

Agenda ^{#35}

Race equality in the spotlight



Government reforms and BAME communities

2011 HOW FAIR ARE THE POLICY REFORMS? • LOCALISM AND RACE EQUALITY •
UNEQUAL ATTAINMENT IN EDUCATION • WOMEN AND PRISONS • PUBLIC
HEALTH WHITE PAPER • VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN • SOCIAL IMPACT BONDS

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Terminology

ROTA uses the term Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) to refer to all groups that are discriminated against, including (but not exclusively) people of African, Asian, Caribbean, European and Eastern European, Irish, Greek, Turkish, Jewish, Roma and South East Asian descent, as well as refugees and asylum seekers. In Agenda, the terms Black and minority ethnic (BME) and BAME are used throughout the publication by different contributors, in keeping with their own professional usage.

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Barbara began working as a Senior Policy Officer at ROTA in September 2009 after coordinating HEAR, London's first and only regional equalities and human rights voluntary and community sector network, since January 2007. Prior to this, she worked for three years on hact's Refugee Housing Integration Programme. Barbara has a BSc in General Science, an MSc in Physics and an MA in Human Rights.

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Olga is the Founding Director of the Female Prisoners Welfare Project (FPWP) Hibiscus. Ola began her career in social work in Tower Hamlets, London, in 1976. In 1986 she established FPWP and then launched Hibiscus, a branch of FPWP, in 1991 to identify the problem of drug mules at source. In 2005 she was awarded an MBE for services to women in prison. A year later her organisation won the overall prize at the Charity Awards, the Longford Prize for outstanding work in field of prison and social reform, and the New York Festival world medal for the Eva Goes to Foreign Campaign.

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Hannana Siddiqui

Hannana is the Policy, Research and Fundraising Manager for Southall Black Sisters. She has worked for the organisation for 23 years, undertaking a wide range of work, including coordination and casework. Hannana has worked extensively on violence against BME women, including domestic violence, forced marriage, honour-based violence, suicide and self-harm, and immigration and no recourse to public funds. She is also a board member and Co-founder of the End Violence against Women (EVAW) coalition and is Co-founder of Women against Fundamentalism.

Neil Reeder

Neil is a Programme Leader at the Young Foundation, advising on analysis of public service innovations in criminal justice, health, education and employment. Neil coordinates the Foundation's work on Social Impact Bonds and metrics, and is Joint Practice Lead on public service innovation - overseeing projects ranging from business case development of pilots to enhance employability, to a review of actions to strengthen levers for disseminating innovation in the NHS. Since studying maths and economics at the LSE, Neil has worked in a variety of posts, including Team Leader at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Welcome

Government reforms and BAME communities



Historically, ROTA's Agenda magazine has served as a platform for people to share their experiences of, and expertise on, a wide range of policy issues of interest to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. A year into the coalition government reign, one topic has dominated many discussions: reforms.

In some ways, reforms are old news. Policy being 'the business of government', we have grown accustomed to sudden changes in direction, both within and between governments. In 2010 alone, ROTA communicated the concerns of BAME communities on a number of such changes, including the London Health Inequalities Strategy, the Parent and Pupil Guarantees, the Greater London Assembly's Race Equality Scheme and the Mayor's London Strategy to end violence against women and girls.

Current reforms, by contrast, really are new, redefining both the way government works and how public services are delivered. Imbued with familiar concepts like transparency, choice, and accountability, the reforms have the potential to throw the door to the future wide open.

Reasons for caution about what happens next are well-documented. Here are a few of ROTA's. Reforms in education, including the proliferation of free schools, the de-ring fencing of the pupil premium and the replacement of the Educational Maintenance Allowance, could worsen the already palpable differences in experiences and outcomes of BAME young people.

The Equality Act 2010, which only came into force in April 2011, has seen some of its more powerful elements, particularly solid guidance to hold public authorities to account in the quest to advance equality of opportunity, removed or weakened.

On the plus side, the emphasis on choice and independence is something that communities have been demanding, over the past two decades. Our job now is to work together to define this 'new look' public space, and to carve out our own destiny.

With this in mind, this issue of Agenda is a continuation of the conversations we have had with local communities and partners over the past year. I hope they stimulate useful debate. ●

Elizabeth Henry
Chief Executive
ROTA

From the editor



Government reform was the biggest running news story so far this year until the alarming riots in London, the North West and parts of the Midlands became headline news.

As that unsettling story continues to capture the headlines, the impact of government cuts, the reform of the criminal justice system, education and the NHS alongside inconclusive debates over the real meaning of localism and the 'big society' refuses to abate. What isn't as visible is how these changes are affecting Black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

One North West, a coalition of BAME voluntary and community sector organisations from across the North West, produced a position paper based on consultation with 120 BAME organisations on localism and the big society. As well as noting a lack of focus on social justice and equalities, the paper claims that without 'equality standards and safeguards there will be unequal standards of access and outcome'.

The Runnymede Trust, in its report 'Fair's Fair' published in July 2011, goes even further. It found that not only do BAME people fear that the big society will fuel racial tensions, but that the government's flagship policies, such as free schools, will only increase segregation.

Based on the articles in this edition of Agenda it is clear that these concerns are not isolated ones. Anthony Salla questions the fairness of the government's 'slash and burn' approach to reform and highlights a worrying increase in mental health referrals. The question of who will truly benefit from localism and how demographics, history and power bases can influence outcomes is addressed by Omar Khan.

According to Barbara Nea, the major overhaul of the education system is reinforcing the existing disparities in educational attainment among BAME children. The lack of attention being paid to race equality and the Equality Act 2010 is, she believes, putting BAME children at a further disadvantage.

Female foreign nationals, who are in prison, are at the forefront of Olga Heaven's work and mind. She reveals how acute funding cutbacks on numerous fronts are hampering these women's rehabilitation.

I provide a brief assessment of the public health white paper's recommendations, and its shortcomings, and ask some experts in race equality and health to give their verdict on whether it will alleviate or exacerbate persistent health inequalities among particular BAME groups.

The fact that BAME women are consistently identified as one of the major casualties of the reforms has serious implications for the violence against women agenda, which Hannana Siddiqui gives a historical context to.

Finally Neil Reeder offers some hope by recommending that BAME organisations explore the value of social impact bonds, within the wider context of social investment, as a way to be more sustainable.

What connects all these articles is the underlying theme that amid major change and uncertainty, the BAME third sector still has a crucial role to play in enabling BAME communities to make informed choices for a more secure future. ●

Joy Francis



Policy

Where's the fairness?

After being in power for just over a year, the coalition government has been accused of adopting a 'slash and burn' approach to reform with little evidence of fairness. **Anthony Salla** expresses concern at the 'bells of injustice' that are chiming loudly in the ears of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and third sector organisations as they navigate uncertain waters.

It is now just over a year since the coalition government came into power and its reform drive has been shaped by a combination of austerity measures and crude political ideology. There are very few places where the impact can be felt more tangibly than on London's Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) population. The onset of the recession in 2008, and the prolonged economic downturn, has resulted in harsh consequences for these communities and the many organisations who serve them.

Unfair treatment

Evidence of these trends was documented in ROTA's recession report (2009)¹ with a notable increase in hate crime and unlawful cases of dismissal from the workplace. By 2009, the phenomena that BAME groups are more sensitive to unemployment during a recession had started to play out during the contraction stage of the present economic downturn.

ROTA's annual consultation of BAME frontline organisations working in the area of criminal justice, health and education during 2010/11, highlighted the continuing pressures facing BAME communities in the areas of hate crime and particularly mental health. The impact of the recession was most keenly felt among community-level mental health services, with the Fanon Resource Centre based in Merton noting a 50 percent increase in mental health referrals.

