

**Improving Government Services
to Minority Ethnic Groups**

Key Considerations for Service Providers



*This publication is dedicated to our friend and colleague,
Dave Ellis 1949–2007.*

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Introduction

The following are some guidelines and key considerations for improving government services for minority ethnic groups.

A more detailed discussion of these issues was published in 2006 as a result of research carried out in Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The research was commissioned by the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland from the Centre for Cross Border Studies. The research was co-ordinated by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI); working with the Institute for Conflict Research in Belfast, Piaras MacÉinrí at University College Cork; and Organisation and Social Development Consultants Limited in Edinburgh.¹

The objective of this booklet is to provide practical guidance to Government bodies, enabling them to deliver better access to and outcomes from their services for people from minority ethnic backgrounds. The booklet will also be used in delivering the NCCRI's Anti-racism and Intercultural training and may be useful for service providers in delivering their own in-house training.

By taking the key considerations outlined in this booklet into account, service providers can take steps to improve the organisation's ability to deliver suitable and accessible services, leading to increased satisfaction with, and confidence in, public services, especially among minority ethnic communities.

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2 ¹Watt, P. & F. McGaughey (ed.s) (2006) *Improving Government Service Delivery to Minority Ethnic Groups*. Available at: www.nccri.ie

1. Policies

The National Action Plan Against Racism² advocates mainstreaming, particularly to “infuse intercultural and anti-racism approaches into all relevant policy areas...”.

Policies clearly set out an organisation’s intentions in a particular area. Existing policies in all key areas of the organisation also require attention, as seemingly neutral policies have sometimes been discovered to have an unintentional negative impact on some or all minority ethnic groups, this is sometimes described as systemic racism.

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to policies?

Does your organisation have an anti-racism and intercultural policy (or equality policy with a specific anti-racism component)?

Does this policy express a commitment to preventing racial discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity?

Have key policies and procedures been 'equality proofed' to ensure there is no unintended negative impact on minority ethnic groups and that any specific needs have been taken into account?

Have undocumented policies or common practices also been considered?

Has the commitment to anti-racism and interculturalism been reflected in your strategic and operational plans?

²Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2005) *The National Action Plan Against Racism, Planning for Diversity*. Available at www.diversityireland.ie

2. Training

Staff training is an essential component of effectively delivering services to minority ethnic groups. All staff require training, not just 'front line' staff; it is equally as important that policy-makers and managers receive training so that they are aware of the possible implications of their policies and decisions.³

Anti-racism and intercultural training has three key purposes:

- 1) To challenge and change racist attitudes, beliefs and behaviour.
- 2) To contribute to a broader range of policies and strategies to address racism and/or promote equality within the whole organisation.
- 3) To promote the positive inclusion of minority ethnic groups and intercultural interaction between ethnic groups based on the principles of equality, cultural awareness and respect.

“*Anti-racism and intercultural training is not an end in itself but is a valuable tool in an overall package of measures to address racism and promote the inclusion of minority ethnic groups.*”⁴

⁴ The NCCRI has an Anti-Racism Training Unit currently specialising in 'train-the-trainer': www.nccri.ie / tel: 01 858 8000

³NCCRI, *Guidelines on Anti-Racism and Intercultural Training*.

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to training?

- Has a training plan has been drawn up which includes specific anti-racism and intercultural training?

- Does the training plan infuse principles of anti-racism and interculturalism into mainstream training programs (for example customer services, induction training etc.)?

- Have all staff received anti-racism training?

- Is training delivered by an experienced or qualified trainer?

- In addition to training, have relevant tools and methodologies to support staff been developed (this publication might be an example)?

3. Legislation

For Government bodies as both employers and service providers, the key legislation in this area is the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004; and the Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004. This legislation protects against discrimination in the workplace and in the provision of goods and services on nine discriminatory grounds (gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). There are certain exemptions, including some relating specifically to Government bodies.⁵

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to legislation?

Have staff received training on the relevant legislation?

Are staff aware of the relevant legislation?

Do all policies comply with equality legislation?

6 ⁵Additional information on the legislation can be obtained from the Equality Authority. www.equality.ie

4. Languages

It has been reported that 167 languages are spoken in Ireland.⁶ People with limited English will need the support of an interpreter in order to enjoy equal access to and outcome from a service, ensuring accurate communication and confidentiality. Using friends and family, including children, is bad practice and unreliable. Interpreting can require technical terminology (e.g. medical), which is a specialised skill.

