The journey to race equality

Delivering improved services to local communities
The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local and national services for the public. Our work covers local government, housing, health, criminal justice and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we monitor spending to ensure public services are good value for money.

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Introduction

The Government believes that public sector authorities have a special responsibility as employers, policymakers and service providers to deliver race equality. They should set the pace on race equality and lead by example.

New Laws for a Successful Multi-Racial Britain (Ref. 1)

Why race equality matters to the public sector

1. People from black and minority ethnic communities experience multiple inequalities: 70 per cent live in the 88 most deprived neighbourhoods of the UK and they are more likely to be poor, with lower incomes spread across larger household sizes (Ref. 2). They also continue to experience discrimination, stereotyping and racism. These overall patterns also vary between and within different ethnic groups.

2. The fact that race inequalities still exist is partly explained by the slow and sporadic progress being made by public services, despite 27 years of race relations legislation. Race inequality is visible and stark, yet local agencies find it difficult to identify race equality outcomes. Much activity is focused on policy and process, without a clear vision of the end result.

3. Race equality is critical to delivering good-quality public services and better quality of life for everyone. The drive towards citizen-focused delivery recognises that the needs of individuals varies according to their particular circumstances. Understanding the needs of different black and minority ethnic communities and ensuring that they are treated fairly and with respect, is one of the key factors to modernising public services.

A modern, fair, effective criminal justice system is not possible whilst significant sections of the population perceive it as discriminatory and lack confidence in it delivering justice.

Race and the Criminal Justice System (Ref. 3)

4. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (the Act) underpins the drive to achieve race equality. It requires that public services identify where inequality exists and address it in a systematic and coherent way (Ref. 4). But the Act goes further. All public sector organisations now have a positive duty to promote race equality. It makes race equality a driver for service improvement and better staff management.

We have defined black and minority ethnic communities to include the following census categories of ethnicity: White Irish, White Other (including white asylum seekers and refugees), Mixed (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other mixed background), Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Any other Asian background), Black or Black British (Caribbean, African or Any other Black background), Chinese, and any other ethnic group.
Delivering race equality benefits everyone

5 Race equality is an issue that affects all public services as local populations become increasingly diverse. The dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees means that new ethnic groups are increasingly present in local areas, for example, from sub-Saharan Africa, eastern Europe and the Middle East (Ref. 5). Black and minority ethnic groups are younger. This means that over time the proportion of people of black and minority ethnic origin will rise, and therefore the number of older people of black and minority ethnic origin requiring care will increase (Ref. 2). As black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be disadvantaged and socially excluded, they are also more likely to be heavy users of public services.

6 Race equality is applicable to areas of low and high black and minority ethnic populations. The duties under the Act apply to all. Black and minority ethnic communities have traditionally settled in urban areas. This is likely to change in the future as British born children of migrants are more likely to live in areas of lower density black and minority ethnic populations than first generation migrants (Ref. 5). Small, isolated and vulnerable groups can experience the effects of discrimination more acutely (Ref. 6). Public services must take a new approach, focusing on their diverse communities’ level of need, rather than on the size of their black and minority ethnic populations.

7 Delivering race equality requires a consistent and systematic approach to improving customer service, staff management and the quality of life experienced by diverse black and minority ethnic communities. This means tackling differences in outcomes in a range of areas including service delivery, access to services, employment, trust and confidence, community relations and involvement in decision-making. These improvements have a direct benefit to the whole of society (Ref. 7).

The historical context

8 Black and minority ethnic communities have been a significant and growing part of the British population for 50 years. The Race Relations Act 1976 marked the beginning of a change in how public services tackled racism and discrimination against these communities (Ref. 8).

9 In the 1980s public services started to address equalities issues through ‘equal opportunities’, typically creating policies and delivering awareness training for staff. The essence of this good practice was later undermined by elements of the media as being symptomatic of the ‘loony left’, and many public services distanced themselves from it (Ref. 8). This has left a legacy where people can feel uncomfortable about discussing race equality openly and initial progress has slowed.
Consequently, race equality is often viewed as a negative issue consisting of multiple ‘problems’ that are the direct result of overtly racist attitudes and behaviours. Discussions focus on how difficult it is to achieve equality and the apparently insurmountable barriers that get in the way. People who have different needs and aspirations are viewed as a problem rather than a resource, creating ‘extra’ work, additional to mainstream business.

The negativity and discomfort with which race issues are viewed are fundamental to explaining why so little progress has been made in the last 27 years. This report aims to help local agencies move beyond this legacy and understand race equality as a positive driver for improvement.

The Audit Commission’s contribution

At the beginning of this study many of our key stakeholders told us that very few agencies were developing a systematic and coherent approach to achieving race equality, and that many were struggling to define tangible outcomes. They said that public service staff lacked the relevant skills and knowledge to move forward.

Public services are also facing a significant challenge in responding positively to an issue that has historically been seen as a problem. We discovered that the issues local agencies found most challenging did not differ across sector or locality. We designed our research to share learning from the experience of those organisations that have most direct contact with the general public in local government, health and the criminal justice sectors.

We decided we could provide most help to those struggling with these issues by focusing on three key questions:

- What does race equality mean?
- How are public services currently positioned to deliver tangible race equality outcomes?
- What are the critical building blocks for moving forward successfully?

We recognise that equality and diversity are important elements of improving services for local communities and that they are fundamental to the reforming agenda for public services. While our increasing commitment to equality and diversity reflects this, we acknowledge that the Audit Commission’s own approach to race equality must be further improved. This research forms part of that commitment and contributes to a wider body of evidence about what works in equality and diversity, drawn from our work across the public sector.

We have taken a collaborative and learning approach, reflecting that we and many other public services are still at an early stage of the journey. We focus on positive examples of emerging practice and a solution-focused approach to the inevitable mistakes made as we manage significant change.
About this study

This report provides a framework to help public services think through what race equality means for their localities and manage their approach better. We believe that the learning from this research can be applied to other strands of equality work and to types of organisation not directly involved in the study.

- Chapter 1 explores what race equality means to local black and minority ethnic communities and sets out a framework for developing a local definition based on specific outcomes.
- Chapter 2 looks at how local agencies are responding to the renewed agenda for race equality and the key challenges they face.
- Chapter 3 examines the common barriers to progress and challenges the assumptions that underpin them.
- Chapter 4 highlights the elements needed to make progress along the journey to race equality.
- Chapter 5 outlines what can be done to encourage and sustain progress.

Our findings, analysis and recommendations are available in this report, and in a one-page summary and four-page briefing. A self-assessment tool accompanies this report. It is designed to help facilitate discussions within local agencies about where they are now and what needs to improve. A briefing for members and non-executive directors will be published at the same time as the report and we will hold a series of regional conferences in spring 2004. Finally, we are developing a tool for use by our auditors and inspectors to help improve local performance in race equality.
What does race equality mean?

People of black and minority ethnic origin continue to experience racial discrimination, stereotyping and differences in outcomes. Local agencies need a practical vision for race equality, focusing activity on improving the quality of life of black and minority ethnic communities.
Delivering race equality means making significant changes to improve the quality of life experienced by all black and minority ethnic groups. Public services need to find a realistic and achievable vision, based on a good understanding of local needs and aspirations. This chapter explores how black and minority ethnic communities experience public services. It looks at the improvements they want and describes a framework for defining local race equality outcomes.

What does ‘race equality’ look like?

‘Race equality’ is a term widely used by professionals across the public sector but many people of black and minority ethnic origin have a limited understanding and awareness of it (Ref. 9). This may be because public services are themselves often unclear about its precise meaning and find it hard to paint a picture of what race equality looks like locally.

As people find it difficult to talk about race equality, it continues to be an issue that is avoided. Public sector staff can feel uncomfortable because of the negativity with which race equality is often associated. There are also many reasons why people of black and minority ethnic origin are reluctant to speak out, for example:

- not wanting to draw attention to being different;
- fear of being stereotyped as a troublemaker or sounding like a ‘broken-record’;
- futility of continuously raising issues when nothing has changed in the past; and
- fear that identifying problems will reinforce the negative perception of race issues.

Local perceptions of discrimination

Although some people from black and minority ethnic groups find it hard to say what ‘race equality’ means for them as individuals, they do have common perceptions about where inequality exists (Box A). Most describe race equality in general terms, as receiving the same service and outcomes as everyone else, regardless of their ethnicity. They say that it is hard to identify whether they are personally discriminated against because they do not know what others experience (Ref. 9).

Box A

Examples of local perceptions of discrimination

- Unfair distribution of housing, with priority given to white people over black and minority ethnic families with children.
- Police services treating black and minority ethnic communities less favourably, particularly black males.
- Discrimination in employment where ethnicity is felt to be a barrier to both entry to and progression within the labour market.
● Poor educational attainment, particularly for African Caribbean boys, where teachers are thought not to encourage black pupils and fail to take account of children’s experience of racism.

