

## **A Position Statement on Race Equality**

### ***A paper by a Coalition of BME VCS organisations for the Department for Communities and Local Government***

#### **Introduction**

1. On 8<sup>th</sup> September, a coalition of BME VCS organisations (hereinafter referred as the coalition) was formed to produce a **Position Statement on Race Equality** for the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to present to Andrew Stunell, OBE MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, the Government's Lead Minister for Race Equality.
2. The aim of the paper is to inform the Minister's thinking in developing the government's strategy on race equality and to affirm the organisations' collective commitment to working alongside government to reduce racial inequality in our society.
3. In producing the Position Paper, partners to the coalition contributed a list of 20 key priorities to promote race equality in the following policy areas outlined on pages 2 - 5 :
  - (i) Health
  - (ii) Education
  - (iii) Employment
  - (iv) Criminal Justice
  - (v) Housing
  - (vi) political engagement and representation.
4. Underlying these priorities is the requirement to pursue effective implementation of recently passed equality legislation, and the desire to build relationships with and between BME VCS organisations in order to create solutions to the persistent racial inequalities that blight our society.
5. This paper acts as a starting point for ongoing discussions between the Minister, BME VCS organisations, and CLG in its role as a co-ordinator of action to tackle racial inequalities across government. We look forward to opportunities to work to pursue our collective aspiration for an inclusive society in which racial inequality is a thing of the past.
6. The context for each policy theme is further outlined in Annex 1. The paper also presents a business case in support of the coalition's key priorities and this is set out in Annex 2.
7. Following organisations are partners to the Coalition:
  1. Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG)
  2. Council for Ethnic and Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO)
  3. Coalition for Racial Justice UK
  4. Equanomics UK
  5. Friends, Families and Travellers
  6. JUST West Yorkshire
  7. MENTER – BME network for the Eastern Region
  8. Operation Black Vote (OBV)
  9. Race Equality Foundation (REF)
  10. Race on the Agenda (ROTA)
  11. Runnymede Trust
  12. Voice4Change England

The Coalition of BME VCS organisations calls on government to address the following priorities:

### Housing

1. ***Ensure that in line with the national planning policy framework for housing, local authorities meet the demands for suitable sites for Gypsy and Travellers community.***

Clear national leadership is required for a consistent approach in local areas to allocation of sites for Gypsies and Travellers which may otherwise be unduly hampered by prejudices.

### Health

2. ***Invest in prevention and early detection of illnesses which disproportionately affect particular sections of BME communities in order to address persistent health inequalities.***

Racial health inequalities include disproportionate rates of infant mortality in Gypsy and Travellers community, high prevalence of diabetes in Asian and Caribbean communities, high levels of poor mental health in African and Caribbean communities, and difficulties in securing kidney transplants for all BME communities. Investment in prevention serves not only to improve the health of citizens, but also reduces the costs expended on treating acute illnesses.

### Criminal Justice

3. ***Create effective local accountability that can address the lower levels of confidence in policing reported by people from BME communities.***

There is an opportunity in the forthcoming Police and Social Responsibility Bill to establish measures for local accountability that include the legal and moral responsibility of the police to address racial inequality and discrimination prevalent within policing.

4. ***Develop targeted initiatives to address crime that people from BME communities are more likely to be victims of.***

While some focus in recent years has been given to the ongoing disproportionality at every stage of the criminal justice process for BME people, less focus has been placed on BME people as victims of crime. Improving clean-up rates would contribute to building greater confidence within BME communities. Learning from the experience of programmes like Operation Trident is a crucial step in building trust.

### Education

5. ***Ensure that no school assessed as 'good' or 'outstanding' can have an attainment gap for Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African or Black Caribbean children larger than the national average, or exclude a disproportionate number of Black children from school.***

While we recognise that school reform is likely to be significant, minimum standards must be set from the centre for all children. These standards should include schools being held accountable for the ethnic attainment gaps in their school, and the decisions that they make about exclusions from school.

6. ***Use the proposed pupil premium to address ethnic penalties in education.***

There has been some discussion of using the proposed pupil premium to address socio-economic inequalities, but no discussion of using premiums to address racial inequality. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant included a recognition that race has an impact beyond class. We hope that this recognition can be included in devising a pupil premium that will allow schools to have the resources to address racial inequalities in attainment and achievement.

