

Public Sector Approaches to Race Equality

Qualitative Research Report

FINAL REPORT

Research Study Conducted for

Audit Commission

July 2003

Contents

Public Sector Approaches to Race Equality	1
Introduction	1
Interpretation of the Data	3
Publication of the Data	4
Summary of Findings	5
Perception of public services	5
What is race equality?	6
Views on the area and community	8
BME respondents in *****	8
BME respondents in *****	10
BME respondents in *****	12
Views on public services	15
General perceptions	15
Education	21
Housing	23
Public transport	25
Health services	28
Police services	31
Employment Opportunities	36
Delivering race quality	38
What is race equality?	38
Delivering race equality	39
Views on key outcomes	41

Appendices Topic Guide

Introduction

Background

This report presents the results of a qualitative research study carried out by the MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the Audit Commission.

The Audit Commission is currently undertaking a study of how public sector organisations approach race equality and incorporate it into their service delivery. The Audit Commission is carrying out a programme of research looking at the views of staff working in public services, as well as users. As part of the research programme, MORI has undertaken some qualitative research to explore the issues among some Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.

In particular, the project sought to discover:

- the views of the BME public on their experiences of public services – specifically local government, health and police;
- their expectations of public services;
- awareness of race equality initiatives currently in place in the public sector; and
- the race equality outcomes they are looking for when dealing with these services.

Methodology

Four focus groups were conducted. The locations chosen for the groups were decided in consultation with the Audit Commission. The areas were selected because Audit Commission staff visited public services in these locations as part of their qualitative research. This involved conducting a range of interviews and workshops with staff – both frontline and senior management – to understand how they approach race equality. This report presents the findings of BME users only.

The composition of the groups was decided by the Audit Commission in conjunction with MORI. They aimed to capture the views and experiences of people from a variety of ethnic groups and different life stages.

In each group, the discussion focused on a particular public service. This reflected the sector of the organisation the Audit Commission were working with in the area, and the focus of their race equality activity.

Details of the groups are shown in the table overleaf.

Group composition

	Date	Area	Discussion	Other quotas
Group 1	14/5/03	*****, *****	Council services	Mixed gender, 18-34, Black and Asian
Group 2	18/6/03	*****	Council services	Mixed gender, 25-45, Black and Asian parents
Group 3	18/6/03	*****	Police service	Mixed gender, 18-30, Black and Asian
Group 4	7/7/03	*****, *****	Health service	Female, 45+, Pakistani

Respondents for the groups were recruited in-home and offered an incentive of £25 to attend the group.

Interpretation of the data

Qualitative research involves an interactive process between the moderators carrying out the research and those being researched. It provides a way of probing the underlying attitudes of participants, and obtaining an understanding of the issues of importance. The real value of qualitative research is that it allows insights into the attitudes, and the reasons for these attitudes that could not be explored in as much depth with a structured questionnaire.

However, it must be remembered when interpreting these results that they are not based on quantitative data. The data are based on a small sample of a cross-section of BME residents in these areas; the findings, therefore, should be seen as indicative. Throughout the report we record perceptions, not facts. Participants may hold views that are based on incorrect information; these perceptions are reported here.

Publication of the data

As with all our studies, these findings are subject to our standard Terms and Conditions of Contract. Any press release or publication of the findings of this research requires the advance approval of MORI. Such approval is only refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misinterpretation of the research findings.

Summary of findings

Perception of public services

People's perceptions of public services tend to be shaped by a number of factors. These are:

- level of contact and experience;
- customer care processes and outcomes; and
- levels of information.

While there is a strong feeling that *everyone* gets a poor deal from public services, a finding that also emerged in previous research conducted for the Audit Commission¹, there are some issues that are felt to be race-specific. These include:

- The perception that housing is unfairly distributed, with priority given to White residents over BME families with children.
- The view that police services treat BME communities less favourably – particularly Black males. Although there have been improvements since the Stephen Lawrence enquiry, there is still much more the police need to do to deliver their service without discrimination and to build up trust in the community.
- Employment discrimination is spontaneously mentioned as an issue in areas with low BME

¹ *Public Sector Approaches to Race Equality*, for the Audit Commission, January 2003.

penetrations in the general population and high unemployment. People feel their ethnicity does present itself as a barrier to both entry and progression within the labour market.

What is race equality?

