it easy, then imagine one coming to a foreign country without knowing the language.

Learning a new language is a challenge and can be demanding. It can have some frustrating effect on learners. However, knowing the language of the area where you live is so important for socialisation. If you want to register your child with a GP, you will need language. If you have to apply for a job you will need it. (cont'on page 4)

### Inside this WHEMAG

- 1  
All about Whem Group  
Profile corner  
Michal's Experience
- 2  
Carmen Dillon  
Interview with WHEMG Member
- 3

### Children & Young people's Page

- Thought for the Season  
A life in the Day  
This Way
- 4

- All about WHEM Group  
Michal's Experience  
WHEM Group Objectives  
WHEM group Current Activities  
Up and coming events

## Kaleidoscope Festival 2010

Celebrating Cultural Diversity in Welwyn Hatfield 17th July, Stanborough Park, WGC,

Get involved now! - Volunteers Needed!

[www.kalfest.org.uk](http://www.kalfest.org.uk)



Bill Salmon Centre, 88 Town Centre, Hatfield, AL10 0JW Telephone: 01707 262548 Fax: 01707 258845  
Website: [www.whemgroup.org.uk](http://www.whemgroup.org.uk) Email: [whemgroup@btconnect.com](mailto:whemgroup@btconnect.com) Registered charity No. 1110122

If you would like us to remove your Email address from our mailing list, tell us by [clicking here](#).



## PROFILE CORNER—cont'd from page 1

Born in Jamaica on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1958 to Mr and Mrs Levene, Carmen at the age of ten was the last of three children to join her parents and other siblings in England. She grew up in Brixton, South London and attended West Norwood Secondary School. At 14 years Carmen joined the British Red Cross and that's where her love for voluntary work began. At age 17 Carmen left home to live with her eldest sister, worked in Sainsbury to finish putting herself through school. After six months at the supermarket she moved to work with a publishing company called Hutchison Publishers based in West London and attended evening classes continuing with her studies. She then moved on to work with Pearl and Dean Film Company before moving on to a Jewish textile manufacturing company.

Carmen met her husband Cleffen in 1976 and in 1979 they married. She joined him in his home town of Welwyn Garden City and in November 1979 their son was born.

Carmen then suspended her career ambitions and concentrated on the upbringing of her child in anticipation of another child and in 1981 her daughter was born. She stayed at home with the children for the next seven years continuing with her studies. When the children started attending nursery Carmen took up voluntary work with schools and in 1987 she returned to temporary work. From 1990 to 1994 Carmen took a part-time employment as a PA with Age Concern Hertfordshire and did not allow anything to stop her ability to combine family life with career ambition until she climbed to the position of the Chief Executive of Welwyn Hatfield CVS and raised the organisation's annual income from £30,000 per annum to £250,000 per annum.

Carmen continued to champion the development of various projects that help to improve people's lives and community empowerment. She is a founding member of Welwyn Hatfield Ethnic Minority Group; she re-established the furniture recycling scheme; she has been a school governor for various local schools; she was secretary to the PTA at her children's secondary school; she is a mentor for children of mixed race and is also a beautician. As she fondly says:

*"For the last 9 years I have combined my day job with working as a part-time Beauty Consultant, advising women on taking care of their skin and cosmetic application"*

Carmen's husband works in construction, her son studied as an accountant and her daughter is currently a media student at the University of Bedfordshire. Her hobbies are keeping fit, badminton, jogging, creative writing, and anything to do with beauty and fashion.

Carmen is highly competitive, full of laughter and loves life and family. When it comes to career ambition, Carmen says *"believe you can and you will, believe you can't and you are probably right"*.

## INTERVIEW WITH A WHEMG MEMBER By Efu Sey Koi-Larbi

**Q: Dear Stella, I understand you were a Trustee of WHEM Group. Is that right?**

S: Yes I was; but now I'm taking a break. I'm still a member of WHEM Group and I represent WHEMG at the police consultative council but I'm taking a break from the Board of Trustees.

**Q: Is that for any particular reason?**

S: Well, not really. Actually I serve as a member of other organisations. As I have retired from my regular job, I need time for myself. I was the secretary of the Board of Trustees at WHEM Group so I did the minutes at meetings and so on. All that is tiring and I need a break.

**Q: So how did you hear about WHEM Group. I mean How did you get involved with WHEM group?**

S: I got involved with WHEM Group about eight years ago through a friend. When I bought my house and moved to this area there was no African and Caribbean social club nearby. As such I first joined a social club close by where I was the only black person. I did not feel comfortable there because the conversation was always on the negative things about Africa. So I constantly found myself on the defensive side trying to explain things and educating people about Africa and a about my culture. So I stopped going to that club.

