



changing lives
reducing crime

Race and prisons: Where are we now?

A race and criminal justice update



Race and prisons: where are we now? A race and criminal justice update

About Nacro

Nacro, the crime reduction charity, is dedicated to making society safer. We have an unrivalled expertise in developing effective solutions to crime and stimulating fresh thinking on how best to reduce it, based on over 30 years of experience. Combining practical services to individuals, communities and organisations with pioneering campaigns, Nacro lobbies for better ways to reduce crime, while demonstrating how this might be done in practice.

Nacro's Prison and Race Services Directorate

Nacro's Prison and Race Services Directorate develops and promotes best practice on prisoners' resettlement and race equality for prisons and other criminal justice agencies. The Directorate works with prisons and other agencies to give prisoners and ex-prisoners the best chance of establishing positive lives in their communities. It provides direct services, training and consultancy. The Directorate also produces a quarterly newsletter, *Race for justice*, to help criminal justice agencies develop effective race equality policies.

To find out more about the Directorate's prison and resettlement work, contact Nacro's Resettlement Plus Helpline on 020 7840 6464 or at helpline@nacro.org.uk

To find out more about its work to promote race equality, contact the Race and Criminal Justice Unit on 020 7582 6500 or at raceunit@nacro.org.uk

Nacro

169 Clapham Road
London SW9 0PU

Telephone 020 7582 6500

Fax 020 7735 4666

www.nacro.org.uk

ISBN 0 85069 197 4

Nacro is a registered charity no. 226171

© Nacro 2003

Nacro welcomes a wide circulation of its ideas and information. However, all reproduction, storage and transmission must comply with that allowed under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988*, namely for purposes of criticism or review, research or private study, or have the prior permission in writing of the publishers.

Photos: Michael Grieve

Nacro is very grateful to everyone who appears in the photos. Please note, it should not be assumed that any individuals depicted have any association with the stories or activities described in the text.

Contents

Foreword: Lord Navnit Dholakia, Chair of Nacro's Race Issues Advisory Committee, introduces this report, which provides an update on the Prison Service's progress in implementing action points identified in *Race and Prisons: A snapshot survey*, published by Nacro in 2000 **page 4**

Background: Sets out the core initiatives taken by the Prison Service to improve race relations in prisons **page 5**

Findings from Race and prisons: Sets out the key findings identified by Nacro's earlier survey about prisoners' and prison staff members' views of race relations in prisons **page 6**

What has happened since 2000? The Prison Service's actions as measured against Nacro's main recommendations in *Race and prisons* **page 11**

Conclusion: While an enormous amount remains to be done, the Prison Service now has a comprehensive range of policies and an unprecedented mood of determination at senior level to combat racism **page 18**

Race and prisons: A snapshot survey (Nacro, 2000) is available from Nacro Publications priced £5.00. Telephone 020 7840 6427, email publications@nacro.org.uk or write to Nacro Publications at the head office address (see opposite)

Foreword

The year 2000 saw three events of crucial importance for the future of race relations in the Prison Service.

The first was the murder of Zahid Mubarek, a 19 year old Asian prisoner at Feltham young offender institution, by a cellmate with a history of racist and violent behaviour. This tragedy and the Prison Service's subsequent inquiry into it focused national attention on institutional racism in the Prison Service.

The second was the announcement of a formal investigation by the Commission for Racial Equality into the Prison Service, concentrating on events at Brixton prison between mid-1991 and July 2000, at Parc prison between 1998 and July 2000, and at Feltham young offender institution between January 1996 and November 2000. The report of this inquiry is due to be published in summer 2003.

The third was the publication by Nacro of the findings of a survey in its report, *Race and prisons: a snapshot survey*. The report was based on interviews with 1,223 prisoners and 295 prison staff. The report made 23 recommendations designed to improve race relations in the prison system.

The purpose of this follow-up report is to assess the progress which the Prison Service has made since 2000 in the areas covered by Nacro's recommendations. It is clear that the Prison Service has adopted a commendable range of measures designed to promote racial equality. However, it is also clear that a great deal of work remains to be done before racism is eliminated from the prison system.

We hope that this report will assist the Prison Service in continuing its efforts to take effective steps to combat racism, as well as providing a valuable case study from which other criminal justice agencies can learn in their work to promote racial equality.

