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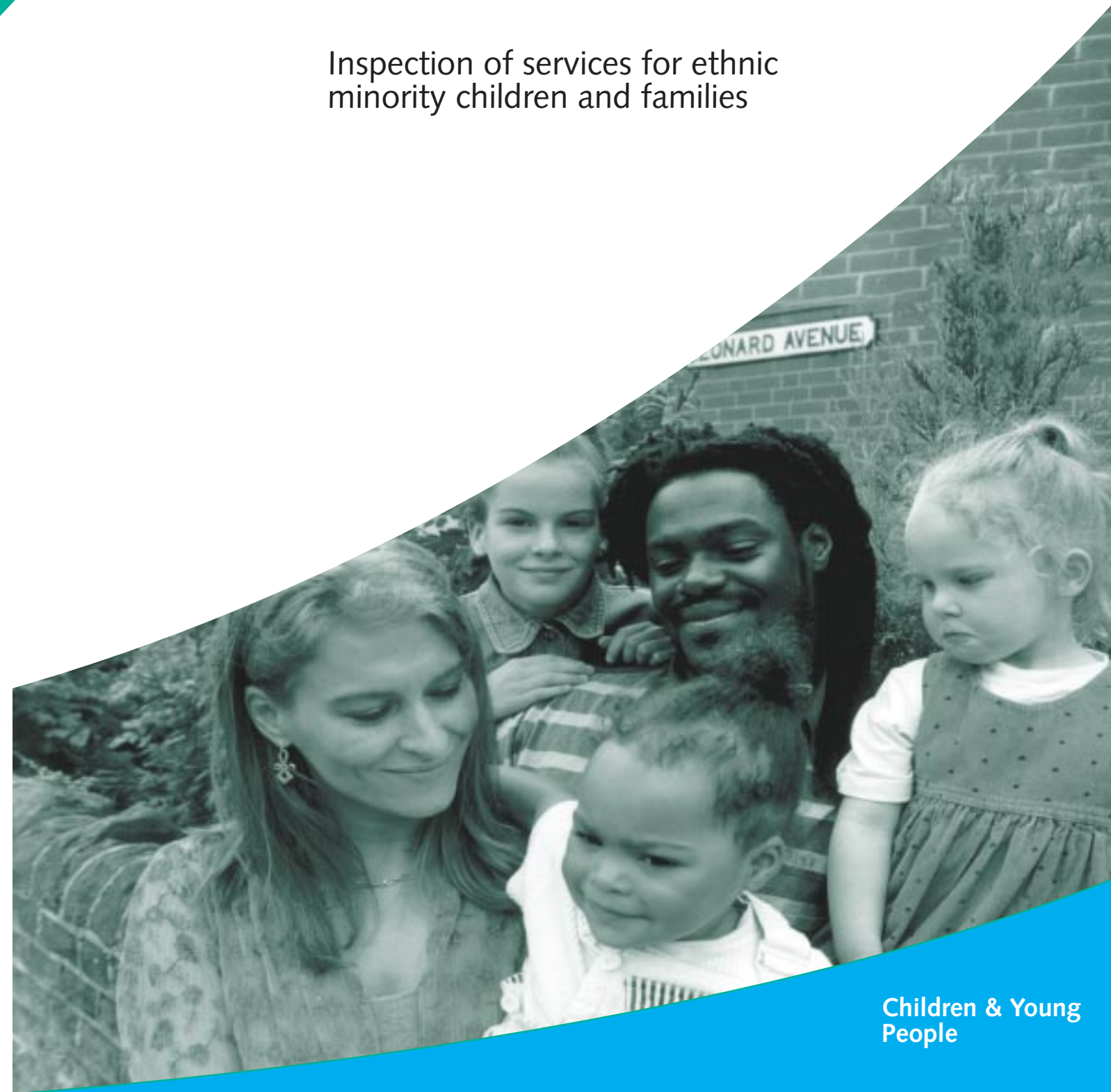
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## *Excellence not Excuses*

Inspection of services for ethnic  
minority children and families



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- to monitor the implementation of Government policy for the personal social services.

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# EXCELLENCE NOT EXCUSES

Inspection of Services for Ethnic  
Minority Children and Families

Vivienne O'Neale

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# Contents

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Chapter	Page
1 Introduction and Summary	1
2 Improving Services: Key Questions	5
3 Trends in Race Relations	9
4 Outcomes for Service Users	15
5 Who is Managing Race Equality?	23
6 The Social Work Task	31
7 Communication	39
8 Monitoring	43
 <b>Appendices</b>	
A Standards and Criteria	47
B Methodology	53
C Inspection Design Team and Reference Group Members	55
D Authorities Inspected	57
E Glossary	59
F Bibliography	61
G Parents' Questionnaire Survey Data	63

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# Introduction and Summary

## 1

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### Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 Ethnic minority families face many issues, which have little or no significance to the white population. These include personal and institutional racism and the impact of immigration, nationality laws and separated families. These issues compound other problems of parenting, such as discipline and inter-generational conflict.
- 1.2 In the wake of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry there is an expectation that councils will be aware of these issues. Sir William Macpherson reminded us that ‘Racism, institutional or otherwise, is not the prerogative of the police service. It is clear that other agencies ... also suffer from the same disease’.
- 1.3 However, a recent SSI inspection of social services for ethnic minority children and families showed that most councils did not have strategies in place to deliver appropriate services to ethnic minorities and that families were often offered services that were not appropriate or sensitive to their needs. This report is based on inspections of services to ethnic minority children and families in eight authorities. It follows an earlier inspection of services to black elders. It complements the work being undertaken under the Quality Protects initiative.
- 1.4 The report provides an overview of the quality of social services provided to ethnic minority groups and the extent to which they were involved in planning and decision making. It does so in the context of statutory requirements and the recommendations of the Macpherson report. It also provides key questions for councillors, managers and practitioners and includes examples of good practice. This report has therefore been designed to help you improve services to ethnic minority children and families.

### Terminology

- 1.5 In this report the term ‘ethnic minority’ has been used. It specifically covers families from Africa, the Asian sub-continent, the Caribbean, British born members of these groups and people of mixed race, i.e. people with one black parent and one white parent, in other words, black people.

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## Context

- 1.6 Although there have been black British citizens for many centuries the main period of immigration from New Commonwealth countries was between the 1950s and 1970s. Since then immigration legislation has significantly reduced the numbers arriving from these countries. This means that almost all ethnic minority children and most of their parents were born in the UK and have never lived in the countries from which their families originated. The majority of ethnic minority families are concentrated in inner city areas. Because of changing family patterns there are now a significant minority of children born to one black parent and one white parent.
- 1.7 Families from Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Caribbean face particular pressures in keeping together but the take-up rate for family support services are lower than for the white community. Children from black, mixed race and other ethnic minority families are more likely than the general population to enter care under the age of five years and to have entered through the voluntary route. Children of mixed race are less likely to remain in contact with their birth family and more likely to experience placement changes. Ethnic minority children who continue to be looked after are likely to have low educational attainment, difficulty in securing employment and find it hard to fit in with people from their original background or community.
- 1.8 Whilst there is an increasing number of staff from ethnic minority groups working in councils with high ethnic minority populations, there are few black managers. This is even truer at the most senior levels where there are fewer directors and assistant directors from ethnic minority backgrounds than ten years ago.
- 1.9 In the 1960s and 70s legislation was introduced to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. However, as the Macpherson report shows, racism and the effects of unintentional discrimination continue to have serious consequences. These are uncomfortable issues for white managers and councillors to address. Sir Herman Ouseley has recently highlighted the responsibility that we all bear for addressing them. *‘If you are doing it, it’s happening: if you believe someone else is doing it, it’s not happening’*, he said.

## Summary of Main Issues

- 1.10 We found that whilst authorities had anti-racist and equal opportunities policies and strategies there was little evidence that they had been implemented. There was only one council that had taken race equality issues seriously. Many authorities talked about ‘mainstreaming’ the issues,

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but in practice this often meant that no one took responsibility for them and they were ignored.

- 1.11 Some authorities had policies to deal with aspects of racial harassment and abuse, for example, covering disciplinary issues and housing policies. However, these policies did not cover issues of racism relating to children and young people or staff. Even in areas where racial abuse was known to be widespread, black staff reported that their managers seemed oblivious to their experiences.
- 1.12 Two authorities had a clear training strategy to ensure appropriate training was offered to all relevant staff. They offered excellent training programmes in anti-racism and anti-discriminatory practice which were mandatory and commissioned from specialist trainers. Other councils had provided specialist training in the past but had not made arrangements to maintain and update it. Where these issues were seen as a theme running through all training, they were often given insufficient attention.
- 1.13 Two authorities had good mechanisms for consulting ethnic minority groups involving staff groups, community groups and race equality councils. However, links with black voluntary groups were often fragile and authorities did not always understand the particular role and contribution that they made to their community. They did not generally have strategies to use ethnic minority groups as service providers or to help them to compete in the 'contract' culture.
- 1.14 Practice in relation to recruiting and developing black staff was variable. Whilst ethnic monitoring information about staff was generally available, little use was made of it. Only one council had set targets and achieved them. Five authorities had black workers groups, but others with a high percentage of ethnic minority staff in front line posts, did not recognise that they might have particular needs. Most authorities provided training initiatives for black staff and one had a mentoring scheme for staff in management positions.
- 1.15 Families seeking support often experienced difficulty in accessing services because they did not understand the role of social services, particularly if English was not their first language. Few authorities had given much thought to the staffing of their reception areas and how to deal with language issues in this context. All councils had translation and interpretation services. These were most accessible and efficient where there was a corporate service rather than spot purchasing arrangements.
- 1.16 Workers had varying levels of understanding of the situations of ethnic minority families. In some instances white staff relied on the expertise of black resources teams. These arrangements could be the source of tension. Overall the quality of services delivered to ethnic minority families was heavily dependent on the quality of social work intervention. Workers had to be knowledgeable and tenacious to achieve positive results particularly

where there was a limited range of appropriate services. However, once services were accessed most service users were satisfied with what was offered. Families responded particularly positively to practical support such as day care placements, transport to school or nursery and holiday schemes.

- 1.17** Assessments were often partial and rarely covered parenting capacity, the child's needs and family and environmental issues. In some instances the safety of ethnic minority children was being compromised because physical and sexual abuse had not been identified and properly dealt with as a child protection issue.
- 1.18** We found little evidence that care planning took a lifelong view of the situation of ethnic minority looked after children. Although there was a general recognition of the need to find placements to meet their needs holistically, it was often difficult to do so in practice. Strategies for recruiting black foster carers did not always recognise the changing characteristics of this group of children. The placement needs of mixed parentage children were the hardest to meet. Authorities outside London had most difficulty in recruiting black foster carers and therefore were more likely to have black children placed with white families. The health and educational needs of ethnic minority children were in the main addressed, although there were gaps in child and adolescent mental health services and psychological support in most councils.

## Reading the Remainder of this Report

- 1.19** The rest of this report includes:
- Chapter 2 which provides sets of key questions for councillors, managers and practitioners to use to evaluate their own services;
  - Chapter 3 which provides background information on trends in race relations;
  - Chapters 4-8 which cover the main findings of the inspection including examples of good practice.
- 1.20** The inspection standards and criteria are listed in Appendix A with the inspection methodology at Appendix B. The membership of the inspection reference group and design team are included at Appendix C. Appendix D provides information about the local inspections. Appendix E the glossary, Appendix F the bibliography and Appendix G the parents' questionnaire survey data.

