



National Body of  
Black Prisoner Support Groups

S.E.E.D. 4 BME OFFENDERS PROJECT



## Good Practice Guide

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A practical guide for practitioners  
working with BME communities  
within the Criminal Justice System

ChangeUp

Funded by the Home Office



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### **Who is this guide for?**

This guide is intended to be a resource to police, probation, prison and commissioners of services within the context of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). It identifies the key principles that need to inform service delivery to BME offenders, refers to current prison, probation and NOMS policies related to this area of work, and gives examples of effective projects working in partnership with prison, probation and police.

It also provides some guidance to commissioners of services in relation to the procurement of services from voluntary sector BME organisations.

### **The current situation**

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Offenders are over-represented at every stage in the criminal justice process from arrest to imprisonment. They are 5 times more likely to be subject to Stop and Search, are dealt with more punitively by the Crown Prosecution Service, and sentenced more severely by the courts. BME groups comprise approximately 8% of the population of England and Wales and yet make up over 20% of the prison population.

There have been several high profile reviews and reports which have examined the treatment of members of BME communities by the Criminal Justice agencies including:

- 1 The McPherson inquiry relating to the response by the Metropolitan Police to the murder of Stephen Lawrence;
- 2 The Commission for Racial Equality's review of HM Prison Service treatment of Zahid Mubarek, an Asian offender murdered by his cell mate at Feltham YOI in March, 2000;
- 3 HM Prison Inspectorate Review of the implementation of prison service race equality policies (Parallel Worlds).

These reports and related academic research into the treatment of BME groups in general and offenders in particular, confirms that racial discrimination still exists, both covert and overt, in British society. This remains the case despite the legislative and policy initiatives that have been introduced to combat racism and promote race equality. The evidence found in these inquiries points to a range of ways that racial discrimination is manifested including:

- a failure to understand and comply with legislative requirements;
- b continued presence of stereotypical attitudes and assumptions about ethnic minority groups held by some white staff working in Criminal justice agencies;
- c over-reliance on bureaucratic processes and monitoring regimes as a means of addressing race equality issues;
- d lack of power and opportunity for members of BME groups to articulate their concerns and influence decisions.

The position of BME offenders needs to be seen within a broader context. People from minority ethnic groups are amongst the most socially excluded and suffer inequalities of health and consequently poor quality of life. In comparison to their representation in the population, minority ethnic communities are:

*'... more likely than others to live in deprived areas; be poor; be unemployed, compared with white people with similar qualifications; suffer ill-health and live in overcrowded and unpopular housing. They also experience widespread racial harassment and racist crime and are over-represented throughout the Criminal Justice System, from stop and search to prison' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003).*

## **Why Engage with BME Voluntary Community Sector Organisations?**

A study undertaken in the borough of Enfield assessed the contribution that BME Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) organisations made to the community and the individuals living in the area.

(<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/research/index.asp?id=1322/>)

The research concluded that these organisations improved the lives of citizens by:

- Reducing isolation
- Addressing and combating racism, harassment and discrimination
- Enhancing neighbourhood safety
- Promoting user involvement/participation
- Empowerment
- Promoting regeneration
- Working in partnership/cooperation with other organisations
- Raising standards of living/improving users' quality of life
- Health improvement

These broad themes are key to the successful reintegration of offenders back into local communities whether they are currently subject to community orders or serving prisoners. By delivering services that help members of BME communities to overcome language barriers, access benefits and information about employment, and enhancing self-confidence and empowerment the BME VCS provides the 'social glue' so important to a healthy society.

Before beginning to address the various issues involved in developing services for BME offenders it is important to be clear as to the reasons for doing so. What are the advantages for your prison or probation area? How can effective engagement with BME VCS improve outcomes for BME offenders? Addressing the following questions can help to define your engagement and focus on its purpose:

- Do you deliver services to a large BME community?
- Are most of your service users from BME communities?
- Have you identified some inequalities in outcomes in relation to BME groups?
- Do you find it difficult to reach disadvantaged groups in the BME community?
- Do you have a skills and knowledge deficit in relation to the diverse groups you need to engage with?