This trend has been mirrored more widely in research on the recession carried out by Roehampton University². It showed that the number of people suffering from stress, anxiety and depression as a consequence of redundancies, job insecurity and pay cuts had soared. The research indicated that the incidence of depression had jumped almost five-fold as unemployment; cuts in employment hours and concern about security of tenure have become the norm.

Appraisal

Fast forward to 2011, amid major decision making at local and regional levels alongside government reforms, and there is now an opportunity to offer some useful appraisal of these decisions. With regards to the voluntary sector, there are some noteworthy developments to consider.

The reduced availability of funding through grants and loan-oriented funding, such as the 'Big Society Bank', will present a test case for those delivering to the less well off.

The management of the transition fund by the Office for Civil Society (OCS), which has determined that candidates are eligible to apply if they meet the turnover threshold criteria (from £50,000 to £10 million), has proved largely inaccessible for many of London's BAME organisations.

It has also set some alarm bells ringing about the direction of the government's intentions. The bells of injustice certainly clanged when OCS made its decision not to fund any equality organisations as a strategic partner.

Lost support

The bells of injustice continue to chime at a local level with local authorities cutting grants indiscriminately across organisations, regardless of their size or annual turnover. Many smaller organisations have had to close services, such as the Egyptian supplementary school in Lambeth. This has led to the loss of educational support to 52 children from the Egyptian community covering different parts of London. Parents have also lost a vital support via the school's holistic family approach.

In the Tory-run London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the council announced the sale of Palingswick House to reduce the local authority's debts.

Palingswick House for a long time served as a hub of voluntary activity for many BAME organisations. The organisations previously accommodated at Palingswick House are still waiting to be relocated.

Government reforms in the area of English language support will create significant difficulties in the short to long term, and prove extremely disruptive to families. The introduction of fees, and the abolition of learners' funded places, will create fundamental barriers to how people learn English.

At a time when many refugee mothers are at the point of feeling content with their children's settlement and are looking for employment, say as child minders, the cuts will inhibit their career aspirations. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provide an important instrument to those largely isolated from society, and from the labour market.

Welfare reforms

Changes pushed through in the welfare arena have also raised eyebrows. Reform to local housing allowance and child benefit will create even greater economic disparity in society. The inadequate Equality Impact Assessment carried out on proposed housing benefit changes is yet another obstacle to fair treatment. The reduction and capping of the local housing allowance will impact disproportionately on London's BAME population as many live in areas targeted by the spending cuts and require larger living accommodation due to family size.

Based on the Policy Simulation Model, which is used to predict the likely impact of a policy change, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) estimates that approximately 30 percent of those affected by the housing benefit changes will contain somebody of a BAME background. Yet people from minority ethnic communities form less than 20 percent of the overall benefit population³. The knock-on effect of the housing benefit cuts is likely to increase the disparity in child poverty rates for BAME families, which are already higher than the national average.

Devolution

The government's plans for budget devolution, based on the logic that priority setting is best arranged by public bodies locally without the benchmarking provided by Local Area

The bells of injustice chime loudly in the ears of BAME communities



Indicators for measures of efficiency, is bizarre. This weakens the very instruments local communities could use to hold public bodies to account. With a shift towards localism, and the reduced legislative apparatus to question public bodies, it would seem obvious that hard won rights have become a bureaucratic burden in the government's eyes.

The decision to consult again on specific duties in the Equality Act 2010 means that public bodies are no longer required to publish details on their engagement in equality objectives, or the information considered when undertaking an equality analysis to reach policy decisions. These requirements were critical in ensuring proper scrutiny and accountability in the public sector decision making processes, and in allocating public resources based on need.

In addition, it seems ironic that the shift towards localism is being whisked through while we witness the closure of the 'eyes and ears' of race equality locally such as the Hounslow Race and Equalities Council and the Bexley Race Equality Council, both of which closed in early 2011.

Fairness?

The coalition government's election manifesto was underpinned by the theme of 'Freedom, Fairness and Responsibility'. Today we see the diminution of legal rights, which is unacceptable and which we are being forced to mourn. However, it is crucial at this juncture that race equality advocates refresh their approaches against the government's penchant for

destroying the very safeguards that have largely been taken for granted.

The government's push for a fairer society with locally empowered communities assumes that local communities will decide the kind of services they want, including how they want their communities to be policed. Yet there are paradoxes present in almost every one of the coalition government's policy agendas, particularly where race equality is concerned.

These paradoxes seem based on the belief that everybody has the same ability, tact and voice to engage in the government's changes. Some may argue that there has never been a semblance of normality in the BAME third sector; a sector which seems to have been in a permanent recession, always responding to various policy shifts such as the aftermath of community cohesion guidance for funders. Yet the environment they now operate in is increasingly affected by an opposition to race equality.

Future role

As politicians appear to be going through a process of redefining need, and who is seen as deserving, a role to remind politicians of the 'ethnic penalty' remains. To make progress in making their case, ROTA and BAME third sector organisations need to regroup, rationalise and consolidate.

A new self-sustaining grassroots movement would offer hope in penetrating the new structural changes in power, and the unhealthy hierarchies being created. Organisational practices and assumptions about BAME people and communities have to be challenged – yet again. ●

Footnotes

- 1 MiNet (June 2009) *The Economic Downturn and the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Third Sector*: London: ROTA
- 2 http://www.elizabethfinncare.org.uk/Rise_in_mental_health_illness
- 3 Beasor, Sue, (2011) Housing Quality Network, Better Housing Briefing Paper 18, Race Equality Foundation



Localism

Making race equality local

Decentralising power to give local communities a greater voice in how services are run is a positive concept, but hides a multitude of challenges. Packaged by the coalition government as localism under the banner of 'the big society', questions of accountability and how race equality will be managed have yet to be answered, says Omar Khan.

Organising locally has been crucial to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. It helps to raise awareness of their concerns and holds local authorities, and other organisations, to account in terms of race equality legislation. So how do BAME communities and race equality fit in with the 'localism' agenda against the backdrop of the 'big society'?

Defining localism

The first challenge in discussing 'localism' is defining what it means. One difficulty within the current context is that the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, the two main parties of the current coalition government, have a slightly different notion of what they mean by localism.

Localism ideal? There is an assumption that 'the people' will come together and make a decision

Generally speaking, localism assumes that local people are often better placed to make decisions affecting their daily lives. In the British context, the view is that too many decisions are made in London by central government. This not only leads to bad decisions, but makes citizens feel disconnected from the decision making process, and arguably contributes to political apathy.

Many feel that they have little input into important decisions that affect their lives. One interpretation of localism, then, connects it to political or democratic decision making. In short, this form of localism is best understood as the decentralisation of decision making power.

Decentralisation of power could be a welcome development for BAME communities; especially where local communities have the power to decide what best meets their needs and interests. Where BAME people are a significant part of a local population, their interests may be more likely to be on the agenda, and we may see some areas respond much more effectively to race inequality.

Whose power?

It isn't hard to understand why some communities might be sceptical that a decentralisation of power may lead to a renewed response to tackling race inequality. The question is who gets to exercise 'local' power? A particular locality is made up of many individuals and communities, and whatever the demographics of a particular area, not everyone is equally able, or willing, to participate in decision making. Not only do some people have sharper elbows, but some people have better access to, and control of, local decision making. In localities with few BAME people, localism may result in decision makers focusing even less on race.

Most of us understand that decentralisation doesn't resolve the problems of democratic accountability. But for those of us concerned with race equality, there is another question, chiefly how far local decision makers can go against national standards of rights, equality or other parts of key legislation.

In the Localism Bill, the initial suggestion was that local authorities would have a wide discretion to opt out of major parliamentary decisions. Partly through the work of Runnymede, ROTA and the Equality and Diversity Forum, this provision has been watered down.

Minimum standard

If local decision making is democratic and inclusive, then concern about 'postcode lotteries' can be minimised. Local variation may be permissible, within boundaries. However, there must be mechanisms to ensure a minimum standard of public services is ensured for all, regardless of address.