Lord Navnit Dholakia

Nacro Chair and Chair of Nacro's Race Issues Advisory Committee

Background

The disproportionate number of prisoners from minority ethnic groups is well known. In June 2001, prisoners from minority groups accounted for 21% of the male prison population and 26% of the female prison population.

Since the Prison Service first began to monitor the ethnicity of prisoners, there has been a similar pattern: minority prisoners were 17% of the prison population in 1985, 16% between 1989 and 1994, 17% in 1995, 18% between 1996 and 1998 and 19% in 1999 and 2000.

The Prison Service has been taking official steps to respond to the needs of a diverse population for longer than any other criminal justice agency. For example, it was among the first to collect and make public ethnic monitoring statistics, and it issued its first instruction to governors on race relations in 1981. Over the years it has taken a series of other initiatives on race relations culminating in the launch of a new streamlined policy on race relations issued as Prison Service Order 2800 in 1997. This stated:

'The Prison Service is committed to racial equality. Improper discrimination on the basis of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, or religion is unacceptable, as is any racially abusive or insulting language or behaviour on the part of any member of staff, prisoner or visitor, and neither will be tolerated.'

The order included a set of standards, each with a list of mandatory steps and further recommended actions. The standards cover:

- legal obligations and Prison Service policy
- management structures and performance assessment
- ethnic monitoring
- facilities and services
- complaints and racist incidents
- external contacts
- training and information.

Also in 1997, the then Director General of the Prison Service, Sir Richard Tilt, stressed his commitment to ensuring race equality in prisons at the first ever national conference of Black Prisoner Support Groups and announced the establishment of a new national race relations policy advisory group, now known as the Director General's Advisory Group on Race.

Two years later, a new Prison Service programme, RESPOND (Race Equality for Staff and Prisoners), was launched with five key objectives:

- confront racial harassment and discrimination
- ensure fairness in recruitment, appraisal, promotion and selection
- develop and supporting minority ethnic staff
- ensure equal opportunities for minority ethnic prisoners
- recruit ethnic minority staff.

Judy Clements OBE was appointed as Race Equality Adviser to give day-to-day leadership to the programme.

Findings from *Race and prisons*

The survey's background

In 1998 the Prison Service commissioned Nacro to conduct a survey of race relations in prisons. The aim was to find out what progress had been made and how much remained to be done, so that the results could provide signposts for implementing Prison Service Order 2800.

Staff and prisoners from all ethnic groups were invited to take part in the survey to express their views on race relations in their prisons. Two women's prisons, four men's prisons and three young offender institutions were involved in the survey. The survey was conducted using short tick box questionnaires. Workshops and discussion groups were also held allowing prisoners and staff to expand on the topics covered in the questionnaire.

The survey respondents consisted of 295 prison employees and 1,223 prisoners. Of the prisoners, 18% were held on remand, 19% were women, and about a third of the sample were male prisoners held in young offender institutions. Sixty-seven per cent of the prisoners in the sample were white, 24% were black, 4% were Asian, 4% described themselves as being of an 'other' ethnic origin, and 1% did not answer.

Ninety one per cent (267) of the prison staff were white, 20 (7%) were black, two were Asian and three described themselves as of an 'other' ethnic group. The majority (67%) were prison officer grades. The others included administrative workers, governor grades, cleaning and catering staff, educational tutors, lecturers, librarians and healthcare staff.

The survey followed two earlier studies of relevance to race relations in prison. The National Prison Survey*, conducted in 1991 by the Home Office aimed to gather information about the background characteristics of prisoners, their perceptions of regimes, and

their attitudes to crime and offending. The survey found that white prisoners were more likely than black or Asian prisoners to have left school before 16 and to have truanted before the age of 11. In addition, 44% of white prisoners had no qualifications compared with 30% of black and 40% of Asian prisoners and, just before imprisonment, more minority ethnic prisoners than white prisoners had been working. The survey found a greater interest in education and training among minority prisoners than white prisoners.

Black prisoners were the least likely of all the groups to feel they were well treated by the prison staff. A higher proportion of Asian than either black or white prisoners in the sample said they had been assaulted in the last six months, and 14% of minority prisoners said they felt threatened by racist prisoners.