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to languages?

- Is there a language policy in place?

- Are interpreters and translators used when required?

- Are interpreters and translators professional and, where possible, accredited?

- Has sufficient budget been allocated to the provision of interpreting and translating services?

- Have staff received training on how to work with interpreters?

See Appendix 1 for a case example on service provision and languages.

⁶The Language Centre in National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Reported by Carl O'Brien in *The Irish Times* March 26, 2006

5. Data Collection

Government bodies should collect and analyse data on the ethnicity of their clients for the purposes of ethnic/equality monitoring. The data can be used to highlight possible gaps and inequalities and answer questions such as:

- Who is currently using your services?
- Who is not currently using your services?
- What are the outcomes for various groups?

The information collected within the organisation should be compared with external information. For example, the Census 2006 included an ethnicity question for the first time.

The following categories are required in order to build a comprehensive ethnic profile of service users and enable service providers to better understand their client group:⁷

- a) **Ethnicity:** an ethnicity question was developed for the 2006 Census, this can be used by service providers for consistency.
- b) **Country of birth**
- c) **Language:** The question asked depends on the service being offered, some options include: Preferred language/Interpreter required?/English language support required? (For example for school children).
- d) **Religion**

8 ⁷Further explanation of the rationale for these data collection categories is available at Appendix 3 of the report: Watt, P. & F. McGaughy (ed.s) (2006) *Improving Government Service Delivery to Minority Ethnic Groups*. Available at: www.nccri.ie

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to data collection?

- Have data collection systems been put in place, including the collection of ethnicity, country of birth, language and religion?

- Have staff been trained on data collection?

- Do staff understand the relevance and importance of the data collection and can they explain it to service users?

- Is data periodically analysed and used to identify the potential need for targeted initiatives?

See Appendix 1 for a case example on data collection and evaluation.

6. Consultation and Engagement

Most government services in Ireland were developed when there was less ethnic diversity; therefore it is essential that the needs of minority ethnic groups are established and that their views are sought on service design, delivery and evaluation.

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to consultation and engagement?

- Has the organisation developed an approach and guidance for staff on consultation with minority ethnic groups taking account of language, cultural and gender issues?

- Are minority ethnic groups consulted in the design, delivery and evaluation of services?

- Is the data collected from internal and external sources analysed to assess which groups to meet for consultation?

- Have links been established with minority ethnic groups, NGOs and expert bodies (for example, the NCCRI)?

- Has sufficient budget been allocated to enable effective consultation? (Many minority ethnic led groups are unfunded or under-funded).

- Are issues requiring further clarification following consultation progressed through further needs analysis and/or research?

7. Mainstreaming

Following initial data collection and consultation when some gaps, unmet needs and inequalities are identified and people have been consulted about how best to meet their needs, specific actions should be identified. These actions can fall into one of two categories: *mainstreaming* or *targeting*.

Mainstreaming is about how service provision policies and processes are inclusive of the needs of minority ethnic groups, including consideration of these needs in the planning, implementation and review of policies and practices for their impact on minority ethnic groups. Mainstreaming does not mean that there is one 'mainstream' model of service provision of the 'one size fits all' kind, rather than the awareness of different needs and thus different models of service provision becomes central to an organisation's modus operandi.

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to mainstreaming?

- Have actions, timeframes and resources been identified to address needs, gaps and inequalities identified during data collection and consultation?

- Have clear roles and responsibilities been identified?

- Do actions include developing the capacity of mainstream service provision to effectively meet the needs of minority ethnic groups?

- Have working links with other departments, agencies and NGOs been established?

8. Targeting

Following initial data collection and consultation when some gaps, unmet needs and inequalities are identified and people have been consulted about how best to meet their needs, specific actions should be identified. These actions can fall into one of two categories: *mainstreaming* or *targeting*.

Targeting is about the development of specific policy and service provision priorities and strategies tailored to meet the needs of minority ethnic groups. Targeting can include, but is not limited to, positive action measures.

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to targeting?

- Have actions, timeframes and resources been identified to address needs, gaps and inequalities which emerged during data collection and consultation?

- Have clear roles and responsibilities been identified?

- Have targeted initiatives to address specific needs for particular groups been identified (if required)?