# Improving Services: Key Questions

## 2

- 2.1** This chapter sets out a series of questions which can be used by councils to evaluate their own services. It is relevant to councillors, managers and practitioners. It includes key issues highlighted by the Macpherson report and could be used as a comprehensive management tool on social equality.

### Key Questions

*“If you’re doing it, it’s happening, if you believe someone else is doing it, it’s not happening”.*

**2.2 Corporate Strategy for Councillors and Senior Managers**

- do you have a strategy for implementing the Macpherson report?
- have you adopted the Commission for Racial Equality standards to develop, audit and review race equality standards?
- do you have a race equality strategy for both employment and service delivery?
- does your council have a racial harassment strategy and work within a multi-agency approach to implement it?
- does your council have a local Racial Equality Council?
- are all staff clear in their responsibilities in implementing your race equality policy?
- are monitoring mechanisms in place for collecting data on ethnicity?
- does the authority set targets and take positive action to encourage ethnic minority staff and applicants at levels and in areas where they are under-represented?
- do you have policies which ensure individuals and families who do not speak English are only assessed with a competent interpreter present?
- is your race equality strategy an integral part of Best Value planning, reviews, and service delivery?

- does each service area provide an analysis of what the service achieves for ethnic minority people?
- are contractors delivering services on behalf of the council monitored regularly to ensure that the services that they deliver reflect the council's race equality principles?

### 2.3 Departmental Policy for Managers

- are services monitored by ethnicity and evaluated annually to ensure that they are provided appropriately and assessed equally?
- how are ethnic minorities involved in the planning and reviewing of services?
- do you have a policy in place for working with black families?
- do you know how many black children are placed out of area?
- do you have service level agreements with providers from ethnic minority communities?
- are racist incidents recorded and monitored?
- do all staff receive training in anti-racist, anti-discriminatory practice?
- are language skills and knowledge of ethnic minority people recognised when drawing up job descriptions?
- are ethnic minority employees accessing and benefiting equally from training and development opportunities?
- are racial discrimination and/or harassment complaints by staff investigated and monitored?
- are race equality competencies built into job descriptions and performance indicators of all managerial staff?
- are these included in the performance review process?
- are exit interviews in place for employees to discuss with managers and human resource officers any concerns they may have?
- do you communicate specifically with ethnic minority service users and employees?
- do service users and employees feel supported and are their views and cultures respected?

- do you have a black workers group or other consultative forum?
- do you review the environment in which you offer services with a view to making it culturally sensitive?

#### **2.4 Practice Issues for Front Line Staff**

- do you ensure that your practice is anti-racist/anti-discriminatory?
- do you recognise racial harassment as a child protection issue and that child victims of racial harassment are children in need?
- do you ensure that a child's religion, racial, cultural and linguistic background are taken account of in any decision making process?
- do you follow up issues of racial harassment/abuse when they are brought to your attention?
- do you record ethnicity, language and religion of children and families?
- do you ensure that asylum seekers are treated fairly?
- do you ensure that black children in residential care have positive role models?
- do you ensure that black children in residential care have advocates?
- do you use children as interpreters? You should not.
- do you attend meetings of black workers groups if they are held in your council?





# Trends in Race Relations

## 3

- 3.1    *“Racism, institutional or otherwise, is not the prerogative of the police service. It is clear that other agencies .... also suffer from the same disease”.* (Macpherson, 1999).<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2    The impact of immigration from New Commonwealth countries in the second half of the twentieth century has given rise to what we now know as multi-racial Britain. The result of immigration legislation has meant that effectively very little immigration from those countries now takes place. It also means that because migrants arrived mainly in the 1960s and 70s ethnic minority children and families were in the main born in the UK and may never have lived in the countries from which their families originated.
- 3.3    The population of ethnic minorities in the UK is just over 3 million, an estimated 5.5 per cent with families from the Asian sub-continent forming the largest group.

Table 1: Ethnic composition of the population of Great Britain 1991

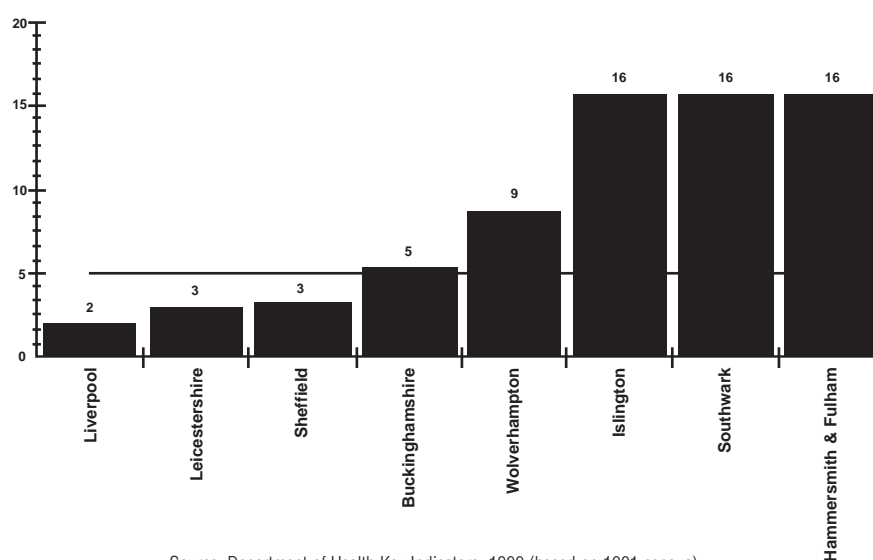
	Number	% of Total Population	% Born in UK
Total population	54,888,844	100	93
White	51,873,794	94.5	96
Ethnic Minorities	3,015,050	5.5	48
Black Caribbean	499,964	0.9	53
Black African	212,362	0.4	36
Black Other	178,401	0.3	84
Indian	840,255	1.5	42
Pakistani	476,555	0.9	50
Bangladeshi	162,935	0.3	37
Chinese	156,938	0.3	28
Other Asian	197,534	0.4	22
Other	290,206	0.5	40

Source: Owen, D, 1992-1995 – CRE Fact Sheet 1999

<sup>1</sup> Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson, TSO, March 1999

- 3.4 Although the overall picture is one of a small group nationwide, ethnic minority families are concentrated mainly in inner city areas. In some of the areas in which our inspections took place, they comprise a significant minority.

**Figure 1: Percentage of population belonging to ethnic minority**



Source: Department of Health Key Indicators, 1999 (based on 1991 census)

## Policy Development

- 3.5 Various Acts of Parliament were passed to improve the quality of race relations in 1965 and 1968. The 1976 Race Relations Act abolished the Race Relations Board and the Community Relations Commission and replaced it with the Commission for Racial Equality. This Act placed a duty on councils to 'eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations'.<sup>2</sup> This should be done in their role as employers, service planners, providers and purchasers of services.
- 3.6 The fragility of race relations has resulted in conflicts, followed by inquiries (where the issue was considered serious enough by Government to warrant it), and a determination to do better. The Brixton disorders resulted in the Scarman Report of 1981. This was seen as a watershed in the history of race relations. Lord Scarman's view was that "*racial disadvantage and its nasty associate racial discrimination have not yet been eliminated. They poison minds and attitudes; they are as long as they*

<sup>2</sup> The Race Relations Act, HMSO, 1976

*remain .... a potent factor of unrest*<sup>3</sup>. If not eradicated they threatened “*the very survival of our society*”, he wrote.

- 3.7 The death of Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager, in 1993 resulted in the setting up of an inquiry in 1997 under the chairmanship of Sir William Macpherson. The report was published in February 1999 and concluded that his murder was “*unequivocally motivated by racism*”.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.8 Once again an inquiry report was being signalled as the catalyst for change and the re-introduction of the concept of institutional racism by the Macpherson report was being widely embraced. Whilst couched in different language, the Scarman report of 18 years ago identified institutional racism as discrimination which was ‘unwitting, unconscious and unintentional’. The definition provided by the Macpherson report is that institutional racism is ‘the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage ethnic minority people’.<sup>5</sup> The main shift seems to be in the use of the word ‘racism’ as opposed to ‘discrimination’. However, the onus has been put on institutions to examine their policies and procedures and accept unequivocally the nature and problem of institutional racism, which should be dealt with in partnership with ethnic minority communities.

## Community Trends

- 3.9 One of the common factors between different ethnic minority groups is that they face discrimination in various areas of their lives such as employment and education. However, recent research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>6</sup>, suggests that there is now a discernible gap between ethnic groups. In looking at the fortunes of young Caribbean men in the labour market the report suggests that Caribbean, African and Pakistani/Bangladeshi young men have less earning power than White or Indian men. The jobs and earnings of Indian men were similar to those of White men and they had similar risks of unemployment, which was relatively low. Young Caribbean men were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as young white men and also had lower earnings. One in eight white men in their 20s was unemployed compared with one in three young African men.
- 3.10 Ethnic minority groups were more likely to stay on at school after the minimum school leaving age; Africans and Indians were the best-qualified

<sup>3</sup> Report of Lord Scarman, HMSO, 1981

<sup>4</sup> Macpherson, Ibid, 1999

<sup>5</sup> Macpherson, Ibid, 1999

<sup>6</sup> Ethnic Minorities the Inner City, Joseph Rowntree Foundation ‘Findings’, September 1998

groups. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were the least qualified with white and Caribbean men falling behind.

**3.11** The national survey of ethnic minorities, undertaken by the Policy Studies Institute (1997)<sup>7</sup> suggests that new ethnic identities were being framed in the late 1990s. These identities have as their components, skin colour, racial group, place of origin, religion and their relationship with British culture. These identities are not pure or static but changing and evolving.

**3.12** Shifts in family patterns have also been identified by the Policy Studies Institute study. For example, for people born in Britain half of all Caribbean men and a third of Caribbean women had a white partner. This compared with a fifth of Indian and African Asian men who had a white partner.

This has tremendous implications for the children who have one black parent and one white parent and they are a significant minority. There are also issues about the transmission of racial identity, as many of those children do not live with a black parent.

**3.13** In respect of differences between ethnic minority groups, South Asians marry earlier and almost invariably choose partners from their own Asian groups.

All South Asian mothers remained married as opposed to Caribbean mothers, who either do not marry or remarry once divorced. A high proportion of South Asian couples including children, lived in the same houses as the parents of the bridegroom on marriage.

**3.14** Despite the decline of religion in British society, the Policy Studies Institute survey showed that religion was more central to the lives of ethnic minority groups than to the white community. Asian Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus saw religion as very important; whilst for Caribbean people Pentecostal Churches were the preferred places of worship and were also seen as important.

**3.15** In terms of language, the most commonly used Asian language was Punjabi, followed by Urdu, Gujarati, and Hindi. Cantonese was the most used language by the Chinese community whilst a high proportion of people also spoke Vietnamese.

## Conclusion

**3.16** It would appear that society as reflected by public bodies, has not responded positively to the diverse groups of people of black origins who were born, or have made their homes, in this country. The challenge for

<sup>7</sup> Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities, Policy Studies Institute, 1977

individuals and institutions is to value the diversity of the population and work towards the elimination of racism.