● Poor communication from health professionals, for example, about why a treatment is necessary.

Source: Public sector approaches to race equality – research study conducted for the Audit Commission (Ref. 9) and Stereotyping and Racism (Ref. 10)

The national picture

National patterns of race inequality are also widely recognised (Box B). They are often easy to observe locally, for example, the lack of black and minority ethnic senior managers employed within public services. It is important to note that the experience of black and minority ethnic communities is not homogeneous. These patterns vary both within and between different ethnic groups and localities (Ref. 2).

Box B

Examples of race inequality

● Employment – Overall, black and minority ethnic people are more likely to be unemployed, irrespective of their qualifications, place of residence, sex or age. They are less likely to hold senior management positions.

● Education – Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils experience lower levels of educational attainment. Black pupils are more likely to be excluded from school.

● Health – African Caribbean people are more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia.

● Social services – Adults and older people from black and minority ethnic communities are less likely to be provided with social services following an assessment. Only 33 per cent of all social services users in England thought that matters of race, culture and religion were noted by local authority social services staff.

● Policing – Black people are eight times and Asian people three times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people.¹ There is a strong perception among young black and minority ethnic people that the police assume that they are potential criminals. Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people are more likely to be victims of crime.

● Housing – Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are more likely to live in homes that fall below the Decent Homes Standard than white households.

Source: Audit Commission review of national data on outcomes experienced by people of black and minority ethnic origin (Refs. 2, 3, 11, 12 and 13)

¹ This figure is under review by the Race and Criminal Justice Unit at the Home Office.
What do black and minority ethnic people experience?

Black and minority ethnic people experience racial discrimination and stereotyping...

24 When asked about their experience of public services, people of black and minority ethnic origin report specific incidents of discrimination and stereotyping. One in six say that they have experienced racial discrimination, abuse or harassment when contacting a public service (Ref. 11). Some believe that, although there are now fewer instances of direct racism, it has not disappeared. They are simply discriminated against in more subtle ways (Ref. 10). People told us that assumptions were made about them because of the way that they dress, their names and the colour of their skin.

25 Such comments come from areas with high and low black and minority ethnic populations. It is not an issue that only occurs where communities are isolated. And it is not simply a matter of white British people discriminating against black and minority ethnic people. Discrimination also happens within and between black and minority ethnic communities, for example, between new groups of asylum seekers or refugees and more established black and minority ethnic groups (Ref. 10).

... and are more dissatisfied with public services

26 Overall, people of black and minority ethnic origin are more likely to be dissatisfied with public services than white British people, and public services are more likely to fall short of their expectations (Ref. 12). The satisfaction levels of different black and minority ethnic groups also varies.

27 The underlying reasons for such differences are complex. They reflect individual experiences of discrimination and stereotyping, and the following factors may also play a part:1

- demographic factors, such as the younger age profile of black and minority ethnic communities;
- social and cultural factors that impact on the propensity for some groups to express dissatisfaction openly;
- black and minority ethnic people are more likely to live in areas of high deprivation; and
- lower expectations of public services due to poorer access to information, services and decision-making processes.

28 Measures of satisfaction need to be interpreted carefully. They can be a useful indication of where improvement needs to be focused but must be supplemented with other, more specific information about the experiences, needs and expectations of different groups. Public services must meet the needs of all parts of the communities they serve, recognising that different groups may report varying levels of satisfaction.

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1 Further research is needed to understand fully the true effects of these factors.
What do black and minority ethnic communities expect from public services?

Black and minority ethnic communities can easily identify the public service issues that concern them most. These are no different to many of the issues that concern white British people (Ref. 9). They relate to quality of life, such as wanting more for young people to do, less crime and fear of crime, better health, more employment opportunities, better secondary education and public transport.

In common with most of the population, black and minority ethnic communities believe that the quality of public services needs to improve (Ref. 9). They have important views on which aspects need most attention, based on their specific experience, for example:

- many say that council and health services are inefficient and slow; and
- some told us that they receive a poor level of customer care and often feel as if they are being treated like a number rather than an individual.

More needs to be done to improve the level of customer care experienced by people of black and minority ethnic origin. By training staff to have a good customer focus and work with culturally diverse populations, public services will enhance their user-focused approach to service delivery. This will mean that staff identify the specific needs of the individual, rather than make assumptions about groups.

Outcomes to improve quality of life

Public services need to have a practical vision for race equality in order for activity to be clearly focused on improving the quality of life for all black and minority ethnic communities. It must be based on a good understanding of the current areas of inequality and describe how things will be different in the future. Although the significant areas of discrimination are known, many local agencies still struggle to be specific about what race equality means locally.

We have identified key race equality outcomes where clear and focused action will improve the quality of life of black and minority ethnic communities (Exhibit 1). It is for local agencies to think through the action necessary to deliver those outcomes in a way that reflects local circumstance and the experience and aspirations of different ethnic groups (Box C). The outcomes interrelate; focusing on a single area in isolation will not be enough. However, to make the work manageable, public services will need to prioritise the order in which they are tackled. Case studies 1-3 illustrate how some agencies are rising to the challenge.
Exhibit 1
Local outcomes for race equality
Local agencies will need to deliver these outcomes in a way that reflects local circumstance.

Box C
Examples of what each outcome could look like locally
This list is not exhaustive but gives a flavour of what race equality could look like locally. In addition, the library of local performance indicators developed jointly by the Audit Commission and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) include measures related to race equality and diversity.
Influence over decision making
Local black and minority ethnic communities are engaged in public services through democratic processes, consultation and community groups.

Access to services and information
People are aware of the services they need and are able to access them easily. Services are tailored to meet the specific needs of people of black and minority ethnic origin where necessary, including physical location, cultural competence, language and translation.

Employment
The organisation works towards removing the barriers to and actively promoting the recruitment, progression and retention of black and minority ethnic staff. The organisation supports and encourages improved achievement within the labour market of all local ethnic groups.

Positive community relations
Good race relations between different ethnic groups is actively promoted. This includes shared community values and principles, knowledge, understanding and respect for others.

Community-wide trust and confidence
Local black and minority ethnic communities feel fairly treated, feel that they receive services that appropriately recognise their differences and are as satisfied as white British people with public services and their jobs.

Service outcomes
Differences in outcomes, needs and aspirations of different ethnic groups are identified and understood, and the appropriate response in terms of policy and practice is delivered.

Source: Audit Commission analysis

Case study 1
Improving health outcomes for African Caribbean people in Bristol

Bristol South and West Primary Care Trust (the PCT) knew from national data that the incidence of hypertension, stroke and diabetes was likely to be higher in the city’s African Caribbean community. In addition, local consultation exercises for the Community Strategy had revealed that people wanted more culturally appropriate information on specific health issues, particularly relating to diabetes, diet and medical terminology.

The PCT held a series of focus groups with members of the local African Caribbean community. These explored knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about high blood pressure and how its management in primary care could be improved. The following key themes emerged related to accessing information:

- raising awareness among ‘healthy’ members of the community, helping them to take preventative action; and
the need for more information about the risk factors associated with high blood pressure and ways to help control it, particularly when first diagnosed.

As a result the PCT is better able to develop and implement accessible and appropriate high blood pressure prevention initiatives with the African Caribbean community. This has included organising an information day to provide advice on diet and lifestyle as well as carrying out health checks.

Outcomes
Although it is too early to record the impact this has had on the incidence and management of high blood pressure, there have been other outcomes:

- awareness has been raised in pockets of the community as information and services are made more accessible and appropriate health promotion resources are allocated; and
- members of the local community have been given the opportunity to influence changes in local health service provision.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Case study 2
Improving employment opportunities in Manchester

Central Manchester PCT had a shortage of health workers and wanted specifically to employ more people from the local black and minority ethnic communities. This would increase the number of staff who spoke community languages, helping to improve access to health services for those with English as a second language. The PCT also recognised that reducing levels of unemployment within the community would have a positive impact on the quality of life for all.

The PCT was aware that many local people of black and minority ethnic origin did not regard the NHS as a potential employer, for example:

- the local population experienced poor educational attainment and lacked basic skills and knowledge that would normally be expected for NHS posts; and
- the current black and minority ethnic profile of the PCT workforce was poor, so local people could perceive the NHS as a predominately ‘white’ employer.

In response the PCT recruited healthcare assistants who were not required to have previous experience or qualifications. They were offered on the job training and experience, leading to an NVQ. This provided an alternative route to becoming a health professional.

Outcomes

- Recruitment of local people of black and minority ethnic origin has slightly increased.
- Black and minority ethnic staff say that their confidence in the PCT as an employer who values diversity has improved.