Answering these and similar questions will help you to focus on the purpose of strengthening engagement with BME organisations working with offenders.

## **The Role of the Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector**

The voluntary sector may be well placed to counter this social exclusion. The government's commitment to an inclusive society is addressed in the Home Office strategy *Strengthening the Black & Minority Ethnic Voluntary Sector Infrastructure* (Home Office, 1999) which promotes social inclusion, race equality and justice. The report acknowledges that as well as the provision of tailored services and cultural activities, black and minority ethnic (BME) voluntary organisations also provide new employment, training and education opportunities, act as advocates for those who are disadvantaged and under-represented, and influence government policy and practice through campaigning. The report also acknowledges that the BME voluntary sector could contribute to a more just and inclusive society by, for example, tackling racism in its various forms, including institutional racism, racist attacks and harassment. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations *Compact Code of Practice on Black and Minority Ethnic Community Organisations* (2000) proposes that the BME voluntary sector uniquely provides a source of expertise on the needs of BME communities. They further suggest that it acts as a delivery agent for vital mainstream services for government and is a focal point for the development of individuals, particularly young people in BME communities, and that it is a source for developing leadership from BME communities. Finally, a number of authors suggest that BME voluntary and community organisations have a potentially important role to play in promoting social capital (Turner, 2001, Demos, 2003, Pilkington 2002). According to the London Health Commission (2002) the higher the social capital in a community, the better off people are in terms of quality of life, health and well-being and is therefore increasingly being seen as an alternative way to combat effects of socio-economic disadvantage and strengthening disadvantaged communities.

## **The Characteristics of the Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector**

There is a dearth of knowledge and information about the BME VCS. The Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO) reports that it has 9,500 BME VCO's on its national data base. However, a study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation identified a much smaller figure of 5,500 BME VCO's. It is difficult to account for these two very different estimates of the size of the BME sector but one possible answer lies in the highly informal and 'fluid' nature of a significant proportion of BME organisations. They can be loosely characterised as:

- 1 a formally constituted organisation that is registered with the Charity Commission;
- 2 a less structured but nevertheless distinct group of local citizens organised around specific issues;
- 3 faith-based groups that provide a range of services for local people connected with their specific religious institution (church, mosque, temple, etc.)

Thus, there will be 'mapping' exercises, or research initiatives, which apply criteria that will capture some but not all of these groups.

Additionally, there are significant differences between the wider, mainly white, voluntary sector and the BME voluntary sector. The Home Office, 1999 found that The Home Office, 1999 found that the BME voluntary sector is younger than the wider sector and has been created on a self-help basis by people directly affected by the problems it aims to address, in contrast to the wider sector which has tended to emerge mainly from middle class people taking a benevolent

interest in the disadvantaged. Furthermore, the BME voluntary sector is diverse; there are differences of ethnicity and culture, experience and struggles against racism, demography, patterns of settlement, gender, age, outlook, and religion as well as the distinctive problems of the UK's newer minority ethnic communities, particularly those which consist mainly of refugees and asylum-seekers

The BME Voluntary Sector is particularly fragile and characterised by funding shortages and a lack of engagement by mainstream organisations and agencies. Additionally, much of the sector has a strong and recent campaigning tradition. This often makes it feel very differently to the rest of the sector. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of Government service delivery contracts to larger organisations has meant that the BME sector continues to develop in a different way.

These factors are particularly prevalent in the BME Voluntary Sector that specialises in working with offenders and their families. There are nevertheless examples of excellent practice in relation to the effective delivery of services to BME offenders. Where these projects are well supported by criminal justice agencies they can make a real difference to reducing offending amongst BME offenders.

