Scottish Community Safety Network

Title: The Journey to Race Equality: Delivering Improved Services to Local Communities
Author: Audit Commission
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SCS topic headings: Safety of Vulnerable Groups; Partnership Working; Community Engagement; Evaluation and Monitoring

This document is a REVIEW of effective practice in response to Government legislation.

Summary of the intervention's aim

The main aim of the study was to investigate how local agencies were responding, at a strategic level, to the duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 in terms of delivering improved outcomes to local black and minority ethnic communities. The research report focused on three key questions:

- What does race equality mean?
- How are public services currently positioned to deliver tangible race equality outcomes?
- What are the critical building blocks for moving forward successfully?

The report provides a framework to help public services think through what race equality means for their localities and manage their approach better. Discussion and case studies are presented to support learning from this research so that it can be applied to other strands of equality work and to types of organisation not directly involved in the study.

Outcomes

- Chapter 1 explores what race equality means to local black and minority ethnic communities and sets out a framework for developing a local definition based on specific outcomes.

- Chapter 2 looks at how local agencies are responding to the renewed agenda for race equality and the key challenges they face.

- Chapter 3 examines the common barriers to progress and challenges the assumptions that underpin them.

- Chapter 4 highlights the elements needed to make progress along the journey to race equality.

- Chapter 5 outlines what can be done to encourage and sustain progress.

'Race equality' is a term widely used by professionals across the public sector but many people of black and minority ethnic origin have a limited understanding and awareness of it (see the report's Ref. 9). This may be because public services are themselves often unclear about its precise meaning and find it hard to paint a picture of what race equality looks like locally.

As people find it difficult to talk about race equality, it continues to be an issue that is avoided. Public sector staff can feel uncomfortable because of the negativity with which race equality is often associated. There are also many reasons why people of black and minority ethnic origin are reluctant to speak out, for example:

- not wanting to draw attention to being different
- fear of being stereotyped as a troublemaker or sounding like a 'broken-record'
- futility of continuously raising issues when nothing has changed in the past
- fear that identifying problems will reinforce the negative perception of race issues.

Examples of race inequality

- **Employment** – Overall, black and minority ethnic people are more likely to be unemployed, irrespective of their qualifications, place of residence, sex or age. They are less likely to hold senior management positions.
- **Education** – Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils experience lower levels of educational attainment. Black pupils are more likely to be excluded from school.
- **Health** – African Caribbean people are more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia.
- **Social services** – Adults and older people from black and minority ethnic communities are less likely to be provided with social services following an assessment. Only 33 per cent of all social services users in England thought that matters of race, culture and religion were noted by local authority social services staff.

- **Policing** – Black people are eight times and Asian people three times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. There is a strong perception among young black and minority ethnic people that the police assume that they are potential criminals. Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people are more likely to be victims of crime.
- **Housing** – Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are more likely to live in homes that fall below the Decent Homes Standard than white households.

Source: Audit Commission review of national data on outcomes experienced by people of black and minority ethnic origin (see the report's Refs. 2, 3, 11, 12 and 13).

Black and minority ethnic communities can easily identify the public service issues that concern them most. These are no different to many of the issues that concern white British people (see the report's Ref. 9). They relate to quality of life, such as wanting more for young people to do, less crime and fear of crime, better health, more employment opportunities, better secondary education and public transport. In common with most of the population, black and minority ethnic communities believe that the quality of public services needs to improve (see the report's Ref. 9).

Outcomes to improve quality of life
Public services need to have a practical vision for race equality in order for activity to be clearly focused on improving the quality of life for all black and minority ethnic communities. It must be based on a good understanding of the current areas of inequality and describe how things will be different in the future. Although the significant areas of discrimination are known, many local agencies still struggle to be specific about what race equality means locally.

  The report identifies key race equality outcomes where clear and focused action can improve the quality of life of black and minority ethnic communities (see the report's Exhibit 1).

Improving services to reflect the needs and aspirations of new and old black and minority ethnic communities requires significant change. Audit Commission work has consistently shown that high-performing services focus on meeting the needs of individuals by understanding local issues and prioritising resources accordingly (see the report's Ref. 15). Delivering high-quality services that meet the needs and aspirations of all local black and minority ethnic communities requires the same approach. Most public services recognise that race equality is an important aspect of good performance.