Source: Audit Commission site visits
Case study 3
Improving educational attainment in Manchester

Manchester City Council aims to reduce inequalities in the educational attainment of pupils of black and minority ethnic origin to improve their quality of life opportunities. The Local Education Authority’s Diversity and Inclusion Team offers direct support to children of black and minority ethnic origin in 80 schools, supporting around 9,000 children, of whom 10 per cent are asylum seekers.

In addition to working with individual pupils and their families to help them to effectively access the education system, the Diversity and Inclusion Team is involved in a variety of initiatives to promote race equality:

● working with schools to promote refugee week;
● developing a multilingual booklet and website to give advice to asylum seeking families on educational issues;
● involving schools in various events to celebrate black history month, including producing a booklet with teaching activities and a performance evening;
● investigating why a high percentage of black boys are excluded from school (in conjunction with Manchester University and community groups) and developing recommendations for schools to reduce the numbers;
● obtaining funding to develop a programme of support and advice for supplementary schools led by black and minority ethnic community groups; and
● working with schools to help to ensure that racist incidents are reported and tackled, including developing an anti-bullying pack, which discusses racial harassment.

Outcomes

● In three years (1998-2001), the number of Bangladeshi and African Caribbean pupils achieving five A-C GCSE grades increased by over 13 per cent, and the number of African pupils by over 21 per cent (compared with a 1.2 per cent increase overall).

● Involving black and minority ethnic communities enabled them to influence decisions about how best to respond to poor attainment and high exclusion rates.

Source: Audit Commission site visits
In summary

34 Responding to the concerns of all black and minority ethnic communities will mean that services improve overall. Most of their needs and aspirations are no different to the rest of the population. They do not inevitably require special or separate treatment. But they do need to be clearly understood and the specific requirements of different groups reflected in the way that services are managed and delivered. Local priorities that accurately address their specific concerns will be of benefit to the community as a whole.

35 Public services need to have a clear vision for improvement to deliver local race equality outcomes that benefit the whole community. It must be based on a good understanding of current inequalities and the needs and aspirations of their black and minority ethnic communities. Public services face a significant challenge in moving beyond the legacy of negativity and discomfort around race. Chapter 2 looks at how local agencies are responding to this challenge and at how confident they are about progress so far.
How the local public sector is responding

Public services are optimistic about their approach to race equality but progress is not uniform. Organisations are at one of five stages of a journey to race equality.
Local public services tend to be optimistic about their approach to race equality, but progress is not uniform. This chapter looks at the reality of the public service response and explores the different stages of the journey to race equality.

**Public services are optimistic…**

Improving services to reflect the needs and aspirations of new and old black and minority ethnic communities requires significant change. Audit Commission work has consistently shown that high-performing services focus on meeting the needs of individuals by understanding local issues and prioritising resources accordingly (Ref. 15). Delivering high-quality services that meet the needs and aspirations of all local black and minority ethnic communities requires the same approach.

Most public services recognise that race equality is an important aspect of good performance. Our survey, commissioned from NOP (the Commission’s survey) shows that 89 per cent of chief executives say that race equality is a significant part of the organisation’s overall objectives and 50 per cent say that they have changed their priorities to reflect this.

We found that those making most progress recognise the benefits to the whole community of achieving race equality. For them, responding to the improvements desired by black and minority ethnic communities means that services improve overall.

Public services are also confident about their progress. Four in five believe they have made good progress with implementing their race equality scheme. The majority also recognise that successful change requires an understanding of the needs of local black and minority ethnic communities and staff. Many say that they are doing well in engaging councillors, non-executive directors and staff across their organisation.

…but a gap between optimism and reality is emerging

Local agencies say that race equality is an important part of improving services. However, many are unclear about what they are trying to achieve, and are focusing on compliance with the requirements of the Act.

- Two-fifths of organisations in the Commission’s survey report poor progress in identifying race equality outcomes. When asked about their race equality objectives, the majority of organisations quoted the duties under the Act.
- Fieldwork showed that many organisations found it hard to articulate what success would look like beyond a broad aspiration to ‘treat people fairly’.
- Recent research commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) also showed that many race equality schemes have not defined any tangible outcomes (Ref. 16).
We found that progress is often measured in terms of process, rather than the delivery of outcomes that will impact upon quality of life. Although many local agencies are feeling confident, this is based on a low level of ambition to really deliver outcome change.

- The most common areas of success cited by equality champions in the Commission’s survey were setting up systems, writing a race equality scheme or policy, and collecting or using information.

- Fieldwork indicates that implementation of the race equality scheme often means no more than having a working group in place with an action plan that has been endorsed by a senior manager. Many organisations we spoke to found it hard to say what improved outcomes had been delivered.

Those who are feeling the most confident are therefore not necessarily those making the most progress in achieving outcome change. Confidence reflects different levels of ambition, realism when assessing progress and a clear picture of what needs to be achieved.

**Confidence is not universal**

Organisations display different levels of confidence. Larger organisations (such as police forces, county councils, single tier councils and acute hospitals) tend to be most confident. Smaller organisations (such as district councils) and newer ones (such as PCTs) tend to be less confident and more overwhelmed; around one-third of equality champions told us that they found it hard to know where to start.

Analysis of the Commission’s survey shows that organisations can be described as being in one of five groups (Exhibit 2). We found that, overall, local agencies are more likely to be in the intending and starting groups, with very few in the achieving group.
Exhibit 2
Local agencies are displaying different levels of confidence and progress
Local agencies can be described as being in one of five groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resisting</th>
<th>Intending</th>
<th>Starting</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Achieving</th>
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</table>

- **Resisting**
  - No understanding of the importance of race equality – focus of work on producing a scheme and/or policy.
  - More likely to say they have started work in last two years.
  - Likely to believe race equality is not an issue that affects them because there is a small number of black and minority ethnic people in their area.
- **Intending**
  - Say race equality is important but still have a poor understanding of the depth of change required.
  - More likely to say they have been working on race equality for ten years or more.
  - Likely to agree race equality is important, but not motivated to make real change.
- **Starting**
  - Better understanding of local issues, expressed within a high level vision.
  - Likely to say they have started work in last two years.
  - Likely to feel over-confident about progress due to a low level of ambition for change.
- **Developing**
  - Understand the issues and where they are trying to get to. Still need to prioritise activity.
  - Likely to say they have been working on race equality for ten years or more.
  - More likely to be motivated to achieve change. Commitment from a wide range of leaders, which is visible at all levels. Starting to develop active partnerships with other public sector agencies. Feel they are making good progress with engaging local black and minority ethnic people.
- **Achieving**
  - Have a clear vision for where they are trying to get to and have set out and prioritised improvements to specific local outcomes. Achievement is recognised by peers and information and advice is regularly sought.
  - Highly motivated and driven to improve their performance, using national agendas to help them to deliver local race equality outcomes.
  - Commitment from a wide range of leaders, which is visible at all levels. Starting to develop active partnerships with other public sector agencies. Feel they are making good progress with engaging local black and minority ethnic people.
  - Resources are being shifted within the organisation to ensure that race equality projects and initiatives can take place. This sometimes means taking difficult decisions to decrease funding for other priorities.

**Source:** The Commission’s survey and analysis of Audit Commission site visits
When considered together, the groups can be said to describe different stages of a journey to race equality (Exhibit 3). The idea of an improvement journey is not specific to race equality. The Equality Standard for Local Government in England and in Wales, the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) all define five levels of performance. Our model describes the improvement journey in the specific context of race equality.

**Exhibit 3**

**The stages of the journey to race equality**

Organisations at the earlier stages must quickly improve by adopting the characteristics of those at the later stages.

The notion of stages is important because it helps to:

- describe why some organisations are doing better than others;
- assess where an organisation is now and what it needs to focus on in order to improve; and
- understand the type of support required at different stages, and to target it where most needed.

*Source: Audit Commission analysis*
Delivering race equality depends upon organisations at the earlier stages quickly improving by equipping themselves with the characteristics of those at the later stages. This concept is similar to the generic improvement model developed by the IDeA, based on its experience of improvement in local government. This shows how organisations can move between five stages of an improvement journey. We explore the factors that are important to the journey to race equality in Chapter 4 and in the self-assessment tool that accompanies this report.

Two key challenges for public services

If work to address race equality is to have a real impact, then public services and the local communities they serve must have a clear, shared understanding of where they are now and where they want to be. Many organisations find it difficult to define a vision for their locality and lack the ambition to deliver significant improvements for black and minority ethnic communities.

Work so far provides a good foundation for a step change. The first key challenge is to mobilise staff, members and non-executive directors to develop a locally specific, realistic but aspirational vision. Regulators and improvers must focus on activating change, encouraging organisations to move along the journey.

Central to our research was understanding why it appears to be so difficult to articulate a vision of race equality. The important areas of race inequality are widely recognised and different black and minority ethnic communities can easily identify the issues that concern them most. So what is getting in the way?

