

Housing Black & Minority Ethnic Communities

This briefing explores what research tells housing providers about the housing preferences and needs of BME communities. We have also included information on the legislative duties of housing providers and the requirements of the Supporting People programme on 'Fair Access, Diversity and Inclusion'. This briefing is intended to be a starting point and, as usual, VHG have included a Resources section full of useful contacts and further information.

Addressing the housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic People

The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions' (DTLR), now the ODPM, Housing Directorate produced an Action Plan which aimed to bring together the full range of housing policies and initiatives to tackle the issues relevant to the people of Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

The report identified the current main housing related problems faced by BME groups as:

- over-representation in unfit properties and run-down areas
- some groups (particularly some Asian groups) are less likely to be in social housing. This can be because of a preference for owner occupation; or an inability of local authorities and RSLs to reach out to BME groups
- under-utilisation of supported housing services because of lack of awareness or inappropriateness of the services available; services need to take cultural and religious sensitivities into account in their design and communicate these to target audiences
- racial harassment
- homeless applicants, including BME groups, often end up with the worst social housing

These are mainly urban issues, and the policies set out in the DTLR's Action Plan focussed on these areas. However, issues faced by BME groups in more rural areas cannot be ignored, particularly in light of the dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees.

The Action Plan stated that local authorities needed to take a more strategic approach to housing through collaborative working and more systematic planning. There is an expectation that they comply with key codes of practice, such as the statutory *Code of Guidance on Homelessness and Allocations*, the CRE's *Code of Practice on Rented Housing* and the new *Code of Practice for social landlords on tackling racial harassment*.

When drawing up their housing strategies local authorities are encouraged to work closely with BME groups. Best Value housing reviews must involve the BME community and reflect their views on the performance of the local authority. Monitoring by local authorities of delivery of services and the involvement of BME groups will form part of the Best Value inspection programme. The Housing Corporation is in the process of setting up a similar regime for RSLs, which will focus on good practice towards BME tenants as one of five main themes.

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

Under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 public bodies have a duty to tackle unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between persons of differing races. This duty applies to all local authorities, Government Departments and a wide range of public bodies, including the Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation through its Regulatory Code and Guidance are required to disseminate information to RSL's and monitor their performance as part of its regulatory and inspection function.

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What does the research tell us?

- **Homelessness:**

The literature reflects a lack of reliable data on homelessness experienced by different ethnic groups and much of the limited research evidence concentrates on London. Members of black and minority ethnic groups appear less likely to be homeless on the street and therefore tend to be less visible. BME homeless young people were less likely than Whites to have slept rough and more likely to have stayed with friends and relatives. Members of black and minority ethnic groups make up 22% of households accepted by local authorities as homeless and are therefore considerably over-represented.

- **Racist harassment:**

Members of ethnic minority groups were four times more likely to see racist harassment as a serious problem in their area than Whites (survey of English Housing 1998 – 2000). The research evidence suggests that harassment associated with residence remains widespread and can have a negative effect on household choice of residential area. Studies have highlighted problems of both Asian and African/Caribbean communities generally and of both Black women and of White women with Black children children of mixed heritage. Researchers have criticised the effectiveness of responses to racist harassment and the take-up of good practice on tackling it by official bodies, including social landlords.

- **Segregation:**

After five decades of settlement, Britain's BME population is still disproportionately concentrated in the poorest urban, usually inner city, locations and in the most deprived housing. The separation of groups living in different localities in itself is not necessarily a bad thing; it is the continuing association between BME segregation and deprivation that is problematic. Clustering has many positive attributes, which are evident through extended social and cultural relations, social support, a sense of belonging and well developed community infrastructures. There is a need to widen the housing choices of minority ethnic groups, both through providing support for those who wish to move away from the established ethnic cluster, and by widening housing options within the ethnic cluster for those who wish to stay.

- **Housing needs:**

Housing needs studies serve to highlight the diverse needs of the different communities and the commonality of housing experiences amongst some groups. All communities share the desire to live in areas where there are other members of their community and cultural and religious facilities close by and this becomes particularly important in later life. Common problems are affordability in terms of housing and access to social housing for some groups, while overcrowding and poor housing conditions are particularly important for some groups. Because of the public policy and investment focus on social rented housing rather than private sectors, there may be too few means for policy makers to respond to housing and allied disadvantages for some of the communities whose needs are being researched.

- **Housing preferences and pathways:**

Most studies on preferences of BME communities have tended to show the long-term wish for owner-occupancy, sometimes coupled with negative perceptions about social rented housing. Much housing research or local consultation is of an 'ad hoc' character, aimed at uncovering present experiences or conditions, and rarely being able to take a longer view. There may be generational as well as ethnic group differences in propensity to migrate out of established areas of settlement. Caution is required on expressed tenure preferences, which may be amended or revised over time.