7. ***Work with universities to address the poorer attainment of degree students from many BME backgrounds and their subsequent poorer results in the labour market.***

Research has highlighted that even after controlling for the majority of contributory factors, being from a minority ethnic group (except the Other Black, Mixed and Other groups) was still found to have a statistically significant and negative effect on degree attainment. If university is a key driver of opportunities for young people from marginalised groups, this must be addressed.

## **Employment**

8. ***Place a stronger focus on supporting people from BME communities into self-employment.***

A national enterprise mentoring scheme for people from BME communities, as proposed by the government, also offers a good opportunity to engage BME VCS organisations in the development and delivery of the scheme. This scheme should be developed and introduced as a matter of urgency and linked to access to financial support.

9. ***Ensure effective implementation of the public sector equality duty that requires public bodies to improve race equality and diversity outcomes in the procurement of public services.***

For example, DWP should ensure that Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme primary contractors deliver on challenging ethnicity targets based on regional JSA ethnicity data. There should be effective performance incentives which result in transformational outcomes for BME jobseekers, whilst recognising that there remains significant employer discrimination on grounds of ethnicity in the labour market.

10. ***Ensure that successful BME employment brokerage organisations in the VCS are not excluded from contracting opportunities.***

Their expertise and commitment is vital in reaching and supporting the long term unemployed including young BME people, women from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities.

11. ***The DBIS and the National Apprenticeship Service should develop and implement equality action plans to tackle the concentration of BME individuals in low pay sectors of the economy.***

There remains significant under-representation of people from BME communities in the engineering, and construction and IT sectors. If these industries are to reflect our society in the future they need to ensure that their commitment to equality is shown from apprenticeship to Board level.

## Political engagement and representation

12. ***Develop targeted programmes, with the help of BME VCS organisations, to promote civic and political engagement of BME communities.***

The outcomes of such intervention should deliver increased numbers of voter registrations and votes by people with BME backgrounds. It will also give BME people greater confidence in their ability to influence their society – encouraging involvement in local decision-making structures; a crucial factor in ensuring the success of new ‘Big Society’ approaches.

13. ***Invest in efforts to increase political representation of BME communities in parliament and local councils.***

Specific measures can include development of comprehensive outreach programmes with community and faith organisations, support for local young Mayors and youth parliament, and support for non-partisan voter registration and democracy week.

14. ***Invest in targeted campaigns to increase number of people with BME backgrounds in public appointments in particular in areas of health, education, employment and housing.***

Government must work with BME VCS organisations with expertise either in advocacy or in delivering services in identified areas to help improve the confidence of BME communities to apply for public appointments.

## Equality Act 2010 and spending cuts

15. ***Support all government departments in carrying out rigorous and timely Equality Impact Assessments as required by equality law.***

Central government departments should lead by example in assessing the equality impacts of policy decisions. They should work to ensure all obligations under equality legislation are met at all spatial levels.<sup>1</sup>

16. ***Establish centralised monitoring frameworks and publication of results by local authorities in promoting race equality.***

The EHRC should be enabled to take an active role in helping to ensure effective monitoring is undertaken by relevant authorities.

17. ***Ensure that the Single Equality approach does not dilute the need to tackle race inequalities, but creates better opportunities to tackle multiple discrimination.***

The new provisions of the Equality Act 2010 should add to rather than detract from efforts to promote race equality across all public authorities. As new guidance is issued and acted upon, CLG has an important role in acting as a champion for race equality and monitoring the impact of changes on the effectiveness of government efforts to address persistent inequalities.

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<sup>1</sup> This priority is originally listed in Voice4Change England’s publication. See Voice4Change England (September 2010) **A shared vision for the future of the BME voluntary and community sector**, p5. <http://www.voice4change-england.co.uk/assets/files/e-copy.pdf>.

18. ***Monitor the impact of spending cuts on BME communities, recognising that geographical differences may lead to differential impacts.***

Accept that formulaic approach to cuts in the provision of public services cannot be applied universally in all local areas. In areas like West Midlands and the North where there is an industrial decline, lack of private sector investment, and recessionary pressures mean a broad brush approach to cuts will exacerbate the poverty and disadvantage for local communities.