We found that the key barriers relate to institutional attitudes and behaviours that historically accompany thinking about race equality, for example, believing it is not an issue that affects the local community, or that it is one already being addressed by treating everyone the same. The second key challenge is understanding and tackling the institutional behaviours that get in the way of defining and delivering the vision. We set these out in Chapter 4.
What is preventing progress?

Local agencies report common barriers to progress, many of which are underpinned by unexplored assumptions. These assumptions can contribute to the behaviours that characterise institutional racism and need to be challenged.
Local agencies at all stages of the journey to race equality must tackle the institutional behaviours that prevent the delivery of improved outcomes for black and minority ethnic communities. This chapter looks at the barriers that organisations describe and explores the assumptions upon which these are based. These assumptions, if unchallenged, can create the unwitting behaviours and attitudes that characterise institutional racism.

There are common barriers

Respondents to the Commission’s survey gave examples of similar barriers to progress, no matter what sector they were from (Exhibit 4). These resemble those cited by a broader representation of national and local public sector organisations in the CRE’s recent research (Ref. 16). The most significant barriers are perceived to be:

- a poor understanding of the importance of race equality either because of a small black and minority ethnic population or because it is a low organisational priority; and
- insufficient capacity due to a lack of resources, skills and knowledge.

Exhibit 4

Barriers to achieving race equality

Organisations cite similar barriers to progress, no matter what sector they are from.

Source: Audit Commission survey commissioned from NOP
Barriers are often based on unexplored assumptions

We found that underpinning many of the barriers are assumptions that help to perpetuate the perception of race equality as a ‘problem’ that is difficult to address. If these assumptions remain unchallenged, they can contribute to the behaviours and attitudes that characterise institutional racism and act as a powerful rationale to justify inaction. Many of the barriers are complex, but they are not insurmountable.

Institutional racism consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

HMSO, The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Ref. 17)

We identified some groups of assumptions underpinning the main barriers to progress. Although some are specific to race equality, many equally apply to other strands of equality work. We explore each of them in more detail below:

- race equality is a low priority;
- confusion about ‘mainstreaming’;
- lack of resources;
- difficulty connecting with black and minority ethnic communities; and
- too many or too few targets.

Race equality is a low priority

Race equality is often an emotive issue. Because of the long history of negativity attached to it, people can be scared to start talking. They may have feelings and beliefs that are deep rooted, personal and hidden. These are used, knowingly or unknowingly, as powerful rationales to keep race equality a low priority. They are expressed through some common assumptions, for example, that:

- addressing race equality explicitly will inevitably result in a ‘backlash’ from the white community as some groups are perceived to be receiving more favourable treatment than others;
- race equality has little significance because of the small black and minority ethnic population being served;
- there are rules about what language to use; and
- the organisation has a ‘colour-blind’ approach that it believes ensures equal treatment. Information to confirm or deny this is not sought, perpetuating the belief that there are no issues.
For some organisations, inaction is justified on the grounds of ‘proportionality’ because local black and minority ethnic communities are small. But people of black and minority ethnic origin have the right to expect fair access to good-quality services and employment, regardless of the size of their community. They contribute to the funding of public services through paying taxes and have the right, recognised in the Human Rights Act 1998 (Ref. 18), to be treated with fairness and equality. Diverse black and minority ethnic communities, including asylum seekers and refugees, are also critical partners in improving local quality of life through contributing to wealth creation, service excellence and social cohesion.

Public services have a duty to respond in a way that is proportionate to the level of need, rather than to the size of the population. It is only by understanding the issues and views of the local community, including black and minority ethnic groups, that the appropriate response can be determined.

Confusion about mainstreaming

Many organisations are struggling to mainstream appropriately. This can prevent them from allocating specific resources or reporting on progress to staff and the community. For them, some common assumptions have made ‘mainstreaming’ a barrier, for example:

- having dedicated equalities specialists or specific projects will encourage staff to regard race equality as separate and unrelated to their job – they will leave race equality work to someone else; and
- once integrated into existing systems and processes race equality is no longer an issue that needs to be tracked and monitored.

Achieving race equality is a driver for improving services to all members of the community and is integral to overall performance. Mainstreaming – having an integrated and systematic approach across the whole organisation – is key to success. Dedicating resources to specific work is sometimes necessary and appropriate within this systematic approach. It should not be an ‘either/or’. It is also crucial to remain vigilant, even when race equality has been mainstreamed overall, checking that unequal outcomes continue to be tackled.

Lack of resources

Forty per cent of our survey respondents said that they needed extra funding and resources. That there are always more important things to fund can reflect the low priority given to race equality. Poor clarity about the benefits to all of achieving race equality also makes it harder for leaders to justify re-directing funds. We found that race equality action plans were often uncosted, giving rise to myths about how much delivering race equality actually costs. The kind of assumptions that underpin this barrier are that:

We make a lot of effort to ensure that we treat everyone the same. I haven’t heard of any particular issues that local black and minority ethnic people face and no one has reported any incidents of poor or inappropriate behaviour to me.

Chief executive

We’ve talked about maybe having a dedicated equalities officer or team, but we’re worried that people would just expect them to do everything. And that wouldn’t be mainstreaming would it?

Senior manager

We’ve worked hard to mainstream race equality into everything we do. It’s no longer seen as something special, it’s ingrained. I sometimes find it hard to say what has improved though.

Member

Resources are a major problem, staff resources are needed as a catalyst to change attitudes around here but the Board don’t seem to understand. They find it hard to justify the levels of investment we really need.

Middle manager

We’ve made a lot of effort to ensure that we treat everyone the same. I haven’t heard of any particular issues that local black and minority ethnic people face and no one has reported any incidents of poor or inappropriate behaviour to me.
race equality is expensive and always requires additional resources;

since it is part of everyone’s day job it does not need to be costed;

external funding is the only way to afford it; and

race equality directly competes with other priorities, rather than helping to achieve them.

Central funding is already allocated to local agencies based on the diverse needs of the local population. Additional central funding for race equality is unlikely to be made available. This means that local agencies have to seek ways of releasing internal funds, reflecting the fact that the delivery of race equality is part of improving services overall.

It’s difficult to know where to start because we don’t know how to reach black and minority ethnic people in our community, there aren’t that many community groups that we can tap into.

Senior manager

It’s been difficult to get beyond the same old ‘community leaders’ who turn up to every meeting. We’re not really getting to service users.

Director

Difficulty connecting with black and minority ethnic communities

Nearly one-half of the organisations we surveyed reported having made little progress with engaging local black and minority ethnic communities. Black and minority ethnic community groups also told us that, although they had been consulted for many years, public services did not seem to be learning from or responding to what they had heard. This poor progress is underpinned by the following assumptions:

- representatives from all black and minority ethnic communities must be present at every meeting or people will feel alienated;
- there is an inevitable risk of explicit racist remarks and differences of opinion during wider community meetings, which will be difficult to manage;
- it is always hard to contact black and minority ethnic community groups;
- black and minority ethnic communities do not attend traditional consultation meetings; and
- engaging black and minority ethnic communities will inevitably raise expectations and place extra pressure on scarce public sector resources.

Delivering services that are focused on the needs of users means that local agencies must engage with all parts of the community. Engaging these communities can often appear more difficult when it is treated separately from other consultation and participation activities, and where the principles of effective engagement are not adopted. Audit Commission research has shown these principles to be commitment, support and structure, representation, handing over control, learning from experience and a focus on real results (Ref. 15).
Too many or too few targets

Our survey showed that some organisations perceive contradictory messages from national agencies as a key barrier. Our study sites explained that this could create difficulties when trying to push race equality up the agenda. In particular, it could make race equality appear to be competing with, and separate from the national ‘must dos’ in the minds of their leaders and service delivery staff. The impact is that, although the organisation says it is committed to achieving race equality, in practice things never move beyond the rhetoric. The sort of assumptions that underpin this barrier are that:

- leaders are only interested in issues that are national priorities. So where there are no explicit national targets or performance measures, race equality remains a low priority;
- race equality work does not impact on achieving existing national targets but directly competes with them; and
- local targets cannot be set because the existing workload is already unmanageable.

Targets are an important part of motivating activity and measuring progress. If race equality is integral to improving performance then it makes sense to integrate the race dimension within existing targets. These may sometimes require adjustment or new ones may need to be added to reflect adequately the needs of different black and minority ethnic communities and staff.

In summary

These barriers reflect real difficulties as well as unchallenged assumptions. Tackling them is not easy but they are not insurmountable. It requires a change in mindset, to seeing race equality as being beneficial to everyone and a key driver for better services and quality of life. In challenging the assumptions, organisations must think through and explain why race equality matters to their locality. This is critical to developing a shared and consensual local vision and delivering outcome change.

