



Voice4Change England

Policy Briefing

Tackling race inequalities

Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation

April 2009

Building a Thriving Black and Minority Ethnic Third Sector

Voice4Change England Briefing on CLG Tackling Race Inequality: A discussion document

1 About the consultation

On 24th February 2009 Communities and Local Government (CLG) launched their consultation *Tackling race inequalities: A discussion document*. This consultation seeks views on a new government-wide approach for race equality. Through a series of 21 questions it aims to answer three broad questions:

- What should a government race equality strategy look like?
- How does tackling race inequality fit with a broader equality and fairness agenda?
- How do we strengthen our society to tackle race inequalities?

The consultation document is available to download from [CLG's website](#) along with details of how to respond. CLG are also holding a series of regional listening events on the consultation. For full details visit their [consultation website](#). **The consultation closes on 18th May 2009.**

Voice4Change England will be submitting a response to the consultation. To inform our response we have created an online questionnaire for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) third sector organisations. To share your views [complete our questionnaire](#) by the end of Tuesday 5th May. We will also be consulting with our partners. If you would like to discuss our response to the consultation contact Jemma Grieve at jemma@voice4change-england.co.uk or on 020 7843 6130.

This briefing provides a summary of the contents of the *Tackling race inequalities* discussion document drawing out key themes of relevance to the BME third sector.

2 About the Race Equality Strategy

The first government-wide race equality strategy *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* was published 4 years ago in 2005. This strategy had two aims:

- To increase race equality; and
- To build community cohesion by helping people from different backgrounds get along well together in their local areas.

The third and final [progress report](#) of the race equality strategy was published alongside the *Tackling race inequalities* discussion document. It assesses progress in race equality in public services and sets out the ways in which cohesive communities are being built.

CLG want a new race equality strategy to take into account: the changed equalities landscape; progress on race equality; remaining inequalities; and

new challenges such as the global economic downturn. They highlight that they are not looking to prescribe a single approach but to start a wide-ranging discussion about the ways in which the Government's approach to race equality might develop.

2.1 Which communities is the Strategy aimed at?

In their discussion document CLG refer to Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups as 'people from 'visible' ethnic groups such as Black, South Asian and Chinese people and also Gypsies and Irish Travellers'. At the Cambridge CLG listening event we were reassured that CLG intended this to be a broad inclusive definition. This will need to be clarified in the proposed race equality strategy.

CLG emphasise that not all communities are in the same position. For example, that many people from Chinese and Indian backgrounds are more successful in education than the rest of the population. CLG's [press release](#) accompanying the discussion document states that further progress on race equality 'depends on recognising that different ethnic groups are experiencing disadvantage in different ways' and that CLG want to find 'how best to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach to targeted help addressing the different needs of particular groups'.

2.2 Relevance to the BME Third Sector

This is a key consultation for the BME third sector. It provides an opportunity to influence Government's race equality strategy and any associated funding, wider policies and engagement mechanisms. It is also an opportunity to ensure the valuable role of the BME third sector is recognised. CLG recognises charities, voluntary organisations and community groups as key stakeholders in the discussion document. They also recognise the historical role of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic voluntary sector in providing specialist services stating that 'it is frequently these organisations that best understand how to reach communities and what actions need to be taken to deliver specific programmes'. It is important that BME Third Sector organisations take the opportunity to build on this recognition.

2.3 Equality Impact Assessment

CLG state that they have not carried out an equality impact assessment but will conduct a full assessment before any full strategy is implemented

3 The consultation

3.1 Overview

The consultation is divided in to nine sections with a summary of the questions in Appendix A: section 1 talks about the purpose of the document; section 2 outlines why Government is revising its approach to race equality and gives consultation details; section 3 gives the historical context; section 4 talks about cultural diversity in Britain today and the benefits of diversity; section 5 details recent changes to the equalities landscape; section 6 is the core part of the document looking at the need for a race equality strategy, what it

should include and presenting statistics demonstrating progress on race equality and continuing inequalities; section 7 asks how Government can work with stakeholders to address race inequality at a local level; section 8 explores ways to promote race equality particularly through community empowerment; and Section 9 looks at engagement of different communities in the strategy and the impact of the global economic downturn.

3.2 The need for a Race Equality Strategy

3.2.1 Importance and distinctiveness of race equality

CLG are keen to explore how the race equality strategy can fit within a wider equalities framework. They outline the move away from separate equality strands to a single equality focus. They recognise that this has caused some to fear a dilution of the existing strands but are keen to emphasise the benefits such as tackling multiple discrimination. They invite views on how the new approach can develop and clarify the focus on race rather than diminish it.

The consultation document also highlights the debate around the extent to which disadvantage can be driven by class and poverty. It cites research that suggests deprivation has a greater impact on pupils' progress than ethnicity. They recognise that this is not uniformly the case and say that a race equality strategy can aim to identify patterns where racial inequality is a cause of disadvantage and put in place efforts to eradicate it. The consultation seeks views on how to do this. The document also considers the challenges faced by disadvantaged White communities and outlines Government's commitment to alleviating poverty and improving social mobility for all in Britain, signposting to the New Opportunities White Paper.