## **Who Can Deliver Services to BME offenders?**

Services for BME offenders can be delivered by BME VCS organisations and by 'traditional' mainstream VCO's that develop specialist projects to ensure that their organisations are accessible to as diverse a group as possible. For example, the Pakistani Resource Centre in Greater Manchester provides a range of services for the South Asian Community, and has a specific contract with Greater Manchester Probation Area to provide translation, interpretation, and support services for South Asian offenders subject to supervision by the GMPA. Alternatively, another Manchester based organisation, Partners of Prisoners and Family Support Group, has developed specific programmes delivered to Black prisoners in a number of prisons in the Northwest and Yorkshire and Humber regions. Similarly, a London based VCS employment and training agency, PECAN, a Christian faith-based organisation, has recently launched a programme focussed on meeting the needs of Black offenders released from prison. The latter two organisations would not define themselves specifically as BME VCS agencies but their commitment to promoting race equality has been manifested in the delivery of services for BME offenders.

## **Range of BME VCS Services**

The following categories of BME VCS services are not exhaustive but do represent the types of service that prison and probation have looked to the BME VCS to deliver.

- 1 Translation and Interpretation Services**-it is essential that service users whose first language is not English are provided with accurate information about criminal justice requirements and services. Their participation in report preparation and related assessments will need to be facilitated by accurate and independent interpretation services.
- 2 Cultural Awareness**-the criminal justice agencies are predominantly white organisations and rarely have within them the skills and knowledge to effectively engage with a diverse community. Recruiting BME organisations to provide training and on-going consultation regarding different cultures better equips the criminal justice system to deliver equitable services to all sectors of society.

- 3 **Accessing BME Communities**-criminal justice agencies need to communicate with a range of BME groups and individual citizens in order to understand their concerns and effectively respond to them.
- 4 **Resettlement and re-integration**-employment, accommodation, health (including substance misuse), finance and debt, children and families, and mentoring/support are all essential issues to be addressed in order to reduce re-offending. Effective delivery of these services to BME offenders is often enhanced by organisations which have roots in the BME community. Service users will more readily relate to providers who are likely to share their experiences of belonging to a minority race/culture.
- 5 **Black empowerment groups and Black history teaching**- One of the consequences of racism on members of BME communities is the adoption of negative views of their race and culture by members of BME groups. There is clear evidence that equipping black and minority ethnic offenders with a positive image of their race and their history is an important key to changing behavior.
- 6 **Parenting skills courses**-young offenders especially benefit from acquiring the skills and knowledge to enable them to take up their roles and responsibilities as parents.
- 7 **Faith based services/mentoring schemes**-faith based groups are an important agents for social cohesion in BME communities. They are able to reach into isolated and deprived areas and engage with disadvantaged and disaffected individuals, often through committed and knowledgeable volunteers/mentors.
- 8 **Services which are specific to black women offenders.** These organisations particularly address the problems arising from the 'double discrimination' of racism and sexism.

# UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES IN WORKING WITH THE BME VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

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The Compact Code of Good Practice on Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations identifies some key principles which should govern the way the statutory sector works and the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary sector work together:

- 1 vital that government and the BME voluntary sector engage in a positive relationship for mutual benefit;
- 2 recognition of the important role of the BME voluntary and community sector in representing diverse groups in society generally and refugee organisations and those supporting asylum seekers in particular;
- 3 commitment by both government and the sector to take forward Race Equality together;
- 4 ensure BME organisations are a part of consultation and policy processes through involvement of a large pool of individuals and organisations;
- 5 invest in the BME voluntary and community sector;
- 6 support the development of capacity and infrastructure in the BME voluntary sector;
- 7 recognise the importance of local partnership;
- 8 value and celebrate volunteering by BME people.

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS), prison, and probation services should incorporate these principles by embedding the following policies and processes in relation to commissioning services for BME offenders:

- 1 Commissioning and procurement processes should address race equality objectives by building capacity within both the BME and generic VCS working with offenders;
- 2 Objectives for race equality should be clearly communicated to VCS organisations working with offenders and those organisations that may wish to do so;
- 3 Services should be commissioned from VCS organisations whose services are equally accessible to all racial groups in the community;
- 4 Identifying opportunities to promote race equality through procurement and commissioning processes;
- 5 Implementing robust monitoring arrangements with the VCS that support race equality outcomes;
- 6 Facilitating (including where appropriate the provision of funding) VCS organisations' efforts to comply with race equality requirements.