Local agencies say that race equality is an important part of improving services. However, many are unclear about what they are trying to achieve, and are focusing on compliance with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

- Two-fifths of organisations in the Commission's survey report poor progress in identifying race equality outcomes. When asked about their race equality objectives, the majority of organisations quoted the duties under the Act.

- Fieldwork showed that many organisations found it hard to articulate what success would look like beyond a broad aspiration to 'treat people fairly'.
- Recent research commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) also showed that many race equality schemes have not defined any tangible outcomes (see the report's Ref. 16).

Progress is often measured in terms of process, rather than the delivery of outcomes that will impact upon quality of life. Although many local agencies are feeling confident, this is based on a low level of ambition to really deliver outcome change.

- The most common areas of success cited by equality champions in the Commission's survey were setting up systems, writing a race equality scheme or policy, and collecting or using information.
- Fieldwork indicates that implementation of the race equality scheme often means no more than having a working group in place with an action plan that has been endorsed by a senior manager. Many organisations found it hard to say what improved outcomes had been delivered.
- Those who are feeling the most confident are therefore not necessarily those making the most progress in achieving outcome change. Confidence reflects different levels of ambition, realism when assessing progress and a clear picture of what needs to be achieved.

Case study topics include:
- **Creative methods of consultation**
- **Developing trust and confidence**
- **Improving health outcomes; educational attainment; and employment opportunities**
- **Securing external funds to deliver key priorities**
- **Making internal funds available**
- **Working in partnership to tackle specific issues**
- **Engaged non-executive directors**
- **Visible leadership**
- **Drawing on staff knowledge**
- **Setting priorities for race equality and aligning them to corporate objectives.**

Self-assessment tool
To accompany the report, the Audit Commission developed a self-assessment tool to help local agencies to understand where they are on the journey to race equality and how they can move forward. The aim of the tool is to support agencies to improve race equality outcomes. The tool can be used at any level, from an individual department or service, to a local partnership involving a number of organisations. It is designed to be practical and flexible and to move agencies and partnerships beyond process, towards the outcomes required by their specific needs and circumstances. (The self-assessment tool is available to download free at:

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The key driver for delivering race equality should be improving outcomes for all black and minority ethnic communities as part of the work to improve services for everyone. This driver is widely recognised and some progress is being made. But many agencies are struggling to define a local vision of race equality and the outcomes they are aiming to deliver.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 underpins the drive to achieve race equality. It requires that public services identify where inequality exists and address it in a systematic and coherent way (see the report's Ref. 4). However, most local agencies are focusing on compliance rather than on improving diverse black and minority ethnic communities' experience of public services. All public sector organisations now have a positive duty to promote race equality. It makes race equality a driver for service improvement and better staff management.

Alongside the legislation, the most important driver of activity is the need to improve services. Despite this, many local agencies are struggling to define race equality outcomes and the focus of their activity is on compliance with the letter, and not the spirit of the Act. The Audit Commission concludes that this indicates a lack of real local ownership and is supported by other evidence.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

There were seven elements within the research:

- Three-day site visits to ten organisations across England and Wales, including councils, acute hospital trusts, primary care trusts and police forces in both urban and rural areas. The sites were chosen to reflect geographical location, size of local black and minority population, likely stage of the journey to race equality and organisation type. Researchers spoke to members, non-executive directors, senior staff, frontline staff, middle managers, black and minority ethnic staff, local public sector partners and local voluntary sector groups

- A telephone survey commissioned from NOP of 150 organisations across England and Wales, asking chief executives and equality champions about their work on race equality (visit http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/journeytoracequealitysurveyanalysis.pdf for the NOP report on it's actions)

- Focus groups were undertaken with black and minority ethnic members of the general public (for more information about the focus group methodology and

key   findings,   see   http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/communitysafety/Pages/thejourneytoraceequality_copy.aspx#downloads)

- A series of interviews with national policymakers, government departments and supporting bodies to explore their understanding of the issues

- Workshops with a range of black and minority ethnic voluntary sector groups to find out their perception of the issues and gather examples of emerging practice

- A review of national data on black and minority ethnic people's attitudes towards public services and the outcomes they currently experience

- A listening and learning day with all stakeholders to discuss our interim findings and identify recommendations for action.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Please contact info@scsn.org.uk

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