### **Supporting BME VCS organisations**

19. ***Recognise the importance of BME VCS organisations in tackling race inequalities.***

The BME VCS plays a crucial role in empowering communities, encouraging active civic participation and volunteering, delivering public services that are relevant to the needs of local communities, in reaching out to communities often labelled as 'hard to reach' by generalist providers, and in advocating for minority rights. Fostering partnership between BME VCS organisations and the CLG will deliver on the Big Society vision of fairness, equality and localism.

20. ***Recognise that race matters and that action to tackle race inequality must be a part of building a fairer society for all.***

Invest in targeted programmes in tackling race inequalities across all social policy areas. Funding allocations should be based on indicators of deprivation, disadvantage and poverty often exacerbated with race and ethnic penalty.

**(i) Housing**

Of the estimated 100,000 Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans and trailers as many as a quarter have no legal site on which to place their home. The Coalition Government acknowledges the need for additional sites to be provided but have rejected the top down directive approach promoted by the previous Government. Instead proposed sites will undergo a community based decision making process. Where this can be achieved successfully it will contribute hugely to the realisation of the Big Society vision but, given the extent of prejudice and bias against Gypsies and Travellers there are substantial risks. If not carefully handled such proposals could become divisive and increase tensions within local communities.

There is an important role for the BME VCS working with Gypsies and Travellers to promote and facilitate the process of greater understanding between the settled and travelling communities so that potential conflicts are minimised. The VCS can play a major role in helping to identify and bring to fruition opportunities for site provision in a way that reduces potential conflicts.

The effect of not addressing this issue will be continued and unnecessary tensions between communities and the costs (estimated at £18 million per annum) of simply moving 'the problem' around from one local community to another.

- ◆ One in four Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans does not have a legal place on which to park their home. They are thus, in law, homeless.
- ◆ Gypsies and Irish Travellers live in or pass through 91 per cent of local authority areas in England and Wales, but in 2003 over 70 percent of local authorities did not refer to Gypsies or Travellers within their Homelessness Strategies
- ◆ The great majority of applications for Gypsy sites are refused at first hearing, often following orchestrated campaigns by local residents, leading to community tensions. 90% of applications for Gypsy sites were refused at first hearing. The situation of "roadside" Gypsies and Travellers is even more precarious – in two studies, one third of respondents stated that they had been evicted on at least thirty occasions within the previous five years.

Recent multi-agency policy drives are beginning to have an impact on addressing site shortages, although the majority of new pitches are on 'private sites' funded by owner-occupiers

Gypsies and Travellers who reluctantly resort to living in housing, in the absence of site provision, often experience excessively high levels of anxiety and depression. They are frequently victims of racist abuse, threats and discrimination and experience trauma.

**In the East of England**

The East is the English region with the largest number of Gypsy and Traveller caravans. Figures from the 2009 Communities and Local Government count of Gypsy and Traveller caravans indicate that the Eastern region has 4378 caravans which amount to 25 % of all caravans in England – an estimated 1851 pitches with a further 511 unauthorised pitches. The region also has the largest caravan capacity at Gypsy sites provided by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords, offering space for 1671 caravans. Despite this, 22 % of caravans are located in unauthorised sites (i.e. without planning permission). This is the third highest regional rate after the East Midlands with 25% and the South West with 35%.

The lack of authorised sites has multiple consequences, including: confrontations with the settled community over unauthorised sites; unauthorised sites with lack of basic amenities and often in proximity to health hazards; traumatising eviction processes; and unwanted transitions into permanent housing. Even authorised sites are often located in areas with poor accessibility.

As in the rest of England, Gypsies and Travellers suffer disproportionately of poor performance in schools, exclusion from education, infant mortality, and health problems. It has been reported, for example, that in a survey with young Gypsies and Travellers in Essex, Southend and Thurrock nearly half of respondents had been excluded from school at least once by the time they reached year 9.<sup>2</sup> 2006 DfES data shows that “permanent exclusion rates among Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils were around four times the rate for all pupils, including Black Caribbean boys.”