# Outcomes for Service Users

## 4

- 4.1 The inspection included families whose children were looked after as well as those whose children were considered to be in need. We aimed to find out whether services were accessible and flexible and whether they adequately addressed the needs of children of black origins.
- 4.2 The 1989 Children Act (Section 22(5) (c)) is clear that on issues of service delivery councils should ‘give due consideration to the child’s religious persuasion, racial origins and cultural and linguistic background’.<sup>8</sup> This Act has not been repealed nor has the guidance changed. There was therefore an expectation that close attention would be given to such issues.
- 4.3 We found a mixed picture within and between authorities. In the main service users reported that they were treated respectfully and fairly by social services representatives. One authority, Hammersmith and Fulham had conducted its own survey and reported a 92 per cent user satisfaction rate. In two of the councils inspected 94 per cent and 84 per cent of parents respectively reported that their families were satisfied with the level of services they received.

### Language

- 4.4 However, we found that language was sometimes a barrier to ethnic minority families being treated fairly. In two councils we inspected service users believed that their inability to speak English was a barrier to receipt of services. One service user said, *“if you can’t speak English they won’t deal with you properly – it’s degrading”*. *“Degrading”* was also the word used by a service user in another part of the country to describe treatment received from social services staff. In one council staff who worked in family centres were viewed more favourably than staff in area teams. The former were said to be more respectful of cultural differences and tried to learn basic words in various languages in order to communicate more effectively. This was much appreciated by service users.
- 4.5 Some service users experienced difficulty in accessing services due to a lack of understanding of the role of social services provided and varying perceptions of service provision.

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<sup>8</sup> Children Act 1989, HMSO

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## Religious Adherence

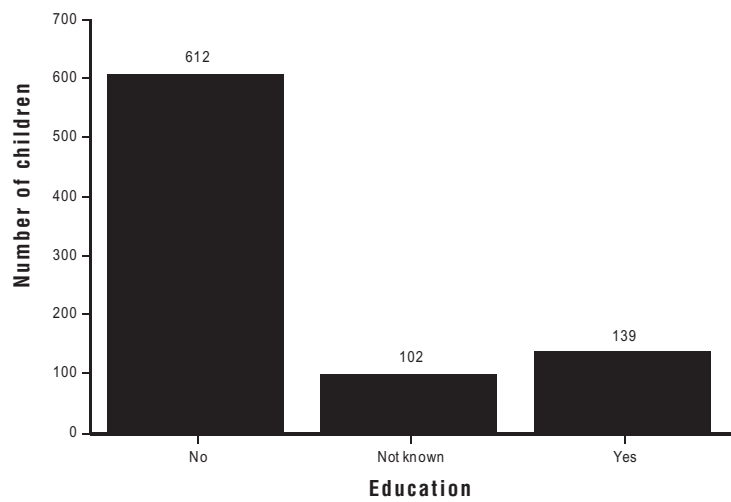
- 4.6 We found very mixed levels of satisfaction with the range and type of services provided. There were concerns about how the religious needs of children were being met. A frequently quoted example was the unavailability of halal meat and comment was made about its cost, particularly for young people who were living independently. We know there are children's homes which provide halal meat for everyone so that dietary requirements of religious groups are fulfilled.
- 4.7 A failure to provide placements which recognised the religious needs of children was highlighted. Some young people were concerned that staff in residential units who were atheists did not fully support and encourage them to fulfil their religious duties. As religion is a way of life to many, particularly ethnic minority groups, it is easy to see that a lack of religious input and back up could lead to cultural alienation for some children looked after.
- 4.8 Respondents to our service user questionnaire indicated that in a quarter of cases, cultural needs were not recognised and dealt with appropriately.

## Education and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

- 4.9 We found little evidence that care planning took a life long view of the situation of ethnic minority children and inspectors described them as 'poor', 'ad hoc' and 'variable'. In respect of education, we found that difficulty in accessing education was reflected in two authorities. In our case sample of over 850 children, education had been identified as a specific need in only 16 per cent of assessments (see Table 2). Our examination of case records indicated that holistic assessments encompassing education, health and other needs were carried out in only 5.5 per cent of cases. Five councils had good collaborative working arrangements within the council. We met with parents who were pleased with the educational achievements of their children in residential establishments.



**Figure 2: Number of children in sample where education was assessed as being a specific need**



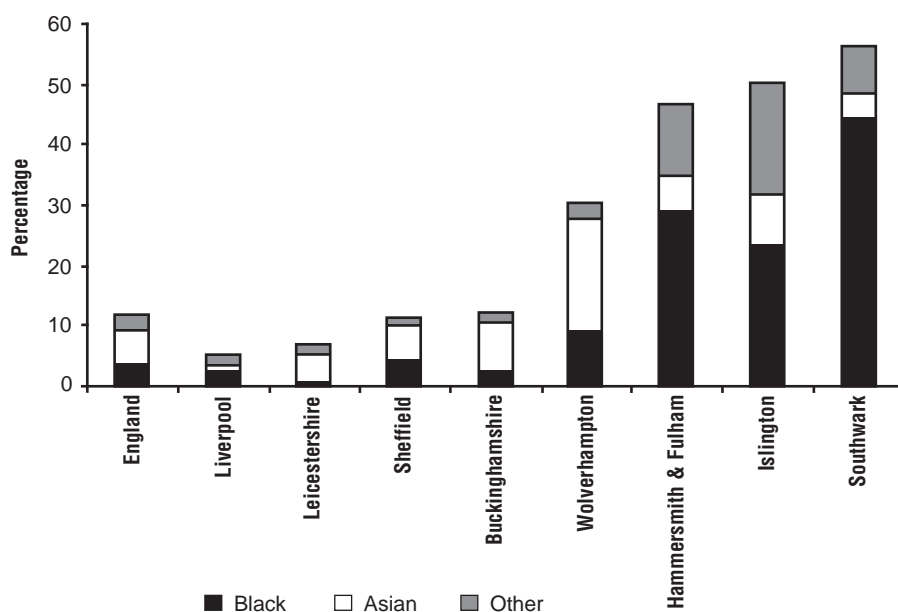
Source: Parents Survey Data

**GOOD PRACTICE**

**Islington council had good liaison between education and social services and placed education high on its agenda; providing placements for children in need in day care centres. Children in residential homes also received help with their homework and were appreciative of this.**

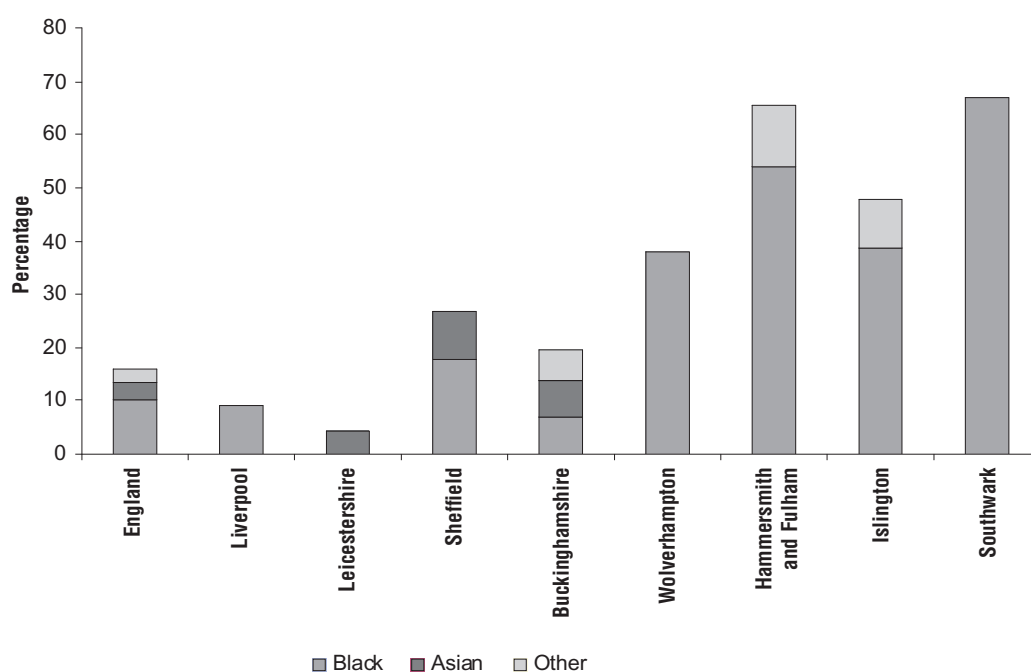
**4.10** Despite this however we note that in two of the three London boroughs and in all but one of the other councils inspected, the numbers of ethnic minority children permanently excluded from school for the period 1998/99 were higher than would be expected from the proportions of ethnic minority school children. (See Figures 3 and 4).

**Figure 3: Percentage of classified school aged children belonging to an ethnic minority group (Jan 1999)**



Source: DFEE Statistics, 1998-1999

**Figure 4: Pupils permanently excluded from school – percentage belonging to an ethnic minority group (1998/99)**



Source: DFEE Statistics, 1998-1999

- 4.11** Good effort was made to address the health needs of black children but there were gaps in accessing the child and adolescent mental health services, as well as relevant psychological support. Particularly parents of an adopted child were very grateful for support to enable them to cope with their child's psychological needs.

**Table 2: Percentage of children in each ethnic group who had been assessed as having specific needs**

Ethnic Group	Assessed Need						
	Home Family	Education	Disability	Juvenile Justice	Racial Harassment	Child Protection	Looked After
Mixed parentage	54%	10%	7%	8%	4%	32%	52%
Black or Black British	74%	20%	14%	17%	2%	30%	46%
Asian or Asian British	69%	21%	32%	2%	1%	19%	21%
Other	56%	0%	0%	11%	0%	56%	22%
All children in sample	66%	16%	15%	11%	3%	29%	43%

Source: Case Record Analysis

## GOOD PRACTICE

**Southwark provided psychological support to black children looked after to enable them to cope emotionally. Their child and adolescent mental health services provision included a 24-hour helpline service, a multi-racial staff team and an open referral system.**

## Children with Disabilities

- 4.12** But there was a group of children for whom there was little provision for their various needs; this was black children with disabilities. Suitable local placements were generally difficult to find, but issues of personal care, culture, religion and diet needed to be addressed in addition to issues of disability. Fifteen per cent of the children in our sample were assessed as having needs arising from disability. This was the case for almost one third of the Asian children (see Table 2). Some of the children had

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complex health and educational needs which could not be adequately met at home. There was therefore a tension between a parent's fear of losing a child to a residential establishment and the child's need for education and training which was only available in a different cultural environment. We met with parents who were doing their best to access support within the home in an attempt to retain their children's cultural identity which they saw as being of utmost importance.

## Asylum Seeking Children

**4.13** Young people who came to the country as asylum seekers raised issues of concern with us. As looked after children they received services under the Children Act 1989. However to their disappointment their status changed on reaching the age of 18 and they received help under the 1948 National Assistance Act. The issues of concern were:

- delay in the clarification of their immigration status;
- further education funding;
- inability to work;
- voucher system.

**4.14** We met young people who described their predicament. The complexities and delays of the immigration system meant that young people could neither work nor get funding for university places. The motivation of some of the young people was beginning to turn to despondency, as the future looked so uncertain.

The use of food vouchers was a source of frustration and humiliation to young people. This was particularly difficult for young women who had to obtain personal items with vouchers and were sometimes challenged at supermarket checkouts. Lack of cash also had implications for travel, haircuts, or food from specialist shops, including halal meat.