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Tenure by ethnic group

Tenure	Ethnic Group %					Total
	White	Black	Indian	Pakistani/Bangladeshi	Other	
Owned Outright	28	9	24	17	12	27
Buy + Mortgage	43	30	57	43	34	42
Council Tenant	15	33	5	17	18	15
HA Tenant	5	16	3	9	11	6
PRS	10	12	11	14	25	10
All	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 1998 – 2000 SHE Data

● **Regeneration and Neighbourhood renewal:**

There is significant lack of information about minority groups and the impact of regeneration policies and programmes on them. Researchers have argued that renewal or regeneration investment has not led to enough explicit or lasting benefits for minority ethnic communities, that targeting was ad hoc, that funding was too short-term, and that black-led organisations were not accorded a sufficient role. Targeting resources on council estates has been criticised as sidestepping the problems of deprivation because the most disadvantaged areas for minority ethnic groups are of mixed tenure.

● **Positive neighbourhood strategies:**

In view of concerns about segregation, researchers have studied the issue of movement by minority ethnic groups into more peripheral areas and of overcoming barriers to entry to social rented housing estates outside existing areas of settlement. There is a need for sensitive and well-tuned policies to support minority ethnic households now wishing to move to non-traditional areas within the social rented sector. Some housing providers have begun to implementing strategies of creating 'settlement nodes' or clusters in more outlying areas, perhaps underpinned by inter-agency initiatives and tenant support. Shared ownership is potentially important to minority ethnic groups but affordability of even low cost homeownership is an important issue for them.

● **Housing institutions and housing consumers:**

Research from the 1960s to the 1980s demonstrated that there were discriminatory practices against minority ethnic groups in both social and private sector housing. Some directly racist practices may persist, but overt racism has far less purchase in housing practice today. Recent research suggests that for housing associations, BME housing and staffing strategies are not necessarily a firm part of business planning and organisational arrangements at a strategic level, while evidence about local authorities is patchy.

● **Participation and involvement:**

The evidence suggests that BME tenants of councils and housing associations have been excluded rather than fully involved, while households may not even be aware of tenants' associations, let alone members of them. BME housing associations represent about 1.5% of housing association activity. Although firmly established in the policy arena, the minority ethnic associations have remained individually vulnerable to distinct pressures related to their funding opportunities, stock acquisition, limited assets, size, and periods of growth. Despite their small stock sizes, the black and minority ethnic housing associations have played crucial roles in giving minority ethnic participants a voice in housing policy and implementation and have provided valued role models within minority communities. BME groups tend to be under-represented in the professional/technical workforces of white-led housing associations and local authorities.

The extract above is from a summary of a literature review of published research on housing and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in England. Commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister the review was carried out by Dr Malcolm Harrison and Dr Deborah Philips of Leeds University

*Further information is contained in the full report: **Housing and Black Minority Ethnic Communities: Review of the evidence base** ISBN 1 85112618X available from ODPM Literature Centre, PO Box No 236, Wetherby LS23 7NB Tel: 0870 1226 236 Fax: 0870 1226 237 e-mail odpm@twoten.press.net*

RESOURCES:

Commission for Racial Equality

St Dunstan's House
201-211 Borough High Street
London SE1 1GZ
Tel: 020 7939 0000
Fax: 020 7939 0001
e-mail info@cre.gov.uk

Norwich & Norfolk Race Equality Council

Boardman House
Redwell Street
Norwich NR2 4SL
Tel: 01603 442211

Federation of Black Housing Organisations

1 King Edwards Road
London E9 7SF
Tel: 020 8533 7053
Fax: 020 8985 9166
www.fbho.org.uk

Housing Corporation

Waverley House
7-12 Noel Street
London W1F 8BA
Tel: 020 7292 4401
Fax: 020 729 4401
www.housingcorp.gov.uk

National Housing Federation

175 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8UP
Tel: 020 7278 6571
Fax: 020 7833 8323
www.housing.org.uk

Refugee Council Eastern Region

1st Floor, 4-8 Museum Street
Ipswich
IP1 1HT
Tel: 01473 297900
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

ODPM Literature Centre

PO Box No 236
Wetherby
LS23 7NB
Tel: 0870 1226 236
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Supporting People Services

Under the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) for Supporting People, Fair Access Diversity and Inclusion is one of the four core objectives and requires 'a commitment to the values of diversity and inclusion and to practice of equal opportunity (including accessibility in its widest sense) and the needs of black and minority ethnic service users are appropriately met'.

In order to achieve performance level C there are six standards to be met and evidenced. The main focus being placed on written policies covering equal opportunities (EOP), anti-discriminatory practice (ADP) and harassment; provision of information and service user involvement.

Organisations will be expected to demonstrate that their EOP covers discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, religion, race, disability, nationality and sexuality in accordance with the following legislation:

Human Rights Act 1988

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Race Relations Act 1976

Race Relations amendment Act 2000

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Anti-discriminatory practice needs to show what procedures are taken in order to ensure that discrimination is identified, challenged and prevented from occurring, demonstrating the effective application of equal opportunities policy. Policy on harassment needs to show how complaints are investigated and carried forward, what action will be taken against perpetrators and what measures will be taken to prevent harassment.

All policies and procedures need to be up-to-date, ensure fair access to the service and apply to both staff and service users and be made available to anyone requesting a copy. There is an expectation that the policies will be covered as part of staff induction programmes and that staff will be able to describe the key features of each. In addition, staff should be trained to understand discrimination and the various forms it can take.

Finally, services will need to identify the needs of their service users at the assessment stage in order to meet the sixth standard of providing information about the availability of cultural and religious organisations and centres in their locality.