There is a very low awareness and understanding of the term 'race equality'. Most describe race equality as receiving the same service and outcomes as everyone else – regardless of ethnic background. However, they state that there may be *practical* differences that need to be taken into account to deliver good service to all BME people. Suggestions include:

- More cultural awareness amongst public sector workers and more cultural diversity of those working in the public sector. For example, some mention that removing shoes when entering a Muslim household is a basic courtesy.
- The Council could be better prepared when dealing with BME people on pre-arranged appointments, using the information that they already have about the person.
- Consultation with the grass roots of the BME community rather than affluent educated people that are slightly removed from the community.
- Council staff showing more tolerance and patience when speaking to service users with language needs. A general attitude of willingness to understand the person is

perceived to be more important than council staff having specific language skills.

The primary concern of all those we spoke to was to receive more efficient public services overall, rather than improving race equality specifically – by improving public services in general, they feel their needs will be met. There is widespread support and approval of the race equality objectives discussed in the groups, but few are aware of what is currently being done to meet the objectives at both local and national levels. If there are policies in place, more publicity is needed to inform BME people of what is being done to meet their needs and allow them to judge for themselves whether this is taking place. In research carried out elsewhere, this latter point is mentioned by residents as a whole. In much of MORI's work, there is often a direct link between how informed residents are and their level of satisfaction with a service. Therefore, improving information and communication will be key in improving perceptions of public services overall.

©MORI/19

735

Checked and Approved:

.....
Kully Kaur-Ballagan

Checked and Approved:

.....
Salome Simoes

Views on the area and community

When exploring the views of the different BME communities, it is important to bear in mind that experiences (and therefore attitudes about quality of life) vary depending on the size of the community and socio-economic profile. For instance, the BME community in ***** is relatively new and much smaller compared with the long-established (and less well-off) BME community in *****.

BME respondents in *****

The ***** respondents are very positive about the physical aspects of the city – they say it is clean and green, with a friendly local population. Many of the BME participants had moved to ***** from towns and cities with larger BME populations and feel that ***** provides for a much better quality of life than places such as London due to a more pleasant general environment and attitude of the local population.

However, as mentioned above, the BME community in ***** is very small. Therefore there tends to be awareness among BME residents that they are ‘different’ from the predominantly White, middle-class population of *****. Respondents say that they feel conspicuous in public as a ‘foreigner’, drawing attention and sometimes, abusive comments or harassment.

Because you are a minority, usually you draw everyone’s attention.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

****** on the whole I find is very good, but I've had like four incidents where a car is passing with young men, obviously I suppose drunk, they shout through the window rude words to you like "Go back to where you're coming from." ... I think it's because there's too much, you know, sort of stereotyping. When you're a minority the assumption I tend to pick from the media is that, you know, you're sort of an asylum seeker so to speak, so in that sense people become a little bit negative, in the sense that everyone is coming to take.*

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Participants feel that the level of insecurity among the BME community of ***** has increased in the current political climate, and that the media coverage about immigration issues and September 11 play a key role. They say that the media present a one-sided and sensationalist view of Muslim faith, which has a negative effect on their position within the ***** community – for instance, a local mosque was desecrated by someone dumping a dead pig on the premises.

It's been over a year since September 11 and they're still playing sort of like woe is America, pity America. But they're not showing the conflict that we've had since this happened, they

wouldn't show what's happened to Muslims in this country, or what's being happening like the incident at the mosque. They wouldn't show that on TV and say look this happened to the Muslims because of September 11, it's all about America, and they don't portray our side of anything.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Blatant forms of racism (such as name-calling by members of the public) are commonly reported in the group. However, many feel that this is something that all new minority groups face. And despite these incidents, people say they like living in the area and generally feel safe. This in part may be due to the fact that the local police are seen to be more proactive at 'looking out' for *****'s minority groups since the incident at the mosque.

BME respondents in *****

Respondents in ***** come from a much larger BME communities and see themselves as well-integrated into the wider population. Compared with the group in ***** , they appear to be more confident about their minority status. The groups we spoke to lived in the ***** area of ***** , which is characterised by high levels of deprivation. However, despite the area's poor reputation for crime, people feel that in reality the area is not as bad as it is made out to be. Respondents are positive about their local area and say that there is a greater sense of community spirit in the ***** area than in some other (and more affluent) areas of ***** . In research carried out by MORI elsewhere, we often find that people feel a greater

sense of community spirit in areas where there are large numbers of people from the same background as themselves. Identification with the local area is particularly strong among ethnic minority participants, which is attributed to growing up in an area, being positive about the area, as well as having a good network of friends and family.²

When I am walking here everybody says to me “Don’t go there, don’t go there as it is not a good place to stay and you can be attacked, mugged, raped” and it has a very, very bad reputation. ... What we have been taught before is not what it is like.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

*I noticed myself compared to where I live in ***** there is more sense of community here. In ***** people have stopped looking at each other but here people do look at each other and do talk more.*

Male aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

While people are positive about the social environment, they complain there is a lack of things for young people to do in the area as well as the lack of cleanliness of the area. In MORI’s experience poor facilities for young people are seen as a problem

² *The Voice of Britain: delivering equality and social justice*, conducted for the Committee for Racial Equality, May 2002.

nationally – in a survey conducted for the Audit Commission in 2001, two in five people (43%) highlighted activities for teenagers as the most needed improvement in their local area³. In research carried out for local authorities across the country by MORI, concerns over physical environment and community safety tend to be greater among ethnic minority residents than White residents. This no doubt reflects the fact that ethnic minorities are more likely to live in deprived areas where these problems tend to be worse.