In addition to activities related to commissioning, corrections agencies need to enhance their relationships with BME communities and organisations. This can be achieved by:

- implementing arrangements to ensure regular and effective communication between NOMS, prisons, probation and the BME voluntary and community sector;
- recruiting members of the BME community into the governance and policy making structures;
- ensuring that the work force reflects the race and ethnic distribution of the geographical area or client population that is being served.

### **Using Procurement to Promote Race Equality**

Prisons and probation should use their procurement activity to contract with organisations that deliver services to BME groups. This achieves more effective service delivery to BME offenders by recruiting the skills and knowledge required which may not be readily available in a predominantly white criminal justice organisation. Procurement should not be restricted to funding service delivery but should also contribute to longer term sustainability of BME organisations allowing them to develop new services and innovative ways of working.

The BME Voluntary sector has suffered disproportionately from funding short-term. The most important factor in determining success or failure in BME services generally and for offenders in particular, is the acquisition of long-term funding. NOMS, prison and probation must make every effort to deliver 3 year contracts with BME organisations with whom they contract. These contracts should reflect the principles of 'full cost recovery' in order that organisations can meet legitimate managerial and other overhead costs.

### **Public Sector Duties to Promote Race Equality**

Under the provisions of the Race Relations Act 2000 all public sector agencies are required to have Race Equality Schemes and associated plans which assess the organisation's capacity to promote Race Equality. Although progressive and anti-discriminatory practice should be embedded in all the activities of criminal justice agencies it is important to ensure that this focus is not diluted. HM Prison Service has established a Race Equality Action Group (REAG) which is responsible for reviewing and monitoring the Race Equality Schemes in the public sector prisons in England and Wales. There are also requirements under the RRA 2000 for public sector bodies to undertake Race Equality Impact Assessments whenever a significant new policy or initiative is to be implemented. The National Offender Management Service has recently undertaken a Race Equality Impact Assessment to determine whether its policies and procedures directly or indirectly impact on Black and Minority Ethnic groups. It particularly identified the risk to small BME VCS organisations of large scale commissioning and proposes to address this by ensuring that commissioners include these organisations in discussions to minimise these risks.

## PROMOTING RACE EQUALITY IN ORGANISATIONS

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Both the National Probation Service and HM Prison Service, as well as the National Offender Management Service have created organisational arrangements to help to ensure that both BME staff and service users are able to fully engage with the work of these bodies. Given the history of racism in the criminal justice system, and the importance of addressing the needs of minority groups in society generally and criminal justice agencies in particular, the role of support groups and specialist staff is an important strand in delivering equality of opportunity.

### ▪ **Black Staff Groups**

These are prison or probation support groups which primarily serve to provide BME staff with an opportunity to share concerns and identify barriers and solutions to their full engagement with the organisation. They can also provide an effective source of advice and information on how service activities can develop to enhance outcomes for BME offenders.

### ▪ **Race Equality Advisory Groups/Race and Diversity Managers**

A number of probation areas have established external advisory bodies to assist them in developing and implementing policies relating to promoting race equality (see Working with Minority Ethnic Communities: Models of Good Practice especially Hampshire and Merseyside Probation Areas). The membership of these groups will include individuals from both statutory and voluntary sector organisations that have specific skills and knowledge regarding the BME sector. Additionally, some probation areas have created dedicated posts to develop relationships between the service and BME organisations and communities. The job specifications can vary but many will include the creation and maintenance of directories and data bases of organisations and services relevant to BME service users. There are also examples where these staff will produce regular newsletters aimed at BME organisations informing them of current probation service developments and advice on how to effectively engage with the service.

