

Equality and Human Rights Commission

A roadmap to race equality

October 2017



Introduction

The Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Runnymede Trust, Operation Black Vote, the Black Training and Enterprise Group and Business in the Community have worked together to develop this joint response to the Government's Race Disparity Audit ('the Audit').

We welcome the Audit and the resulting website, which provides new data showing the entrenched inequalities experienced by people from different ethnic backgrounds in all areas of life in Britain.

The data paints a concerning picture of a country in which ethnicity has a significant and persistent impact on the chance to succeed and prosper at all stages of life, with people from some ethnic backgrounds and in some areas of Britain faring particularly badly. While this data confirms many longstanding uncomfortable truths, it also gives us a fresh perspective on race in Britain and provides us with a unique opportunity to change and challenge how we all - governments, business, communities and individuals - tackle these persistent inequalities that blight our society.

The Audit emphasises the need for the UK Government to put in place a comprehensive, coordinated and long-term strategy to achieve race equality and to set out our ambitions for the type of country we want to be. Only by taking focussed action to tackle the inequalities exposed by the data can Britain become a fair country in which individuals can reach their potential and our diverse communities can live and work together to create a strong economy and a cohesive society which benefits everyone. In this document we set out the key actions we believe Government needs to take to set Britain on the road to race equality.

Create the environment to deliver race equality in post Brexit Britain

1. Ensure strong leadership is in place to deliver the change needed

Strong leadership is essential in order to tackle the range of inequalities that the Audit highlights. We believe a single government department should set the strategy and lever action across government to drive improvements to race equality in Britain, coordinating effectively with the Scottish and Welsh Governments as appropriate. This single department should be responsible for developing a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the progress that has been made across the six areas of the Audit and use it to hold other departments to account. It must also address the data gaps that the Audit highlights, so that there is more information which is disaggregated, inter-sectional and geographic, to better inform the most appropriate interventions.

Many of the issues identified in the data require concerted efforts by local public services such as schools and local government. We believe the public sector equality duty could be strengthened to require all public authorities to address the key race inequalities identified in the Audit. We recommend that the Government strengthens the duty by using it to set specific race equality objectives for particular public services. This will act as a driver for concerted action on race equality at a local level.

2. Put equality and human rights at the heart of post-Brexit Britain.

As we prepare to leave the European Union, it is important to set out a positive vision for the kind of country we want to be. We want the UK to be an open and fair place to live and do business. This means being clear that we share the values of fairness, dignity and respect for all and protecting our legal framework so that we remain a world leader on equality and human rights.

Recommended priority areas for action

Whilst the Audit highlights many areas of race inequalities which need to be understood and addressed, we believe that progress will be best achieved when certain issues are prioritised and concerted action is taken by all relevant organisations to address them.

1. Employment: Take action to reduce the ethnicity employment and pay gaps so that everyone has a chance to get a job that matches their abilities and be fairly rewarded for it

- Encourage employers to set aspirational targets appropriate to local demographics, take concrete actions and monitor progress to improve diversity at all grades in their organisations, including at board level where applicable. This should include reviewing recruitment and promotion processes, using positive action and effective talent pipelines to help tackle ethnicity employment and pay gaps and ensure diversity in succession planning.
- Encourage employers to introduce quality apprenticeship schemes rather than relying on low-paid or no-paid internships, enabling a higher proportion of ethnic minority applicants to access these opportunities.
- Set stretching local targets appropriate to local demographics, and encourage the use of positive action to the fullest extent possible, to improve the participation, progression and completion rates of underrepresented groups in quality apprenticeships.
- Implement local strategies to tackle high unemployment rates for ethnic minority groups, driven by Job Centre Plus in collaboration with local partners, and require Local Enterprise Partnerships to adopt inclusive growth strategies with specific actions to tackle ethnicity employment and pay gaps. This should include investment in training in sectors and industries where ethnic minorities are over-represented in low-paid and low-skilled jobs.
- Require public authorities to set public sector equality duty objectives to address their ethnicity and employment gaps so that its workforce better represents the public it serves, including at senior levels. This should involve reviewing recruitment progression and retention processes and ensuring that complaints of racism are dealt with fairly and effectively.