BME respondents in *****

The Pakistani community of ***** is fairly segregated from the wider ***** population – this is especially the case with older (female) members of the community. They are a close-knit community, living in a self-contained area – three interconnecting streets that include a fabric shop, mosque and grocery store.

The women we spoke to were positive about the level of community spirit in the area and say they are happy with their lives in the town of *****; local people accept them and they have a good support network within their own community.

They do, however, mention some problems with the area as a place to live; these problems mainly arise from the reputation of the area for drug related crime, although none say have actually experienced drug-related crime themselves. Also, there are felt to be few employment opportunities for skilled people and professionals – which has resulted in much of the

³ Quality of Life Survey for the Audit Commission, October 2001

younger BME population either having to commute a long distance to work, or moving out of the area altogether.

*The main disadvantage here is that there are no jobs for people who are educated because ***** is such a small town, so there's a real job shortage for well-qualified people. So they have no choice but to go and seek work in London or ***** because there's no industry here, and obviously being a small town as well!*

Female respondent aged 45+, *****
discussion group

While the women enjoyed the self-contained aspect of their community, there is a feeling that main barrier to integration with the wider community is their lack of language skills. Those who had never learned English are reluctant to mix with the English speaking community – any contact they do have with English speakers is with the aid of an interpreter (usually a member of the household). This, coupled with the fact that the women live in a very traditional community, where the male members of the family tend to be responsible for any business outside the home (such as dealing with the Council) means that there is little incentive (or need) to learn English. This is demonstrated by the fact that, when informed of the free language courses available to them during the group, the women are unwilling to entertain the idea of learning to speak English.

It wouldn't look good for us to be going to classes at our old age, would it? It's not right. Never mind! I've only got a bit of life left in me now anyway. I'm not going to be around for that much longer so I imagine I'll get by as I have for this long.

Female aged 45+, ***** discussion group

Views on public services

Given the very different circumstances of the BME groups we spoke to, their levels of contact with, and experiences of public services tend to vary. These differences have been set out in the table below.

*****	*****	*****
More 'middle class', widely dispersed, light users of public services, accessing them where there is a need	Tend to live in deprived area, large community, heavy users of public services	Live in self-contained community, little contact with public services because of language and traditions. Some contact with health services

General perceptions

Among all groups, there is a sense that public services are under-funded and poorly delivered – and these views are consistent with those of the general public. There is an overall feeling that public services have little incentive to improve their delivery because they are a monopoly, whereas in the private sector there is at least some element of choice.

If you're getting crap service from one bank, you can go to another bank and

things. But with the council you're basically stuck.

Male aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

People's perceptions of public services tend to be shaped by a number of factors. These are:

- level of contact and experience;
- customer care processes and outcomes; and
- levels of information.

While there is a strong feeling that *everyone* gets a poor deal from public services, there are some issues that are felt to be race-specific. For instance, consideration to larger ethnic minority households in the allocation of Council housing and a more diverse education curriculum that teaches about different religions. The following sections look at the services explored in each of the groups.

Local council services

In most of the groups, people view their local council in a negative light with the words ‘inefficient’ and ‘slow’ commonly used. Again, this is no different to the attitudes that MORI finds among the public as a whole. In the groups participants mention the poor quality of work (both in terms of specific repairs such as housing, as well as general working practices such as customer care). Many attribute poor quality of work to a lack of monitoring – particularly when council services are contracted out – and to a lack of motivation and dynamism among public service staff, which people feel is inherent in the public services culture.

The quality of things like the work that will get carried out by the workers. The council workers will do the job but they will half do it so that they can come back so that there is another job for them. They try and benefit from your loss if you like.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

With the private sector, most of their workers are always monitored. It is not like the public sector – they are not monitored because nobody has the sense to monitor them, but with the private companies, they do monitor them to see how good they are at their jobs.