### ▪ **Race Equality Action Teams/Race Equality Officers**

All prison establishments are required to have Race Equality Action Teams (REAT's) and dedicated Race Equality Officers (REO's). The REAT's function is to ensure that the prison regime is delivered equitably to all racial groups. It is recommended that REAT's membership includes representatives from BME VCS organisations to assist them to better understand the issues impacting on the BME prisoners. The REO acts as the executive arm of the REAT and is responsible for reporting on the results of race and ethnic monitoring of regime activities, the results of investigations into allegations of racist incidents, and to advise on the progress of the implementation of any relevant strategic activity relating to race equality.

## **Facilitating Consultation with BME Voluntary and Community Organisations**

There has been a long tradition about the denial of racism and the refusal of organisations to acknowledge its existence. Since the MacPherson enquiry into the police response to the death of Stephen Lawrence, and more recently the public inquiry into the murder of Zahid Mubarek while in custody at Feltham Young Offenders Institution, criminal justice agencies have undertaken a range of measures to address this. Nevertheless, there continues to be a lack of communication with the BME community and this has often meant that it is difficult for BME

groups to communicate their views about policy development, design of services, and related issues. Criminal justice agencies can address this problem by:

- a. working together with local BME groups and individuals to establish forums that meet regularly to learn about current developments in criminal justice and to share their views and concerns about the impact of the criminal justice system on their communities;
- b. establishing 'panels' or 'advisory groups' which contribute to the governance of their organisations by reviewing and advising on policy and practice initiatives.

*The Southwest Regional Reducing Re-offending Strategy Boards has created a BME VCS Advisory Group to help ensure developing services and policies promote services for BME offenders. Its purpose is to advise the SW Regional Offender Manager (ROM) on:*

- *The needs of BME offenders*
- *The suitability and effectiveness of provision*
- *Effective engagement with BME communities and organisations.*

*Membership of the group includes representatives from a wide range of BME VCS service delivery and infrastructure organisations. The group is formally convened by the SW ROM and expenses for attending meetings are met by the ROM's office.*

- c. publishing newsletters which can be an effective way of communicating agency policies and obtaining feedback from the BME community.

*Cheshire Probation Area regularly sends newsletter bulletins to the BME sector using the BME infrastructure networks to reach as wide an audience as possible. Information about funding opportunities, agency initiatives, and key staff appointments is combined with news about the BME sector in the local area.*

Regardless of which methods you use or how many the importance of committed engagement with BME community based organisations cannot be overstated. It needs to be more than simply a process of 'ticking the right box' and should be informed by a genuine desire to utilise whatever resources are appropriate and available to enhance the relationship between a predominantly white Criminal Justice System and a BME community that has not always experienced equal treatment and access to services. The powerful potential for criminal justice agencies and BME communities and organisations to work together is evidenced by some of the examples identified in this guide.

## **Getting Engaged-Practical Suggestions**

It is important to identify the degree of organisational commitment to increased engagement with BME groups. BME VCS agencies are vulnerable to even unintentional exploitation and there should be a significant degree of genuine commitment to this agenda. When approaching the BME community, criminal justice agency staff at whatever level should be clear about what is 'on offer' from their organisations.

- Have sufficient management resources been identified for this area of work?
- Is there a specific budget allocation for contracting with BME organisations?.
- Is there a policy commitment to working with the BME VCS?

## **Resources to help engage BME VCS in local areas**

The task of effectively engaging with BME Voluntary and Community Sector organisations can

be a daunting prospect. However, there are sources of information and assistance which provide useful points of contact and bring added resources to the task. The following is not an exhaustive list but does provide a good starting point:

- 1 Regional voluntary sector infrastructure organisations are bodies that co-ordinate and support the work of voluntary and community sector agencies. They will often have strategic links with specialist BME infrastructure and service delivery organisations. The infrastructure bodies will often have information (including directories) about the services in the area.

