

An Coiste Comhairleach Náisiúnta
ar Chiníochas agus Idirchultúrachas

National Consultative Committee
on Racism and Interculturalism

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Submission to the NESF Project Team on Improving the Delivery of Quality Public Services

**National Consultative Committee on
Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)**

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The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the discussion on improving the delivery of quality public services.

We are currently co-ordinating a research project on how public authorities provide services to minority ethnic groups, which we feel is very relevant to the current NESF project.

1. Role of the NCCRI

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) was established in 1998 as an independent expert body focusing on racism and interculturalism. The NCCRI is a partnership body which seeks to build on consensus by bringing together government and non-government organisations. The Training and Resource Unit of the NCCRI provides anti-racism and intercultural awareness training to government and non-government organisations and other groups. Also, the NCCRI is a member of the Quality Customer Service Committee.

The NCCRI is funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the European Union, and through research grants. Further information about the organisation can be found on our website - www.nccri.ie.

2. Background to the research

The research primarily examines the areas of health, education, policing and employment as sample areas within Government, and focuses on the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The research was commissioned by the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) in Northern Ireland. The research was commissioned from the Centre for Cross Border Studies and is being carried out and co-ordinated by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) in Dublin; working with the Institute for Conflict Research in Belfast, Piaras MacEinri in Cork; and Organisation and Social Development Consultants Limited in Edinburgh.

An emerging findings discussion paper on this research has been published recently and is attached at Appendix 1. This will provide points for discussion at an international conference in Belfast on 28th March 2006. Feedback from the conference will be amalgamated with ongoing research and be presented in a final report in August / September 2006. Researchers in each jurisdiction have carried out a literature and policy review, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with Government officials, service providers, and service users from minority ethnic groups.

A number of issues are highlighted in the report, as are interesting practices and initiatives developed in the three jurisdictions.

3. Key findings from research to date

Profile of diversity

The following are some key findings from the research as they relate to the Republic of Ireland.

Ireland has experienced a growth in minority ethnic populations in recent years, and continued growth is expected. Ireland has also demonstrated economic growth in conjunction with increased inward migration.

Minority ethnic groups in Ireland include migrant workers, students, asylum seekers and refugees, Travellers and long-term minority ethnic groups. There is also increased religious diversity in the population. Each group has distinct, and not necessarily homogenous, needs in relation to Government service provision and individuals within the groups also have distinct needs.

Policy and legislative framework

2005 saw the publication of the National Action Plan Against Racism - Planning for Diversity (NPAR). NPAR has a number of objectives, one of which is 'Provision':

“Provision is concerned with accommodating cultural diversity in service provision, including a focus on common outcomes related to all forms of service provision and a focus on specific policy areas, including: education; health; social services and childcare; accommodation and the administration of justice.”¹

There are a number of expected outcomes. These include common outcomes in relation to service provision, and specific outcomes in relation to:

- Education
- Health, Social Services and Childcare
- Accommodation
- Administration of justice

Unfortunately, there has not yet been much progress in the implementation of NPAR in relation to public sector service delivery.

Government bodies in Ireland, unlike the UK, do not have a 'positive duty'. For example, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 imposes a duty on specified public authorities to “have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity” across the nine equality strands and “to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group”, this is described as

¹ Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2005), *National Action Plan Against Racism - Planning for Diversity*, p.31.

a 'positive duty'. The research so far finds that the positive duty in Northern Ireland does enhance the focus on service provision to minority ethnic groups.

Government service provision

Health

Data collection within health services in Ireland tends to be inconsistent at best and almost completely absent at worst. Key issues raised by staff included communication and cultural differences. Initiatives undertaken include:

- Anti-racism / cultural diversity training; and
- Use of interpreting and translating services.

Education

Education emerged as an area of concern in Ireland due to the lack of an overall strategy in relation to 'intercultural education'. Difficulties in communicating with parents emerged as one issue. Although some data collection takes place, this is again inconsistent as not all levels of educational institutions collect data.

Policing

Interaction between police and minority ethnic groups can be difficult for a number of reasons, although a few initiatives of note have taken place, these include:

- An Garda Síochána has specific roles for officers responsible for liaising with minority ethnic communities; and
- A major initiative² was launched in 2005 by the Garda authorities, advised by the NCCRI, to target recruitment to the Garda from members of minority ethnic groups.

Employment

There are reports of discrimination and exploitation of migrant workers. In Ireland, there is no ethnic monitoring in the area of employment. It has emerged that with the increase of migrant workers, NGOs and community groups have developed significant expertise and fill gaps left by Government service provision.