Female aged 25-45, ***** group discussion

In terms of specific race equality issues, many feel that Council staff are not always adequately equipped to deal with people who have different needs to the 'average' customer. Language is given as the main example. While there is agreement that having translators and interpreters is desirable, participants believe that quite often all that is needed when dealing with someone with poor English is patience and a willingness to understand and be helpful. However, there is widespread agreement that people with poor English skills are treated as 'problem' cases.

For us, we are coming from a country that speaks French and we do not find help everywhere ... If the person is very patient it is helpful, but here sometimes no, some of them are laughing after you and it is difficult.

Female aged 25-45, ***** group discussion

The issue of language and cultural difference is highlighted in the ***** group. As the BME community in ***** is so small, respondents say that services (both public and private) are not used to dealing with their needs. Many feel they are treated more suspiciously than White people – especially the Muslim residents who wear traditional headdress. One woman gave the example of how she went into an estate agents to rent a property and staff insisted on checking her bank details for sufficient funds.

They don't have the talent to deal with foreigners, because they have to go

through like a police type of work. We have to check the bank, my bank in Scotland.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Customer care

There are a number of customer care issues that are highlighted in the groups. Poor customer care processes along with outcomes tend to form the basis of how people judge public services – particularly the local council. The issues raised in the groups are:

- lack of responsiveness and feedback to enquiries;
- little or no information or feedback on complaints – in fact many believed complaining to the council was futile as the complaint is often simply forgotten about;
- slow responses to requests for services, such as housing repairs; and
- a general lack of trust in the council to carry out its duties in an efficient and timely manner.

The following responses are typical of the discussions in the ***** groups:

You are just kind of left and if you don't put the effort in to find out what is going on you will not find out.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

They didn't keep me informed that much and I had to ring them up to get informed of what was going on with the defendant, the guy accused. Basically we had to ring them up to see what happened.

Male aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

They think that if they do complain, nothing is going to happen anyway, so they are not going to waste their time complaining in the first place. And that is how I feel, so I don't bother complaining.

Female aged 25-45, ***** group discussion

These types of responses are typical of residents irrespective of their ethnicity, but it is worth bearing in mind that specific ethnic groups are more likely to encounter these problems if they are heavier users of council services – for instance, Black Caribbeans are more likely to be council tenants.

The women in the ***** group were very different from the other groups. They have very limited direct contact with council services – because the traditional nature of their community means a male member of the family tends to be responsible for any dealings with the council or any other official body. As a result of this limited contact (and anecdotal stories from friends and family) they were more likely to assume that unsatisfactory outcomes of enquiries or requests are the result of racial discrimination by the council.

Education

In general, participants are positive about the education system – and most have had contact with the service. The most positive views are expressed about primary schools and adult education. There is, however, some criticism about secondary schools – particularly in the ***** group where teaching is felt to be poor.

*It hasn't got a very good ethos really. It is just like I went to ***** High School. And I don't know, it was just not very good at all and the teachers didn't bother with you.*

Male aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Racial discrimination in schools is not widely mentioned as a problem. Most feel that schools are trying to do a good job in promoting good race relations. However, there is some feeling particularly in the ***** and ***** groups that because of the small BME populations, schools are not adequately equipped to recognise and deal with discrimination. For instance one woman in ***** felt that not enough was done to deal with the bullying of her daughter.

Out of all the teachers in my children's school, there might be the odd teacher who is supportive, all the others won't really care about our children. They don't listen to our children. My daughter keeps saying they take the side of the White children and they scold the

Asian children. If other [White] pupils fight with the Asian children, the teachers turn a blind eye. My daughter tells me. But this has been going on in our schools and colleges for some time. My sons used to tell me before my daughter started to go to that school! This is what happens.

Female aged 45+, ***** discussion group

More diversity in the curriculum

Respondents believe that it is very positive that schools teach about different religions. However, ***** and ***** respondents say that they would like to see more focus on teaching children about the different cultures – which would help alleviate the racial stereotypes that many children pick up.

When you go to assembly you sing Christian hymns, you get readings from the Bible. You don't get people coming in and then giving Islamic talks or Hinduism talks or Jewish talks, you don't get that, you get the majority of Christian based teaching.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Housing

The issue of council housing was emotive in all the groups. In general, the view was held that council housing is poor quality and difficult to access – particularly for those from an ethnic minority. In MORI's work, satisfaction with council housing tends to be lower among ethnic minority groups – particularly among Black residents.

There is a strong feeling among all the groups that council housing provision for BME communities is poor because councils do not offer adequate housing for BME families – which tend to be larger than average white families – and that because of this, BME families tend to have to wait much longer to move to more suitable properties.