*Example-Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Forum supports a BME Information Service on a free web site. This provides the mechanism for a wide range of BME VCS organisations to share information with each other, and to access information about strategic initiatives, funding opportunities, and new services.*

- 2 Race Equality Councils have a range of responsibilities linked to the promotion of racial equality and combating discrimination. They can provide training and consultancy about policy and practice in working with BME groups. Information about those local organisations receiving funding from the CRE can be found at: <http://www.cre.gov.uk/about/localwork.html/>
- 3 Government Offices of the Regions have contact details for regional voluntary sector organisations as well as regional black and ethnic minority forum members.
- 4 Black and minority ethnic staff members in your prison or probation service may well have information and contacts with local BME organisations.
- 5 Independent Monitoring Boards may have members who can provide useful links to BME communities and given their knowledge of prison issues can be helpful in facilitating contact with local BME VCS agencies.
- 6 Probation Boards are required to reflect the diversity of local communities in their membership and there will be BME members of the board who will have knowledge of relevant BME organisations.
- 7 Faith based networks comprising BME led church and faith organisations.
- 8 Placing advertisements in the BME media which are clear about the nature and purpose of the information sought and give precise details about who, where, and how to make contact.

## **Forging the Relationship**

Obtaining information about the BME VCS is just the first stage. They will need advice and assistance to effectively engage with the criminal justice system. Many of the most effective groups will be quite small and may already be stretched to deliver the services they currently provide. Criminal justice agencies are often opaque organisations and it is rarely easy to gain access to them. Therefore, having acquired information about the key groups and individuals providing services your prison or probation area could:

- a Form a Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy Group to include staff and VCS representatives.
- b invite individuals from agencies to a meeting to discuss how to work together;
- c organize a networking event/seminar in order to share information about the profile of BME offenders and their needs, and to communicate information about corrections policy

and priorities. Such an event would also provide an opportunity for the BME community to articulate its issues and concerns, and to provide information about the sorts of services it provides;

- d arrange opportunities for individuals from BME organisations to tour a prison or spend time in a probation office to get first hand experience of the work of the corrections agencies;
- e offer to give presentations about the work of prison and/or probation to meetings and events held by BME groups and agencies;
- f negotiate with BME organisations to facilitate joint training events or offer places to BME groups on appropriate probation or prison training courses;

Many BME bodies will have minimal or no independent funding and may well require financial support to participate in any of the activities listed above.

## **Service Delivery**

BME Voluntary Sector Organisations will be working with offenders in either contracted or more informal partnership arrangements. These are valuable services and will enhance the quality of service to BME offenders in particular. In order to be as effective as possible they will need to be well supported and effective liaison and communication between probation and prison staff and staff from BME agencies is critical. It is important to identify and remove any potential barriers to service delivery to BME offenders by partner organisations. The service provided should be seen as an integral part of the over-all sentence plan whether delivered in custody or the community. This will be reinforced by well-managed working relationships between prison/probation staff and BME VCS partners. This can be achieved by:

### **a. Co-location of staff**

Where possible and appropriate, criminal justice agencies should arrange for staff from contracted BME organisations to be co-located in service delivery units. This strategy needs to be handled sensitively to avoid the risk of placing BME staff members in a vulnerable and isolated situation. The potential advantages of this approach include a greater credibility of the agency with BME offenders, effective sharing of skills and knowledge, and greater awareness by criminal justice agency staff of the issues confronted by members of BME groups.

### **b. BME 'Welcoming' Environment**

Closely linked to the above is the importance of creating an environment which reflects an organisation's commitment to promoting race equality and inclusion:

- Photographs and other pictorial decoration should have subject matter which represents the diversity of the community.
- Displays of leaflets, magazines, and newspapers should include those that relate to the BME community.
- Arrangements should be in place to ensure that all key information regarding agency policies should be made available in languages other than English.

### **c. Training**

Prisons, and to a lesser extent probation offices, are predominantly white environments and BME staff working in these settings can be very vulnerable. It will assist the delivery of services by BME VCS agencies if specific training is provided to equip BME staff to work in these

settings. The components of training programmes would include not only information about agency policies and objectives but also about the organisational culture including 'jail craft' and other informal but critical custom and practice. (Clinks has published training resource packs specifically for VCO's working with offenders in prison and in the community.)