Given that BAME people are more likely to live in the most deprived wards of England, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, and given that race equality is not always higher on local agendas than the national agenda, this is not just a theoretical or alarmist concern.

There is, therefore, a danger that in the drive to localise power and cut bureaucracy, local authorities will not be sufficiently held accountable on the decisions they make. New ways to hold local authorities to account need to be explored, particularly in relation to race equality. Some local authorities may also need further resources and training to deliver their new powers effectively.

Efficiency

Some proponents of localism also believe it will reduce costs, or lead to greater efficiency. Two concerns arise in thinking about how decentralisation may be more effective. First is that inequalities that exist locally are likely to mean that some people are better able to express their interests and have their needs better met.

There is evidence to show that allegedly universal public services often leads to unequal outcomes, based on the advantages that different citizens bring to those services 'prior' to



Decentralisation of power could be a welcome development for BAME communities

delivery. There is no reason to believe this will be different for decentralised service provision.

Second is that there may be a difference between 'effective' and 'efficient', especially in areas where there are particularly pressing needs. In such localities, it may prove extremely costly to respond to those needs, but in doing so will make public services more effective in that they properly target those with the greatest needs, and affirm the value of equal rights and citizenship.

Increasingly, race equality will reduce public spending. If decentralisation is to achieve substantial public savings, it is important that service delivery does not result in increased ethnic inequalities, which would result in greater public expenditure further down the line.

Decentralisation and public services reform need to ensure efficiency, and give people a voice, while at the same time protect and affirm everyone's rights. These principles should guide the implementation of localism, but also outline its limits.

Big society

It's worth linking the localism agenda to another widely discussed idea, namely the 'big society'. One interpretation is that this is simply the same agenda, where both are concerned about giving a greater voice to local people. As with many ideas and policies, questions require more detail: who is being given a greater voice? What decisions will be delegated? How will decisions actually be made?

For the Liberal Democrats, the answer has typically been that local councils are the right decision making body, and they have focused on democratic public institutions. Many Liberal Democrats don't necessarily think that the size of the state should change, just the distribution of powers and expenditure within the state. To give a purely hypothetical example in line with this viewpoint, instead of 30 percent of government spending decisions being made in Whitehall and 10 percent at a local level, 10 percent should be spent in Whitehall and 30 percent at a local level.

The 'big society' idea is a Conservative one, and focuses as much, if not more, on non-government or non-public institutions and actors. This partly explains the criticism of there being an over-reliance on volunteering. There is also widespread concern that the principle is merely a cover for widespread privatisation or, at very least, greater power for private companies at the expense of individuals, or the public sector.

Collective decisions

This raises a final question, linked to the lack of clarity over who is going to make the decisions and how those decisions are to be made. This is not simply a case of the 'sharpest elbows' or that some people have more time to 'volunteer' than others. Making collective decisions is extremely difficult where people hold different views and interests. So far democratic institutions are the best way we know of resolving these disputes.

In contrast, both localism and the big society tend to suffer from 'voluntarism'. That is, they simply assume that 'the people' will come together and make a decision, ignoring not only the institutions that are necessary for the decision making process, but how they weigh up different claims, and deal with conflict. Democratic accountability is not a key strength of voluntarist approaches.

There has been little clarity so far in discussions about localism of what the proper role of local government is and how it needs to be strengthened to provide transparency and legitimacy to decision making. This point is particularly crucial when the decisions before us are likely to impact disproportionately on the already marginalised, including BAME communities.

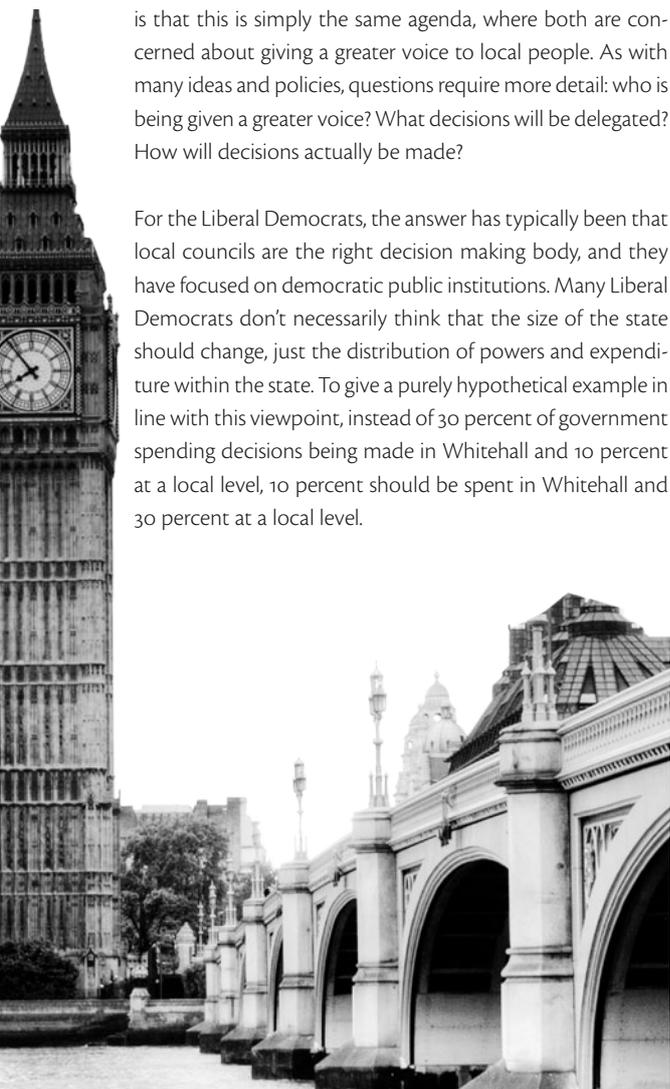
Making collective decisions suffers from two problems: how to adjudicate competing claims, and how to ensure the resulting decisions are legitimate and accountable. Democratic decision making institutions are the best way of responding to these difficulties.

Engagement

Currently local authorities and local councillors appear to be the best institutional mechanism for ensuring accountability. Bearing in mind that local people are not always engaged with these institutions, those decisions will neither accurately reflect everyone's interest, nor will they be fully accountable.

If we 'localise' service provision or collective decision making further – to institutions or people with no democratic standards – this will not only lead to resentment, but will further undermine people's faith in institutions and democracy generally.

As many BAME people currently lack access to important decision making institutions and still don't always have their legal rights affirmed, those interested in race equality will need to ensure that localism not only respects choice, but also allows people a voice and rights. ●



Education

Unequal attainment

Despite overwhelming evidence that shows how unequally Black, Asian and minority ethnic children are being treated by the education system in London, the education reforms fail to include any reference to race equality, which is worrying, argues **Barbara Nea**.

Evidence demonstrating multiple examples of unequal treatment in education for Black Asian, minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in London isn't in short supply. At present, Black Caribbean, mixed, white and Black Caribbean, Irish Traveller, Gypsy and Roma children and young people have, on average, attainment rates below the national average.

Furthermore, Black Caribbean, mixed Black Caribbean and white, and Black African children and young people are more likely to be permanently excluded from mainstream education, and for reasons that others may not be excluded for¹. Black Caribbean and Black African children are more likely to be placed in lower-tiered classes and be entered for lower-tiered examination papers². Many of these persistent educational inequalities were highlighted in the 2010 report by the National Equality Panel³.

Success v failure

The degree of competition in the education system has produced schools categorised as 'failing', allowing wealthier parents to move into areas with schools that top the league tables. Others are left behind with schools that cannot compete. The success or failure of schools has also determined their funding levels, and has compounded the disadvantage.

The difficulty that many BAME families have in navigating and understanding the British education system, and the impact that poverty has on their ability to travel, means they often struggle to compete with other families. This is particularly acute for refugee and migrant families as well as those who lack support and awareness to help guide their decisions⁴.