See Appendix 1 for case examples of targeted initiatives.

9. Evaluation

The targets set should be monitored to ensure successful completion and outcomes; this can be described as evaluation or benchmarking. In this way, the Anti-racism and Intercultural policy will not be seen as purely a bureaucratic exercise, but rather a means of effecting real change.

What steps has your organisation taken in relation to evaluation?

- Do targets include a way of measuring outcomes (sometimes called performance indicators)?

- Does the organisation report on its progress in meeting its targets in relation to anti-racism and interculturalism?

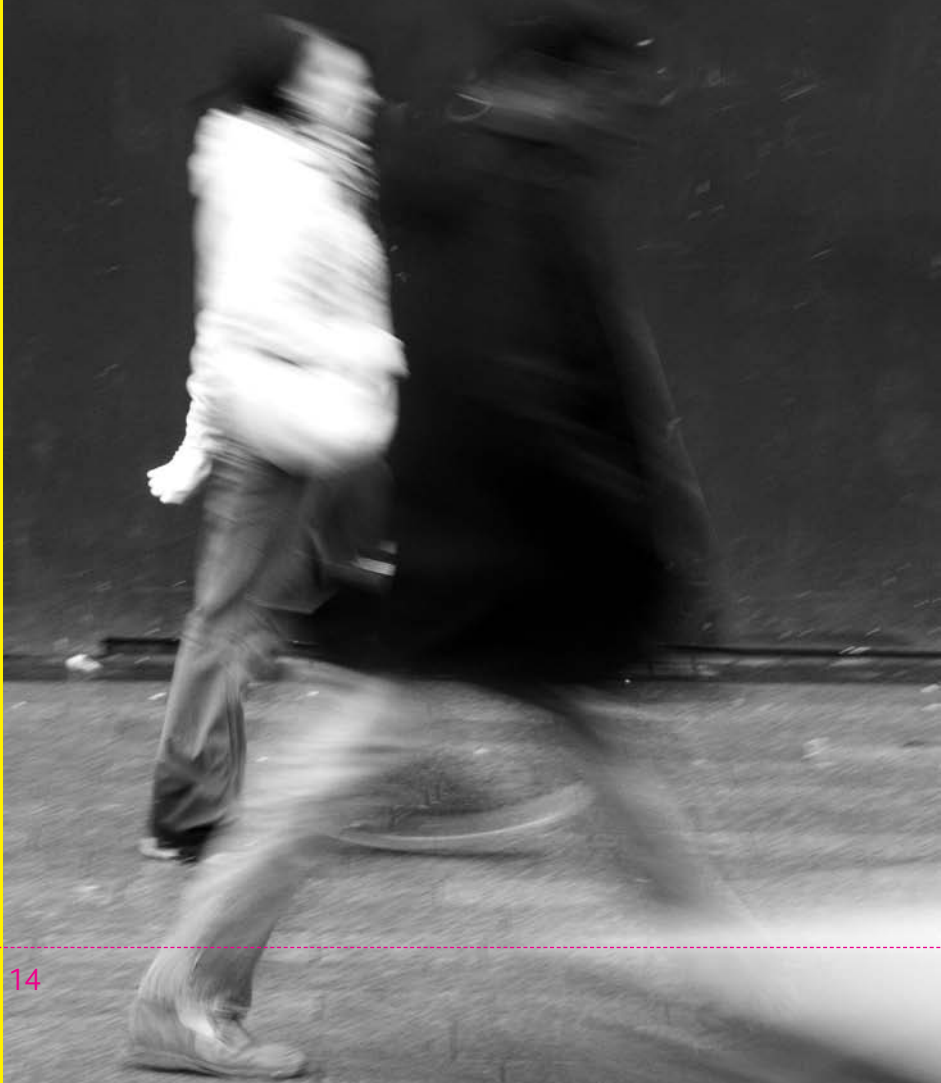
- Have minority ethnic groups been consulted on their view of the effectiveness of the steps taken?

- Have alternative strategies been identified where actions have not been successful?

- Has good practice been shared where actions have been successful?

See Appendix 1 for a case example on data collection and evaluation.