Conclusions

The conclusions locate the research within a framework with the following components:

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming in this context is essentially about how policy and service provision processes are inclusive of the needs of minority ethnic groups. Ireland lacks a mainstreamed approach, although further implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism may begin to address this to some extent. Also, there is a need to focus on *outcomes* for minority ethnic groups and to accelerate the pace of change.

² Address by Minister McDowell, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to an Information Seminar for Ethnic Communities on Garda Recruitment. Available at: www.justice.ie/80256E01003A02CF/vWeb/pcJUSQ6GWJZG-en

Although some interesting initiatives emerge in this research, they are often not mainstreamed. Emerging practices are often not replicated in other service areas due to a lack of funding; suggesting that service delivery to minority ethnic groups may be low on the list of priorities for some service providers.

Mainstreaming racial equality is not an about an add-on to an existing practice. To be effective it must be a continuous and sustainable dimension to the work of the whole organisation. It may mean rethinking how things are done.

Targeting

Targeting is about the development of specific policies and services tailored to meet the needs of minority ethnic groups. There are examples of targeted initiatives emerging and whilst this is positive, it must operate in parallel with mainstreaming so that the needs of minority ethnic groups are considered as 'core business'.

Targeted initiatives in this research have included recruitment, sometimes in order to increase the ethnic profile of the organisation so that it is more aligned with the demographic profile of the public, or to fulfil a particular role. Intercultural, diversity or anti-racism training is also becoming more widespread among public sector service providers. However, recruitment and training are not enough to effect organisational change and it is important that policies, systems, processes and procedures are reviewed and amended if required.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is about setting and reaching targets within a timescale including the development of data to measure progress. Data is also required so that the ethnic make up of users and potential users of services, both current and future, can be assessed.

However, current data collection on ethnicity in Government service provision is inadequate. It is important that ineffective data collection is not seen as an excuse for inaction or lack of benchmarking.

Engagement

Engagement involves the participation of key stakeholders in the policy and service provision processes, migrant and ethnic minorities and specialised and expert bodies. This happens in some cases, but not in others.

4. Key recommendations arising from research to date

- The National Action Plan Against Racism provides a useful framework and direction for improving government service provision to minority ethnic groups and implementation of this should be accelerated and be prioritised by Government Departments.
- Positive duties on Government bodies increase the focus on service provision to minority ethnic groups and legislation, similar to that in the UK including Section 75 in Northern Ireland, should be considered here.

- An intercultural approach to public policy should increasingly inform the provision of services. This should be part of a wider approach to equality and requires service providers to move away from a ‘one cap fits all approach’ to service provision and towards the accommodation of ethnic diversity based on the principles of equality and respect.
- An intercultural approach must encompass a continuing and enhanced focus on combating racism against minority ethnic groups.
- The focus of positive duties must be on *outcomes* for minority ethnic groups (for example academic achievement / results by children from minority ethnic groups), rather than simply the equality of opportunity approach that can inform some existing approaches to positive duties.

“Robust schemes and policies are simply the delivery vehicle for tangible improvements; they are not an end in themselves.”³

- To achieve outcomes, Government service providers need to adequately prioritise service delivery to minority ethnic groups and provide associated funding.
- Governments should adopt a systematic ‘whole organisation’ approach to delivering services to minority ethnic groups, through a framework of mainstreaming, targeting, benchmarking and engagement.
- Mainstreaming will involve thinking about things differently and a focus on (often unintended) systemic issues is required.
- There needs to be stronger commitment from public services towards proactive planning to accommodate ethnic diversity in service provision that both acknowledges new diversity arising from recent migration and existing minority ethnic communities, including Traveller communities.
- Diversity in public sector employment is essential and has important implications for service provision. Positive action measures should be adopted where there is a lack of diversity and restrictions in relation to nationality acting as barriers against people from minority ethnic groups being employed in the public service should be identified and, where possible, removed.
- Data collection categories need to accurately reflect the demographic profile of society, and data collection must be consistent and used with a view to outcomes for minority ethnic groups. A template for data collection that includes ethnicity, language, country of origin and religion should be developed in the census and replicated at the level of service provision, for example in schools.
- Minority ethnic communities must be more effectively involved in the planning, implementation and review of services. This includes the need for greater resources, including core funding to enable such participation.
- The role of expert and specialised bodies in the provision of public services to minority ethnic groups should be enhanced. The pace of change is accelerated

³ CRE Scotland, Disability Rights Commission; Equal Opportunities Commission Scotland (2005). *Public Sector Duty. Position paper.*

when there is effective 'joined up' working between such bodies and Government.

- The public sector could establish closer links with the private sector; for example there are a number of interesting initiatives emerging from the private sector that could inform public service provision, including the employment of bilingual staff in banks.

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Appendix 1

Emerging Findings Discussion Paper How public authorities provide services to minority ethnic groups