In 1995, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Prison Service published joint research on race relations in seven prisons*. The study found that although race relations management teams (RRMTs) were in place, there were variations in how often they met and in their effectiveness. Additionally, ethnic monitoring systems were in place, but were not always used effectively.

The study also found that communicating race relations policy to staff and prisoners had a low profile and that links with outside organisations such as race relations equality councils were weak and ad hoc. There was a very low reporting rate of racist incidents and a lack of effective responses. The study concluded:

'...there has been sometimes impressive but uneven progress in establishments since the publication of the Race Relations Manual in 1991

* CRE/Prison Service *The Management of Race Relations in Prison Establishments* (1995) London: CRE/Prison Service

... However, there was little appreciation of the need to move to regimes which positively promote racial equality.'

The Nacro survey was undertaken in the light of these findings to look more closely at the perceptions of staff and prisoners in the following key areas:

- awareness of race relations policy
- training
- the prison regime and facilities
- relationships in prisons
- racist incidents
- community ties.

Nacro also asked survey participants to give a general assessment of race relations in their prison and recorded their general comments.

Race relations in general

Staff

On being asked to assess race relations in their prison, 12% answered very good; 47% answered good; 33% said they were OK; 6% said poor; none answered very poor. Over half said race relations were important in their everyday work and a further third said they were important to some extent.

Sixty-four of the 69 staff who made general comments were white and four were black.

The more positive comments acknowledged the importance of race relations, better awareness and information about diversity, and the need for a diverse staff to deal with a diverse prison population. Some comments were also honest about the fact that there are racist attitudes within the Prison Service which needed to be tackled. Several staff also mentioned the lack of time and resources to do the job properly.

Other comments suggested a strong element of denial of any problem or need for action,

referring to alleged 'political correctness'. A small number of comments revealed a deeper form of racism and a lack of understanding of the harm that it does: 'It is a fact that in this area of England there are more blacks committing crimes than whites. No amount of ethnic monitoring can alter that.'

Prisoners

The majority of prisoners assessed race relations as OK, good or very good: 83% among white prisoners, but dropping to 68% among Asian prisoners, 61% among black prisoners and only 55% among prisoners in the 'other' category. Prisoners from all minority groups were less likely to assess race relations as very good or good, and more likely to say they were poor or very poor. Thirty-six per cent of black women said that race relations were very poor or poor compared with 22% of white women.

More of the black prisoners and respondents in the 'other' group submitted comments than did white or Asian prisoners. Attitudes among white prisoners varied. Some felt resentful and commented that too much was done for black and Asian prisoners to the detriment of white prisoners: 'There should be an independent body for white people. There is nothing for us.' Others said that they did not see a problem. A third group of white prisoners – the smallest number of comments – felt that black and Asian prisoners were picked on and did not receive fair treatment: 'The screws are racist bastards, especially to the Asians.'

Comments from black prisoners in the main pointed to the racism they experienced in prison from both staff and other prisoners: 'Prison officers think we are all dogs and a few have told us to our faces.' 'I believe there is an underlying tone of racism in this prison that is not too prevalent but nevertheless is subtle and enough to make one, as a minority prisoner, feel a little uncomfortable at times.'

Comments from Asian prisoners reflected similar concerns and also referred to verbal and other abuse: 'There's no minority community prison officer in this prison who can support minority groups' problems in or outside.'

Awareness of race relations policy

Staff

The majority of staff (63%) were aware of the new Race Relations Order, yet most (78%) had not received any relevant training. Black staff were less likely to be aware of the new order and were less likely to have received any training on the order compared with white staff.

The order sets out detailed instructions about which areas of prison life should be subject to ethnic monitoring. There were significant ethnic differences in whether this was seen as useful. More black staff said that it was essential or important compared with white staff. Of the 22 members of staff who said that it was a waste of time, 21 were white.

Some of the comments on monitoring stressed the need to make use of the results to improve the Prison Service's approach: 'It is vital that it serves as a springboard and helps in a way to stamp out or alleviate the racial problem.'

Prisoners

Seventy-three per cent of prisoners said they knew that the Prison Service had a race relations policy, although far fewer knew what the policy actually said. A smaller proportion of minority prisoners knew about the policy. Women were most likely to know about the policy but fewer minority women were likely to know about the policy. Only 22% of respondents completed the section of their survey asking who they thought was responsible for race relations in the prison.