#### **d. Effective Referral Procedures**

Timely and accurate referral processes are important to any successful partnership arrangement. In working with BME organisations sensitivity to language and cultural issues in communication is critical. The kind of information required by the partner organisation should be agreed and included in the contract/service level agreement. There should be accurate and comprehensive monitoring of referrals by the referring organisation in order to demonstrate the validity and effectiveness of the partnership. The contracting organisation should assess the potential need for the service and match this regularly with the rate of referral in order to ensure that BME offenders' needs are being met through use of partnership services.

#### **e. Monitoring and Review**

When negotiating the contract it is often helpful to consult with the organisation delivering the service regarding the criteria and measures they would see as important in demonstrating effectiveness. This will help to develop a sense of shared ownership of the project.

The success of any partnership or contractual arrangement depends on regular monitoring and review of the achievements of targets and outcomes, any barriers to effective working, and the identification of specific actions to address problems and improve service delivery.



## CONCLUSION

This guide has identified the legislative requirements and policy drivers which contribute to the development of effective partnerships between criminal justice agencies and the BME VCS. It has also offered some practical suggestions for taking this work forward. There can be difficulties and frustrations in this area just like any other. However, the history of racism and discrimination within the criminal justice system means that it is vital that these are recognized and overcome. The available evidence confirms that the expertise, knowledge and commitment of the BME VCS brings an enormous value to the work of criminal justice agencies, not only for BME offenders but for all service users.

### **Further examples of Effective BME Offender Projects**

#### **Provision of Black Empowerment Courses in Prisons**

Prison Link has created 2 corresponding Cultural Awareness Training Programmes for offenders and staff respectively. 'Equal but Different' is a highly structured programme delivered in a 2-3 hour session. Content includes performances of poetry and music illustrating both Asian and African Caribbean culture, overviews of Asian and Black African and Caribbean history, and an opportunity to discuss some of the issues that might have been raised by the presentations.

Prison Link has also devised a 10 week course for delivery at Swinfen Hall YOI. It is highly innovative in that it consists of parallel learning strands. Each weekly session lasts for 2 hours. The first hour is delivered to Black and Asian offenders separately and explores in depth the respective histories of each ethnic tradition/culture. The two groups are then brought together for the second hour which focuses on employment and education, money management, parenting skills, civic participation, and access to support agencies in the community.

#### **Southside Partnership**

This project provides support services to prisoners with mental health needs in 12 prisons across London. It has recently been funded by NOMS to deliver culturally specific resettlement services to BME women prisoners with mental health needs. It is an outreach service delivered both in prison and at point of release. It works in partnership with a range of specialised service providers as well as Women in Prison, Hibiscus, Inreach teams, Shelter, St. Giles Trust, and St. Mungos.

Funding for the Southside Partnership comes from a variety of sources including charitable and statutory funders.

#### **Prison Housing and Advice Service**

This is a generic service delivered by Shelter in several prisons in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region. Staff working closely with other services in the prisons in the region to provide an holistic service to those prisoners with housing needs.

The organisation recently introduced ethnic monitoring processes to determine the race and ethnicity of offenders accessing their services and this revealed that there were some communities that were under-represented in their services. As a result they have developed arrangements whereby they target BME offenders for referral. Additionally, they have published 5 self-help leaflets in the 6 most common languages in the prisons in which they work. In order to further inform their work with BME prisoners they convened a focus group of BME users to gain information about the accessibility of their services. This in turn has led to the formation of a consultation forum which regularly provides feedback on issues relating to language, and cultural relevance of services.

#### **Black Prisoner Support Groups**

Partners of Prisoners and Black Support Groups (POPS) deliver support groups for black prisoners in a number of prisoners in the Northwest and Yorkshire and Humber Regions. These

groups are facilitated by black staff employed by POPS and they are funded by individual prisons. They have two functions. The first is to act as a forum to discuss their experiences as black prisoners including dealing with racist incidents, barriers to access aspects of prison regimes, and generally managing within a white dominated organisation. The second is to provide opportunities for exploring wider aspects of black history and culture, their roles within their families and communities, and exploring ways to achieve greater empowerment in their lives. The potential for these groups to provide a valuable source of consultation and communication between the prison managements and the black prisoner population is currently being explored at several establishments. This includes the possibility of using these forums to equip prisoner representatives on Race Equality Action Teams.