Life chances

Education is a key determining factor in an individual's life chances. A strong relationship between educational success and other social areas, such as criminal justice and health, is well documented.

For these reasons education consistently emerges, through ROTA's biannual consultation of London's BAME sector and varied research projects, as a key area of concern for BAME communities. ROTA's most recent consultation⁵ reconfirms the need for increased support around education for BAME pupils and parents, through specialist BAME voluntary and community organisations and targeted measures by mainstream voluntary and statutory sector agencies. It is for these reasons that education has remained one of ROTA's three policy priorities for over 20 years.



Last November the coalition government published its white paper on education, 'The Importance of Teaching'⁶ and in February introduced its Education Bill to parliament. These reforms, combined with the wide ranging public sector cuts which are impacting on services for children and young people, are likely to have a significant and detrimental impact on the educational opportunities, experiences and outcomes for BAME pupils and communities⁷.

Educational standards

The education reforms place a strong emphasis on the improvement of standards in schools and a narrowing of the attainment gap between wealthier and poorer pupils, which is positive. ROTA's overarching concern, however, is the lack of reference to race equality and the Equality Act 2010 in the education white paper and bill.

There has been very limited reference to race across all areas of government policy making since the coalition government was formed a year ago. In education, policymakers increasingly say that race no longer has a significant influence on opportunity, experience and outcome. Increasingly it is being argued that socio-economic status is the key factor to influence success. To justify this, policymakers are speaking about

how, for example:

- BAME pupils are now outperforming white pupils in school
- The proportion of BAME people participating in higher education has increased significantly, and is greater than the white British population
- It is white working class boys who need attention.

Such statements are oversimplifications and could lead to policy making that exacerbates the educational inequalities faced by certain BAME groups. Putting all ethnic groups into one homogeneous BAME block masks the huge diversity of experience, and the persistence of race inequality within education. While Chinese pupils are, for example, performing excellently in school, the outcome is very different for Black African and Caribbean pupils.

Attainment levels

Differences in the average attainment levels for different ethnic groups cannot be explained away by the over-representation of certain BAME communities in more disadvantaged socio-economic groups. There's a lot of evidence which indicates that even when socio-economic factors are taken

Competition has produced schools categorised as 'failing', creating a further divide

into consideration, such as employment status and family structure, there are still unexplained differences in educational outcomes across different ethnic groups⁸. Policies that focus on socio-economic status alone will not ensure educational equality for BAME pupils.

Due to the lack of reference to race equality or the Equality Act 2010 within the education reforms, ROTA is concerned that, at best, efforts to improve standards and address attainment gaps will not benefit BAME groups. Also the proposals that relate to discipline, free schools and academies, accountability and assessment, alongside other changes such as to Ofsted and the Training and Development Agency (TDA), will have a detrimental affect on BAME communities.

Discipline

With regards to discipline, teachers will have more powers to search pupils, issue same day detentions and use reasonable force. Independent Appeals Panels will lose their authority to reinstate pupils who have been unfairly excluded. Given the over-representation of certain BAME groups in other areas of discipline cited earlier, it is likely they will be disproportionately searched and face reasonable force under the extended powers.

Same day detention will cause unnecessary anxiety among families, particularly if children are at risk due to where they live, such as having high rates of crime. These measures should be carefully monitored in their use on different ethnic and socio-economic groups, yet nothing within the reforms reassures ROTA that this will happen in practice.

Ofsted will no longer inspect schools on the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils

Academies

Proposals aimed at encouraging more schools to become academies, and for more groups to open 'free schools' have huge implications for BAME communities. Academies will have more freedom than maintained schools, whereas free schools will have the same legal structures as academies.

There is evidence to suggest that race inequality at many existing academies, of which there are around 200, is more severe than in maintained schools. In particular there are higher rates of exclusion of certain groups of BAME pupils from academies while Black students, on average, perform less well than in maintained schools⁹. Additionally, the attainment gap between wealthier and poorer students in academies has grown¹⁰.

In some areas of the US, similar 'free school' systems have turned around educational inequalities for BAME communities. However overall, evidence suggests that similar systems in both the US and Sweden have led to socio-economically and ethnically segregated school systems with greater gaps in the quality of provision. In attempting to roll out a similar model here, the government hasn't given enough consideration to the risks that similar unequal systems will also emerge in the UK¹¹.

Proposals

So far the coalition government has received over 323 free school proposals. Around 40 have been approved to go through to the next stage. One proposal, the West London Free School, has already entered into a funding agreement



with the government.

With race equality think tank Runnymede, and the Black Training and Enterprise Group, ROTA hopes undertake an analysis of the engagement of BAME communities in the free schools movement as lead-proposers, pupils, staff and governors. ROTA is currently awaiting a response to its Freedom of Information Request, submitted to the Department for Education, for information about both the successful and unsuccessful free school proposals made so far.

ROTA's initial look at a sample of the successful proposals indicates a lack of engagement from BAME communities in most of the free school proposals. There also appears to be a limited focus on equalities in service delivery.

The premises for the new West London Free School (Palingswick House) has been home to more than 20 voluntary groups, working with refugees, the homeless, former young offenders and a range of BAME communities since the 1980s. These voluntary groups will now have to move.

ROTA is concerned that the combined impact of a number of the education reforms will lead to the emergence of a separate poor quality education system for excluded and other vulnerable young people. Of particular concern are the proposals around discipline, perverse incentives to exclude less academic pupils, new providers in the system, the introduction of market competition and shifts in responsibility for quality assurance from local authorities to the alternative providers.

Accountability

In terms of accountability, there will be a greater emphasis and reward for academic achievement. The current Contextual Added Value measure, which acknowledges schools working in challenging circumstances, will be changed. Combined with the reduction in the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, this will lead to a decline in the quality of service provided by schools working in disadvantaged areas, where BAME pupils are concentrated. As BAME pupils are more reliant on the Education Maintenance Allowance than the national average, these changes will be keenly felt².

Ofsted will no longer inspect schools on the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils, or on how far the school meets the needs of the range of pupils or the contribution made by the school to 'community cohesion'. The TDA has spent more than £6 million since 2007 on working to promote teaching among BAME groups. This investment has now gone and the TDA will soon be no more.

What can be done?

While ROTA's analysis is disheartening, there are potential opportunities for BAME communities and organisations to take control of educational services and address pressing inequalities. ROTA is currently working with other organisations to

inform and consult BAME communities about the education reforms, and will support organisations to engage in and influence the changes in their local areas. Raising awareness of the disengagement from race equality in education is now more urgent than ever. ●

To help ROTA in its campaign on the education reforms, or to find out more, contact Barbara Nea at:

Email: barbara@rota.org.uk

Tel: 020 7902 1177.