Training

Staff (only)

Of prison officer and governor posts, 70% said they had received race relations training as new officers. Forty-two per cent said they had received race relations training as serving officers. Only 20% of black staff said this. Black staff were, however, more likely to say that it was useful (30% compared with 19% of white staff).

The prison regime and facilities

Staff

There was little ethnic variation in responses to questions on whether staff knew how to get hold of minority newspapers and books or special items for the canteen shop such as black skin or hair products. Unsurprisingly, staff in rural or isolated prisons with fewer minority prisoners were less likely to be able to meet these requests. (See also section on 'community ties' below.)

Prisoners

The questionnaire asked whether prisoners were satisfied with 13 areas of prison life, including the variety of prison food, religious services, access to work and education, advice about drug and alcohol problems and about release plans, and the personal officer scheme. Overall, the results reflect a generally lower level of satisfaction among prisoners from black and minority ethnic groups, with a few exceptions, notably education. (These results were in line with those from the 1991 National Prison Survey, which found that minority prisoners have a strong interest in education.)

For instance, black prisoners and those in 'other' ethnic groups were much less satisfied with advice about release (35% and 28% respectively) compared with white and Asian prisoners (48% and 57%). Forty four per cent of white women

expressed satisfaction here compared with 36% of black women. All minority prisoners were less satisfied about visiting arrangements. This could be partially accounted for by the high proportion of prisoners from outside the UK held at some of the prisons in the survey. Black and 'other' prisoners were the least pleased with their access to drug and alcohol advice and Asian prisoners were the most satisfied of all the groups. The same pattern of (dis)satisfaction was found with the personal officer scheme. Asian prisoners were happiest about their access to work and black male prisoners were least pleased, although black women were more pleased with this aspect of prison life than white women. Black prisoners were less satisfied than other groups with religious services in the prison, although in general, prisoners showed a fairly high level of satisfaction with this aspect of prison life.

Relationships in prison

Staff

Sixty-four per cent thought staff relations with prisoners were good or very good. Although the numbers were small, it is worth noting that black staff were less likely than white staff to describe prisoner and officer relations as good or very good, and more likely to rate them as 'OK'. All staff shared a more negative view of relations between prisoners of different minority groups.

Prisoners

The majority of prisoners assessed relationships between prisoners and officers as OK, good or very good: 81% among Asian prisoners, 78% among white prisoners, but dropping to 65% among black prisoners and 64% among prisoners in the 'other' category. Fewer minority prisoners assessed relations between prisoners and officers as very good or good: only 23% of the black prisoners compared with 37% of the

white group. However, black women assessed prisoner-officer relations more positively than white women, with 37% compared to 33%, saying they were very good or good.

Racist incidents

Staff

Eight white staff said they had been physically assaulted by prisoners because of their racial or ethnic origin. Eighty-two staff said they had been subject to verbal abuse because of their ethnic or racial origin: 72 were white, eight were black and two were from 'other' ethnic groups.

Prisoners

The Nacro survey asked prisoners about their experiences in the light of the findings of a survey published in 1994*.

Twelve per cent of black and Asian prisoners said that they had been physically assaulted as did 8% of the 'other' group but only 4% of white prisoners. Of the 82 prisoners who said they had been the victim of physical abuse because of their racial or ethnic origin, 34 said staff had been involved.

Forty-nine per cent of the Asian prisoners said they had been verbally abused, as did 27% of black prisoners, 22% of the 'other' prisoners and 13% of the white prisoners. Other prisoners were mentioned as being responsible by 112 prisoners, and staff were mentioned by 87 prisoners.

* Burnett R and Farrell G (1994) *Reported and Unreported Racial Incidents in Prisons*, Centre for Criminological Research, Occasional Paper No. 14 Oxford: University of Oxford. The survey found that more Asian prisoners described themselves as victims of racial incidents between prisoners, with one-third saying they had been victimised, on average, five times in the previous three months. A quarter of black prisoners said they had been victimised by other prisoners on average four times. Nearly half the black prisoners, a third of Asian prisoners and a quarter of those in the 'other' group said that they had been racially victimised by staff. Verbal abuse was the most common form of racial incident and the most common form of complaint by black and Asian prisoners. The main reason that prisoners gave for not reporting incidents was that they believed 'nothing would be gained by complaining'.