## GOOD PRACTICE

**To its credit, one authority had tried to house some young people together so they could support each other. In conjunction with a voluntary agency a liaison officer was appointed to provide advice and liase on the young people's behalf.**

## Racial Harassment

- 4.15** As councils are now charged with the responsibility for tackling institutionalised racism, workers need to be more responsive and deal with both overt and covert racism.
- 4.16** It was clear from our inspections that children in various authorities had complained of racial and verbal abuse. Children in residential homes, away from their communities, told us about being subjected to racial abuse. This was mainly labelled as 'bullying' by staff perhaps because residential staff found it easier to resolve. One family also told us that they believed their neighbour's report to social services about their neglect of their children was born out of racist intent. Some social workers dealt with the issues and achieved varying results. In only three per cent of our sample cases had racial harassment been identified as an issue during assessment (see Table 2)
- 4.17** A worrying picture was that outcomes seemed to be dependent on the perceived reliability of those who were advocating on behalf of the children and young people. It is an area which needs to be closely monitored and for which procedures for reporting should be put in place by councils.

## Role Models

- 4.18** We found that generally social workers acknowledged the need for black children to retain their racial and cultural identity if they had to be placed away from their families. Equally, workers were aware that for some children, their need to have black role models was being compromised by unsuitable placements. The provision of role models was mainly achieved when children remained in their communities. It was difficult if they were placed out of borough or in mainly white neighbourhoods. Only one authority had mechanisms to deal with this; it had a policy of ensuring that role models were provided appropriately and was able to do so as it had ethnic minority managers, carers and social work staff.
- 4.19** Some workers experienced great difficulty in finding therapeutic placements for black children. This was because such placements were

often in rural communities, with few black staff and children were cut off from their cultural environment. Placing authorities had to judge whether the benefits of the therapy provided outweighed the other deficits. Black children with disabilities whose first language was not English were placed at a particular disadvantage, as appropriate placements were even harder to find. Four authorities had been able to recruit black fieldworkers, residential workers and foster carers. Where black children were placed in the councils' local provision, perhaps for a period of assessment, their needs appeared to be adequately met.

- 4.20 We tried to identify the ingredients for a good assessment for black families. To do this we discussed families' experiences and tried to assess the values and need for role models. We found that there are no easy answers and there is no blue print for this. We found black families who did not 'get on' with workers from their particular ethnic group because they were not behaving in a 'culturally appropriate' way; that is they were not conforming to stereotypes. Families told us that some white workers had stereotypical views of black people, were not straight with them and avoided difficult issues. We also found white workers who were sensitive and understanding and prepared to go the extra mile in the support of the families with whom they worked. One service user who had had a number of social workers told us *"it doesn't matter what the colour of the worker is, it's if they are nice"*. Another said, *"race is not important it is about being up front and honest"*.
- 4.21 We were reminded during the fieldwork of the extent to which the involvement of families with councils with social services responsibilities contributed to the alleviation of family poverty in some areas. This was particularly evident where there were several young children in a family. One authority had good preventative services to black families whereas in others preventative work was under-developed and the focus was on statutory work. Nevertheless families responded positively to practical support such as day-care placements, transport to school and nursery, grants for clothing and the provision of holiday placements and schemes. Some workers also received requests for practical household items which they were unable to provide.
- 4.22 In some authorities there was a reluctance to sufficiently utilise family support systems of ethnic minority groups. One family told us of workers' reluctance to place children with grandparents because their accommodation was inadequate. The children were placed with foster carers whose accommodation in the family's eyes was also inadequate – both properties had the same number of bedrooms. The placement was also not sympathetic to the children's religious needs and there was resistance to their wearing of traditional dress. Another family believed the potential of relatives to offer care to a young person was not given enough consideration resulting in a placement away from home.

# Who is Managing Race Equality?

## 5

- 5.1 We looked at how authorities managed race equality. We wanted to find out whether there was corporate responsibility, how staff were recruited and supported and whether minority communities were used as service providers.

### Management Arrangements

- 5.2 Our inspection findings suggest that in all but one of the local authorities there was little clarity and much fragmentation on issues pertaining to race equality. The main response from authorities was that race equality was ‘mainstreamed’ into a council’s work, and therefore it was part of everyone’s responsibility. But when the question, ‘who is driving the race agenda?’ was put to workers at various levels and in different authorities the most frequent answers were, “*I don’t know*” or “*no one*”.
- 5.3 In an address given at the Civil Service College on 28 September 1999, Sir Herman Ousley, speaking about responsibility for race equality said, “*If you’re doing it, it’s happening. If you believe someone else is doing it, it’s not happening*”.<sup>9</sup> We believe that clear responsibility, leadership and commitment at the top are important ingredients for delivering a race equality agenda.
- 5.4 In some of the councils inspected, race equality was dealt with corporately within the Chief Executive’s department. This meant that targets were set for recruiting a multi-racial work force, for employing people with disabilities and women as well as men. Only two councils had race equality officers who dealt with issues pertaining to race equality. In one department the post was well embedded and influential, whilst in the other the position was more tenuous. The difference was noticeable. The three London boroughs in our sample had good corporate working arrangements.

### Recruitment

- 5.5 Most authorities we looked at acknowledged that people from ethnic minorities should be employed at all levels to ensure a black perspective on policy and practice issues. Six had recruitment policies on ethnic minority workers. Four departments had set recruitment targets, one had

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<sup>9</sup> Link, page 6, November 1999

exceeded those targets at fieldwork and managerial level and another had achieved them at fieldwork level. However not all departments monitored their targets.

- 5.6** We were pleased with the representation of ethnic minority staff in residential and fieldwork posts, particularly in inner city authorities. However we were disappointed that the trend did not continue into managerial positions. Our understanding is that at December 1999 there was one black director of social services and four assistant directors.<sup>10</sup> At the same time there seemed to be a movement of senior black managers from local authorities into consultancy work, possibly because of the intolerable burden of dealing with racism and stress in the workplace. Along with a recruitment strategy, councils with social services responsibilities also need to have a strategy for the retention and progression of staff from ethnic minority groups, which includes secondments, mentoring and shadowing. A first step has been taken by the SSI in the setting up of a senior black managers group which aims to give such managers a voice in identifying issues. Work towards designing a development programme to meet their needs was also being progressed; this involved the LGA's Improvement and Development Agency and ADSS.

## Consultation

- 5.7** We found that in most of the eight authorities we inspected, consultation with ethnic minority groups was poor. Two authorities had very good consultative mechanisms. The various forums included social workers, black workers groups, specific minority groups, ethnic minority press and race equality councils. It is noteworthy that both departments had black workers groups which involved workers at various levels in the organisations. The relationships between councils and the local race equality councils (which link directly to the Commission For Racial Equality), were variable. In some authorities they did not exist, in some they were marginalised and in a few the links were good. It is often hard for councils to distinguish between the various roles and contributions which ethnic minority organisations make to their communities. They often have different methods of working and varying emphases on religious, cultural, campaigning and advocacy functions. Where good relationships exist a race equality council can be useful in identifying those strengths. Their knowledge of various community groups should be seen as a resource. Councils should aim to work in partnership with ethnic minority organisations, valuing their strengths and maximising their contribution.

<sup>10</sup> The senior black managers group of the Department of Health



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## Arrangements with Service Providers

- 5.8** Few departments had strategies for using ethnic minority groups as providers. Most councils in our sample had spot purchasing arrangements with black providers but these were not part of their strategic plans for providing services to ethnic minority families. There were service level agreements with well-established voluntary childcare bodies such as NSPCC, Barnardos and NCH Action for Children. These agreements worked well in many instances. In catering for the specific needs of children from black origins, it may well be that ethnic minority service providers have a contribution to make to a local authority's planning process in respect of the range of needs presented by such children. They may also be in a position to discuss innovative ways in which children's needs could be met. However it is often the case that in times of financial restraint it is often the smaller less well established and more vulnerable groups whose funding is cut first. Ethnic minority groups generally fall into that category in common with small community organisations they often find it difficult to compete in the 'contract' culture and may not have the administrative infrastructure to deal with funding bids. Councils should provide support to community based organisations providing culturally appropriate services.

## Training

- 5.9** We looked at training on two levels. One level was whether all staff had received training in anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice and the other was whether black staff had been given the required training to enable them to carry out their jobs competently.
- 5.10** All of the authorities we inspected had provided some training in anti-discriminatory work. Some councils had no strategy for this training which was therefore voluntary, so that those who needed it most could opt out. In some departments this training had been organised in the past but was not currently being provided. Liverpool and Islington provided two excellent models of training where this training was mandatory and specially commissioned by and from relevant bodies.
- 5.11** Four of the eight departments ensured that black staff had appropriate training for their work. Workers were mainly encouraged to undertake the diploma in social work course in those authorities.

### GOOD PRACTICE

**Liverpool black workers group identified their training needs and produced their own training plan.**

### GOOD PRACTICE

**Islington encouraged foster carers to complete NVQs and qualified staff to undertake post-qualifying courses.**

- 5.12 There was one authority which tried to encourage ethnic minority staff to do the Masters in Business Administration. However, staff members were ambivalent about this because as black workers they thought white workers might object to this, seeing it as preferential treatment. This could be a potential source of conflict.
- 5.13 There was an assumption in some departments that training in race, culture and religion was no longer necessary. However this view was countered by many staff interviewed during the inspection who mentioned the need for such training. We also found in our inspections that poor levels of understanding about cultural and religious issues impacted negatively on assessments and placement choice for children.
- 5.14 In their guidance for local authorities, the Local Government Association suggested that effective training should be provided ‘to prevent and challenge racial discrimination, harassment, prejudice and inappropriate behaviour’<sup>11</sup>. There was also an acknowledgement that written commitments needed to be translated into reality by both staff and council members. A three pronged approach was suggested as follows:
- acknowledge and deal with the impact that racial discrimination, harassment and prejudice can have on ethnic minority clients and colleagues;
  - be aware of the racial dimension in service delivery – either directly or through contractors;
  - be able to challenge discrimination and exclusion on racial or religious grounds as part of work.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and Home Secretary’s Action Plan initial guidance for local authorities, LGA, June 1999

These aims are only achievable if they are backed by an ongoing programme of training and monitoring.

## Role of Black Staff

- 5.15** There was some variation between councils about the role and function of black staff. Mostly, councils operated a ‘colour blind’ approach and black staff were employed as any other members to carry out duties as required by the local authority. In a few authorities they were seen to have special skills and expertise to contribute to policy formation and in one authority the special linguistic skills of ethnic minority staff were used to the benefit of service users. But we also found a certain ambivalence amongst black staff themselves about whether or not they wished to be involved in discussions of policy formation. Mainly it was about being used, or even abused as black workers to cover all issues for which there were not management strategies.
- 5.16** An issue linked to the role of black staff was the existence of a forum for such workers. Three of the councils in our inspections had no black workers groups, two of them were in London and had high percentages of black staff at field and residential levels but not at managerial levels. In Liverpool the group was chaired by the head of strategic commissioning and had a role in the development of standards and setting of targets to ensure anti racist practice. There was also a race equality officer in post who had a role in ensuring ownership of race equality issues by senior management.