Some organisations are finding it easier than others to make progress, as reflected by the different stages of the journey. These organisations are overcoming the barriers by positively managing change. Chapter 4 explores how local agencies can move forward.
Race equality and managing change

Race equality potentially affects every aspect of public service delivery. Some key factors are fundamental to managing this change successfully.
Delivery of race equality depends on successfully managing a broad change agenda. It requires improving outcomes for all black and minority ethnic communities and potentially affects every aspect of public service delivery. It can only be achieved by rethinking the way that things are currently done. Some local agencies face a key challenge in changing their mindset and behaviour, and breaking through the assumptions set out in Chapter 3.

Delivering race equality by improving services and quality of life requires a strategic, systematic and coherent approach led from the top. Visible and committed leadership from officers, members and non-executive directors is critical to getting started and sustaining progress.

Those at the resisting and intending stage of the journey must focus on developing a robust rationale, describing why race equality matters locally and how it benefits everyone. Those that are starting must create a vision for where they want to be that is shared with black and minority ethnic groups and the wider community. Those who are developing must concentrate on increasing their capacity and working with partners. Those who are achieving must ensure that they keep on track by managing their performance. This needs to be underpinned by visible and committed leadership from officers, members and non-executive directors at all stages of the journey.

These factors are similar to those that the Commission has already identified as being fundamental to any successful change management (Ref. 20) (Exhibit 5). They also reflect the critical factors we identified in Equality and Diversity: commitment, involving users, mainstreaming equality and diversity, monitoring performance data and sustainability (Ref. 12).

This chapter examines in more depth what managing change looks like in the context of race equality, based on examples of emerging practice. It is an approach that is equally relevant to other strands of equality work. For each factor we set out the key breakthroughs to making progress. Leadership is critical to success, but this must be accompanied by the other important factors of change. We have reflected the specific factors that are important at each stage of the journey in the self-assessment tool that accompanies this report.
Exhibit 5
Key factors in successful change management

There are key factors that are fundamental to managing change successfully in the context of race equality.

Source: Audit Commission analysis and adapted from Change Here (Ref. 20)

Leadership

Since the chair and chief executive took on the issue senior managers have really shifted. Once they got involved in the change programme you could see the behaviour really starting to change.

Senior manager, PCT

75 Our study sites emphasised the importance of leadership at all levels of the organisation, including members and non-executive directors, in prioritising race equality, setting the culture, raising expectations, increasing accountability and following through with action. Many officers, members and non-executive directors told us that hearing about the real experiences of black and minority ethnic communities had helped them to understand why race equality mattered. Less senior individuals also made a valuable difference by influencing peers and challenging progress.
The written and spoken commitment of leaders is not enough. It must be demonstrated by action and consistency of message. Real commitment is shown by making race equality an organisation-wide priority, allocating resources, talking about race equality in different settings and actively challenging and tackling barriers. Many leaders have still to demonstrate these sorts of behaviours in the context of race equality. For example, the Commission’s survey found that senior managers primarily demonstrate their commitment by approving policies.

The breakthrough leader behaviours that make a difference are:

- leaders at all levels, and members and non-executive directors, giving consistent messages about the importance, rationale and aims of race equality work (Case study 4);
- non-executive directors and members keeping informed about progress and actively focusing on tackling barriers (Case study 5);
- demonstrating commitment by action, not just written words (Case study 6); and
- recognising and supporting the potential of champions at all levels (Case study 7).

Case study 4

The value of consistent messages

At the London Borough of Lewisham race equality is seen as an integral part of the vision for making ‘Lewisham the best place in London to live, work and learn’. Councillors and senior managers have endorsed a comprehensive equality and diversity plan that sets out the strategic approach to race equality along with age, gender, disability, religion and sexual orientation. They speak with one voice: that race equality is fundamental to the delivery of improved performance, community well-being and engagement. This commitment is universally recognised and valued by staff at all levels within the council.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Case study 5

Engaged non-executive directors

The influence of board members at Central Manchester PCT has been key to the development of their approach to race equality. Board members are comfortable with talking about the issues. They have strong links with diverse communities through local area groups and so have a good understanding of local concerns. Their impact has been felt in a number of ways:

- asking questions at board meetings about progress in tackling inequality;
- challenging the chief executive and senior managers about how well the organisation is demonstrating commitment to race equality;
- requesting training on equality and diversity issues;
- sending back board papers for clarification where they do not address race equality adequately; and
actively taking on a leadership role for race equality across the region through involvement in Department of Health initiatives to progress race equality within PCTs.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Case study 6
Visible leadership

The chief executive at Devon County Council takes race equality very seriously but recognises that the council is just starting out on the journey. He has demonstrated his commitment through a number of tangible actions:

- personally requesting a series of focus groups with staff of black and minority ethnic origin, where they told him about the issues they faced as employees;
- taking action to investigate and address examples of discrimination within recruitment;
- contributing to the core funding of key local organisations and networks to develop capacity;
- organising a session for councillors where members of black and minority ethnic communities told their stories about the realities for them of living in Devon; and
- working with peers to increase public authority investment in the local Racial Equality Council.

This has helped to put race equality on the agenda of the senior staff and councillors, and sends an important message to staff.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Case study 7
Leadership at all levels

A key part of embedding work to address race equality across the whole of the Norfolk Constabulary is through diversity champions. Ten per cent of staff will be champions and they come from all sections and levels within the Constabulary. Staff are invited to volunteer for the role and go through a selection process. Once appointed, they receive an intensive training programme to help to develop their expertise. Their role is to:

- be a source of advice and expertise for other staff;
- role model behaviours and challenge peers’ inappropriate behaviour; and
- ensure that race equality and diversity issues are considered in everyday meetings and discussion.

Source: Audit Commission site visits
Culture and rationale

At our study sites, staff at all levels said that it was often attitudes and behaviours that really inhibited progress. This particularly matters where race equality is seen as unimportant, allowing staff to develop a negative ‘can’t do’ attitude. Key to challenging this is communicating a clear rationale, setting out why race equality matters and linking it with improving services to meet the needs of the diverse local community.

Creating an open environment for discussion is important to removing the discomfort that some people feel when talking about race issues. Our study sites found that directly involving different groups of staff in the development of policy and innovative practice helped them to build their confidence and understand better how race equality matters to their specific work. This included listening and responding to staff from different black and minority ethnic groups and harnessing specific staff networks as a positive force for change.

We identified some key breakthroughs that were helping our study sites to challenge the assumptions that keep race equality a low priority. They helped to create a more open and honest learning culture by:

- being clear about why race equality matters and how it benefits the wider community;
- creating an open environment by providing opportunities for ‘safe’ discussions and being clear about (and enforcing) appropriate behaviours and competencies;
- drawing on black and minority ethnic staff as a valuable source of information and knowledge (Case study 8); and
- recognising and rewarding improved performance in race equality (Case study 9, overleaf).

Case study 8

Drawing on staff knowledge

The London Borough of Lewisham has a well-established forum for staff of black and minority ethnic origin. It has:

- contributed to an increased understanding of race equality issues, for example, in raising concerns about lack of progression opportunities for black staff; and
- helped to build confidence to contribute to policy development, including the race equality strategy and the Comprehensive Equality and Diversity Plan.

Next steps for Lewisham are to acknowledge more publicly the value it places on the contribution of forum members. This will also help to raise the profile of staff within the organisation.

Source: Audit Commission site visits
Involving and rewarding staff

Central Manchester and Manchester Children’s Hospital University Trust are at an early stage in developing a strategic approach to race equality. They recognise the importance of involving staff in the development of this approach but also in rewarding and celebrating positive behaviours. Their plans include:

- holding an equality and diversity summit for the top 200 managers at the trust to launch the strategy. This will be endorsed by the chief executive and chair and will include space for managers to start mapping what the strategy means for them; and
- establishing equality and diversity awards for both services and individuals who are demonstrating good practice in race equality. This is also seen as a way of sharing good practice more widely among staff.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Vision, priorities and outcomes

Clarity about outcomes and priorities helps to focus the work. It also enables staff and communities to understand why race equality matters and to assess whether it is being achieved. It is not enough for the vision to express a general commitment to treating people fairly. It needs to paint a picture of how unequal outcomes will be redressed. By understanding the detail of what needs to change, priorities for action can be identified, and the impact on existing organisation objectives assessed (Case study 10). This information can be drawn from a number of existing sources:

- national information about key areas of inequality can provide a starting point for checking the local dimension;
- local information, such as monitoring service access, complaints, residents surveys, consultation about specific services and equalities impact assessments and reviews; and
- supplementary evidence about experience, aspirations and the perceptions that local black and minority ethnic communities have of using public services.

Some of our study sites wanted to develop their vision fully before sharing it more widely. We found that this resulted in frustration for staff and the local community who took silence to be a lack of commitment. Although information may be patchy to begin with, it is important to start talking about what success could look like early on. This can help to make race equality more ‘real’ and identify the issues that need further investigation. The policy impact assessments required under the Act can then be prioritised to address gaps in knowledge.
The breakthroughs that help to create a vision and set priorities for action are to:

- start talking and writing about the vision at an early stage and focus discussion on the outcomes you want to deliver;
- use existing national and local information; and
- set priorities that will deliver outcomes and align them with corporate objectives.

