

# Practice Matters

## 1 July 2005

### Race equality and promoting good practice

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The objectives of the morning and afternoon discussion groups were to ensure clarity about the expectations of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act for local authorities and the implications of this for practice. To that extent the session included a presentation on the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) followed by a discussion focused on the three following questions:

1. How might race equality and relevant legislation be put into practice?
2. What are the challenges in your work area in terms of black and minority ethnic groups?
3. Do you have examples of good practice that can be shared?

It is important to note that organisations that are commissioning services on behalf of a local authority still have a duty to ensure race equality.

### Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RR(A)A)

The Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) is not in itself a new Act but rather an amendment to the 1976 Race Relations Act. Unfortunately, the 1976 Act was undermined in terms of effectiveness, as many important organisations were not subject to its legal powers. The need to 'close the gaps' in the RRA 1976 had long been recognised. However, this position remained unchanged until the tragic death of Stephen Lawrence and the campaign, which led to the Lawrence Inquiry. The lessons learned from the Inquiry together with the recognition of Institutional Racism formed the basis for the design of the RRAA 2000. RRAA outlaws race discrimination (direct, indirect & victimisation) in **public authority functions** not covered by the 1976 Act. The term '**public functions**' enables both **direct service delivery** and **indirect service delivery** together with other duties to be covered by the Act. It also places a general duty on specified public authorities to promote race equality.

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) now has more powers than before the Act came into force. It can enforce the duties set out in the Act.

In regards to victimisation and racial harassment, the RR(A)A means that the burden of proof is no longer on the victim. There is now a duty to promote race equality. This wasn't the case before.

## Race equality schemes

All local authorities (and Public bodies) have a responsibility to produce a race equality scheme. Staff should know what the race equality scheme in their organisation says. It is important to know how the scheme affects practice and to ensure that race equality is part of day-to-day practice.

In certain parts of the country, we are now talking about BME communities as majority communities rather than minority communities. It is important to think about developing services that are appropriate for the majority and minority communities. The race equality scheme and action plan needs to be relevant to community needs and policy issues.

## Race equality and service provision

The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has published its race equality scheme. Organisations can push organisations such as the CSCI to ensure that their race equality scheme is incorporated into inspections and all other aspects of their work.

SCIE has been consulting with black and minority ethnic service users and carers about the green paper for adult social care. Feedback from these consultations has shown that people from black and minority ethnic communities have low expectations of services. They did not ask for unreasonable things, therefore if we can provide appropriate services for white older people then we should be able to provide appropriate services for black and minority ethnic older people.

It is important to realise that in every job in an organisation, people have the power to affect change at some level. This can mean approaching service users and challenging stereotypes of them. This is about questioning our own practice and the way services are provided.

## Challenging assumptions

Challenging personal assumptions is the responsibility of everyone working within an institution. All of us, black and minority ethnic and white, hold assumptions and stereotypes of the 'other', and carry our own personal baggage about people. This means we need to all be aware, and take positive steps to challenge our own assumptions as well as assumptions made by others.

Assumptions are also made about black and minority ethnic workers, and these can be both negative such as 'they are not as skilled as the white workforce' as well as apparently positive. In terms of the latter, it is often assumed that all black and minority ethnic workers have knowledge and expertise on all matters relating to black and minority ethnic communities, and black and minority ethnic workers are therefore used as 'educators' of the white workforce, and often expected to drive the race equality agenda. When things go wrong, black and minority ethnic workers are then made scapegoats and left to shoulder the responsibilities. The reality is: as with the white workforce, the black and minority ethnic workforce will vary, and there will be excellent practitioners as well as incompetent ones. This means that organisations have, both, the responsibility of supporting black and minority ethnic workers and ensuring their professional development, as well as management responsibility to address any competence issue relating to black and minority ethnic workers. It is also important to recognise that knowledge about a particular community does not equate having professional expertise about all aspects of the lives of individuals or families within that community. Black and minority ethnic workers should therefore not be expected to provide 'cultural' expertise' nor should the matching of workers with service users be purely based on the race and ethnicity of workers. For race equality to become fully integrated in any organisation, the responsibility of taking it forward should lie with everyone within those organisations, not just black and minority ethnic workers.