Gypsies and Travellers often do not access primary health care and their first point of contact with the health service can be A&E departments.<sup>3</sup> Gypsies and Travellers are reported to be five times more likely to have health problems and have life expectancy 10-12 years shorter than the settled population. One in five Gypsy and Traveller mothers experience the loss of a child compared to one in a hundred in the settled population.<sup>4</sup> Their infant mortality rate has been estimated to be more than three times higher than that of the rest of the population. The reasons are multi-faceted including lack of literacy and awareness within the travelling communities coupled with prejudice and ignorance among healthcare service providers. Difficulties of accessing primary healthcare are documented in a recent publication by FFT.<sup>5</sup>

Without central guidance local authorities are likely to fail to provide sites. With the Regional Spatial Strategy, delivery was slow but did lead in the East of England to a 6% reduction in the number of unauthorised pitches. A planning officer commented to us that the RSS made it easier to provide sites because local authorities did not face unpopularity (and its resulting political pressure) from the local electorate as they could say site provision was a requirement of central Government rather than something the local authority set up.

Without good site provision costs of eviction will continue as well as all the other issues of a mobile communities' access to health and education services and the costs incurred by poor access e.g. using A&E rather than primary health care.

## **(ii) Health**

It is important to emphasise that racial inequality costs. While Professor John Hills' work on employment and earnings shows some variation, in overall terms, it still shows the persistence of lower employment rates amongst black and minority ethnic, compounded by lower earnings during employment as well as the accrual of lower occupational pension contributions (Hills, et al 2010). The net effect is of greater pensioner poverty and an inevitable consequence, is a greater reliance on state support in older age.

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<sup>2</sup> Warrington C/Peck, S, (2005) Gypsy and Traveller Communities – an East of England perspective

<sup>3</sup> Ormiston Children and Families Trust (2008) – an insight into the health of Gypsies and Travellers

Hall et.al (2009) Gypsies and Travellers' experience of using urgent care services within NHS Brighton and Hove boundaries

<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> Atterbury (2010) Fair Access for all FFT: Brighton

While the numbers are important, we must remember racial inequality is costing real people in identifiable ways. The murder of Jonathan Zito by Christopher Clunis robbed Jonathan's wife and family of a loved husband and son, but has also led to the institutionalisation of Christopher and the distress to his family. It would be wrong to attempt to put a price on this tragedy, but we must be clear that what it demonstrates is that inequality costs and that those costs are on-going and long-lasting.

Racial inequality can have a compounding effect too. We know that Asian and Caribbean communities are at greater risk of developing diabetes. But we also know that detected early, Type 2 diabetes (the most common form) can be controlled through diet and exercise, often requiring minimal medical intervention. However, late detection is likely to lead to greater medical intervention and the need to use drugs to control the disease. If this intervention is not implemented effectively it is likely to significantly increase the risk of chronic heart disease, cardiovascular disease as well as renal failure. With the known difficulties in securing kidney transplants for black and minority ethnic communities, renal failure is likely to lead to very poor outcomes. The evidence on early detection is unclear, but diabetes is certainly a contributing factor in the higher rates of CHD and CVD in some minority communities. As a consequence the burden on the NHS, which is already spending £9 billion (latest available figures from 2008) on treating diabetes, is only likely to be increased.

It is also important to note, that effectively promoting racial equality is likely to ease the burden on public resources. The Race Equality Foundation's experience of leading the deployment of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities parent programme with sister organisations across England has seen the programme show statistically significant change in parent/child relationships, in parental confidence and in parents' assessment of the social competence and behaviour of their children. These statistically significant outcomes have been demonstrated both by our commissioned evaluations (drawing on data from over 1500 parents) as well independent evaluations using scientifically validated tests. While the field of social research on investment is still developing, studies have already begun to demonstrate that achieving outcomes such as those reported for Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities, could see a return of £4 – £7 for every £1 invested. We have some way to go before we can evidence this robustly, but the existing evidence on outcomes is a major step that has already been taken.

The experience with Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities is of value to racial equality for another reason. Principally, this programme has been shown to work effectively with black and minority ethnic communities (both established as well as newly arrived), but has also been shown to work effectively with white communities. The programme is being delivered in places such as Tower Hamlets, Birmingham, Manchester, Bolton, but also in places like Cornwall and Middlesbrough. It appears if you implement race equality effectively, you develop interventions that work across all communities.

To conclude, we would suggest that progressing race equality does cost, but not progressing it is more costly.