APPENDIX 1:



Selected Case Examples

These practical initiatives from Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland are provided as examples of how the concepts described in this booklet have been implemented by other service providers. They are presented as case examples only and not necessarily as examples of best practice that can simply be replicated elsewhere. These examples are available in the full report on improving Government services,⁸ along with twenty one other practical examples from Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

⁸Watt, P. & F. McGaughey (ed.s) (2006) *Improving Government Service Delivery to Minority Ethnic Groups*. Available at: www.nccri.ie

Data collection and evaluation case example

Policing – Safer Businesses for Ethnic Minorities⁹

Central Scotland Police Race Equality Scheme progress report 2005¹⁰ details a number of actions that they have taken to promote race equality. They include:

- the development and introduction of a 'Racist Crime Repeat Victimisation Scheme' and a service users survey for such victims;
- developing a relationship with the local BME communities; *and*
- involvement in multi-agency strategy group on racist attacks and harassment known as RAHMAS (Racist Attacks and Harassment Multi-Agency Strategy) which they currently chair.

Central Scotland Police have been a significant partner in the establishment of a Safer Businesses for Ethnic Minorities initiative. The initiative was initiated by RAHMAS in response to statistics which show that over 60 per cent of racist incidents occurred within business premises that were owned or managed by members of the ethnic minority communities. The initiative aimed to identify the true extent of racist crime against businesses as well as the impact such criminal activity had on the business and the staff. It also aimed to reduce crime and fear of crime in business premises.

16 ⁹Davis, W. & A. Ohri. (2006) *Scotland Research Findings* in Watt, P. & F. McGaughey (ed.s) (2006) *Improving Government Service Delivery to Minority Ethnic Groups*. Available at: www.nccri.ie

¹⁰Central Scotland Police (2005) *Race Equality Scheme Progress Report*.

The support which was offered through the project included the temporary supply of CCTV equipment (as a remedial measure), information booklets, safety and security advice and information roadshows and contact details for staff on how to deal with aggression.

The evaluation of the pilot project showed that it had successfully met its key aims and suggested that there should be a Business Plan for the project to widen it further into the local community. As a result there is a three year plan for 2005-2008 with the overall aim of creating a safe working environment that meets the needs of staff and customers in minority ethnic owned and managed business.

Targeted initiative case example

Information pack for GPs¹¹

The General Practice Care in a Multicultural Society Information Pack was launched in November 2005 by the Health Services Executive (HSE), Irish College of General Practitioners and the Berkeley Clinic. Its content reflects the need to develop new ways of providing traditional general practice care to communities with different health needs and different understandings of health. It also reflects the need to deal with some illnesses that have only presented on rare occasions prior to the recent arrival of new communities to Ireland.

18 ¹¹MacEinri, P. (2006) *Ireland Research Findings* in Watt, P. & F. McGaughey (ed.s) (2006) *Improving Government Service Delivery to Minority Ethnic Groups*. Available at: www.nccri.ie

Targeted initiative for languages

Bi-lingual Advocacy Workers¹²

The United Hospitals Trust in Northern Ireland has set up a project for two part-time Bilingual Advocates; one for the Chinese community and the other for the Portuguese speaking population. The Chinese and Portuguese speaking communities were identified as those accessing their services the most and thus represented the greatest need.

This project commenced in October 2005 and was officially launched in November 2005. It is a six-month flagship project based on a model of good practice adopted by NHS Scotland and Newham NHS Trust. The Trust following an eight month consultation process on the screening of their existing policies, identified issues concerning minority ethnic communities and persons with a disability. The issues were:

- Communication difficulties, due to language barriers;
- Lack of information translated into a format that could be understood; *and*
- Dietary requirements of people from ethnic minorities.

Both communities were consulted concerning the project at a half-day workshop. Interpreters were at the workshop to enable maximum input from the two communities. The bilingual advocates accompany patients to appointments and are accessible to both the patient and the health worker. The bilingual advocates received training in interpreting.

“Part of the work is also outreach... and to bridge the gap between staff and the community.”

¹²Hamilton, J. (2006) *Northern Ireland Research Findings* in Watt, P. & F. McGaughey (ed.s) (2006) *Improving Government Service Delivery to Minority Ethnic Groups*. Available at: www.nccri.ie

Useful Websites:¹³

- National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) www.nccri.ie
- The National Action Plan Against Racism www.diversityireland.ie
- The Equality Authority www.equality.ie





NCCRI



IRELAND EMBRACING
CULTURAL DIVERSITY
NATIONAL ACTION PLAN AGAINST RACISM