## Comments from the group

### Putting race equality into practice

- Whilst there has been progress made in race equality and anti-oppressive practice, it has been ad hoc and compartmentalised. There is a need to develop a framework that acknowledges the wholeness of people with a multiplicity of backgrounds and identities and develop practice using the principle.
- Legislation is important to underpin anti racist activity. Race equality schemes need to be usable and written. The skill is in ensuring that the action plan is broken down at team level. It is important to ensure that teams understand their obligations. Practitioners are often not involved in the formulation of race equality schemes. This has to change.
- Why are teams not being given a dialogue in developing action plans? All staff need to be involved in action planning and they should own the scheme.
- Training is important but should not be seen as the only way to bring about positive change in race and other equalities. Race and other equalities should be integrated in all aspects of work, and should form part of supervision and appraisal.
- Evaluation of how training has had an impact on practice is important.
- While awareness of race equality is important, in itself it is not sufficient. Behaviour is key, and without a change in behaviour, race and other equalities will not be addressed adequately.

- The law is one way of ensuring race equality requirements are fulfilled, however, commitment to race equality has to be top down and bottom up. Accountability for anti oppressive practice is crucial.
- One shouldn't think that when consulting with black and minorities about service use it is sufficient or acceptable to consult with workers from black and minority community groups as they rarely have direct experience of using social care services. Also, often black and minority ethnic service users and carers are not linked in with such groups and if they are it is in a very limited way.

### Challenges for change

- Ensuring that we engage with black and minority ethnic service users and carers and those who would be eligible for a service but are not coming forward for services.
- Institutional racism has become so entrenched that it has become more sophisticated. The RR(A)A and race equality schemes can mean that managers can say that they have a scheme and that is enough. How do we tackle this?
- There are pockets of good practice but the challenge is how to ensure that good practice is wide spread.
- People go on training but what happens after this? Often there is not much implementation. People who go to equalities training are the people who have an interest in this area.
- Often race equality talks and work tends to be done by the converted. Other staff see it as an add on as though race is separate, e.g talking about child protection of a black child without talking about race. It is important to think about where integration takes place. Equality in relation to social care is about providing appropriate services and good assessments.
- It is important to look at institutional racism within organisational cultures in order to change the system as a whole throughout.
- Employers should lead by example. Why are there few black and minority ethnic leaders and senior managers? Training around empowerment and mentoring is crucial.
- Avoid stereotyping and regarding black and minority ethnic clients and families as a whole. It is important to ask questions and not to have preconceived ideas.
- It is important to keep up with what has been happening in relation to race equality and social care. Some changes have come about because workers have pushed for it.

## General comments

- There is a need to start moving away from labels, if there is to be a move away from racism. Practitioners need to question labels and assumptions about black and minority ethnic service users, carers and practitioners.
- It is important to unpick why there are low expectations of services (from black and minority ethnic service users and carers).
- You can't get quality without equality and you can't get equality without quality!
- Everyone in social care has power. It may be frustrating but everyone has a role to play.
- Language is important. People now talk about diversity but racism is not talked about. Likewise, people talk about culturally competent services however, culturally competent practitioners rarely mention race, as this seems too political. Focusing on 'culture' is easier to deal with than the complexities of race and racism.

## Questions to be put to the panel during the final plenary session:

- Equalities issues such as race, gender and disability have become de-politicised. How do organisations such as SCIE address this, particularly in knowledge reviews and practice guides?
- How do practitioners get the training and support that they need to make the leap from practitioner to manager?
- There are examples of good practice and innovation on the ground, how does this get recognised, learned from and fed up through the system?