We need to move house because I am expecting a baby so we keep filling in forms, filling in forms and they just ask us to wait, wait, wait. When you pay your rent a week late three letters come so they just keep informing you we are still waiting for your rent.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

I personally know an ethnic family that has only three children, who's more likely to not survive without a house than maybe a couple that don't have any children, but because they're local they get priority, and I feel that's wrong, because children are priority over anybody really, no matter what ethnic group they come from.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

As well as access and quality, many (particularly among the ***** group) believe that the council allocates housing in such a way that encourages segregation of the different communities, which can exacerbate racial tensions.

I think the council here needs to try and incorporate it as a whole inner city, they need to look at the situation as a whole instead of separating all these areas, because then the main problem is separation. It creates the discrimination that we are now talking about.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Respondents are very critical of council housing repairs – in all groups. People complain of the length of time taken to complete repairs as well as the poor quality of the work. In MORI's experience these comments are common among all Council tenants, irrespective of ethnicity – although as mentioned earlier, in many areas BMEs are heavier users of council housing services, therefore more likely to experience these problems.

Housing is not too great, you wait forever for a repair. You know like I needed a repair for my bath, I had a problem with my bath when my bath was leaking. It took eight months for them to come out even though it was dripping through my light switch and I had to get my partner to sort the problem out himself. I am still waiting for them to retile the wall, bath panel on and sort out the leak. There is a bucket there.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Public transport

Poor public transport is mentioned spontaneously as a problem in the groups – specifically, unreliable and infrequent bus services. Again, these issues are mentioned by the public generally, but BMEs are more likely to rely on public transport (particularly in

areas of high deprivation) and therefore more likely to cite it as a problem.

*Initially the transport when I came here I found it very reliable. I mean the last six months it has become very difficult. I think that in terms of transport, they seem to have really sort of being going downhill in *****.*

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

For the Asian women in the ***** group, the lack of English is a barrier to using public transport – as well as the fact that many do not carry out any journeys that require using public transport. Those who use the hospital on a regular basis, are heavily reliant on ambulance service to pick up and drop off. Some group members are aware of a free bus service to the hospital, however are reluctant to use this service – partly because of a fear of travelling alone as they cannot speak English, but also because they are ‘set in their ways’ and do not want to change their routine.

I do get scared actually, that's why I don't get on the bus. I've never had to get the bus anywhere anyway. I've never needed to.

Female aged 45+, ***** discussion group

I've no idea which bus to take anyway. I've never bothered so how would I know?

Female aged 45+, ***** discussion group

Health services

As with council services, customer care aspects are important in determining how people perceive health services – as well as external factors such as media coverage. Despite the fact that in the groups, fewer people had had regular contact with the health service than they had with their council – health is seen as an important service. In MORI’s political research, the NHS is seen as one of the top issues facing Britain.

General perceptions of health services are they are ‘under-funded’, ‘poorly managed’ and ‘inefficient’. People report experiences of long waiting times in casualty as well as feeling they are ‘just treated like a number’. However, this is seen to be the case nationwide, rather than one limited to the BME experience.

They don't seem to understand your feelings, it just seems that you are a number and a statistic and they want to get rid of you. Quickly so they can do something else.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

When I've been to the main hospital I found the waiting time far too long, but I suppose that's a national problem, it's not so much related to anything about being a minority.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Most people in the groups report positive experiences of the health service (despite having a negative perception of the NHS overall). Race discrimination is not spontaneously mentioned as a problem, but some participants do feel that staff are not always equipped to deal with the needs of BME users. This was particularly the case in the women's group in ***** where there is a great need for translation services. Many say it is essential that they have a translator, otherwise there can be anxiety (or misunderstanding) during consultations. While some make use of the services, many feel it is not widely advertised and for others, there is a reluctance (and fear) to take up the service because they have never accessed services generally before.

When the doctor sends you off to the hospital, what good is that when you don't speak a word of English! They take your blood and do all sorts and you can't say anything because you don't know any English.

Female aged 45+, ***** discussion group

If you don't know the language, throughout your appointment all you can think about is how you are going to get home. You forget all about your illness, your ill health. You can't even explain why you are here to the doctor because you are feeling so confused about how you are going to make your way home afterwards. You can't think

about anything else! It causes so much anxiety!

Female aged 45+, ***** discussion group

Police services

Overall there are fairly negative views about the policing services, although there are positive reports in the ***** group, where the police have taken a more proactive and community-style approach in working with the local BME community to combat racial tensions.

I think the police, because of recent events and tensions towards minority people, they would pay more attention to [a BME person's] security than the other person, because they know he's more vulnerable.

Male aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

In the ***** groups, the police service is felt to be the only public service where there is clear and overt evidence of racial discrimination. Most base their opinions on personal experience – and any bad experience with the police in the past tends to shape their opinions overall, even if they have had subsequent better experiences. As well as personal experiences, many participants form their judgement of the police on stories they have heard – either through friends and family or in the press.