Footnotes

- 1 ROTA's consultation response to the Mayor of London's draft 'Time for Action' Strategy (2007) ROTA
- 2 Burgess, S. and Greaves, E. (2009) Test Scores, Subjective Assessment and Stereotyping of Ethnic Minorities, University of Bristol: Centre for Market and Public Organisation, working paper no. 09/221. Available at <http://www.bris.ac.uk/cmpo/publications/papers/2009/wp221.pdf>
- 3 The National Equality Panel (2010) The Anatomy of Economic Inequality, Report of the National Equality Panel: Government Equality Office
- 4 ROTA's consultation response to the Mayor of London's draft Time for Action Strategy (2007) ROTA
- 5 ROTA report, undertaken by MiNet, on the impact of the economic downturn on BAME education services (May 2010). To find out more visit www.rota.org.uk or contact Anthony Salla on Anthony@rota.org.uk
- 6 The Importance of Teaching - The Schools White Paper 2010 is available at <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/CM%207980>.
- 7 For further analysis see ROTA (2010) Briefing on the Importance of Teaching available from the publications pages of www.rota.org.uk
- 8 Strand, S. (2010) Do some schools narrow the gap? Differential school effectiveness by ethnicity, gender, poverty and prior achievement, School Effectiveness And School Improvement 21 (3), 289 - 314 (0924-3453)
- 9 Gillborn, D. (2011) Fine Words and Foul Deeds: why coalition education policy will make things worse for Black students and the White working class, Race Equality Teaching. Volume 29, Number 2. Spring 2011; Gillborn, D. and Drew, D. (2010) 'Academy Exclusions', Runnymede Bulletin, Issue 362, Summer 2010, pp. 12 - 13. See also Department for Education (2010a) Equalities Impact Assessment: Academies Bill. London: Department for Education
- 10 National Audit Office (2010) Department for Education: The Academies Programme. Available at: <http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1011/academies.aspx>
- 11 Ravitch, D. (2010) The Death and Life of the Great American School System <http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/>
- 12 At ROTA's education event in February 2011, the Runnymede Trust highlighted what the disproportionate impact from the replacement of the EMA with a much reduced scheme would have on BAME young people. To read Runnymede's presentation from this event please visit [http://www.rota.org.uk/Downloads/Runnymede Trust.ppt](http://www.rota.org.uk/Downloads/Runnymede%20Trust.ppt)

Prisons

No sign of change

Female foreign nationals who end up in prison are a forgotten minority. Media negativity and disinterest from the coalition government means that these women's human rights are compromised, exposing them to an increased likelihood of reoffending, warns **Olga Heaven**.



Female foreign nationals in prison are unfairly labelled

Hibiscus supports women to develop independent lives free from factors which increase the risk of offending behaviour, such as abuse, unemployment, poverty and isolation. Established in 1991 as a branch of the Female Prisoners Welfare Project, Hibiscus seeks to empower female prisoners to be active, positive and contributing members of local communities once they are released.

In the community, Hibiscus works with over 115 women to find accommodation and legal representation, deals with emotional and practical issues, while encouraging compliance with immigration and UK Border Agency (UKBA) requirements and the probation service to ensure a smooth transition back into their communities.

Prevention

Hibiscus works towards a reduction in offending among EU, Foreign National, Migrant and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups. Hibiscus's success over the last 26 years is well documented. Three of the charity's educational campaigns in West Africa and Jamaica preceded a marked drop in the number of drug mules entering the UK from these countries.

Up to 1400 new clients each year are supported by Hibiscus while incarcerated. They are helped to retain family ties, and have facilitated links to legal representation, statutory and non-statutory organisations.

The government's cuts and prison reforms have already had an unfavourable and challenging impact on the charity's work. They include:

- Loss of service level agreements
- Tighter UKBA control has led to increased demand for Hibiscus's services, especially from women with no recourse to public funds within the community
- Reduction in legal aid services, leaving many women without legal representation as they cannot afford to

instruct competent lawyers

- Very little consultation with service users and minimal recognition of Hibiscus's extensive expertise as a charity working with BAME and foreign national women.

Increasing need

As a result, Hibiscus has had to decrease, or cease, its activity in four prisons over the last six months. However, there is now an even greater need for Hibiscus's services as foreign national numbers in British prisons continue to rise. All the while the need for community support intensifies. The closure of Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Morton Hall and its new role as a detention centre has meant that female foreign nationals are now widely dispersed across the country. Logistically this development makes it harder for the charity to reach them, which intensifies their isolation.

Furthermore, new European Union (EU) legislation, which categorises some EU citizen offenders as foreign nationals, has led to an increase in the numbers of women from the EU. Some serve short sentences and are released into the community. However, EU citizens serving more than one year for certain offences can be subject to the same deportation and removal criteria as foreign nationals. Cost cutting also impacts on the level of training available for prison staff dealing with an increasingly complex set of regulations. This can only have a negative effect on the women and on reoffending rates.

The problem of reoffending cycles is perpetuated by short term cuts to rehabilitation and resettlement goals. There is now a greater need for Hibiscus's expertise, yet the resources to provide these essential services are decreasing at an alarming rate. In the long run the charity believes that it will cost more to rectify the damage caused by the cuts. The government aims to 'reduce reoffending', yet is more likely to face future social and economic problems due to the short term or immediate savings made.

Under current government guidelines¹, foreign nationals in prison should receive the same level of support as British



Budget cuts are leading volunteers to be seen as a cheap replacement for once paid for services



passport holders, with specialist support to enable them to understand immigration issues. This, sadly, doesn't happen.

Misperceptions

The public perception of 'foreign nationals' continues to be ambiguous. Media misrepresentation needs to be tackled to help demystify the term. Anyone without a British passport is classified as a foreign national. There needs to be informed dialogue surrounding the negative association the term has with 'illegal immigrants' within wider society.

Due to the unpopularity of the client group, and lack of long term roots in a particular borough, some London authorities don't feel responsible for them. This means that the idea of 'localism' potentially squeezes out some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Despite attaining short term efficiency savings, this approach can have a long term and devastating impact on vulnerable groups, which will ultimately cost councils more in the long run as more people face destitution and poverty.

Against this backdrop, the term foreign national needs to be destigmatised through proper social investment in organisations such as Hibiscus. The organisation can help reduce offending among this group, promote integration, a strong community, increase employment, and uphold fundamental human rights.

Isolation

As well as discrimination and marginalisation in prison, these women face major hurdles in their reintegration and rehabilitation. Isolation is a significant obstacle due to language, cultural barriers and being far away from their families. These issues are compounded by reduced access to legal rights due to their lack of understanding of the UK's criminal justice system.

Often overlooked is the trauma of being separated from their children, who may be overseas or in social care. There is also a much higher risk of losing access to their children who often remain in the community, but are far removed from family members who may be able to care for them.

Consequences

A recurrent theme among the women in prison is a poor understanding of the consequences of being trafficked, a form of coercion and exploitation that begins in the women's country

of origin. Often the women are unclear about their rights and responsibilities. This lack of understanding diminishes the chance of any successful reintegration into their communities. Women with no recourse to public funds find their situation even worse.

Women are waiting on excessively delayed Home Office decisions about their immigration status. Due to the complexity of their cases, a backlog at the Home Office leaves many vulnerable women exposed to grinding poverty, which increases the risk of reoffending.

Cuts to the Facilitated Returns Scheme and Assisted Voluntary Return Scheme have hampered these women's voluntary return to their home countries. These schemes enable the women to rebuild their lives, free of crime, in their country of origin after years of absence. They also help reduce reoffending rates in the UK and abroad. Women fighting deportation and asylum appeals cost the government more money than if the women could exercise their legal and human rights.

Interventions

Hibiscus's intervention helps to preserve resources, promote fairness and improve service provision within prisons. Prison governors and staff understand and appreciate the charity's work, but government policy needs to recognise that appropriate early intervention would be cost effective.

The new commissioning and localism agendas disproportionately impacts on foreign national and BAME communities due to a lack of long term ties to specific local authorities and boroughs. These groups also risk being exposed to watered-down services, leading to greater reoffending rates. There is a dearth of true expertise in this area, and a lack of consultation, which would have otherwise allowed for a clearer debate on, and negotiation for, viable alternatives for service users and providers.

Cheap resource?

The government stresses that under localism, volunteers should be utilised and that they are valued. However, current reforms and cuts to the voluntary and community sector means they are being increasingly viewed as a cheap resource to compensate for previously paid for services.

Volunteering is important and effective. Hibiscus has always used volunteers, both in times of greater and lesser austerity. The problem is that the government has unfortunately painted an unrealistic picture of volunteering. Their view appears to be that specialist work, carried out successfully by organisations such as Hibiscus, can be done by non-professionals - for free. This isn't the way forward for the volunteers, for charities or the vulnerable in prison or in the wider community. ●

Footnote

1 PSO 4800 (www.hmprisonerservice.gov.uk/adviceandsupport/prison_life/female_prisoners)

Public health

Health check

The public health white paper unveils a new public health system and the government's vision for the health of the nation. Despite its grand ambitions, there are concerns that race equality has been squeezed out of the picture. **Joy Francis** gives an overview and finds out what those on the frontline think about the white paper's intentions.