**Case study 10**

**Setting priorities for race equality and aligning them to corporate objectives**

*Manchester City Council* founded Agenda 2010 in conjunction with the Progress Trust (an independent umbrella group for black and minority ethnic voluntary groups) and the Manchester Council for Community Relations. It provides a common vision for delivering action over a ten-year period (2000-2010) to improve opportunities for black and minority ethnic communities within Manchester. Its underlying objective is to close the gap in outcomes between these communities and the city as a whole, focusing on four priority areas:

- health and social care;
- crime and disorder;
- education; and
- employment.

Each of the four areas has associated action plans and objectives. For example, the crime and disorder group works closely with the Manchester Crime and Disorder Partnership to reduce the levels of racially motivated incidents, including setting targets for improving reporting. Each group reports to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Achieving Agenda 2010’s aims is seen as integral to the success of the city’s Community Strategy.

**Source:** Audit Commission site visits

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**Engaging local black and minority ethnic communities**

Engaging diverse local black and minority ethnic communities is crucial to making sure that local concerns are reflected in the vision for race equality. Our study sites found that building up the trust and confidence of different black and minority ethnic communities was an important first step and this took the time and dedication of specific officers (*Case study 11, overleaf*). It also meant having to find creative forms of engagement, beyond traditional meetings, surveys and focus groups (*Case study 12, overleaf*).
Black and minority ethnic people told us that it was important to consult with ‘grass roots’ people, not just community leaders and affluent, educated people. But many black and minority ethnic communities do not have the capacity to engage with the public sector. This can be particularly true for new migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who have yet to establish community groups and leaders. Public services play a vital role in developing confidence in participation, through funding and other forms of support. This also increases the potential for local groups to become partners in service delivery. We found some important breakthroughs that helped our study sites to start engaging with local communities:

- Don’t be afraid to start talking to black and minority ethnic communities. Ask them how they would prefer to engage and the best ways for doing this, developing the skills of specific staff to deliver what is needed.
- Develop the trust and confidence of community groups and contribute to building their, and your, capacity to engage.
- Use creative methods of engagement to find out what people want and to develop a mature exchange of views, making sure that members and non-executive directors are fully involved.

**Case study 11**

**Developing trust and confidence**

A community-wide housing needs survey showed that Chesterfield Borough Council needed a better understanding of the experience and needs of its local black and minority ethnic communities. It contracted an external consultant to carry out research into where black and minority ethnic communities were located, the quality of their housing and their broader experience of public services.

In order to get good-quality information from a wide range of households a survey team was recruited from local black and minority ethnic groups. Their local knowledge helped to identify households to include in the survey. Many members of these households were known to the interviewers. This helped to gain interviewees’ trust, enabling them to talk about difficult issues, such as language problems and experiences of racism.

The research helped the council to develop a housing strategy for black and minority ethnic communities, including work to address:

- the housing needs of black and minority ethnic communities, including Gypsy families;
- racism and harassment; and
- communication with black and minority ethnic communities, including support to specific community groups and establishing a forum for people from black and minority ethnic groups.

**Source:** Audit Commission site visits
Case study 12
Creative methods of consultation

Norfolk Constabulary has employed three minority ethnic liaison officers (MELOs) whose job is to build up trust and develop good relationships between the police and local black and minority ethnic communities. A particular success has been with the growing Portuguese community. By being visible within the community the local MELO has built up a strong working relationship. This has resulted in:

- free translation of police posters and information into Portuguese;
- members of the community running Portuguese language classes for local police officers; and
- a project to produce a ‘welcome to Norfolk’ leaflet for new arrivals to the area, which explains the role of the police and basic UK laws.

Building on this success, the Constabulary plans to develop the skills and role of the local community beat officers so that they are better able to connect with and engage local communities across the whole of Norfolk.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Capacity

Capacity within the public sector is limited. Organisations have to manage a tension between prioritising race equality and achieving other important ‘must dos’. Making an explicit link between the benefits of investing in race equality and achieving existing objectives is critical. For our study sites, this made it easier to allocate internal funds, which also helped to increase ownership of race equality across the organisation (Case study 13, overleaf). Some were also able to lever in external funds to deliver specific projects that clearly related to their priorities (Case study 14, overleaf).

Staff need the right skills and knowledge to make race equality a reality. All of our study sites identified cultural awareness as an important knowledge gap, and were organising training programmes accordingly. We found that many staff were unclear about the aim of the training and how it related to the specifics of their particular job. Training was valued when it equipped people with the customer-focused skills and confidence to ask black and minority ethnic service users about their specific needs and requirements.

Key breakthroughs for increasing capacity are:

- linking investment in race equality to achieving existing organisational objectives, allocating internal funds and making use of existing capacity;
- identifying and allocating the resources needed to deliver priorities; and
- identifying the skills, knowledge and competence needed by members, non-executive directors and staff at all levels, taking action to fill any gaps.
Case study 13
Making internal funds available

At the London Borough of Lewisham most of the work to address race equality is funded as part of the mainstream budget, with specific amounts being allocated to projects such as developing black and minority ethnic community groups and the Black Staff Forum. As part of the annual budget-setting process, the chief executive leads on an analysis of the equalities implications of all budget decisions. This enables councillors to assess the impact of budget allocation and to make informed, better-quality decisions.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Case study 14
Securing external funds to deliver key priorities

At Central Manchester PCT the translation and interpretation ‘Linkworker’ service is vital to tackling health inequalities within its black and minority ethnic communities. A review of the service found that it needed to be improved in a number of ways:

- more linkworkers were needed to meet the needs of an increasing refugee and asylum seeker population;
- linkworkers needed to be able to translate in a number of new community languages spoken by the refugee and asylum seekers; and
- overall co-ordination of the service was poor.

The PCT worked through the health inequalities partnership (a subgroup of the LSP) to identify potential funding sources. A city-wide proposal was submitted to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Resources were secured to train more linkworkers, provide management support to improve the co-ordination of the service and scope a city-wide translation service.

Source: Audit Commission site visits

Working with others

Successfully tackling the starkest areas of race inequality, such as poor housing, unemployment and poor health, requires a co-ordinated approach across the public sector. A focal point for this is the LSP. Audit Commission analysis of recent CPA results has shown that many councils are developing a shared vision as a framework for delivering local priorities (Ref. 21). It is vital that the needs of black and minority ethnic communities are explicitly expressed within the work of the LSP.
Partnership working also needs to take place at a practical, service delivery level. Some of our study sites were successfully working across agencies to tackle racial harassment, meet the needs of newly arrived asylum seekers and deliver translation and interpretation services (Case study 15). These projects were possible because staff from different public sector organisations had developed good working relationships based on trust and understanding.

A feature particularly valued by partners we spoke to was the willingness of those who had a more developed understanding of and approach to race equality to act as ‘thought leaders’ within the locality. This could mean chief executives working together to help develop local councillors’ thinking, or non-executive directors and members role modelling appropriate behaviours at public meetings.

Key breakthroughs that help to make partnerships successful are:

- developing a shared vision for local race equality through the LSP, with clarity about boundaries and roles;
- harnessing existing structures for partnership working at strategic and operational levels, building trust and confidence through real involvement and participation;
- integrating race equality into existing multi-agency priorities, such as regeneration, social inclusion and procurement; and
- being willing to take on a ‘thought leadership’ role, using influence to promote race equality and good race relations with partners.

Case study 15

Working in partnership to tackle specific issues

Norfolk Constabulary has developed strong cross-agency relationships to address the needs of black and minority ethnic communities. These have evolved out of the Norfolk Equal Opportunities Network, through which the different agencies have developed a high level of trust and understanding. Individual members are highly committed and enjoy working together. A specific project the group has developed is the Multi-Agency Protocol for reporting racist incidents across the county. All local agencies have signed up to a single method for reporting incidents and a lead coordinating agency (the Constabulary) has been established, working with the local Racial Equality Council. This has resulted in an increased number of reported racist incidents and has enabled the Police to investigate them more thoroughly.

Source: Audit Commission site visits
Managing performance

Like any other programme for improvement, performance in race equality needs to be managed and it must be focused on delivering outcomes. It means being clear about who is accountable for each part of the work and measuring progress. Most of our study sites have established a specific steering group to oversee the work, but many have yet to set local targets and allocate responsibility for achieving them. Those who are making good progress have gone one step further by integrating the management of race equality within existing performance systems and indicators. This is another way of reinforcing the message that race equality is everyone’s business. It also means that the needs of black and minority ethnic communities are addressed through existing work to consult local communities, identify need, plan and deliver services and monitor and evaluate performance. Key breakthroughs for managing performance in race equality are:

- using existing business planning and performance management systems;
- setting targets and allocating responsibilities in the action plan, monitoring it regularly; and
- ensuring that race equality work is integrated with other activities and remains visible.