### **(iii) Criminal Justice**

There is a pressing need to address the elements of racial inequality and discrimination which are still prevalent within the criminal justice system. The Coalition for Racial Justice UK (CRJ uk) acknowledge that some aspects of the problem have improved over the last 10 to 15 years – for example, all criminal justice agencies have increased their recruitment of BME staff and some aspects of the treatment of BME prisoners have improved (as evidenced by the recent Ministry of Justice Race Review). Nevertheless there remains a

significant challenge in improving the experience and confidence of people from BME communities in the criminal justice system.

People from BME groups are disproportionately represented at each stage of the criminal justice process from initial contact to sentencing. This disproportionality has become more extreme over the last decade – for example, racial disproportionality in stop and search has increased and the proportion of BME people in the prison population has risen over that period. Currently Black people are nearly eight times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white people; there are four times more arrests of Black people per head of population than of white people; and there are five times more Black people in prison per head of population than white people.

The government must work with the BME VCS to analyse and increase understanding of the causes of disproportionality and of ways in which the criminal justice system can be performance managed in relation to race issues. The government must work with the BME VCS and national and local criminal justice agencies to identify and explain racial disproportionality at key points within the criminal justice system and to challenge racial disparities that cannot be satisfactorily explained or objectively justified. It must raise these issues nationally and work closely with the BME VCS to propose solutions to national and local policy/decision makers.

#### **(iv) Education**

Despite some progress in recent years, certain groups of BME pupils continue to face a range of inequalities:

- At 16, Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean boys in England have results well below average. Children of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma backgrounds have assessments that fall further behind during the school years, resulting in much worse results at 16 than others. This gap appears to have widened in recent years.<sup>6</sup>
- At 16, white British, black Caribbean and mixed white and black Caribbean boys receiving Free School Meals have the lowest assessment of any group identified by gender, ethnicity and Free School Meals status, apart from Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children.
- Those from ethnic groups with GCSE results around or below the national median are much more likely to go on to higher education than white British pupils with similar results. However, Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are less likely to go to more prestigious universities or to get higher class degrees. Low income acts as a barrier to post compulsory education. Improved educational achievement even at higher education levels for a number of BME groups is not translating into labour market outcomes.
- Permanent and fixed exclusion rates among Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils are around four times the rate for all pupils. Rates for black Caribbean, black other, white and black Caribbean and white and black African pupils are also significantly higher than average.<sup>7</sup> Pupils from certain BME groups tend to be excluded for offences that white pupils would not be excluded for.<sup>8</sup> Disadvantages caused by exclusion are exacerbated because education provided through alternatives such

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<sup>6</sup> The National Equality Panel (2010) *The Anatomy of Economic Inequality*. Report of the National Equality Panel. Government Equality Office.

<sup>7</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5 - 16*.

<sup>8</sup> ROTA's workshop at the 2008 *London Schools and the Black Children Conference*.

as short stay schools and internal behavioural management units is often of poor quality.<sup>9</sup>

- There are higher rates of unauthorised absence among white other pupils, black other pupils, black Caribbean boys, Bangladeshi boys and Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils. This research did not present data about the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma experience, but ROTA has collected anecdotal evidence that indicates that rates of unauthorised absence among this group is also high.<sup>10</sup>
- White British, Mixed Heritage pupils and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils appear to have the least positive attitudes toward education.<sup>11</sup> While data was not included about Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children and young people.
- Despite important progress, the BME workforce still does not reflect the diversity of Britain's BME population.<sup>12</sup>
- Skilled refugees and migrants face barriers to appropriate employment because their qualifications are often not easily transferable to the UK.
- Children and young people are more likely to be segregated in the playground than in their neighbourhoods. Recent research in one London borough's primary schools showed that 17 schools had more than 90% pupils of Bangladeshi origin, while nine others had fewer than 10%.
- There are even higher rates of exclusion of certain BME groups from existing academies than maintained schools and attainment gaps are wider with academies than maintained schools.<sup>13</sup>
- Parent and Pupil Guarantees will have an emphasis on providing personalised and targeted support, which ROTA believe has the potential to act as an effective tool against the educational inequalities faced by certain groups of BME pupils.

## (v) Employment

The best way to help people out of poverty is employment that guarantees individuals and families are better off than staying on welfare benefits.