## **Consortium Building and '2nd tier' Support**

### **Partnership in Reducing Re-offending (PiRR)**

The PiRR Project was one of five centrally funded Change-up projects which aimed to expand the capacity of the VCS working with offenders. One of the PiRR led consortia focussed on BME VCS organisations. Like the other theme based consortia it was brought together to facilitate engagement with the National Offender Management Service, including opportunities to bid for commissioned services from the Regional Offender Manager for London.

### **National Body of Black Prisoners Support Groups (NBBPSG)**

The NBBPSG exists to support organisations that work with black and minority ethnic offender in England and Wales. It managed the SEED 4 BME Project, one of five nationally funded Change-up projects in England and Wales. SEED 4 BME worked to develop regional networks of BME VCS organisations in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. One of the key mechanisms for driving this initiative is the convening of regional forums in the two regions. These forums sought to build capacity in the BME VCS sector working with offenders and to provide an influential voice for the sector in relation to the key criminal justice agencies. The NBBPSG has now received new funding from Capacity Builders to develop the networks and is now providing a service in the West Midlands region.

## REFERENCES

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### **National Offender Management Service**

Improving Prison and Probation Services: Public Value Partnerships Equality Impact Assessment Report

<http://noms.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications-events/publications/strategy/Contestability-EIA?view=Standard&pubID=403519/>

### **National Probation Service**

Go to [www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/](http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/) and follow the links to Diversity to access the documents listed below:

National Probation Directorate Best Practice on Diversity

Diversity Checklist for the National Probation Service- Guide to the Use of the EFQM Excellence Model

National Probation Service and National Probation Directorate Race Equality Schemes-Review of Progress Year 2

National Probation Directorate Associate Race Equality Scheme 2005

Heart of the Dance-A Diversity Strategy for the National Probation Service for England and Wales

Working with Minority Ethnic Communities-Models of Best Practice

### **HM Prison Service**

Go to [www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/abouttheservice/racediversity/](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/abouttheservice/racediversity/) where the following documents can be accessed:

Guidance to Policy Leads at HM Prison Service Headquarters- Assessing and Consulting on The Impact of Functions, Policies and Practices (Impact Assessment Explained)

Prison Service Associate Race Equality Scheme

Zahid Mubarek Inquiry

Parallel Worlds-A Thematic Review of Race Relations in Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Prisons

### **Commission for Racial Equality**

Go to [www.cre.gov.uk/](http://www.cre.gov.uk/) where the following documents can be accessed:

Race Equality in the Public Services

Race Equality and Public Procurement- A Guide for Public Authorities and Contractors

### Other relevant publications

Challenging Institutional racism: a toolkit for the voluntary sector (London Voluntary Sector Council and ROTA 2002)

web site: [www.actionlink.org.uk/Guides/ViewGuide.cfm?GuideID=29](http://www.actionlink.org.uk/Guides/ViewGuide.cfm?GuideID=29)

Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations Compact Code of Good Practice (Active Community Unit)

web site: [www.thecompact.org.uk/module\\_images/Black%20%minority%20Ethn.pdf](http://www.thecompact.org.uk/module_images/Black%20%minority%20Ethn.pdf)

Capacity Building Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations

MacPherson, Lord (1999) *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, London: HMSO CM.4262-1

<http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/sli-00.htm/>

The Role of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Sector in promoting social inclusion, reintegration and quality of life-A case study of the London Borough of Enfield

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/research/index.asp?id=1322/>

McLeod M, Owen D & Khamis C (2001) *Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations: their role and future development in England and Wales*. London: Policy Studies Institute

Pilkington P (2002) 'Social capital and health: measuring and understanding social capital at a local level could help to tackle health inequalities more effectively'. *Journal of Public Health Medicine*. 24 (3): 156-159.

## NOTES

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