It must be borne in mind that a focus group situation can often generate negative opinions – and that British Crime Survey data from 2001/2 shows that while fewer people overall feel that the police are doing a “good” or “excellent” job compared with

2000, views among Black and Asian people are similar to those of White people.

Particular police policies are seen to unfairly impact on BME communities – specifically, **stop and search**. This is considered to be a major cause of distrust of the police, as Black people say that it is clear that they are stopped more often than people of other races – particularly young men. A common question they ask is: “Why am I more likely to be a criminal because I am Black?”

Participants also feel that the police revert to racial stereotypes when dealing with Black people – for instance that if you are Black, you are unemployed or a drug dealer.

I would definitely have to agree that the police are racist. I've had a few bad experiences with them. I generally get stopped and I assume it is because I am Black. I am automatically a suspect. I have been stopped, I have been searched, I have been taken to police stations, stripped, I have been beaten ... I was only 14 at the time.

Male aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Some of them make comments, like if I had nice clothes on “Where do you get the money for that?” Obviously I don't work because I am Black. If there is a gang of youths out on the street because they are Black they are obviously selling

drugs. They just make those stereotype judgements don't they?

Male aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

It is racist targeting on behalf of the police. We are a minority group, what are we, a 10 per cent minority in this country? Do you know what I mean? Yet we are all out drug dealing, we are that, we are the ones, we are the tax fraudsters.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

There is also a strong feeling among the ***** participants that Black youths are dealt with more aggressively than White youths conducting the same offence. Those we spoke to say that they regularly find that Black youths causing a disturbance are taken down to a police station without discussion, whereas White youths are dealt with more benignly. This finding also emerged in MORI's work for Southwark Council, which explore the views of teenagers to crime and policing.

We made a call we say there are kids fighting downstairs or something like that. When they came, if they are all Black they take them all and go without even asking what has happened and what is going on or something like that. But if the White people are there they just try to speak to them and ask them to behave themselves or something like that. When they come most of

them are English men so they just say OK, don't disturb neighbours and things like that and then they go.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Some of the Black respondents say they are treated with suspicion when they go in to *report* a crime. They find that they are regarded with distrust. This issue is also raised in MORI's work among Black communities in Southwark and Haringey.

Last year a police officer came to see us because my partner had a problem so when they phoned they didn't know we were Black people. I spoke to him and said we will be coming to that station and we went down there and as we arrived they saw we were Black people and they started checking everything. Even things that didn't relate to our problem. Asking these questions, phoning here, phoning there. We spent hours there before they told us why they asked us to come down there.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Changes to the police force

Some recognise that there have been improvements in the approach of the police force towards BME people since the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, with more open and honest communications and greater awareness of race relation issues. However, the general view is that

there is still much more to do to in order deliver the service without discrimination and to build up trust in the police force. In our work in Southwark, a change in the style of police was considered necessary – where police are more proactive in the community and begin to understand the needs and issues of the Black community.

I think you know when Sir Paul Condon made his speech it was quite a turning point in the legal system. However, I don't believe it has had a fast enough impact.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

I think that's probably true in a lot of ways, the police probably go out of their way, a bit more to be a bit more friendly, maybe after the Stephen Lawrence case and things, you know.

Male aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

I don't think they are open and honest enough actually. I don't know necessarily but there is always something that comes out a few months later and you read it in the papers and things like that. They are not really honest.

Male aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Employment opportunities

Participants in the ***** and ***** groups spontaneously mention race discrimination as a barrier to employment, whereas for those in the ***** groups, this is seen as less of a problem. Again, this highlights the different experiences of BME groups living in high and low BME penetration areas.

In the ***** group, there was some feeling that ‘local’ (i.e. white people), get priority over jobs and some report overt cases of racism where they have turned up for an interview and been refused the job – despite having all the necessary qualifications. There is a feeling that because of the competition over jobs (since ***** has no large industry) that race discrimination is widely practiced.

*I suppose that's because ***** doesn't have that many industries, I couldn't believe the jobs that are available that maybe automatically go to the, you know, the nationalities, British nationalities, so what can you do.*

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Among the women in the ***** group, there is a widespread feeling that local employers discriminate against BME people – and again, because of very few employment opportunities in general in the area, this competition exacerbates discriminatory practices.

*It's the same problem with employment.
Our children don't get offered the good
jobs. It's the White kids that get
offered the good jobs. Our children say
so themselves....*

Female aged 45+, ***** discussion group

Delivering race quality

What is race equality?