### GOOD PRACTICE

**Liverpool’s black workers group was the most highly developed and effective.**

- 5.17** There were differences of opinion amongst black staff about the value of such groups. Some were of the view that membership of such a group could lead to labelling as ‘troublemakers’ and hinder career progression. However we encountered a more prevalent view which was that a black workers group could:
- provide support with difficulties regarding service users and experiences of racism;
  - share information and encourage each other;
  - enhance and develop skills;
  - inform departmental policy.

- 5.18 Our inspections led us to conclude that where such groups existed with a clear role and commitment by senior management then they could be beneficial to both individual workers and the department as a whole.
- 5.19 Senior black managers who attend the SSI management group have also highlighted areas of concern which included the isolation of being an only black manager and the need for strategies to deal with racism and stress in the work place. One manager commented *“black managers often bring different values, skills and experience to an organisation and this is often not recognised. It is often difficult to discuss racism with white colleagues”*.<sup>12</sup>

## Managing Black Staff

- 5.20 The Macpherson report described a racist incident as *“any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person”*.<sup>13</sup> This definition which includes both crimes and non-crimes is one which the report expects will be universally adopted not just by the police but by local government and other relevant agencies. There are implications for managers in social services providing services to members of ethnic minority groups and to those who manage black staff. Research commissioned by the Local Government Management Board<sup>14</sup> suggested that ethnic minority staff had less confidence than their white counterparts in their organisations’ commitment to equal opportunities in employment. This being the case, authorities need to be clear about the attitudes of all their managers and have strategies to ensure that black staff are treated appropriately and their issues taken seriously.
- 5.21 In looking at discrimination at work, Barbara Davey in a paper for the National Institute for Social Work,<sup>15</sup> found that black staff experienced racism from service users, colleagues and managers. But usually they had not formally complained or made a formal protest either because they thought it was not worth doing or that it would damage their future prospects. It is also the case that racial discrimination has led to the over representation of ethnic minority staff in disciplinary and grievance cases. Organisational support for such staff is often lacking and they have to rely on their own resources and on family support. These issues once again highlight the need for training supervision and monitoring.

<sup>12</sup> The Race Equality Unit’s developing a top black managers programme, November 1999

<sup>13</sup> Macpherson, Ibid, 1999

<sup>14</sup> Evening The Odds – Management Development for Black and Other Minority Ethnic Managers, Local Government Management Board, 1996

<sup>15</sup> Workforce Survey, NISW, 1998

## Racial Harassment

**5.22** The Macpherson report of has stressed the need for education services to have strategies to prevent and deal with racist incidents and for housing departments to share information on racist incidents with other agencies. Councils with social services responsibilities also have a role in multi-agency partnerships to tackle incidents of racial harassment and attacks. But they also have a more specific duty in recognising racial harassment as a child protection issue. None of the eight departments we inspected currently recognise this, but we understand that this has been practised in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for some time.



# The Social Work Task

## 6

- 6.1 This chapter looks at the quality of social work assessments and the planning undertaken for ethnic minority children and families. The need for the review of services and provision to children and parents of mixed ethnic backgrounds is also highlighted.

### Referral and Assessments

- 6.2 The quality of services delivered to ethnic minority families was heavily dependent on the quality of social work intervention. It is usually the case that good service delivery flows from good assessments, but we were struck by how much the burden of responsibility to deliver ethnically sensitive services rested with individual workers.

Where workers were knowledgeable and tenacious they were sometimes able to achieve positive results. But often the systems were not in place to enable workers to access the right packages of care for families. There is a need for workers to have support in the form of reasonable placement choice to enable them to provide a better quality of service to ethnic minority children and families.

- 6.3 It is noteworthy that this picture of service quality being dependent on individual expertise was also observed in the services provided to black elders. That report said, *“much was dependent on the determination of the individual families and the knowledge of the worker concerned...some workers were also more creative in stimulating an appropriate service”*.<sup>16</sup> Inspectors came across ‘heroic individual effort’ in one area where a worker strove to provide a culturally appropriate service.
- 6.4 We did find one authority in which workers were able to tap into a range of services.

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<sup>16</sup> “They Look After Their Own, Don’t They?”, Department of Health, 1998

## GOOD PRACTICE

### Hammersmith and Fulham provided:

- a support group for Asian women (run by voluntary agency);
- a family centre for black families;
- psychological support in a family centre;
- group work for young black women.

- 6.5 In Liverpool a more limited range of preventative services was provided, commendably this included the black voluntary sector and the services provided were wide ranging such as a women's aid service and after school facilities.
- 6.6 We came across incomplete assessments in several authorities which sometimes compromised the safety of ethnic minority children. Instances of physical abuse and of sexual abuse had not been identified and properly dealt with as a child protection issue. There is often a conflict between seeing physical chastisement as a 'cultural norm' in some communities and the need for children to be kept safe. This points to the need for workers to be conscious of the limitations of their skill and practice and for their supervisors to identify the need for involving workers with specific expertise, appropriately.
- 6.7 Although we are unable to be definitive about this, we would like to offer the observation that where a particular ethnic group was not represented or was under represented in a particular department, then the service quality to that group was inadequate. So, for example, in an area where there were few Chinese social workers the service to that community was deficient. It was a similar pattern for African or Asian families. This judgement was also formed in the black elders' inspection which found that "*SSDs with few black staff and with smaller or dispersed ethnic minority populations had greater difficulty in turning statements of good intent into positive outcomes*".<sup>17</sup>
- 6.8 We also discussed with black workers what might be the important elements in working with people from within their own ethnic group as well as trans-racially and trans-culturally. One of the issues raised was the need to avoid having stereotypical views of people generally and the importance of bringing a black perspective in work with people from ethnic minorities. This shared understanding of being black in the UK was seen as important.

<sup>17</sup> They Look After Their Own, Don't They?, Department of Health, 1998



**6.9** The following points were suggested as necessary for successful working:

- sensitivity;
- having an open mind;
- demonstrating respect;
- being humble and saying you don't know;
- seeking advice from an independent worker who speaks the language;
- a lack of arrogance or superiority;
- being open and honest.

**6.10** In addition to the above, assessment tools needed to be available so that assessments were holistic and not partial. Assessments were partial in that they always focused on parental capacity to meet the child's needs, sometimes focused on the child's needs and sometimes focused on family and environmental issues; rarely did they focus on all three.

**6.11** A useful tool for social workers would be the recently published framework for the assessment of children<sup>18</sup>. This complements the 'orange book' as a model for comprehensive assessments and should encourage workers to ensure that children's developmental needs, physical and environmental factors as well as their families' capacity for parenting are thoroughly reviewed. To ensure a holistic assessment, issues of anti-racist practice and cultural sensitivity which we have been discussing also need to be incorporated into any evaluation by workers. It is in this regard that workers from relevant cultures would be able to contribute meaningfully to the assessment process.

## **Anti-racist Work**

**6.12** Many of the case files we examined failed to indicate that issues of race and culture had been taken into account by workers when they undertook assessments. However we also found one worker's description about how she had tried to get a family to discuss the relevance of their various cultural backgrounds to their situation, but they were reluctant to do so. Discussion of this particular case reinforced the point that cultures are not static but are evolving and changing and have varying significance to different people. It is important to recognise the interplay between race, class and privilege and the impact of deprivation and poverty.

**6.13** The level of trust and co-operation between worker and family was an important variable in the assessment process. We found that there were

<sup>18</sup> Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, The Stationery Office, 2000

differing levels of awareness of the need for extended family involvement in the assessment process. This meant that opportunities for family consultation to identify strengths of extended families were not always taken. Where workers were unable to be open with families about possible consequences, then families experienced this as a lack of trust. Sometimes the special health needs of ethnic minority groups, for example the possibility of illnesses such as sickle cell anaemia, were not always clarified.

- 6.14** The role of training for those carrying out the social work task is of vital importance. Working in an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory way means that issues of race, gender, disability, religion and sexual orientation impact on practice issues for workers. Cultural knowledge is also important, as we have pointed out. Those working as foster carers and residential workers also need relevant training.

### GOOD PRACTICE

**In Liverpool an information pack<sup>19</sup> for carers of black young people was put together by the black residential child care support team. The pack contained information on organisations which would be useful to those caring for black children both in terms of their day to day care and their wider socialisation.**

**The black workers group in Hammersmith and Fulham had also produced a booklet on working with black families.**

## Advocacy

- 6.15** The role of advocacy has already been mentioned in the context of the children's rights officer. We were also interested in the role of race equality councils, in the support of ethnic minority families. Several race equality councils up and down the country were used to provide support on an individual basis. One race equality council was said to be used 'to make complaints against the SSD'. In another the race equality council advised social workers on individual cases. Where they existed race equality councils were used differentially but were knowledgeable about various communities in their areas and were seen as helpful.
- 6.16** Social workers also perform an advocacy function. They often advocate for their families in various ways, for example in making representation to the Department of Social Security or to education or housing departments. We saw a few examples of workers challenging their departments on

<sup>19</sup> Black Young People's Information Pack – Black Residential Child Care Support Team, Liverpool Social Services Directorate (undated)

children's behalf where there was a failure to provide adequate education to meet their needs. There is also an advocacy role in respect of confronting racism and racial harassment which families might experience. It might well be that the social worker is seen as the 'credible witness' who will need to liaise with the family and various authority figures. This will require workers to have a more thorough understanding of the issues and the council's policies and procedures which should be implemented. A high level of commitment and determination as well as training will also be required.

**6.17** Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 places a duty on local authorities to:

- “carry out their various functions in such a way as to seek to eliminate unlawful discrimination; and
- promote equality and good relations between persons of different racial groups.”

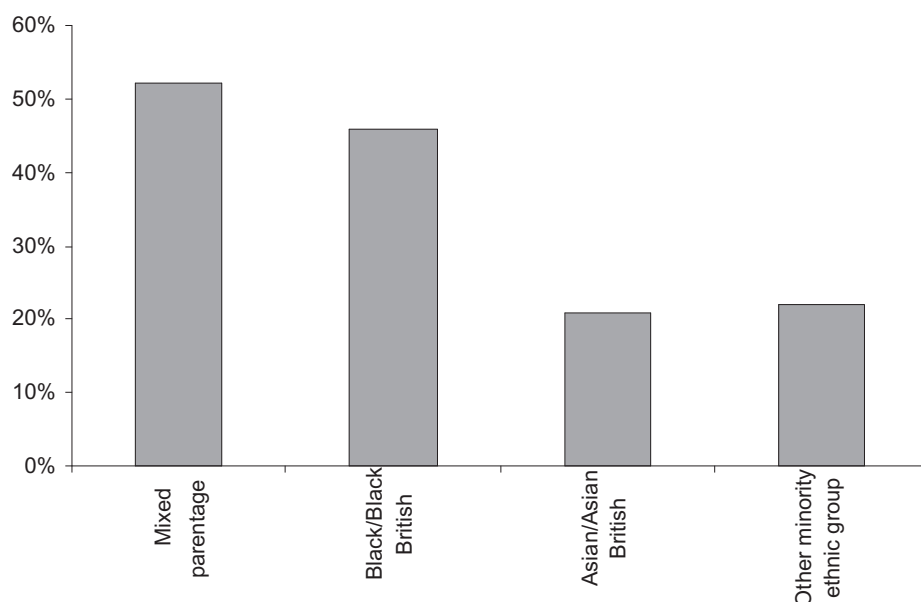
This obligation has seldom been adhered to since the Act came into operation in 1978.