**Q: Was that when your friend told you about WHEM Group?**

S: No. Actually when I stopped going to the first social club I heard about the African Caribbean Centre at Watford. So I started going to Watford until one day my friend who knew about WHEM Group invited me to attend WHEMG meeting. She explained to me that WHEMG was the voice for BME people. She said it was not just a social club but an organisation that represents ethnic minority people in many ways.

At the time I felt that the services being provided were not meeting the needs of people from BME communities. The concerns that we showed were being ignored and although it was on paper that community cohesion was essential and glamorous documents had been produced to outline procedures to follow to achieve integration, with constant reminders of equality yet every effort we made was being blocked by the systems in place. Integrating smoothly was not easy for many of us.

**Q: How was that?**

S: For example, I acquired a space at the allotment near my house. I was the only black person to be using the allotment. The land I was given was overgrown with weeds and had been abandoned because it was prone to flood. Some of the old timers were betting that I was sure to fail. It took my stepson three years to clear and drain the plot. The first year I had crops, my crops were taken. I reported it to the site manager because I saw the person who took it. My crops were returned three days later scattered on the path to my plot. By that time the crops were no longer fresh and had perished. Sometimes I would go and find my crops uprooted and destroyed. Although, I was paying the rent for my plot another plot holder insisted on using the shed on my plot. *(The shed is still a source of jealousy)*. It took a letter from my MP Mr. Shapps to remove the individual from my plot. *(Did the harassment stop? Find out in the next edition)*.



### Thought for the Season By Harlan Davies 16 years

We live in a hierarchical system that cannot be escaped. Perhaps it is innate human nature to strive to better oneself and climb the social "ladder". Often the motivation for many people is to merely gain more wealth for themselves which they in turn believe will make them happy and thus enable them to lead better lives.

This principle is embedded in the educational system where a simple equation is reiterated constantly to the subconscious of the students and pupils alike. The equation being "*better grades = a better paid job*". On the other hand, bad grades means a stagnant life of under-achievement, misery and ultimately, being poor. This is why people conform. Educational establishments, schools and parents struggle to openly admit to little Timmy that they are forcing him to plough through his SATs because it will eventually mean a plumper salary when he is approaching his middle-life crisis. This whole revelation sounds just too greedy, too shallow though, doesn't it? We live in a capitalist world where money is the motivation. After all it is what makes the world go round.

### This way....

I walked through the door to sit on the mat.  
 So far you don't know that I'm a cat  
 I see my tired owner sit down  
 But I'm wondering why he has a frown  
 Walking by, I start purr,  
 Noticing fingers running through my fur  
 I see my owner starts to smile  
 I think I should stay here for a while  
 Wishing I had something nice to eat  
 Fish, poultry or a tasty treat  
 Just because I'm a typical cat,  
 Doesn't mean I'm going to be fat  
 I rarely play with my toy mouse  
 But today I want to create havoc in my house!

By Maya Lwanga Age: 12



### Day in the Life - Saturday

By Freddy Barratt 15 years

If I was writing this two years ago, it could have been different. I used to find myself up early, rushing around having a fulfilling day and getting back quite late with only a small pocket of time to myself, but I loved it.

However this is not two years ago. This is about my average day now; a different period of my life. It starts with a lazy ten-ish to the day. I usually get up as soon as I wake. People tell me it is great just to lie there and "rest", but for me it is just pointless.

So I come to one of the happier aspects of a normal and mostly solitary place of my home. The Shower! This place for me is my favourite time alone, where I stand there and think about everything and feel warm. The shower in my house is great because it is powerful and reaches very hot temperatures. Many others, when you go on holiday, pretty much trickle down your back which for me is a very unsatisfying start to the day. The thing about the shower for me is that it can shape my mood for the rest of the day. It's not every day that the shower runs smoothly or faultlessly. On the occasions that it doesn't, it can set my mood back.

Breakfast: "the most important meal of the day" and a favourite for me too. I have this odd routine where I put my milk on my cereal and then leave it to soften for a while. After having done it for a few years now I would say between five and seven minutes is the best length of time to leave it. Most, including me, would say it is quirky, a lot say it is stupid, but I think it is brilliant; just a small cog in the Freddy Barratt machine. I prefer these smaller cogs. They are the real parts that make up me and my routine, the good parts anyway.

The problem from this part onwards is there is too little to talk about what I do on a Saturdays. Yes, that's worth a mention. As I have said, a few years back and this would have been full. I used to play for the school football team before I got dropped. It was a while coming, so it wasn't a big deal when it happened. I played as a striker for Owens but I "lost my sharpness". I still play for the club but I did enjoy playing for the school and that was what I wanted to do, most of all when I came to Owens. Years ago I played for my club on a Saturday but they moved the games to a Sunday because of school games. So now all the action is on a Sunday.