There is a very low awareness and understanding of the term ‘race equality’. Most describe race equality as receiving the same level of service and outcomes as everyone else – regardless of ethnic background. Beyond this, participants are unable to say what race equality actually looks like on the ground. Partly because they feel that knowing whether or not they are discriminated against assumes knowing the experience of others (i.e. they don’t know if they have had to wait longer for hospital treatment than a White patient). Nevertheless, they feel there are clear steps that can be taken to ensure BMEs receive the same service outcome as others. For instance, while they feel it is vital that everyone receives the same service outcomes – there may be different approaches that need to be taken into account to deliver the same level of service to BME communities – language provision is given as an obvious example.

Having everything equally, no matter your colour, no matter which race you belong to.

Female aged 25-45, ***** group discussion

What I am saying is I think we all need the same things, quiet place to raise kids, good schools, secure area, good jobs for everybody, communities for everybody. Because I am African, you can need some practical things but that

*doesn't mean it will stop you looking
for the main things in your life.*

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Delivering race equality

BME people who are well-integrated into the wider community, especially those born in the UK, see their needs for public services as the same as everyone else and do not feel they require any different approaches. The primary concern of all those we spoke to was to receive more efficient public services overall, rather than improving race equality specifically – and by improving public services in general, they feel their needs will be met.

Some spontaneously mention inequalities in outcomes for BME people (such as the number of BMEs unemployed, underachieving in school or living in poor standard housing). However, when prompted, they agree that if inequalities do exist, more needs to be done to balance outcomes – such as better employment opportunities and educational needs for BME communities.

*You don't have any choice, you don't
have a choice. You have to try and
improve. Because whatever you do,
there are Blacks here contributing to
the tax system right, there are Asians
who are contributing to the tax system.
You can't say, because they are Blacks,
or they are Asians, you are going to*

give them less treatments, or less of whatever they need from you.

Female aged 25-45, ***** group discussion

There is a very low level of awareness of race equality schemes currently in the public sector. When probed, people mention that the public bodies ‘must be doing something’ because it is their duty, but precise details are very sketchy. There are a few mentions of race monitoring when completing forms, which is simply considered to be a ‘tick box exercise’. In fact, many are suspicious why these are being collected – as many feel they may be potentially used against them. They also mention the unambiguous equal opportunities statements on advertisements for public sector jobs, including the police force. While these efforts are considered to be piecemeal, they are seen to be a move in a positive direction.

I was looking at one of the jobs advertised there, the City Council advertises their jobs, and some of the races and Asians, they don't have many people in the management positions. So they are looking for management trainees, and they did emphasise that they would welcome most applications from Black people. I mean that shows that they realise that other races have been suppressed before, for so long, and there is a need for other races in management positions, which is very good.

Male aged 25-45, ***** group discussion

However, they feel that, if there are policies in place, they need to be more widely publicised so that BME communities aware of what the is being done to meet their needs and can judge for themselves whether or not the polices are having an impact on the ground.

They might have their schemes for doing that but I don't know if the public at large, us as people, will take it in that way as if to say they are doing something about it. They might think they are going something about it when in fact they might not be doing enough.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

I think on the whole they do have those sort of policies, except that unless you are walking into the places where these are you will not know about them, and I got to know about these procedures because I went into the local library. I would think that if they were to do more it would be to sort of make them more, maybe leaflets, you know, dropping leaflets around houses and things like that.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Views on key outcomes

There is widespread support and approval of race equality objectives discussed in the groups (see below)

but few are aware of what is currently being done to meet these objectives.

Developing a workforce that reflects the ethnic make-up of the local community. This is considered to be very important, as it shows that equal opportunities are being offered in the public sector. Although some BME people in ***** were concerned that perceived positive discrimination would stir up hostility among the White community, the overall view is that it would be a positive move. They also feel it is important that BME people be employed at senior management positions to provide a BME-focused service from the top down. However, when it comes to dealing with someone in a public service, respondents are unconcerned whether the person is BME or White – so long as the service that they provide is efficient.

As far as I am concerned is there is not enough ethnic people in high positions when it comes to making powerful decisions. How many of us is there in the legal system?

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

So far as the person is efficient and does the job for me, that is OK.

Female aged 25-45, ***** group
discussion

To remove racial inequalities in outcomes (such as the number of BME people unemployed, under-achieving in school, poor standards of housing among

BMEs). There is a strong feeling that tackling these root causes of inequality is the most important factor in ensuring race equality overall. This is considered to be especially important especially for the younger generation, to allow them equal opportunities in later life.