Overall, only 7% said that they had reported incidents: 3% of white prisoners, 8% Asian, 13% of those in the 'other' ethnic group and 18% of black prisoners. Most people who had reported incidents said that nothing had happened, or that they were 'still waiting'. As with the 1994 research, the main reasons given for not reporting incidents included a feeling that nothing would be achieved and fear of reprisals and the desire not to be seen as a grass. Some prisoners also mentioned bureaucracy and the length of time it would take as a deterrent.

Community links

Staff

Black staff were more likely to know how to contact local faith institutions, race equality councils and local black and minority ethnic community groups. For instance, 40% of black staff knew how to contact a local community group compared with 26% of white staff.

Prisoners

Over a third of black prisoners and half of Asian prisoners said they were in contact with outside faith organisations. Eight per cent of all respondents had contact with a local community group, and with community groups in their home areas.

There were wide variations in the visits received by different groups. In particular, there were differences in the replies of women prisoners in relation to visits. Thirty per cent of white women received regular visits from partners/spouses compared with 15% of black women and 28% of white women were visited by children compared with 15% of black women.

What has happened since 2000?

The Prison Service accepted Nacro's findings and considered that they generally accorded with its own information about areas requiring action. Below we describe the steps which the Prison Service has taken since 2000 in the areas identified in the Nacro report and in other related areas.

Race relations in general

- **The Home Office should repeat the 1991 National Prison Survey at the time of the next census [then 2001], with a particular focus on race and gender in prisons.** The *National Prison Survey* has not been repeated. The reason for this is the increase in the range of statistics and information available to the Prison Service Agency between 1991 and 2001. A national prison survey would have mainly duplicated data available internally through the local inmate database (LIDS), Inmate Information System (IIS), and Standards Audit Unit visits (extracted findings against Race Relations Standard). The Home Office publication *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System*, as required by section 95 of the *Criminal Justice Act 1991*, allows for annual comparisons to be made of the ethnic breakdown of the prison population. The Prison Service's published *2002 Race Equality Scheme Action Plan* covers additional areas for local monitoring
- **The Prison Service should make more use of ethnic monitoring, surveys, and discussions with prisoners from all groups in order to improve equality of access to prison facilities.** Chapter 4 of Prison Service Order (PSO) 2800 covers mandatory action on ethnic monitoring at establishment level. It prescribes ethnic monitoring and analysis must cover the following areas:

- allocation to accommodation
- allocation to work
- allocation to education/training
- adjudications
- temporary release
- segregation
- requests/complaints.

The PSO also recommends consideration should be given to ethnic monitoring in relation to:

- allocation/location under the incentives and privileges scheme
- allocation/transfer to other prisons
- transfer under the *Mental Health Act*
- use of sports facilities
- use of the library
- mandatory drug testing.

The PSO also provides advice and guidance together with specimen survey questionnaires. Race relations liaison officer (RRLO) courses continue to feature practical sessions to help RRLOs to attempt to ensure that prisoners have equality of opportunity to use local facilities and services as required by the PSO. Over half of the prison estate now has direct prisoner representation on local race relations management teams (RRMTs), as recommended by the PSO, with many other establishments considering issues raised on prisoner sub-groups.

- **Black staff associations should be formed at all prisons, and a network of support groups established nationally.** The Prison Service has funded a minority ethnic staff support network RESPECT, which was launched in January 2001 before an audience of around 1,500. Area committees and a pattern of local support groups are developing. Contacts with other similar

minority ethnic networks in the public, private and voluntary sectors are being established. In 2002/03 the Prison Service Management Board provided funding of £400,000, office accommodation, and core time allowances for network officials.

- **The Prison Service needs to do more to explain the value of ethnic monitoring to its staff, to provide feedback and information to them about the results, and to make practical use of the results.** Training courses for RRLOs and members of RRMTs have been revised to place more emphasis on the proactive use of ethnic monitoring statistics. In addition to the seven mandatory ethnic monitoring areas listed under PSO 2800 (see above), many prisons monitor other areas such as home detention curfew, removals from association, and use of control and restraint techniques. Feedback has been provided through training, conferences and newsletters on the importance of scrutinising data as outlined in Chapter 4 of PSO 2800. Senior members of staff from the Prison Service's Diversity and Equality Group provide regular monitoring through visits and to area meetings, RRMTs and training courses.
- **Ethnic monitoring of adjudications should be used as a starting point for further investigation of the differences in use of disciplinary procedures shown in the survey.** An imbalance in the levels of punishment of black males has previously been apparent at national level. The Prison Service has drawn this to the attention of key staff. All prisons monitor adjudications. National statistics are published and the Prison Service draws the trends to the attention of RRLOs and governors. Area managers are also provided with similar trend information about establishments in

their area.