My Saturday was also cut in two by my Drama group called Best. It lasted three hours from 1pm to 4pm. It was really fun doing a range of acting and the like, but with that I just got too old for it and I had to move on to the next group called Byte, which I find even better. This just makes my Fridays more hectic and Saturdays more unproductive.

My Saturday is like an empty shell that used to home a hermit crab which has since moved onto better things... and days. From here I could ramble on how I spend the next hour upon hour on games and I could tell you everything about them, how they've changed and what could be better. Do you really want to read more? You don't need to say "yes" or "no" I will tell you anyway. I will share all the secrets now. *Just get the next edition of **WHEMAG** for them!*



## What is WHEMAG All About? What is WHEM Group All About?

cont'd from page **Michal Siewniak**

She visited clubs and other social gatherings, talked to various individuals from ethnic minority families within Welwyn Hatfield and liaised with similar ethnic minority groups within Hertfordshire. From the research it was observed that many ethnic minorities felt that the existing provisions did not cater for their cultural needs. Some such BME families had just moved to settle in Hertfordshire and for that matter Welwyn Hatfield district. They had diverse cultural values and were faced with the daunting experience of adjusting to their new environment to integrate into the community amicably without losing their identity. Although the local CVS in Welwyn Hatfield had an agenda for community cohesion, its plan was generic in nature and did not cater for particular socio-cultural needs of Ethnic minorities. Many of such ethnic minority families felt excluded as they struggled to integrate without losing their cultural identities. It was obvious that just like it was in other Hertfordshire districts; the needs of ethnic minorities could not be met fully by the CVS. The CVS therefore realised that there was the need to get a separate department that had specific focus on addressing the needs of ethnic minority communities just like it was being done in Broxbourne and other districts in Hertfordshire. There was definitely the need to address the issues identified above if local priorities included reduction of isolation among local residents and encouragement of inclusive practices. (Read the next edition for what happened next)

This is why in January 2008, MENTER, Hertfordshire Community Foundation through grassroots funding, North Hertfordshire College, Hertfordshire County Council, Stepping Stones and Welwyn Hatfield Polish Forum started a pilot project in Hatfield to deliver ESOL classes (*English as a second language*) to many migrants.

After a very successful Hatfield Polish Day we managed to attract even more people and last year in September we increased the amount of classes and more than 80 learners participated in different locations – in Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City, and Stevenage. Big success, a lot of challenges but a great success!

We are living in a very diverse society and ESOL classes enabled many members of our local community to increase their confidence and self esteem. It is worth mentioning that learners were coming from different backgrounds – many were from Poland but we had students from Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania and Lithuania .

I think this is a very important step towards creating a well integrated community in Welwyn and Hatfield where everybody feels welcome, know each other and is happy to participate in the lives of our local community.

*“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is a success”. I believe that we made a step in the right direction!*



WHEMAG Staff (Efiua – Capacity Building; Moreen – Strategic Development Manager Kumiko- Admin Support)

## WHEM GROUP OBJECTIVES

- To form links with the ethnic minority groups in the area
- To work with ethnic minority groups to identify their needs.
- To make sure that local agencies are aware of these needs
- To co-operate with local agencies for service delivery.
- To develop social and cultural activities.
- To identify and address the training

## Our Activities

1. Developing social and cultural activities.
2. Accessing training opportunities
3. Establishing new groups.
4. Finding meeting places for groups.
5. Providing information to schools and other establishments about cultural issues
6. Raising awareness through multicultural events.
7. Improving access to services by advocating for groups and individual members of the community.

## Ongoing projects Up & Coming Events

- Community Mentoring Project
- After School African Drumming & Dance
- Kaleidoscope Festival—Volunteers Needed
- Kaleidoscope Cultural Club—To be launched in June.

To find out more about any of the above activities please contact us through the details below.

## Kaleidoscope Festival 2010

Celebrating Cultural Diversity in Welwyn Hatfield 17th July, Stanborough Park , WGC,

Get involved now! - Volunteers Needed!

[www.kalfest.org.uk](http://www.kalfest.org.uk)



Bill Salmon Centre, 88 Town Centre, Hatfield, AL10 0JW Telephone: 01707 262548 Fax: 01707 258845  
Website: [www.whemgroup.org.uk](http://www.whemgroup.org.uk) Email: [whemgroup@btconnect.com](mailto:whemgroup@btconnect.com) Registered charity No. 1110122

If you would like us to remove your Email address from our mailing list, tell us by [clicking here](#).