In summary

Improving local race equality outcomes requires substantial change that needs to be managed like any other improvement programme. Some local agencies are making more progress than others. Those that are further ahead are better equipped to:

- create a shared local vision (Chapter 1);
- understand and tackle the barriers and assumptions that prevent progress (Chapter 3); and
- manage the change that achieving race equality requires (Chapter 4).

This chapter has focused on what local organisations can do to help themselves. Chapter 5 explores what further support and encouragement is needed from central government and national agencies.
Encouraging and sustaining progress

The Act has been an important driver of activity but local agencies need now to take local ownership of the agenda. National agencies must encourage and support this.
The key driver for delivering race equality should be improving outcomes for all black and minority ethnic communities as part of the work to improve services for everyone. This driver is widely recognised and some progress is being made. But many agencies are struggling to define a local vision of race equality and the outcomes they are aiming to deliver. This chapter looks the role of central government and national agencies in encouraging a focus on local outcomes and supporting faster progress.

What is driving activity?

The recent research by the CRE found that the Act is the key driver of activity to address race equality across the public sector (Ref. 16). The Commission’s survey supports this (Exhibit 6). Our site visit to organisations also explained how other national drivers can help to influence performance and remind local agencies that race equality is integral to every aspect of public service, for example:

- in local government, the Equality Standard in England and in Wales has provided councils with a framework against which to benchmark progress and set targets;
- the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry is perceived to have helped to raise the importance of race equality within the police service; and
- national performance indicators, audit and inspection have helped to drive some approaches.

Exhibit 6

The factors that influence race equality activity

The Race Relations Amendment Act is the most influential driver of activity.

Source: Audit Commission survey commissioned from NOP
Alongside the legislation, the most important driver of activity is the need to improve services. Despite this, many local agencies are struggling to define race equality outcomes and the focus of their activity is on compliance with the letter, and not the spirit of the Act. This indicates a lack of real local ownership and is supported by other evidence.

- The influence of members and non-executive directors, and local black and minority ethnic communities, is seen as less important than the influence of the legislation.
- We found that, overall, health organisations have made less progress than the other sectors we looked at. This echoes the CRE’s evaluation (Ref. 16). The CRE acknowledged that this may partly reflect the recent NHS organisational changes. Health staff told us that they often struggled to balance achieving national targets with achieving race equality. This is frequently underpinned by a poor understanding of how delivering race equality can improve services overall.
- Smaller organisations and those serving smaller black and minority ethnic populations are more likely to be at the beginning of the journey.
- Some public services still do not see race equality as an issue that is relevant to them or their communities. One in three chief executives we surveyed said it was not something that affected their organisation.

Improving local ownership

Local agencies are best placed to understand the specific needs of their local populations. They must take ownership of the race equality agenda, engaging diverse local communities, members and non-executive directors in understanding how and why it is relevant. This requires clear goals aimed at delivering tangible outcomes that reflect the specific needs and aspirations of local black and minority ethnic communities. However, national agencies also play a key role in encouraging and supporting change for those black and minority ethnic communities not currently receiving the full benefit of public services.

A role for national agencies

Achieving race equality is a complex activity and there is little robust knowledge about what works where. Commission research has shown that in these circumstances an explicit national aspiration can help to encourage experimentation, learning and local comparisons (Ref. 22). Many organisations have made positive first steps, helped by the legislation. It may now be appropriate to build on this further by setting a broad, national aspiration to achieve race equality within a specific timeframe, supported by a few explicit national targets to set clear expectations.
This must be underpinned by a shared, national vision for race equality and a framework for delivery. A genuinely shared vision requires consistent messages about the value that all black and minority ethnic communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, bring to our society and about public services’ duty to respond appropriately to their specific needs. Integrating race equality outcomes and measures into existing performance frameworks, such as public service agreements, will strengthen the link between race equality and service improvement. The Government and the Welsh Assembly Government are already taking some steps (Box D).

**Box D**

**Work to encourage improved outcomes**

The Home Office has established a unit to look at race in the criminal justice system (CJS). Its key tasks include proposing a programme of action that will speed up eliminating discrimination within the CJS, and championing the implementation of agreed measures.

In partnership with the CRE and other government departments, the Race Equality Unit (REU) at the Home Office is producing step-by-step guidance on how to carry out race impact assessments.

The REU and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister jointly chair the Local Government Strategy Group, whose remit is to identify common themes, set priorities and co-ordinate effort to progress race equality within local government.

The Department of Health has convened a core group of strategic health authority chief executives to progress the race equality agenda, providing practical support to local health agencies. A Transformational Change Programme on race and health, jointly sponsored by Central Manchester PCT, the Modernisation Agency and the Department of Health, has been developed to bring together PCTs to model inclusive ways of working with black and minority ethnic communities, and to improve service outcomes.

The Welsh Assembly Government has established the Equality Policy Unit to focus on equalities policy and practice in Wales.

*Source: Race and the Criminal Justice System (Ref. 3), Audit commission stakeholder interviews*

**A role for the Audit Commission and other regulators**

Regulators must explicitly assess whether the needs of black and minority ethnic communities are being adequately addressed and, in partnership with the CRE, take action where this is found not to be the case. The CRE itself is preparing to take a tougher approach to enforcement, particularly where organisations are in wilful non-compliance with the Act.
The Audit Commission is committed to playing its part. Current activity to improve audit and inspection methods includes:

- assessing the risk of non-compliance with the Act as part of the national risk assessment framework for health, local government and criminal justice sectors;
- a set of equalities indicators for voluntary use by local authorities, developed by the Library of Local Performance Indicators, a joint project of the Audit Commission and IDeA;
- developing an improvement tool to support local agencies’ progress towards race equality, based on the framework outlined in this report; and
- integrating equality and diversity into local government inspection methodologies, including the CPA. This will help to make the case for using existing resources to deliver race equality objectives, requiring organisations to demonstrate how equality and diversity is integrated into overall organisational priorities. It will also ensure that organisations cannot receive higher performance ratings if they are failing to deliver on race equality.

Support and development

Setting a national framework and aspirations is only one way to encourage progress. Other forms of guidance and support are also needed, particularly since many organisations are addressing race equality for the first time.

Fifty per cent of the organisations we surveyed told us that they had found the CRE guidance the most useful form of support to date, and 17 per cent said they wanted more. Our research suggests that the need for detailed guidance reflects the early stage that many organisations are at. However, public services need to move on by focusing on a local vision for race equality that defines the outcomes that need to improve. Any new guidance must reflect this, providing a flexible framework and encouraging local agencies to develop their own approach to delivering the key local race equality outcomes.

This approach is reflected in the new guidance being developed by the CRE, in partnership with other agencies, on race equality outcomes and how best to achieve good race relations.

Moving the focus from process to outcomes requires different skills and knowledge. Local agencies are keen for more opportunities to develop these, with one in five saying that they want to learn more from peers. It is important that this kind of learning is not just directed at ‘those in the know’ but that others critical to the achievement of race equality are also targeted, for example, chief executives, other senior managers, members and non-executive directors. There is a role for national agencies to facilitate networking and learning from peers and the local voluntary sector, particularly between those organisations that are at different stages of the journey.
Next steps

We have developed a self-assessment tool to help local agencies to understand where they are on the journey to race equality and how they can move forward. The aim of the tool is to support agencies to improve race equality outcomes.

The tool can be used at any level, from an individual department or service, to a local partnership involving a number of organisations. It is designed to be practical and flexible and to move agencies and partnerships beyond process, towards the outcomes required by their specific needs and circumstances. For example, agencies might use the tool as a format for staff, member or non-executive director workshops, to assess their race equality scheme and action plan, or to stimulate discussions with local partners. A copy of the tool will be provided with every report. Additional copies are available to order.