**6.18** The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which recognises racial aggravated harassment, also places the onus on councils to work in partnership with the police, probation and health services in the implementation of a crime reduction strategy. The Home Secretary's action plan in response to the Macpherson report also includes local government and relevant agencies in the creation of a 'comprehensive system of reporting and recording all racist crimes'. As government departments will also be covered by the Race Relations Act, through the extension of the Race Relations (Amendment) Bill, this inevitably puts the onus on each of us to accept individual responsibility in the creation of a more just and equitable multi-racial society.

## **Looked after Children of Black Origins**

**6.19** From the information provided to us by the eight authorities, we found that over half of the children receiving services who were of racially mixed parentage were looked after compared with 46 per cent of black/black British and only 21 per cent of Asian/Asian British.

**Figure 5: Percentage of children receiving services who are looked after in each ethnic minority group**



Source: Case Records Analysis

- 6.20** Over the last 30 years researchers have identified this group of children mainly in respect of their position in the care system, particularly the fostering and adoption service. Foren and Batta<sup>20</sup> (1970), Lambert and Rowe<sup>21</sup> (1973) Ken Pryce<sup>22</sup> (1975), Ravindar Barn<sup>23</sup> (1993 and 1997) have all alerted us to this growing group. Researchers Berthoud and Beishon (1999)<sup>24</sup>, have also pointed out that predominantly, those children have white mothers and black fathers.
- 6.21** Although the number of children of mixed ethnicities has increased it has also become increasingly difficult for their parents to bring them up in a racist society with little support. As Pryce poignantly pointed out, *“nowhere is the distress caused by racism more starkly revealed than in the situation of the half white child who is poor and socially deprived. It is in this area that there is a need for greater tolerance and understanding”*.
- 6.22** Some of the case files in our sample described the racial abuse of these children by their mothers and the workers’ attempts to deal with this. Two children who were racially abused at home were also racially abused whilst being looked after. But this was only one aspect with which those children had to deal. They coped with loss and separation; low self esteem and were labelled as difficult. We met with children of black origins who

<sup>20</sup> Colour as a variable in the use made of a Child Care Department, Bradford University, 1970

<sup>21</sup> Children Who Wait, ABAFA, 1972

<sup>22</sup> Fostering Black Children, Commission For Racial Equality, 1975

<sup>23</sup> Children in Public Care System, 1993, Acting on Principle, BAAF, 1997

<sup>24</sup> Ethnic Minorities in Britain, Policy Studies Institute, 1997

told us that “*if you have one drop of black blood in your body then you are black.*” We met some children who were apologetic for their existence and others who were categorised by social workers as black but not by their parents.

**6.23** These varying perspectives reflect the ambivalence of multi-racial Britain in dealing with ethnic diversity as presented by children of black origins. There is a nettle to be grasped but grasp it we must if those children in public care are to develop into emotionally healthy adults. We have previously mentioned the support provided by a psychologist for Southwark Social Services Department. Of the children referred to that service for help 27 per cent were from racially mixed backgrounds.

**6.24** To move the debate forward public bodies need to find out:

- who are the children of mixed ethnicities?
- what do the families of such children need?
- what mechanisms are there in place for support?
- what are the issues for placement?

Coleman<sup>25</sup> has suggested ‘support workshops for parents raising children of mixed parentage’ as a way forward. This will give recognition, validation, and possibly some solutions to issues which are currently being denied.

## Placements of Children

**6.25** We have previously mentioned the need for young people to have appropriate role models. But the availability of role models was heavily dependent on the range of placements available and these were severely restricted. Placements were required to meet children’s needs both short-term and long-term. Specialist input was also required to meet individual need; social workers were trying to place children with varying degrees of success. Placements were sought for children who:

- presented challenging behaviour;
- needed therapeutic environments;
- required special placements because of disability;
- needed containment;

<sup>25</sup> The Work of the Child Psychology Service for Black Children Looked After, Jacquelyn Coleman, Southwark Social Services, 1998

- needed 52 week placements;
- required education on the premises.

These placements were often difficult to find, costly and unavailable in inner city areas. This sometimes resulted in unsuitable matchings.

## Foster Care

- 6.26** The London boroughs in our inspection did well in finding foster placements for black children. Significantly, Caribbean foster carers were best matched with children from that background. We met with carers who genuinely cared for children as their own, identifying education as a route to success and battling to ensure that the educational needs of their foster children were met. Some carers did ‘life story’ work with younger children, going to relevant embassies to obtain background information. Support to carers, specifically in Islington and Hammersmith and Fulham, was crucial in ensuring that their training and developmental needs were met. Carers also identified that their determination to carry on caring and supporting young people was thwarted by boundary and funding arrangements beyond the age of 18. The consultation document “Me, Survive Out There”<sup>26</sup> has recognised some of those issues and should enable authorities to provide support.
- 6.27** Asian children receiving social services were far less likely to be looked after than children who were black or of mixed parentage. Despite this however placements were limited and children were either placed trans-culturally or trans-racially in some authorities. We were concerned that the religious and cultural needs of Asian children were misunderstood and therefore not adequately met. We found that their religious needs were not given appropriate centrality and cultural issues around dress and food were also minimised.
- 6.28** We found that in the London boroughs there was a relatively low number of white foster carers with the result that black carers looked after white children. The reverse was the case in the other areas where there were few black carers and black children were being placed with white foster carers. There are issues of sensitivity and competency and a willingness to work in an anti-discriminatory way to which all foster carers should adhere.

<sup>26</sup> Me, Survive Out There, Department of Health, 1999

# Communication

## 7

- 7.1 Communicating with ethnic minority groups requires more than the translation of some leaflets into various languages. It is an acknowledgement that as citizens they should be involved routinely as part of the consultation process and councils should have strategies in place to deal with this. Our findings suggest that ethnic minorities did not feel included and that consultation was generally poor. The London boroughs we inspected appeared to be more conscious than those outside London of the need for wide consultation, possibly because of the multi-racial population of Greater London.

### GOOD PRACTICE

**Hammersmith and Fulham had consulted with voluntary groups working with black families on the children’s services plan. Translation of the summary and relevant chapters into appropriate languages was being considered.**

## Reception Arrangements

- 7.2 Few social services departments appeared to have given much thought to the staffing of their reception areas and communicating with ethnic minority groups was therefore an issue. Language cards were used to enhance communication in three departments and two departments used the skill of staff who spoke more than one language.

### GOOD PRACTICE

**In Leicestershire staff who spoke additional languages were used in reception areas and were paid an honorarium for the use of that skill.**

- 7.3 Posters saying ‘welcome’ in various languages were evident in some authorities, a multi-cultural ambience was said to exist in one authority. We found that reception areas were generally not welcoming places and

could in one instance be described as bleak. This was of course the same for all service users. Reception staff were not expected to be able to communicate using British Sign Language. Such skills were expected to be available in the team for people with disabilities.

## Translation and Interpretation

- 7.4 All councils had a translation and interpretation service, but they operated in different ways. Three councils had changed from a corporate service to one of spot purchasing with the result that there was a marked deterioration in its quality. Where corporate interpretation services existed they appeared to be more accessible and efficient. Self-employed interpreters did not appear to function as efficiently in terms of time management. One council provided interpretation and translation in 18 languages and London councils had access to 'Language Line'. We tested the translation facilities in several authorities and this worked well.

### GOOD PRACTICE

**Buckinghamshire Social Services Department recruited and trained interpreters over a period of 18 weeks. Interpreters were taught to translate 'nothing left out nothing added'. Social workers were also given a 2-day training course on 'working with clients through an interpreter'. This enabled both worker and interpreter to work effectively together.**

- 7.5 One authority had managed to provide a very humane service to asylum seekers. An excellent computerised system was in place to provide instant information regarding families so that their countries of origin and current places of accommodation could be easily accessed.

The asylum seekers team acted as a 'one stop shop' providing vouchers or cash payments in an emergency as well as links to the health service, trauma counselling, accommodation and other necessities. This was good because it enabled service users the facility of being dealt with in one place and not repeat their stories several times.



## GOOD PRACTICE

**In addition to the use of staff who spoke a second language and the use of language cards, Southwark had provided separate waiting and interviewing facilities for families, (women and children) and for single men.**

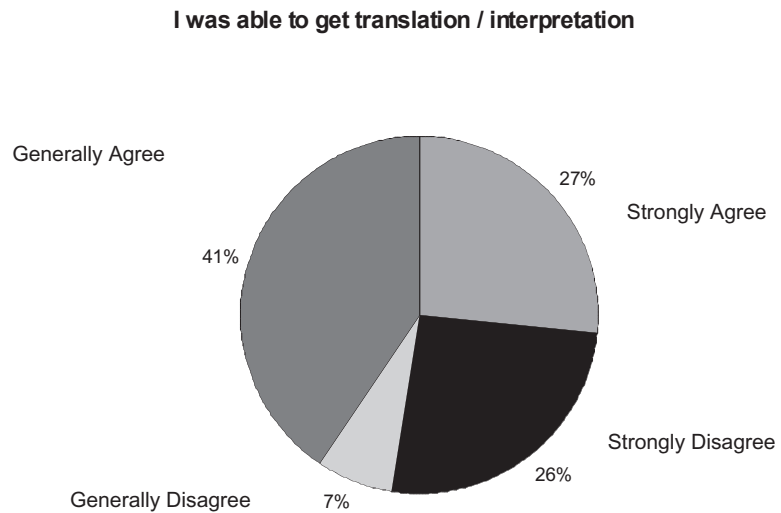
- 7.6 All eight authorities produced information on various childcare topics and complaints, they varied in range and in their involvement of ethnic minority groups.

## Information

- 7.7 The black residential childcare support team in Liverpool was responsible for putting an information pack together for young people in care. This contained relevant historical information about black people as well as world religions. Useful tips on self-care for young people were also covered. In Hammersmith and Fulham a guide to working with black families had also been produced by black staff. Various authorities had involved young people who were care leavers in the provision of a Children's Rights Handbook and a video for those leaving care.
- 7.8 The following ways have traditionally been used to communicate with ethnic minority groups and have often produced effective results:
- ethnic minority media – press and radio;
  - places of worship – mosques, temples, churches;
  - race equality councils;
  - voluntary organisations.
- 7.9 Advocacy services were in place in four authorities. These consisted mainly of children's rights officers, Voice of the Child in Care and in one case Community Service Volunteers. However these advocates were not aimed specifically at ethnic minority families and authorities therefore needed to think creatively when considering their approach to advocacy for ethnic minority families, taking into account issues pertaining to language and cultural backgrounds.
- 7.10 Our examination of case records revealed that there had been use of interpreters/advocates in only 15 per cent of assessments with partial use in a further 13 per cent.

- 7.11 Our survey of parents presented a more positive picture; with over half of parents agreeing that they were able to access translation/interpretation services and almost 70 per cent reporting being able to have someone accompany them at meetings.