When the public health white paper 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People' was released earlier this year, it didn't cause too much outrage. Riddled with good intentions with some attention paid to the link between physical and mental health, and the social determinants of inequalities, first impressions were so far so good.

Oversight

Of course, there is the inevitable oversight or omission. A significant one is that the paper is presented as if we live in an equal society without culturally-associated health inequities. Another is the assumption made about the role of cohesion, and equal communities sharing in the decision making processes, which is naïve. The view that centralism has failed hence the need for localism is also apparent.

When you consider the current steps being taken by the government to dismantle key elements of the Equality Act 2010, their increasingly myopic view of equalities in our society is hard to ignore. Yet the doublespeak continues with the coalition government's overused mantra of 'fairness for all', with local decision making and clear leadership presented as the cure for all ailments.

Race equality absent

According to Dr Jayasree Kalathil of Survivor Research, who worked with The Afiya Trust and ROTA on their joint response to the public health white paper, there are some welcomed ideas. But, she adds: "Public health protection and promotion has to go beyond the idea of fairness. We continue to see unacceptable ethnic disparities in health outcomes, in experiences of health and social care services and in influencing health agendas."

It doesn't help that Prime Minister David Cameron believes that 'state multiculturalism' has failed. This assessment doesn't appear to fit comfortably with the reality of a contemporary UK which is, at a glance, multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-lingual with multiple and intersecting identities, needs and aspirations.

The white paper relies heavily on the Marmot Review, 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives: A strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010', published in February 2010. The Marmot Review highlighted that health was influenced by a range of circumstances including social environment, psychosocial and biological factors and socio-economic conditions. But the review was criticised for overlooking race and ethnic inequalities, and the impact of discrimination and racism on BAME communities' health and wellbeing.

'Healthy Lives, Healthy People'

Key points

- An outcome-focused approach based on what works that recommends public health led from the centre with local leadership and wide responsibility across society.
- A new public health outcomes framework to sit alongside an NHS outcomes framework. The outcomes are proposed along five 'domains': health protection and resilience, tackling wider determinants of ill health, health improvement, prevention of ill health and healthy life expectancy and preventable mortality.
- Introduction of a new public health service called Public Health England, which will sit within the Department of Health and will include the current functions of the Health Protection Agency and National Treatment Agency.
- Public health funds from within the overall NHS budget to be ring-fenced and will be allocated to local authorities, with incentives to improve. Allocation of funds will be overseen by new body Public Health England.
- Will present detailed proposals for the establishment of health and wellbeing boards in local authorities, including county councils and district/borough councils.



Public health protection
has to go beyond the idea
of fairness



Persistent inequalities

Finding evidence that structural racism is a causal factor in social deprivation and distress leading to ill health isn't difficult. Also the statistics on health inequalities among BAME communities is unsettling. In The Afya Trust's 'Achieving Equality in Health and Social Care: A framework for action', launched in 2010, there are numerous examples including:

- People from minority ethnic communities are up to six times more likely to develop diabetes
- People of African and Caribbean origin are at increased risk of having a stroke, more than any other ethnic group
- Rates of supervised community treatment orders for mental health are higher than the national average for Indian, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Other Black groups
- South Asian groups have higher chances of having liver and oral cancers
- South Asian women above 65 have higher cervical cancer rates but less rates of screening for cancer
- Men from Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Irish groups were more likely to smoke than their counterparts, yet less likely to receive smoking cessation interventions.

Patrick Vernon, Chief Executive of The Afya Trust, says: "There is disturbing evidence that health inequalities are getting wider between the general population and BAME communities. Life expectancy and the quality of life for BAME communities

in England is a human rights issue. We are dying younger and experiencing long term health conditions and disability. We need to break this vicious cycle so that everyone is treated equally and fairly."

Kalathil adds: "How would the public health agenda sit within the overall funding cuts, welfare reforms and other proposed changes to health and social care? What will be the real impact of localism and a loosening of central monitoring of health services on marginalised communities? Countering factors that determine inequality and deprivation, including racism, discrimination and 'ethnic penalties', should be at the heart of any equitable public health programme."

As everyone waits to hear back from the government as to how the consultation feedback has been judged, there is no question that there is a growing call for health to be a matter of social justice. It is now time to enable BAME communities to play a significant role in making this happen. ●

Visit: www.survivor-research.com
www.afiya-trust.org

Footnote

1 <http://www.rota.org.uk/downloads/ROTA%20Afya%20response.pdf>

Public health vox pop

What is your main concern about the public health white paper's failure to address the longstanding health disparities experienced by BAME communities?

Bryan Teixeira, Chief Executive, Naz Project, London

"Ensuring that public health interventions effectively target and reach the most vulnerable benefits us all. A national policy that inadequately addresses the health inequalities of BAME groups cannot be in the best interests of all. The number of people living with HIV in the UK continues to rise, of whom over 25 percent are unaware of their infection and 48 percent are from BAME backgrounds. A snapshot survey of BAME people living with HIV has identified key community-level services that are seen as vital. Reducing them would have a dramatic adverse effect. Top among these services are up-to-date information on HIV treatment, support groups, counselling, and help with social security benefits. BAME communities stand to be disproportionately impacted by a variety of simultaneous changes, such as the reorganisation of the NHS, drastic reductions in statutory services and the abolition of the ring fence for the AIDS Support Grant. It is crucial that the needs of the more vulnerable BAME community members, including those living with HIV, are addressed in the government's health planning."

Ratna Dutt, Chief Executive, Race Equality Foundation

"There is no longer any doubt that health inequalities disproportionately impact on Britain's BAME communities. With regards to public health, evidence (including those produced by the Race Equality Foundation) continues to show inequalities in relation to specific health-related issues such as mental health, smoking cessation, maternity services and HIV prevention. Given this context, it is no longer acceptable to ignore the health disparities that are experienced by BAME communities. The shift to a locality-based public health system, and the focus on population health as laid out in 'Healthy People, Healthy Lives', provides an opportunity to redress past inequalities and target action in assessing need in BAME communities. It is also worth stressing that in many inner city areas, the BAME population is not the minority but the majority population. In these areas there needs to be a shift in the experience of health and social care for BAME communities out of the margins and into the mainstream."

Prof. Kam Bhui, Director, Cultural Consultation Service

"The government's public health white paper sets out a utopian vision of how to prevent and remedy mental health problems. The public health approach relies on primary prevention, promoting individual responsibilities and resilience, while also sustaining existing services and tackling inequalities. Although the evidence on cost effectiveness of public mental health interventions is growing, specialist mental health professionals are needed to inform and lead public health reforms. The current approach to public health risks ignores the needs of people with complex, multiple problems, and those that need specifically tailored intervention. Evidence suggests that there are disparities in the prevalence of mental health problems and access to mental health care for high-risk groups including BME, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups. Such groups are likely to be stigmatised and discriminated against and have a significantly higher prevalence of mental health problems than the general population. These disparities call for a change of practice that will enhance inclusivity"

Sandra Griffiths, Director, Red Earth Consultants, a mental health consultancy

"Addressing the continued health inequalities experienced by BME communities within the context of tackling material inequalities, such as housing, employment and environment, is essential if we are to make any headway on improving the health and quality of life of these communities. There are still many structural barriers that prevent local communities, community organisations and service users from participating in discussions about public health. For community organisations, limited resources often mean that an overstretched staff team is unable to attend meetings or have the resources to evaluate their work. As a result they are unable to produce their own evidence-base on what works for the communities they support. Alongside our understanding of how race and racism contributes to health inequalities we should aim to improve our understanding of how the strengths and resilience of BME individuals, families and communities contribute to their health. Reframing the contribution that BME communities make, with a focus on their strengths and assets and not just their 'needs', could make a valuable contribution to the new Public Health Service."