Latest figures released by the Department for Work and Pensions show an increase in the rate of ethnic minority unemployment across the country. The figures, from the Labour Force Survey, show that 12.8 per cent of ethnic minorities are unemployed, compared with the national average of 8.3 per cent. The Annual Population Survey figures also show that ethnic minority unemployment has been rising; from 10.6 per cent in the 12 month period ending September 2008 to 12.4 per cent in the period ending September 2009. Over the same period, unemployment increased for all ethnic groups apart from people of Mixed ethnicity. The biggest increase was for Black/Black British people, where unemployment rose from 13.5 per cent to 17.2 per cent. Public sector job losses will have

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<sup>9</sup> Gillies, V (February 2010) *Behavioural Support Units: Excluded but Included?* Runnymede eConferences. Available at <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/events-conferences/econferences/econference/excluded-but-included.html>.

<sup>10</sup> 'Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5 – 16*' reported higher rates of unauthorised absence among white other pupils, black other pupils, black Caribbean boys, Bangladeshi boys. It did not include rates for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils, but anecdotal evidence collected by ROTA points to high rates of unauthorised absence among this group also.

<sup>11</sup> 'Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5 – 16*' has reported on the attitudes of white British, mixed heritage pupils. While data was not included about Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children and young people, ROTA has collected anecdotal evidence about attitudes of this group.

<sup>12</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families (January 2009) *School Workforce in England (including Local Authority level figures)*.

<sup>13</sup> Gillborn, D and D.Drew (2010) Academy Exclusions Runnymede Bulletin 362 p.12

a disproportionate impact on the Black/Black British population because a greater proportion is employed in the public sector than for other ethnic groups. Over 40 per cent of Black/Black British people who are in employment are employed in the key public service areas of public administration, education and health, compared with 29 per cent of the general population.

Government figures present the ethnic minority employment gap as the difference between the employment rate for ethnic minorities and the average employment rate for Great Britain. Using figures from the Annual Population Survey, the current gap by this measure is between 59.1 per cent for ethnic minorities and 72.9 per cent overall, giving a gap of 13.8 percentage points. But if the gap is measured between ethnic minority employment (59.1 per cent) and white employment (74.8 per cent), then the current gap is almost two percentage points wider at 15.7 per cent. Using figures from the more recent Labour Force Survey, the gap between ethnic minority employment (59.5 per cent) and overall employment (71.9 per cent) is 12.4 percentage points.

Whichever way the ethnic minority employment gap is measured, it remains persistently wide, despite the efforts of the previous government to address this problem.

It remains to be seen what difference the new Work Programme will bring for the 218,000 ethnic minority people who are currently on Job Seekers Allowance (Claimant Count, April 2010). The Government plans to make significant changes to the welfare benefits system in the coming years.

It is vital that we help the high numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic unemployed into jobs and self employment over the next five years.

#### **(vi) Political engagement and representation**

*The problem:* lack of BME political engagement.

- Non voter registration of BME communities has only fallen from 26% in 1997 to 18-23% in 2010. This compares to 8%-6% within white communities,
- Non voter registration amongst African communities has risen to 50%
- Non voter registration amongst BME under 25's is around 50%
- Voter turnout of BME communities is estimated to be 35% this compares to 55% of white communities

*The outcome:* lack of BME political engagement.

Recent data has highlighted that BME communities are more likely to be active in the community. This suggests that far from being apathetic towards political engagement, many are consciously opting out of more formal political processes. Therefore, part of the answer is that democratic engagement from local and national Government must be more inclusive and representative.

*The problem:* Lack of BME political representation

- Although we have recently made good strides in this area moving from 14 BME MP's to 27 MP's we are still only a third in where we should be. This lack of critical mass does not empower many BME MP's to talk about race inequality.
- Liberal Democrats have no BME MP's
- There are no MP's or Chinese or Turkish decent.
- In a city that has 1 in 3 from minorities the Greater London Authority has only 3 GLA members out 25
- Scottish parliament one BME SMP of 60
- In the Welsh assembly one BME assembly member of 40

- At a local level there are only three BME leaders of council and two chief executives out of over 170 local authorities

*The problem:* Lack of equitable representation in public appointments.

There are very few public bodies that are BME representative. Representation on some bodies matters much more than others. For example, some science base public bodies might not be greatly affected by the lack of BME representation than lets say Health Trusts. In these important areas: health, criminal justice, education, housing, and employment, the problem is not only lack of representation but also seniority within boards.