**Figure 6:**



Source: Parents survey

# Monitoring

## 8

- 8.1 The collection, use and availability of data relating to ethnicity was a major issue of the inspection. There was a lack of clarity around both method and process of collection. All the councils in our sample monitored ethnicity of staff. For some this was part of their council's corporate equality strategy and included targets which were set within its 'managing diversity' framework. One authority had set specific targets for the recruitment of women as well as people from ethnic minority groups. Performance indicators for one council included not only the numbers of ethnic minority personnel but their location, grade and retention. One authority was working towards the achievement of the Commission for Racial Equality's Standards 'Racial Equality Means Quality'.<sup>27</sup> It had set recruitment targets for ethnic minority groups and commendably, had achieved them.
- 8.2 The existence of written policies on staff monitoring did not in itself always lead to the strategic collection, analysis and utilisation of information. Councils made varying use of this data, but at least it was available.
- 8.3 But if councils were half-hearted about ethnic monitoring of staff, an activity which required individuals to self identify, they were even more exercised by the monitoring of information on service users. There appeared to be a lack of clarity about:
- what should be collected;
  - by whom it should be collected;
  - when it should be collected;
  - to what use it should be put;
  - and more fundamentally why it should be collected.
- 8.4 This basic lack of understanding of the rationale for ethnic monitoring by some, has led to their services for ethnic minority families being poorly planned, poorly delivered and poorly considered at a strategic level. This issue has been highlighted for departments over the last 25 years. In 1978 a working party of the ADSS and Commission For Racial Equality

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<sup>27</sup> Racial Equality Means Quality, Commission For Racial Equality, 1995

highlighted the implementation of a system of monitoring as a major recommendation.<sup>28</sup>

- 8.5 So why monitor? Ethnic monitoring should be seen as a tool in ensuring racial equality. Without accurate information it would be impossible for councils to tell whether their policies were being effectively implemented or whether some groups were being denied services because of direct or indirect discrimination.
- 8.6 In respect of service delivery, it is important for councils to understand whether services are relevant to the needs of particular clients and whether they are being delivered in the most effective way. In some inner city areas people of black origins make up almost half of the local population. Their needs for services are equally valid even though they may require them to be presented in a different way.

## How to monitor

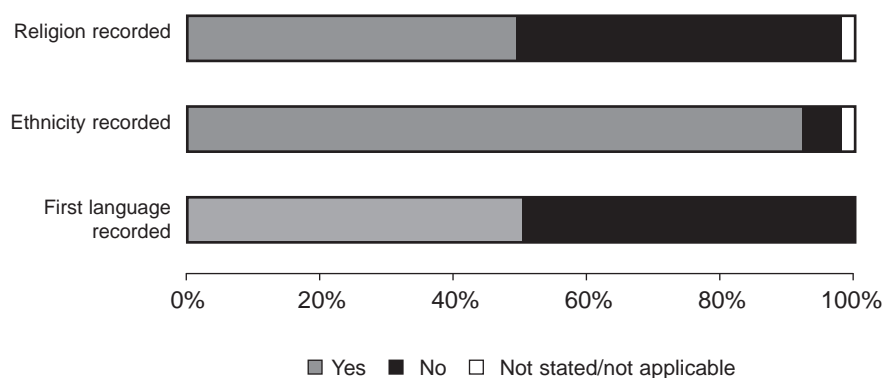
- 8.7 We came across a degree of reticence and diffidence from some staff about asking service users questions about their ethnicity. Some staff confessed to feeling awkward and were confused about the reasons for their discomfiture. One worker said, *“white people might get upset”*. Clearly issues need to be dealt with sensitively, as with so many issues with which social workers have to deal. These questions could be dealt with in the context of family history and background. Given that service users also have a right of access to their records, a broad sharing of information is essential. But this also points to a training issue to ensure that workers deal confidently and competently with service users.
- 8.8 The classification of data on ethnicity was confusing to some staff. We found that the category ‘black British’ was used and whilst this was accurate it was inadequate as a planning tool. Children of mixed racial origins were frequently defined as ‘other’ or ‘unclassified’. As appropriate service delivery is one of the reasons for ethnic monitoring then a degree of sophistication and political will to make it work are also required.
- 8.9 A major contributory factor to the confusion around ethnic monitoring has been a lack of appropriate guidance. Categories, which are due to be used in the 2001 census, have been piloted and are in use by the Department of Health.<sup>29</sup> The suggested wide variety of categories encourage workers to be specific about ethnic backgrounds and not use vague groupings.
- 8.10 In the use of the Office of National Statistics classification, the Department of Health was striving for a synergy between its data collection and those of other national, local and statutory bodies.

<sup>28</sup> Multi-racial Britain: The Social Service Response, Commission For Racial Equality, 1978

<sup>29</sup> Categories for Collection of Ethnic Related Statistical Data on Central Returns, Barker, Department of Health, 1999

**8.11** But for services to be culturally appropriate, issues of religion and language also need monitoring. Whilst ethnicity in various forms was recorded by most councils, language and religion were less well documented. In considering placement issues for ethnic minority children who were looked after such information is vital.

**Figure 7: Ethnic Monitoring of Service Users**



Source: Case Record Analysis

## Use of monitoring information

**8.12** All data collection should be used to inform planning at a strategic level. We found that in some departments information on ethnicity was collected but was filed away and not used. One authority could not provide us with information on service users for the inspection. The Commission for Racial Equality standards for equality<sup>30</sup> suggests that when ethnic monitoring becomes standard procedure councils will be able to:

- use ethnic data to feed into policy review and targeting;
- monitor the effectiveness of community consultation on influencing service delivery;
- plan services annually and on a long-term basis, using ethnic demographic data from the census to establish targets;
- set up a procedure for reviewing the implications for ethnic minority service users of all decisions to increase, decrease or reallocate funding;
- use this procedure to take into account the needs of ethnic minority service users when new services are planned;

<sup>30</sup> Racial Equality Means Quality, Ibid

- use this procedure to consult relevant community organisations on the suitability of service provision;
- include the delivery of an effective and appropriate service to ethnic minority service users, fairly and without unlawful discrimination;
- establish and publicise the local authority mechanism for dealing with complaints of racial discrimination against itself from members of the public;
- encourage contract compliance by systematic checks on the racial equality component of service delivery;
- ensure that staff training in racial equality is formally linked to performance measurement.

**8.13** We came across an authority which monitored financial expenditure. It was a council which had traditionally made use of Section 11 of the 1996 Local Government Act to recruit and train black staff. Section 11 has been subsumed by a Single Regeneration Budget which urban priority areas receive and which could be used to pursue equality objectives. In terms of best value, councils will be expected to monitor range of spend as well as fair access.

**8.14** Monitoring is the key to service delivery and is relevant at every stage of engagement with departments. Planners and managers need to know the numbers of ethnic minority families so that appropriate communication and language support are provided to families. They need to be aware of whether new communities with varying needs have replaced well-established groups. It is important at every stage from referral through to planning and review. Managers would then be able to have staff who can communicate and plan the right kind of preventative services which are culturally appropriate. Having the relevant foster carers, residential placements and psychological support for families would also be helped by having the right information. Trends can be detected from detailed analyses of data; it is unhelpful if information is collected and not used. Profiling of various communities and identifying the stresses and problems which might need responses could mean that partnership with ethnic minority families becomes a reality as some of the community strengths and abilities may also be identified.

# Standards and Criteria

## A

### STANDARD 1: OUTCOMES FOR SERVICE USERS

**Services provided for ethnic minority groups are flexible, easily accessed and of good quality. Facilities are available to address the special, physical and emotional needs of ethnic minority children.**

#### Criteria

1. The SSD works in partnership with ethnic minority parents and children.
2. Ethnic minority children and their families feel they are treated fairly and with respect.
3. Ethnic minority children have experienced care planning and decision making which takes a life long view and strives to enhance their life chances as individuals.
4. Ethnic minority children and families express satisfaction with the quality, range and type of services being offered.
5. Ethnic minority children and families have experienced care planning which has supported their health and educational needs.
6. Ethnic minority children and families feel supported in meetings, reviews and other dealings with the SSD.
7. Ethnic minority children have role models with whom they can identify whilst being looked after.

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## **STANDARD 2: REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT**

**The SSD has coherent processes to respond to the initial contact or referral of ethnic minority children and assessment processes which involve families in deciding how their needs will be best met.**

### Criteria

1. The SSD responds to initial contact/referrals to ensure appropriate allocation and other responses to referrals.
2. Children, parents, carers and where relevant, other family members are involved in the assessment process.
3. Records resulting from assessment are up to date, clear and comprehensive.
4. Relevant family support and preventative services are offered to families.
5. Where children need to be looked after appropriate placements are made without undue delay.
6. Out of hours duty teams respond appropriately to requests for services in accordance with established procedures and criteria.
7. Appropriate translation and advocacy services are available when needed.



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### **STANDARD 3: PLANNING AND REVIEW**

**Plans and reviews of children's needs are carried out in accordance with regulation and guidance and include objectives and steps needed to achieve them.**

#### Criteria

1. Plans for ethnic minority children are consistent with regulations, involve children and families and give reasons why particular options are chosen.
2. Planning takes into account the racial, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds of children. Plans meet any special needs and consider the need for ethnic minority children to remain near their communities.
3. Plans include arrangements to meet any special health care or educational needs of ethnic minority children and families.
4. Decisions take into account safeguarding ethnic minority children from abuse, including racial abuse.
5. Children and families have a choice of service options appropriate to their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
6. Cases are reviewed following initial contact and at other appropriate times.
7. SSD involves children, their parents and significant others in reviews and notifies them of the outcome.

**STANDARD 4:**

**Communication needs of ethnic minority children and their families are met when they have contact with the SSD. The SSD provides information about available services in ways which they can understand.**

**Criteria**

1. The SSD ensures that the front line and reception staff respond appropriately to people who do not speak English, whose first language is not English or who have communication difficulties.
2. Resources for translation and interpretation are available and staff know how to access them.
3. Ethnic minority families know what communication support is available from the SSD and how to access it.
4. The SSD provides a range of suitable information on care processes and services available to ethnic minority children and families.
5. The SSD consults ethnic minority families or their representatives about the content, format and distribution of appropriate information.
6. Advocates are used where appropriate to enable ethnic minority families to understand and participate fully in their contact with the SSD.

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## **STANDARD 5: EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY**

**The SSD has non-discriminatory service delivery, recruitment and employment practices which underpin a commitment to equal opportunities.**

### Criteria

1. The SSD has equal opportunity policies and action plans for service delivery, recruitment and employment.
2. Services for ethnic minority children take an holistic view of their individual needs, acknowledging their personal experience of family, parenting, social environment, culture, race, religion, language, disability and gender.
3. Staff understand that the social implications of belonging to a black or ethnic minority group vary depending upon the cultural and social backgrounds of individuals.
4. Staff receive training in anti-discriminatory practice which addresses the knowledge and skills required to respond to and support the individual identity needs of each ethnic minority child.
5. The SSD has a policy for dealing with racial harassment and abuse.
6. Ethnic minority staff have access to appropriate training and support.

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**STANDARD 6: MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

**The SSD has clear and comprehensive policies and procedures for provision of services to ethnic minority children and families.**

**Criteria**

1. The local authority has published a Children's Services Plan which identifies the role and responsibilities of all agencies involved and includes services for children from ethnic minorities.
2. The local authority has a corporate approach to provision of services for ethnic minority children and families.
3. The SSD has written policies and guidance which acknowledge the needs of ethnic minority children and how they will be met with regard to race, culture, religion, language, disabilities and gender.
4. The SSD has arrangements with service providers which ensure that they collaborate to meet the needs of ethnic minority children and their families.
5. The SSD monitors financial resources and service allocation for ethnic minority children to ensure equity.
6. The SSD undertakes ethnic monitoring of service users and staff and uses the data to inform its strategic planning.
7. The SSD monitors and reviews other management information to ensure compliance with its own policies, procedures and regulations.