Conclusion

Although many local public services are making progress in addressing race equality, the majority are still at the beginning of the journey. The Act has been an important driver of activity. However, most local agencies are focusing on compliance rather than on improving diverse black and minority ethnic communities’ experience of public services. Local agencies can move forward by creating an aspirational vision, based on a good understanding of the local outcomes that need to change, and of how changes will benefit all local people. Key to this is acknowledging and challenging the barriers and assumptions that characterise institutional racism and managing this change well. Delivering race equality requires a sustained and vigilant focus on progress. National agencies must continue to encourage and motivate improvement, supporting shared learning and challenging those who are resisting or intending.
What next for race equality?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Action for local agencies</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understand why race equality matters</strong></td>
<td>1 Develop a rationale explaining why race equality matters and how it benefits staff and the whole community.</td>
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| Encouraging steps are being made but public services need to move beyond seeing race equality as a negative issue to one that is key to improving services and quality of life overall. Some organisations at the *resisting* and *intending* stages of the journey are struggling to see how race equality is relevant to their community and that provision should be proportionate to levels of need rather than size of population. | 2 Members, non-executive directors and senior officers should shift thinking and open up debate, involving staff and champions at all levels.  
  3 Managers should challenge leaders on their understanding of and commitment to the agenda. |
| **Create a clear vision**                       | 4 Engage all sections of the local community and staff to create an aspirational vision. Use existing information to specify local outcomes.  
  Many local agencies are struggling to develop a clear vision describing how outcomes will improve for local black and minority ethnic communities as they move towards achieving race equality. They say it is hard to connect with local people and have yet to develop effective partnership working to tackle inequalities. | 5 Work with partners to develop and achieve a community-wide vision and share learning and support. |
| **Make progress**                               | 6 Explore and challenge barriers and assumptions. Put in place the key features of change, in particular:  
  - create an open and honest environment for discussion;  
  - work with other local agencies to share delivery of outcomes; and  
  - honestly assess any skill gaps for staff, members and non-executive directors, being clear about how any training will meet these. | 7 Be clear about the benefits of investing in race equality work and the risks of not doing so. Identify the cost of investment and how it will be funded. Work with others to boost capacity where needed. |
<p>| <strong>Develop the business case</strong>                   | 8 Set challenging outcome-based local targets and review and monitor them. Evaluate whether what is being achieved is still meeting the needs of local people and staff. | 9 Local agencies are finding it hard to undertake cost benefit analyses to support their race equality strategies. |
| <strong>Encourage local ownership</strong>                   | 10 Local agencies must move beyond compliance to deliver the spirit of the legislation and ensure that they are accountable to local black and minority ethnic communities. Race equality is a long-term programme of change that must be sustained. | 11 The journey to race equality |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action for national agencies</th>
<th>Action for regulators</th>
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</table>
| 1  | Send explicit and consistent messages about why race equality matters to public service delivery. Make this applicable to newer communities, such as asylum seekers and refugees, as well as more established ones.  
| 2  | Reflect the fact that race equality is integral to improving services in all new guidance and initiatives.  |
| 3  | Develop a shared, national understanding of race equality outcomes, helping to encourage local debate.  
| 4  | Ensure that any new race equality guidance is focused on the delivery of outcomes.  |
| 5  | Motivate local agencies to move along the journey by:  
|   | - facilitating peer learning and support;  
|   | - identifying and sharing good practice; and  
|   | - training members and non-executive directors.  |
| 6  | Support local agencies to develop the business case through sharing learning across all sectors.  |
| 7  | Establish a national aspiration to achieve race equality to keep up the momentum of the legislation.  
| 8  | Regularly report on national progress using a combination of hard data, user satisfaction and experience (focusing on outcomes).  
| 9  | Develop outcome measures, particularly focusing on increasing black and minority ethnic community influence on decision making, their trust and confidence in services and employment, and on positive community relations.  |
| 1  | Integrate race equality into existing methodologies. Reinforce the message that service improvement is achieved by responding to the needs and experiences of all sections of the community.  
| 2  | Take an explicit line on those who are most resistant, reflecting this through ratings and sanctions. Develop auditors’ and inspectors’ skills, competence and confidence.  |
| 3  | Challenge local visions for race equality where they lack ambition or are marginal to core organisational objectives.  |
| 4  | Work together to share learning and practice across localities and with other regulators at a national level.  
| 5  | The Audit Commission is developing an improvement tool with local agencies for use by auditors and inspectors to help them to assess current progress and identify ways to move forward.  |
| 6  | Look for ways to support the development of the local business case for race equality.  |
| 7  | Focus on measuring outcome change for all sections of the community.  
| 8  | Develop methodologies that focus on the experience that all sections of the community have of public services.  |
Appendix 1 –
Acknowledgements

The Commission would like to thank the organisations and individuals who have helped with the production of this report, in particular those that took part in the fieldwork and national survey, and those who provided comments on our consultation draft.

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Our voluntary sector reference group comprised Dawn Stephenson (Black Londoners’ Forum), Jeremy Crook (Black Training and Enterprise Group), Adrian Jones (Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations), Buddhdev Pandya (Confederation of Indian Organisations), Jenny Williams (Federation of Black Housing Associations), Sean Hutton (Federation of Irish Societies), Kate Bearman (Jewish Care), Lesmond Taylor and Mae Teo (Progress Trust), Floyd Millen (Race on the Agenda), Richard Lumley (Refugee Council), Michelynn Lafleche (Runnymede Trust), Ila Mazumdar (Sompriti) and Stanley Hui (The Chinese in Britain Forum).

The user focus groups were conducted and analysed by Kully Kaur-Ballagan and Salome Simoes at MORI Social Research Institute. Our national telephone survey was managed by Tim Buchanan and Alan Worley and analysed by Bess Kemp at NOP Social and Political.

The study also drew on expertise from across the Commission, including inspectors, auditors and central directorate staff. The study team was led by Fran Keene and consisted of Debbie Causer, Asari St Hill, Janice McKenzie, Carol Hayden, Carol Brown, Nigel de Noronha, Mike Emery, Ian Simpson, Cynthia Rowe and Charmaine Arbouin. It was directed by Loraine Martins with support from Sarah Phillips, Joanna Webb, Morag MacSween and Irene Payne.

Responsibility for the content and conclusions in this report rests with the Commission alone.
Appendix 2 – What we did

The main aim of the study was to investigate how local agencies were responding, at a strategic level, to the new duties under the Act in terms of delivering improved outcomes to local black and minority ethnic communities. Given the enormous scope of research activity this could involve we focused on three key questions, outlined in the introduction.

Given that the Act applies across the whole of the public sector, and that our early research suggested that the issues local agencies found most challenging did not differ across sector or locality, we designed our research to focus on the learning and experience of three key sectors – health, local government and criminal justice. More specifically, within each sector we worked with the organisations that have most direct contact with and influence over the lives of local people. We aimed to reflect a range of circumstances that local agencies might find themselves in.

There were seven elements within our study:

- three-day site visits to ten organisations across England and Wales, including councils, acute hospital trusts, primary care trusts and police forces in both urban and rural areas. These sites were chosen to reflect geographical location, size of local black and minority population, likely stage of the journey to race equality and organisation type. We spoke to members, non-executive directors, senior staff, frontline staff, middle managers, black and minority ethnic staff, local public sector partners and local voluntary sector groups;
- a telephone survey commissioned from NOP of 150 organisations across England and Wales, asking chief executives and equality champions about their work on race equality;
- focus groups with black and minority ethnic members of the general public;
- a series of interviews with national policymakers, government departments and supporting bodies to explore their understanding of the issues;
- workshops with a range of black and minority ethnic voluntary sector groups to find out their perception of the issues and gather examples of emerging practice;
- a review of national data on black and minority ethnic people’s attitudes towards public services and the outcomes they currently experience; and
- a listening and learning day with all stakeholders to discuss our interim findings and identify recommendations for action.

For more information about the survey, methodology and key findings, see www.audit-commission.gov.uk/raceequality

For more information about the focus group methodology and key findings, see www.audit-commission.gov.uk/raceequality
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**Directions in Diversity – Current Opinion and Good Practice**  This report from the Audit Commission looks at current opinion and ideas around the implementation of diversity. It is based on a review of recent literature and interviews carried out with a wide number of experts and practitioners in the field.

GMP2897, 186 240 4100, 2002, £18

**Equality and Diversity – Learning from Audit, Inspection and Research**  Equality and Diversity looks at how well councils are performing in this area by examining evidence from performance indicators, inspection and other research. It highlights action required for councils to integrate equality and diversity into all aspects of their services.

LLI2744, 186240 3643, 2002, £18

**Recruitment and Retention – A Public Service Workforce for the 21st Century**  This report explores the recruitment and retention problems among public service providers. It highlights the key reasons why potential, current and former public sector workers join or leave a public sector job, as well as sharing good practice and learning.

GAR2848, 186240 3929, 2002, £25

**Human Rights – Improving Public Service Delivery**  This report draws on research across 175 public bodies, including local government, health and criminal justice. It includes good practice examples, an update on law relating to public bodies, signposting to other resources, plus the latest analysis on progress within the public sector.

GBU3103, 186240 4607, 2003, £15

**Change Here! Managing change to improve local services**  Managing change is one of the greatest challenges facing public services. Change Here! is a guide for top managers in local government and the NHS that draws together the Audit Commission’s considerable knowledge and experience of how local bodies can manage change successfully and overcome barriers to improving services. A light and interesting read for chief executives and their executive teams, this guide is illustrated with case studies that highlight some of the key lessons and show how they have been applied in practice in a variety of situations.

GMP1804, 186240 2752, 2001, £15
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