Key related consultation questions

- *How can we make sure that race equality maintains a distinct profile within a wider programme of work to address multiple disadvantage?*
- *How should a race equality strategy focus on addressing disadvantage linked with race and ethnicity, as opposed to mainstream programmes?*
- *Can we disentangle the role that race and ethnicity plays in driving disadvantage from other factors, e.g. socio-economic status?*
- *How can government strategies to address social mobility for all also address the effects of historic and residual racism?*

3.2.2 What should the Race Equality Strategy tackle?

Government's existing race equality strategy focuses on five public service areas: education; labour market; criminal justice system; housing; and health. The discussion document highlights key statistics indicating areas of progress in race equality and continuing inequalities. CLG ask for views on what the priority areas for race equality action should be.

The Equalities Review (2007)¹ recommends that Government measure equality for 10 freedoms based on the right to enjoy equal opportunity for: a long life; physical security; health; education; a comfortable standard of living; productive and valued activities; individual, family and social life; participation and voice; identity, expression and self-respect; and legal security. CLG ask whether the strategy should be extended to include these areas.

Key related consultation questions

- *Is there a need for a separate strategy to tackle race inequality? If so, what should the priorities be?*
- *Which are the priority areas for Government action on race equality? What responsibilities are there for people from all communities in modern Britain, to others and themselves?*
- *What practical measures should we be taking to address disadvantages experienced by different Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups?*
- *Should we expand our policy areas? If we do, do we risk diluting the focus on the five public service areas mentioned above?*

3.3 Key Themes

3.3.1 Public service delivery

CLG discuss how key public services such as the police are increasingly delivered by more people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic group backgrounds. They also recognise that ‘the Black, Asian and minority ethnic community and the voluntary sector have a long history in providing specialised services to communities that could not always access mainstream services’. There is however no discussion of the current need and role for specialised services.

3.3.2 Mainstreaming

Race Equality Impact Assessments are outlined as a mechanism by which Government can mainstream race equality. Public procurement is also listed as a way of promoting race equality. There are clear links to measures in the proposed Equality Bill though these are not discussed.

Key related consultation questions

- *How can we focus more effectively on ensuring that mainstream policies meet the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups?*
- *How best can we work with the private sector to address ethnic minority employment issues?*

3.3.3 Community empowerment

The consultation document discusses under-representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in civic structures and processes and highlights current measures to address this. CLG ask for advice on how to increase

¹ CLG, 2007, Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review, <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/equalitiesreview/>

Black, Asian and minority ethnic group levels of both civic participation and volunteering.

Key related consultation questions

- *How can we encourage more people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to get involved in public life and in volunteering?*
- *What are the main barriers to civic participation and representation that need to be addressed?*

3.3.4 Cohesion

There are no formal links to the [Cohesion Delivery Framework](#) but aspects of Government's cohesion agenda are referred to. For instance Section 1 states that 'we want to help build strong and positive relationship between people of different backgrounds, including those from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and different faith communities. By focusing on what people have in common, as well as recognising the value of diversity, we can foster a shared sense of belonging and a shared sense of the future'. Further clarity on how the Race Equality Strategy will work with the Government's cohesion agenda is needed. For details on Voice4Change England's position on Government's cohesion agenda see our [cohesion media release](#) and [response to Cohesion Guidance for Funders](#).

Key related consultation questions

- *What more can the Government do to help communities recognise and celebrate the strengths that come from diversity and the values we have in common?*

3.3.5 Global economic downturn

CLG recognise that 'there may be challenges for particular ethnic groups because they are more likely to live in a particular area or work in certain types of jobs' and that during 'times of uncertainty and insecurity there may be increased tensions in some communities'. CLG focus on measures around skills and employment to ensure that progress made on employment rates for Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities are not threatened in the downturn and that Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are not in a worse position than others to benefit from economic recovery.

Key related consultation questions

- *What should the Government be doing to ensure that the gains in Black, Asian and minority ethnic employment, and the narrowing of the employment gap are not reversed during a recession?*
- *How do we ensure that people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities have the skills to fully participate in the post downturn economy?*

3.4 Implementing the Race Equality Strategy

3.4.1 Implementation at a local level

CLG ask how they can work at the local level to prioritise race equality in the context of devolution to local government. They explicitly refer to the third sector asking what the role of the voluntary and community sector is in prioritising race equality at the local level. CLG's current race equality strategy has included an £18 million Connecting Communities Plus fund for third sector organisations to address race equality, one element of which was a Strategic Partners Programme.

Key related consultation questions

- *How can we help and encourage the public sector, such as local councils, criminal justice agencies and NHS Trusts to prioritise their work on race equality?*
- *What role does the voluntary and community sector have to play in prioritising race equality at the local level?*
- *How can we best work with organisations such as Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices and local authorities to deliver on race equality?*

3.4.2 Planning and monitoring

CLG propose a two-fold strategy with both a long-term vision document setting out the high-level strategy until 2025 and a shorter-term action plan. They are seeking views on whether this is the best approach and how success can be measured.

Key related consultation questions

- *Do you agree with the approach of a long-term vision and a short-term action plan?*
- *What does 'success' look like? And how do we measure that success?*

4 Next Steps

- 16th April: Voice4Change England **briefing circulated** to subscribers and publicised on website alongside launch of Voice4Change England questionnaire for BME third sector organisations on the *Tackling Race Inequalities* discussion document.
- 28th April: Voice4Change England hold **consultation workshop with partner organisations**.
- 5th May: **Closing date for Voice4Change England questionnaire** with BME third sector organisations on the proposed race equality strategy.
- 7th May: Voice4Change England **submit response** to CLG.
- 18th May: **consultation deadline**.