# Methodology

## B

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- B.1** The national inspection of Services to Ethnic Minority Children and Families consisted of eight individual inspections in councils in England between December 1998 and July 1999. The inspected departments are listed in Appendix D. The findings and analyses from all the individual inspections were published and then further analysed to produce this national overview report.
- B.2** The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of services provided to ethnic minority children and families by councils with social services responsibilities. A major focus was the monitoring of data on ethnicity and how that information was used in planning and service provision. The inspection considered the extent to which ethnic minority families access services and their involvement in planning and decision making. We looked at preventative services being offered as well as services for children looked after.
- B.3** Objectives focused on:
- policy and strategic framework for services to ethnic minority families;
  - processes within departments;
  - management of the services;
  - quality of practice;
  - compliance with legislation and regulation;
  - liaison with ethnic minority families and communities.
- B.4** Each inspection team consisted of two or more inspectors, with at least one member of the team being from an ethnic minority group. Where there were no ethnic minority inspectors a consultant was employed. A lay assessor was included on every inspection team. Each team used the same standards and criteria to evaluate the work.
- B.5** The inspection process entailed the analyses of position statements provided by each department prior to the inspections. A postal survey of parents who had received assessments from departments was undertaken. Additionally, ten cases were read in each department and the relevant

## B

family and social workers were interviewed. Meetings and interviews were also held with:

- case supervisors;
- middle managers (team, service and EDT);
- ethnic minority staff;
- independent sector providers;
- inter-agency planners;
- social service departments service providers;
- placement panel;
- ethnic minority voluntary groups.

# Inspection Design Team and Reference Group Members



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## Inspection Design Team

Lead Manager:	Lynda Hoare Assistant Chief Inspector SC(ID) South Inspection Group London
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Ratna Dutt	Race Equality Unit
Maureen Eade	OFSTED
Yoni Ejo	BIBINI Centre for Black Children
Ray Foulkes	Barnardos
Daphne Statham	National Institute of Social Work
Beverley Thompson	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders

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# Authorities Inspected

## D

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# Glossary

## E

The following terms are used in this report:

**Ethnic Minority:** The term ‘ethnic minority’ is used inter-changeably with ‘black’. The term refers to all sub-groups of the population not indigenous to the United Kingdom who hold cultural traditions and values derived, at least in part, from their countries of origin. This therefore excludes national minorities (in the sense of the European Conventions), such as the Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh, but they equally have the right to have their distinctive cultural traditions and values respected in the way that they are offered services.

**Black:** The term is used to refer to those members of ethnic minority groups who are differentiated by their skin colour and/or physical appearance, and may therefore feel some solidarity with one another by reason of past or current experience, but who may have many different cultural traditions and values. In this inspection, black is used as a generic and inclusive term to mean African, Caribbean, Asian, Chinese and Vietnamese people in particular. Ethnic distinctions are made wherever necessary. Some people may not regard themselves as black, but they were included in our definition due to the common status of being in a group disadvantaged by racial discrimination prompted by skin colour and physical differences.

**White:** The term white is used to refer to both white indigenous and white European people.

**Asian:** The term Asian is used to refer to those of South Asian background, who themselves or whose ancestors originate from the Indian Sub-continent. The terms Chinese and Vietnamese are used separately so as to not create confusion under the general category of Asian.

**Mixed Race:** The term mixed race is used to refer to individuals of mixed racial and cultural origins. Most of the children of mixed race in the inspection had a white indigenous mother and an African-Caribbean/African father.

**Culture:** The word encompasses the artistic and intellectual accomplishments, religious beliefs and values of people who share the same racial or ethnic origin and/or language. Religion and culture are protected in law in so far as they are aspects of race.

E

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## F

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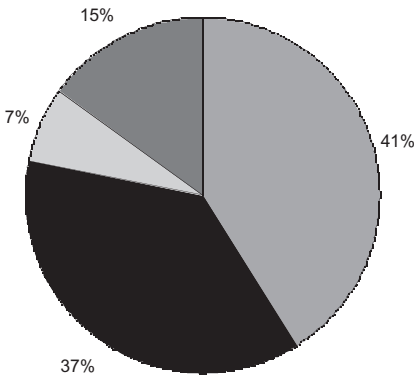
Rowe, J and Lambeth L (1972) **Children Who Wait**, BAAF

# Parents' Questionnaire Survey Data

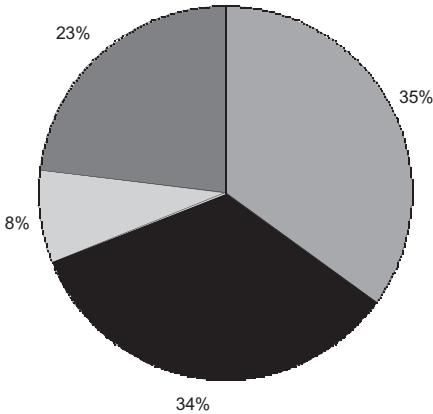
G

## Families' Involvement in Decision Making

I was involved in deciding what my family needed



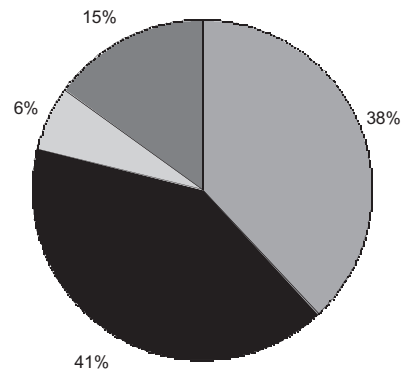
I was able to have someone to accompany me to meetings



Generally disagree Strongly disagree Strongly agree Generally agree

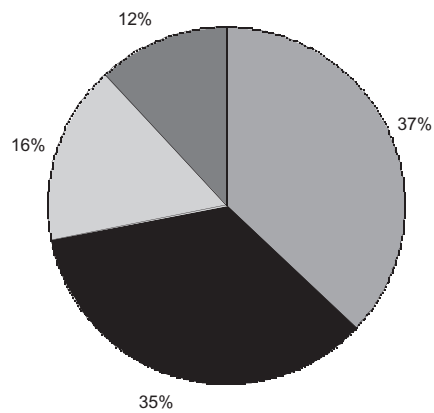
Note: some figures may not add up due to rounding

I was involved in deciding what service my family received



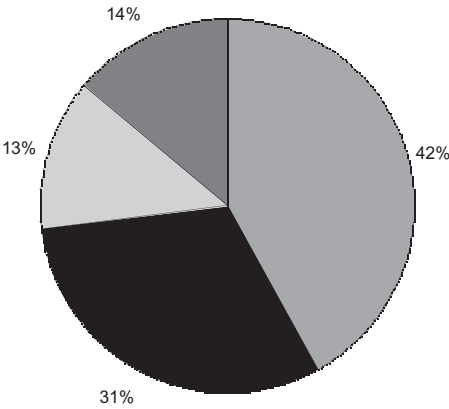
Families' Access to Social Services Support

Staff are easy to contact

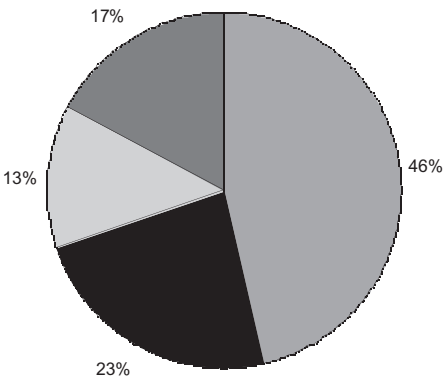




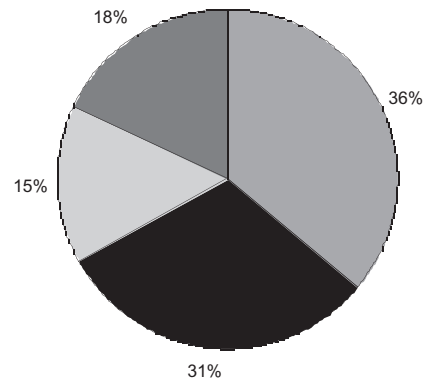
My request for help from social services was acted upon



I am kept informed of what is happening at each stage

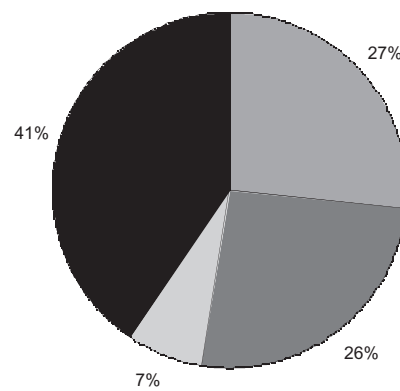


I have been told how to complain if I am not happy

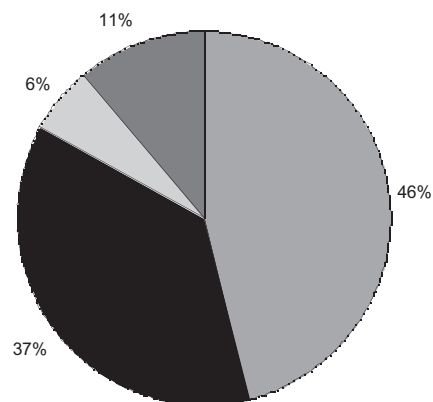


## Respect For Families' Ethnicity

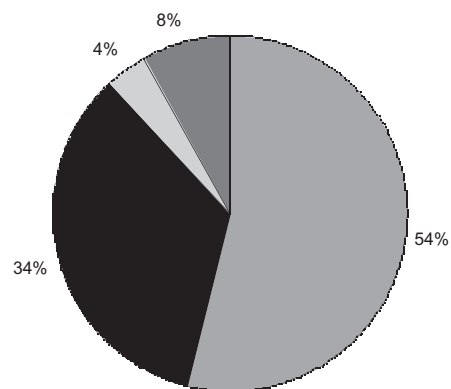
I was able to get translation / interpretation



I am treated fairly and with respect by social services staff

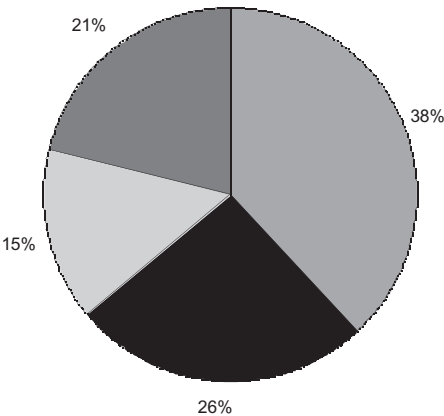


My family was not subject to racial discrimination

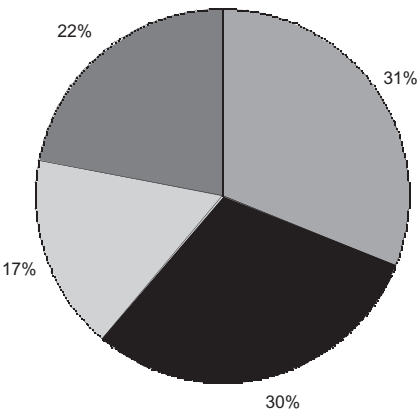


Families' Satisfaction With Services

My family got the services when we needed them



My family received all the services we needed



The services we received have helped the family