Violence against women

Not in my name

Southall Black Sisters has a long history of tackling racism and gender-based violence against Black and minority ethnic women, and transforming the policy, legislative and media agendas on honour killings and forced marriages. **Hannana Siddiqui** charts the government's policy approaches since the 1970s to the present and explains why the campaigning is far from over.

Southall Black Sisters (sbs) was founded in 1979 to address racism and sexual discrimination against Black and minority ethnic (BME) women and girls. sbs has been involved in anti-racist and anti-fascist campaigns, including the protest against the National Front in 1979 where the white anti-racist, Blair Peach, was killed by the police.

sbs also protested against the 'virginity testing' of Asian brides at Heathrow Airport, and over 32 years we have established a nationally recognised expertise on domestic violence, forced

marriage, dowry abuse and honour crimes.

The work of sbs now entails providing holistic, resource centre based frontline services. This includes advice, advocacy, counselling and support to BME women and children, particularly those from South Asian backgrounds, escaping abuse. sbs also campaigns to change social, cultural and religious attitudes and practices on violence against BME women, both within and outside minority communities. Policy and research work is also undertaken at local and national levels.

sbs at an immigration demo
in 2004

Domestic violence

In the 1970s and 1980s, SBS campaigned to break the re-sounding silence on domestic violence within South Asian communities in Southall, West London. It campaigned on cases where women had been murdered, or driven to suicide, to raise awareness in the community. The campaigns also challenged traditional, religious and cultural notions of 'shame' and 'honour', which forced women to stay in abusive situations for fear of bringing dishonour onto their extended family and community.

As a result, SBS was attacked by men and religious leaders as 'home wreckers', or for being a 'Western conspiracy'. The anti-racist left accused us of 'washing our dirty linen in public' and inviting a racist backlash. SBS argued that there wasn't any hierarchy of oppression, and that addressing sexual inequality should be as great a priority as tackling racial discrimination to create human rights for all.

In the 1990s, SBS campaigned for the state to recognise and address domestic violence against BME women. The celebrated case of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who SBS helped to get released from life imprisonment for killing her violent husband in 1992, assisted in propelling the issue of domestic violence within South Asian communities onto the national agenda. The case also changed the homicide law on provocation to prevent battered women who kill their partners from being convicted of murder.

By the end of the 1990s, the state began to recognise harmful traditional practices such as forced marriage and honour crimes, or so called honour-based violence, as a result of high profile honour killings and forced marriage cases, including Rukshana Naz, Heshu Yonis, Banaz Mahmood and Surjit Athwal. For the first time, the state recognised that multiculturalism didn't protect minority women from abuse as agencies such as the police and social services had refused to help them for fear of being labelled racist or intolerant of cultural difference.

Mature multiculturalism

A new approach under 'mature multiculturalism' was first advocated by the former Home Office Minister Mike O'Brien in 1999. He said that "multicultural sensitivities are no excuse for moral blindness," and that the state was required to intervene to protect women from minority communities from forced marriage and other abuses.

Since then, SBS has witnessed many positive developments as a result of sustained pressure by the BME women's movement. These include the introduction of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007¹, statutory guidelines for professionals and increased convictions in honour killings, or domestic homicides, in relation to the murder of Asian and Middle Eastern women.

In 1999, the government even introduced reforms to allow victims of domestic violence on spousal visas to remain in the UK rather than face deportation following the breakdown of their marriage, and gender guidelines for female asylum seek-

ers. More recently, domestic violence victims on spousal visas can also claim state support and possibly benefits, if they are subject to 'no recourse to public funds' problems.

Terrorism

However, from the beginning of the 21st century, particularly post-9/11, changes in state policy on race relations, and the growth of religious fundamentalism within minorities, have increasingly threatened the gains made by BME women over the last three decades. To fight terrorism and Muslim extremism, the previous Labour government and social commentators argued that multiculturalism bred segregation. Instead, the social cohesion approach, which requires minorities to adopt core 'British' values and assimilate into British society, was advanced.

This policy failed to recognise the positive aspects of minority culture, or the impact of racism and poverty on minority groups. Instead young migrant Muslim men were blamed for acts of terror. This included justifying the tightening of marriage immigration laws in the name of tackling 'backward' practices of forced marriage in migrant communities, and to promote social integration.

For example, in 2004 an immigration rule in which both parties had to be aged 18 or over before an overseas spouse could join their British spouse in the UK, was introduced. The age limit was later increased to 21, despite research evidence to show that the original increase in the age limit didn't protect victims of forced marriage, but only served to prevent family reunification in migrant communities².

Multi-faith approach

Additionally, and in contradictory fashion, to win over the hearts and minds of Muslims, the previous Labour government encouraged a 'multi-faith' approach. This allowed for conservative faith organisations and initiatives to flourish, often with state funding. As a result, there was a shift in state support from secular anti-racist organisations, including

SBS outside the Royal Courts of Justice in July 2008





Kiranjit Ahluwalia celebrates her release in 1992 (The Times newspaper)

secular feminist anti-racist women's organisations like sbs, to conservative religious groups. This, in turn, helped to reinforce conservative religious identities within BME communities, particularly among young men.

An increased pressure was placed on minority women to conform to traditional gender roles and to resolve issues, such as domestic violence and forced marriage, through mediation and religious arbitration (such as Sharia courts) rather than through state intervention. The pressure to use these alternative systems, which undermined women's rights, intensified with cuts in public services and legal aid.

Following the formation in May 2010 of a new Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government, this traditional conservative approach continued. While more critical of the funding of Muslim organisations, the government has, nevertheless, continued to argue for social integration and an adoption of 'British' values by minority communities. Multi-faithism has also extended to Christian groups providing violence against women's services such as trafficking.

Impact of cuts

The massive public sector funding cuts, as a result of the economic recession, has led to the closure of more secular progressive BME women's groups, that are less able to compete against large generic organisations in the commissioning process. It is ironic that at a time when issues concerning minority women are increasingly recognised by the state, we see the demise of the BME women's sector. The government has done very little to resolve this situation. It argues that all matters concerning funding and services are now devolved to local authorities under 'localism' and the 'big society' agenda, where central government has a non-existent or a minimal role.

This approach ignores the fact that leadership within BME communities comprises of male conservative community and religious leaders whose aim is not to empower women. As a result, many of the gains sbs has made on forced marriage, honour crimes, domestic violence and wider violence against women and girls strategies will not be effectively implemented locally.

Consultation

In January 2011, following a consultation process with over 200 individuals and women's organisations, sbs launched a joint campaign with the End Violence Against Women coalition. The campaign is calling for 10 key actions from government to address violence against BME women and girls, including the funding of specialist BME women's services, and a review of immigration and asylum policy so that it is anti-racist and gender sensitive.

sbs is currently working on a UK-wide strategy on violence against BME women, which will help to highlight the needs of BME women so that they can be central to the wider strategies on violence against women and girls. In recent years, all issues concerning BME women have been increasingly 'exoticised' and viewed through the lens of honour crimes. There is an underlying assumption that gender-based violence within BME communities is rooted in 'culture' or 'race' rather than in gender inequality. This has created a distorted and even discriminatory response from the state, such as more immigration controls, to tackle abuse within minority communities.

sbs seeks to reframe these issues within the wider context of violence against women and girls, and within the framework of equalities and human rights. This approach recognises intersectional discrimination based on race and gender. Essentially it focuses on the right for BME women to be protected from gender-based violence without undermining the rights of BME communities, as espoused by 'mature multiculturalism' and enshrined in human rights law. ●

Visit: www.southallblacksisters.co.uk

Email: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk

Footnotes

1 Prior to the Forced Marriage Act 2008, which allows victims to obtain civil forced marriage protection orders, sbs resisted calls to criminalise forced marriage because of the fear that it would prevent victims from coming forward, meaning their parents and family will 'get into trouble'. Many victims want protection from the police, not prosecution. In May 2010, the Home Affairs Select Committee renewed calls for criminalisation of forced marriage, to which we are now considering our response.