*The solution:* Targeted campaigns in those priority areas such as education, health, employment and housing.

Working in partnership with organisations with some expertise in these areas, the Department for Education could, for example, undertake a drive to recruit BME school governors, the Department for Health, NHS Trust governors. Comprehensive targeted campaigns would ensure better representation, better service delivery, and greater confidence that our voices can be heard.

### **Equality Act 2010 and spending cuts**

The new Public Sector Equality Duties need to address exactly how public authorities will be held to account to manage the fears and concerns of the BME community.

### **Supporting BME VCS organisations**

The BME VCS can play a unique and vital role in addressing inequality and can support the development of a diverse civic society.

To support diversity and inclusion of the BME community in government policy development each department should have an adequately resourced ethnic minority advisory group.

## Tackling race inequality and the Government spending cuts

### Introduction

The political framework has been transformed by the election of the Coalition Government and its determination to tackle the issue of rising public debt. In October, the Government will announce the results of its public spending review which will set the level of budget reductions for each Department. They have been put on notice that they should expect their budgets to be reduced by between 25% and 40%.

Whatever party or parties had come to power following the May election the elected Government could not have avoided confronting the issue of mounting public debt. The new Coalition has chosen to make extensive cuts within a very short timescale and this paper does not intend to comment on the political wisdom or otherwise of that choice. Rather it seeks to suggest to Ministers ways that, within the new fiscal environment, Government might deliver on one of its central objectives – that of tackling race inequality.

It is within this context, and also the impact of the very recent recession, that a new coalition of BME voluntary and community organisations seeks to put forward clear and coherent facts about some of the more persistent inequalities caused by the various manifestations of racism, and to outline a framework that allows Government in partnership with others to tackle some of these problems. Working closely with key voluntary and community sector agencies also fits comfortably within the Government's philosophy regarding the creation of The Big Society and the new emphasis on a 'localist' bottom-up approach.

### Race Equality in 2010

Over the last 20 years considerable progress has been made in tackling race inequality. Notable gains include:

- The number of black Caribbean pupils getting five good GCSEs has risen by over 20 percentage points since 2003 – and the gap which existed between Bangladeshi pupils and the national average has been virtually eliminated.
- A parliament that gone from 4 BME MPs in 1987 's to 27 today
- Before this recent recession the gap in employment rates between minority ethnic groups and the average has narrowed from 19 percentage points in 1996 to 13.8 percentage

However, the reality is that race inequality persists at significant levels in many areas, particularly for certain ethnic and religious groups. The multifaceted elements of race inequality may occur on an individual or institutional level and it is also manifest in the fabric of our culture. The prevalence of race inequality is complex and multi-layered, bound up as they are with historical, cultural and financial factors.

Recent data clearly demonstrates that as early as 2008, socio-economic indicators were showing that the recession was hitting many BME communities much worse than the general population. An IPPR report demonstrated that as a result of the recession:

- 48% of Black people aged 16 to 24 reported that they were out of work, compared with 20% of White people of the same age.
- Mixed ethnic groups had seen the biggest increases in youth unemployment since the recession, with figures rising from 21% to 35% during this period.

This dynamic along with many other factors including housing, crime, health etc, have, according to recent research, led to a 77% increase in demand for BME voluntary services. According to the same research, this increase was despite a cut of at least 45% in BME voluntary sector funding during that same period.

Therefore, having already been disproportionately hit by the recession, BME communities and the BME voluntary sector are particularly at risk of being disproportionately affected by public spending cuts. There is a real worry that certain measures could not only decimate the BME voluntary sector and further widen the equality gap but also establish a clear underclass that could open up serious fissures within society and, perhaps lead to civil unrest on the streets of Britain. Whilst such an analysis may seem alarmist we believe it to be a genuine threat if we ignore the underlying causes of inequality and simply seek to address the symptoms of increasing community tensions.

Even before the recession and the proposed Government cuts, the race inequality data did not make comfortable reading:

- Black people are six times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than White people.
- South Asians are approximately 50% more likely to die prematurely from coronary heart disease than the general population.
- The unemployment gap between BME communities and the general population is 16% and for Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities that figure rises to 70%.
- Gypsies and Travellers, when housed, are often placed within the most deprived estates, where they are exposed to hostility and racism and cut off from their families. Approximately 25,000 who live in caravans and trailers have no legal site onto which to place their home.
- The BME pay gap has stayed around 25%, with an even greater pay inequality for Pakistani, African, Caribbean and Bangladeshi workers.