The children with these families are the children that are going to be here in ten, twenty years time, trying to get jobs, and if they are better housed then they have a higher chance of doing better at school, then they're going to have a higher chance of getting jobs, instead of them getting to the age of say sixteen, seventeen, and having no qualifications and having to live on benefits, and then taking the money from the council. The council needs to look at getting them into good education so they can earn ... and then it'll resolve gradually, it's not going to happen overnight, but it'll gradually resolve the problem.

Female aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Involving local BME people in public services through consultations, community groups, or as councillors or board members. There is very little awareness of any schemes or forums that allow BME communities to have an input into public service delivery. A few in ***** mention an open forum to meet with Councillors that are organised to allow them to express their views but, as they do not receive

any feedback, this is seen as ‘paying lipservice’ to communication. In MORI’s experience of focus group research, consultation and community involvement is often endorsed, but the reality is that people do not tend to get involved – especially BME communities who tend to feel less engaged with public bodies generally. An example of this are local area forums, which were widely advocated by focus group participants as a way of involving the community, but tended to be attended in general and underrepresented by BME residents.

I think you get a monthly newsletter don't you? Your area councillor and local representative will be attending a community centre to air your views and then you go and they smile and there are airs and graces and see you later.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

The idea of consultation and community involvement is endorsed. However, people feel that public services need to be proactive in reaching the communities as many BME communities are simply not used to, or are suspicious of consultation. They suggest going down to the grass roots of the BME community when doing consultation and going beyond the ‘usual suspects’ and reaching out to the wider community.

Best place to learn what is going on in your community is by speaking to your shopkeepers. There are a lot of things that a shopkeeper can know about an

area is unreal. If they want to learn about your community or your culture they will go and speak to the doctor or the dentist or the one with the MSc or the one that is a graduate and intelligent. The one that has advanced a little bit out of the culture and moved upwards. And I don't think that is the best place for them to start. They need to talk to people that are going to face more inequalities, more hardship. The working class people.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

Encouraging interaction between people of different ethnic origins was especially important to the ***** respondents, who say they would like to integrate more to try to diffuse the racial tension in their area. They suggest more opportunities for people of different backgrounds to get together and therefore overcome racial stereotypes. In our work for the Commission for Racial Equality, young Asians in ***** mentioned more social opportunities to meet White residents – such as sports grounds and leisure centres as well as local events such as carnivals. The ***** group also mentioned a change in local housing policy which they believed inadvertently segregated people by only offering housing to BMEs in predominantly BME areas.

I think it's a good thing if the council can organise inter-faith or inter-religious groups or meetings. I mean if you put it in terms of sort of time for recreation together for all people ... a sort of friendly environment that actually can, you know, this warm feeling that you can change your stereotype about other people when you just get in touch with those people.

Male aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

Improving public confidence that these services will treat people equally. Respondents say that this will be achieved by clearly setting out policy frameworks whereby everyone (regardless of ethnicity) is equally satisfied with the service and that

practical steps are taken to ensure that everyone can access services – so providing better information as well as interpretation and translation skills where necessary. There also needs to be clear communication on the changes that are being made and how these changes are benefiting people on the ground.

Policy framework that is really open, you know, applicable to everyone, and they have to meet certain benchmarks. I think that's the best that you can help any community, whether it's ethnic or the local, that you have a standard, you have certain score charts.

Male aged 18-34, ***** discussion group

While those we spoke to say their basic needs for service delivery are the same as those in the White community, they can improve the practical delivery of these services to better meet the needs of BME people. Suggestions include:

More cultural diversity training of those working in the public sector. Knowing more about the culture and the customs of the local BME people will help community relations. For example, some mention that removing shoes off when entering a Muslim household is a basic courtesy – or not arranging appointments on Friday afternoons.

You see Jamaican people are like Africans – they are noisy people and

when it is very hot we are all out on the streets talking, shouting, singing and they call the police and the police keep arresting people. Why can't they ask what is going on here.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

What like taking your shoes off before you go into a Muslim person's house? It is not specifically important to me but I think to some people it is.

Female aged 18-30, ***** discussion group

- **The Council could be better prepared when dealing with BME people on pre-arranged appointments.** For example, using the information that they already have about the person, they would know that they are non-English speaking tenants and so could arrange for an interpreter to be present on a home visit, if necessary. This issue is specifically mentioned for the Council, rather than health services.

Before the Council comes to the house, they know that the person living in the house, they should have a file for each house, right. I think for in her case, right, being a French speaking citizen, why don't they send somebody who speaks French.

Female aged 25-45, ***** group discussion

In terms of improving race equality, people feel that there are structural issues to address – such as levels of deprivation among BME communities, but that similarly there needs to be wider diversity awareness so that public services better understand the needs of their clients. This, coupled with better information about services will help to improve the way BME communities view public services.

Appendices