2 This age-related immigration policy is now subject to legal challenge in which sbs are interveners.

Social Impact Bonds

Pursuing the benefits of bonds

With the coalition government's drive to reduce spending through wide-ranging cuts, the pressure on the BAME third sector to be sustainable and meet need is immense. Utilising the benefits of Social Impact Bonds, within the wider context of social investment, is worth pursuing, says **Neil Reeder**.



The coalition government has set itself a target of reducing spending by £81 billion over the course of this parliament. Meanwhile the resulting budget cuts are being felt across a range of organisations.

Unequal pressures

Yet it is well known that the challenges already faced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities are often far worse than their counterparts. In health, those from BAME communities are up to five times more likely to develop diabetes than the general population¹, but less likely to have preventative health screenings².

In criminal justice, the 2008/2009 British Crime Survey highlighted a 35 percent risk of adults from a mixed background becoming victims of crime compared to 23 percent of those from a white ethnic background.

An array of social enterprises, charities and community organisations are keen to address these needs. But the twin pressures of need and deep budget cuts has led many down an anxious route of exploring different sources of finance and investment, with the aim of maintaining (or even growing) their own services.

Social Impact Bonds

A source of hope is the recent introduction of Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). SIBs are by no means the sole, or even the main, form of social investment (which is investment used to finance social enterprises, charities and community organisations to achieve a social benefit and, at the very least, modest financial returns in the process³). What SIBs highlight are the general opportunities and challenges of social investments.

The basic concept behind SIBs is that new sources of funding (from private or philanthropic sources) are brought in to finance new preventative activity. Providing this activity delivers better public outcomes and lower costs for the taxpayer. The original funders are then repaid, with interest, along a slid-

ing scale of payments. The principle is that better outcomes lead to bigger payments.

The first SIB contract was signed and initiated in 2010 under a pilot to reduce the likelihood of reoffending among those released from Peterborough Prison after serving sentences of less than one year. If the pilot succeeds, expensive prison places will no longer be required. It is this saving that can be used to reimburse the original funders.

As highlighted by the paper 'Social Impact Investment: the opportunity and challenge of Social Impact Bonds'⁴, various schemes to prevent future costs through action are now under consideration. They range from work in schools with children at strong risk of future unemployment through to supporting older people to stay safely at home rather than receiving treatment in hospital.

Challenges

These types of agendas are 'gaps' in the public sector offer. Action now could prevent the need for much more costly action by public services later. SIBs – or something similar – would enable such gaps to be filled. SIBs would also provide a possible route for proven, successful service organisations to gain funding for an expansion of their offer.

However SIBs are by no means easily initiated, for at least three reasons:

- Business case development can take substantial analytical capability, as it requires an analysis of future savings for public sector bodies as well as current costs. It also requires good standards of evaluation of the outcomes achieved by previous activity
- Measurement schemes that concisely, but effectively, set out the key achievements of a scheme can also take time, and much effort, to design and collate, particularly given that outcomes must closely connect to an ability to achieve future cost savings



Financing preventative activities can create better outcomes and lead to bigger payments

- Investors will tend to be cautious, even if they have strong confidence in those delivering the service, because of the potential risk that they will lose a significant amount, if not all, of their investment if the results don't materialise.

Opportunities

Yet somewhat paradoxically, these difficulties give ground for believing that a move towards a social investment approach (as opposed to a grant funding or donations-based approach) could present opportunities for those with a BAME agenda.

A social investment approach tightens the requirement for providers to take a good hard look at 'what works' in terms of producing the desired outcomes. The Peterborough pilot reflects a much broader shift in thinking towards a 'Payment for Success' approach, which is reliant upon results rather than paying for the amount of activity taking place.

That should in turn increase the pressure to promote more effective approaches to serve BAME needs; sooner rather than (more expensively) later. Indeed there is clear evidence of much scope for improvement, highlighting a need for successful, tailored strategies on the part of service providers, for example:

- Ipsos Mori research⁵ presents a picture of government services often failing to understand the diversity of BAME customers, or take into account cultural factors, and a reluctance for these communities to engage with government
- Mental health charity Rethink cites cases of poor access to non-drug treatments for those with mental health problems. Although some BAME groups are over-represented in psychiatric hospitals, few people from these groups are offered alternative treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy, or complementary therapies such as art therapy and relaxation techniques⁶
- Minority ethnic communities have far greater problems in accessing good quality, culturally and language appropriate diabetes information and services than the norm⁷.

Uncertainty

A key question is will the SIB model bring in a large wave of outside finance? It is hard to tell, as it is early days, but it seems unlikely that this will be the case, certainly for the next year or so. Rather, by promoting a change of perspective to contracting for outcomes, there is greater potential to tap into the broader source of social investment funds.

That said if this optimistic scenario is to be achieved, there is a pressing need for a change of attitude by the current coalition government, investors and providers.

Government, in its commissioning role, needs to recognise that a 'one size fits all' policy is a poor way to promote preventative agendas. From promoting health among those with a propensity to diabetes, through to running mentoring programmes for teenagers who are engaging in anti-social



There's a growing pressure on BAME organisations to be sustainable amid cuts

behaviour, having a stronger cultural understanding makes a vital difference. Contracting arrangements should recognise and take account of diversity.

Better communication

Mainstream financial institutions need to recognise that their communications with BAME social enterprises have, in the past, often been poor⁸. They have to work to understand and overcome the cultural and language barriers causing this problem.

BAME organisations have to press their case for funding on a clear commercial basis, with strong quantitative assessments of how they can make a difference, as well as providing inspirational case studies. They have to be smart at using track record evidence and comparing it against competitors. They have to use research on needs, cultural factors and drivers of change to explain that a one-size fits all approach will fail. They also have to demonstrate to commissioners why it is that investing in their activity now will create better, and more immediate, social outcomes as well as stopping bigger bills for the public purse down the line.

At the end of the day the challenges involved in harnessing social investment are considerable, but so too are the potential benefits. ●

Footnotes

- 1 Turning the corner: improving diabetes care (2006) Department of Health
- 2 Diabetes and the disadvantaged: reducing health inequalities in the UK (2006) Diabetes UK
- 3 The recent NESTA report Twenty catalytic investments to grow the social investment market (Ludlow & Jenkins 2011) has categorised social investment into: early stage funding plus advice; growth capital (such as Franchising Works); initial public offer (such as Big Issue Invest); secondary markets (such as the Social Stock Exchange); working capital loans (such as CAF Venture-some); and Asset Finance
- 4 Mulgan et al (2010) published by the Young Foundation
- 5 The experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities with HMRC services (2010) Ipsos Mori for HM Revenue and Customs
- 6 Comparison of the outcome and treatment of psychosis in people of Caribbean origin living in the UK and British Whites (McKenzie et al, 2001) British Journal of Psychiatry
- 7 Management of diabetes in South Asian communities in the UK (2006) Nursing Standard
- 8 A strategy for the social enterprise movement to improve the engagement and support to BAME social enterprises (2009) Social Enterprise Coalition

Agenda

Agenda is an annual publication that explores the major policy implications for London's Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities and the BAME voluntary and community sector.

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Race on the Agenda

Race on the Agenda (ROTA) is a social policy research organisation that focuses on issues impacting on Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. As a BAME-led organisation, all ROTA's work is based on the principle that those with direct experience of inequality should be central to solutions to address it. Our work is actively informed by the lived experiences of BAME communities and their organisations.

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