### **Meeting the challenges**

We must first acknowledge the bald fact that race and religious penalties exist and recent soundings from the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister highlight that both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrat parties support this analysis.

*'We must tackle the deep and structural inequalities that all too often hold Black people back, especially the young... We know something is extremely wrong when the colour of your skin dictates how likely you are to succeed at school, starting a business, employment, or ending up in prison.'*

(David Cameron's recording for an Operation Black Vote event)

*'I want change...If you're from an ethnic minority you're still likely to be out of work, on low pay, and hassled by the police even though you've done nothing wrong.'*

(Nick Clegg's recording for the same event)

A 'Big Government' response to these challenges would be, typically, to seek to mainstream policy with a built in regard for tackling particular inequalities based on evidence. Likewise, these challenges can be confronted in the context of the Coalition Government 's idea of 'radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups'. The ideal is fine, but can only work well if local authorities are inclusive and representative, supported by a wide range of local community groups – in this case including BME – that can be an effective link to individuals. Without it we risk perpetuating race inequality and undermining good race relations between communities.

## **The price of not addressing inequality:**

Few attempts have been made to measure the real cost of inequality, however, the REACH report to CLG estimated that if the educational underachievement of Black boys and their over-representation in the criminal justice system could be addressed it would save the Government £808 million a year.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, within the UK, child poverty is estimated to cost 25 billion pounds a year. Given that BME communities are disproportionately affected by child poverty – 56% African families, 60% are Pakistani and a shocking 72% are Bangladeshi - tackling inequality in this area alone would result in savings running into the billions.

## **Getting the 'Big society' to work**

The Prime Minister David Cameron has placed the policy idea of 'Big society' at the heart of the Coalition Government.

'The Big Society is about a huge culture change, where people, in their everyday lives, in their homes, in their neighbourhoods, in their workplace, don't always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face but instead feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities.'

This coalition of BME organisations, far from seeing any objections to this vision would argue that much of our work has already been focused on this very issue: empowering individuals to break out of their poverty trap and helping them acquire the skills to rebuild their communities and strengthen local civic society.

## **Some examples of BME national and local organizations working in this empowerment area:**

- During the consultation of the Equality Bill The 1990 Trust undertook the largest consultative programme to BME communities across England and Wales, with over 120 groups contributing to this legislative discussion
- The Coalition of Race Equality UK, made up of a network of over 50 BME organizations and community representatives, worked together to develop the Black Manifesto, that articulated the most pressing priorities for BME communities based on clear statistical evidence of need.
- OBV has directly nurtured some 65 individuals to become Magistrates and has informed many thousands about the role of the courts. With an average age of 40 each magistrate will probably volunteer their services for about 20.

Therefore, given that many of these organisations are principle drivers of delivering a 'Big Society' vision of fairness, equality and localism, it is vital that we maintain a healthy and viable BME voluntary sector. If budgetary reductions result in the decimation of the BME voluntary sector we could be in danger of losing, possibly for decades, the commitment, skills, experience and knowledge that those organisations contribute towards achieving the 'Big Society' objectives. Above all it would be disastrous in terms of the progress of race equality, but also a blow for the Government to achieve its vision.

We would hope that the Coalition Government would recognise that, with a relatively small amount of money, these BME organisations can do a vast amount of work. However, with little or no money these organisations can do little or nothing, especially if they are forced to close down.

Give examples of the disappearing BME voluntary sector and the gaps that are occurring. The loss of Race Equality Councils – loss of BME voice and grassroots work???

Single identity group funding debate - loss of culturally specific grassroots services providing information, advice and guidance to refugee, migrant and new communities critical to promoting citizenship and community cohesion.

**Solutions:**

Although the Coalition sees an imperative for urgent cuts within public expenditure, there remains a need to support the core work of organisations that are critical to making the vision of Big Society a reality. So far as BME organisations are concerned we make the analogy of a tree, firmly rooted within the Big Society soil. National BME organisations make up the trunk, sustaining the life of a huge number of branches that represent the work of local voluntary groups throughout the country. Some pruning of the tree may be needed, but the essential structure must remain viable.