- As part of tender processes, require public authorities to use the public sector equality duty to take into account actions suppliers are taking to address their ethnicity employment and pays gaps.
- Strengthen the Commission's powers to require an employer to provide information about recruitment practices and workforce demographics where complaints about race discrimination have been made, to make sure businesses are complying with the law in a swift, light touch and relatively inexpensive way.

2. Education: Take action to improve educational outcomes so that every child has a fair chance to fulfil their potential irrespective of their ethnicity

- Ensure that equality and human rights are part of the curriculum to instil shared values, tackle prejudiced attitudes by educating about difference, foster community cohesion and enable young people to fully participate in our democratic society. The curriculum should also include Britain's immigration history to enable children to understand how this has shaped all aspects of our country.
- Publish a plan of concrete actions to improve understanding of, and tackle the disproportionate levels of exclusion, absences and attainment rates among, certain ethnic minority groups, including Gypsy and Traveller children, in primary and secondary schools.
- Ensure all teachers have access to training and resources on how to identify, record and develop strategies to respond to bullying and identity-based bullying so they have the tools and confidence to protect pupils.
- Encourage schools and higher education providers to improve their understanding of all ethnicity attainment, attendance and dropout rates in higher education institutions and to take actions to address them.

3. Housing: Tackle the disproportionate numbers of ethnic minority groups living in substandard, overcrowded and inappropriate accommodation

- Identify the reasons why ethnic minorities are more likely to live in substandard housing and overcrowded housing, and take forward strategies to address them in an effective way, including by strengthening local authority powers to ensure that all privately rented accommodation in the authority is in good repair and is not over-occupied.

- Review the extent to which the obligation on landlords to conduct right to rent checks is fairly applied in practice to ensure it is not resulting in race discrimination against prospective tenants.
- Review the adequacy of site provision for Gypsies and Travellers across all local authorities.
- Increase the Commission's powers to enable it to conduct 'mystery shopping' exercises to assess whether landlords and rental agencies are discriminating on the grounds of race when letting their properties and use the evidence obtained as a basis for exercising other powers to address any discriminatory practices.

4. Health: Improve access to healthcare and health outcomes

- Take action to close health inequalities experienced by ethnic minorities. This should include improving access to information about available services, providing these in different languages and formats; collecting data on access, experience and outcomes from health service users; ensuring healthcare professionals understand the different needs of ethnic communities; and trialling interventions to assess what works in improving the healthcare experience for ethnic minorities.
- Appoint an Equalities Champion with responsibility for tackling race inequality, particularly in relation to mental health, as recommended by the Mental Health taskforce.
- Improve the quality of data collection and analysis on the access, outcomes and experiences of patients in mental health settings in order to better address the disproportionalities for Black people and to identify early strategies and care pathways that are appropriate to the mental health needs of ethnic minority communities.

5. Criminal justice: Improve trust and ensure fairness in the criminal justice system where ethnic minorities are over-represented both as victims and defendants of crime

- Improve data collection in order to understand and take action to address unequal treatment in criminal justice system.
- Conduct research to pull together existing evidence and fill any data gaps about why disproportionate numbers of ethnic minorities enter the criminal justice system. This should include examining policing and charging practices.

- Implement strategic action plans that will deliver and evidence how the Government is improving its responses to preventing and tackling on and offline race hate crime. This should include a review of legislation and sentencing practices; collection and publication of data; involvement of members of local communities in evaluation of reporting and recording processes; and ensuring police forces are making appropriate referrals to support services.
- Improve collection of data and analysis on sentencing from Magistrates and Crown Courts to understand why disproportionate numbers of ethnic minorities serve prison sentences. Consider innovative options for alternative responses to criminal behaviour which reduce the risk of prison, such as deferred prosecution.
- Take steps to address differential treatment in prison by improving quality of needs assessments, rigour of oversight mechanisms and the accessibility and effectiveness of complaint mechanisms.
- Take steps to improve criminal justice outcomes for ethnic minorities through (a) probation services better tailored to specific needs and (b) a review of the criminal records system to ensure that the high number of ethnic minority young people who go through the criminal justice system are not tainted for life by crimes committed when still a child.

Contacts

This publication and related equality and human rights resources are available from the Commission's website: www.equalityhumanrights.com.

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