- **The Prison Service should encourage prisons to hold events such as the staff workshop at Holloway [reported in Race and prisons] to allow staff to work together in a safe and honest way on race issues.** Nacro is not aware of prisons holding events following the design of the workshop at Holloway. However, the Prison Service's new diversity training package is designed to encourage staff to discuss issues openly.
- **Ways must be found to give prisoners more of a voice, by providing more formal and informal avenues through which they can express opinions about prison matters.** At the time of writing, prisoners' views about their treatment within prisons were about to be integrated into the Service's audit process. The Institute of Criminology at Cambridge is developing this for the Prison Service. Advice was issued to governors in July 2002 (PSO 4480) about how they should respond to requests from prisoners who wish to establish prisoner representative associations. It is a matter for local discretion how far an establishment permits the operation of such bodies and consults with them, but their numbers are growing.

Awareness of race relations policy

- **Awareness of Prison Service race relations policy needs to be increased among all staff.** The Prison Service has designed new diversity training which places an emphasis on race issues and trained Prison Service trainers to deliver it. The entry-level training programme for prison officers includes specific race relations sessions, and instruction in drill has been abolished in order to increase the amount of

time spent on race awareness issues. A revised local training pack was issued to all establishments in early 2000 containing updated material on race relations policy. Other steps to increase awareness of race relations policy in action are the RESPOND programme (introduced across the prison estate with supporting written and video material) and the minority ethnic staff support network RESPECT (current membership 2,100). The RESPECT network also offers services to the victims of racism, including a freephone support line staffed by specially trained volunteers.

- **The Prison Service needs to do more to make prisoners better informed of its race relations policy, perhaps by producing a ‘plain English’, shorter version, or through a video which could be shown to all prisoners as part of their induction to the prison.** This has not been done because a revised Prison Service Order has been delayed pending receipt of the Commission for Racial Equality Investigation Report due out in summer 2003. It is anticipated that, when it is revised, the existing 100 page plus document will be considerably reduced. The *Prisoners’ Information* books for male and female prisoners – translated from English into 20 other languages – have sections on race relations. Prisoner induction programmes are due for review and input on race awareness and on the wider diversity agenda will be considered.

Training

- **Prison staff need to be informed and aware of the differential impact of the criminal justice system on people from racial minorities, and to have an understanding of the impact of**

institutional discrimination. The Prison Service’s 2002 local diversity training package reinforces statements about the Prison Service being an institutionally racist organisation. Martin Narey, the former Director General of the Prison Service – now Commissioner for Corrections overseeing probation as well as the Prison Service – continues to emphasise his personal commitment to healthy race relations in speeches and articles and is on record in acknowledging the challenge to the Service in overcoming institutional racism within an apparently racist criminal justice system.

- **All staff – not only prison officers – should receive training in race and equality, which is regularly updated.** A new diversity training package has been developed by Ionann Consultants for all prison staff. It uses trained prison facilitators and is designed to address staff behaviour and attitudes locally. Governors and area managers have already received similar training. A national roll out started in April 2002 with the aim of every member of staff receiving a minimum three-hour session within the next three years. The current contract provides for regular updates. The Prison Service has appointed a diversity training co-ordinator with the key role of monitoring the delivery of equality training. During training sessions for facilitators it became clear that the unsatisfactory attitudes of some of those being trained were likely to detract from the effectiveness of the training package at establishment level. When this was brought to the Prison Service’s attention by the Ionann trainers, Judy Clements wrote to governors asking them to ensure that suitable candidates were selected for this work.

The prison regime and facilities

- **The Prison Service must ensure that all staff in all prisons are able to meet the needs of minority prisoners, not just those with large minority populations. Leaving everything to the RRLO should be discouraged.** Chapter 3 of PSO 2800 makes it clear that the needs of minority prisoners should not be the exclusive responsibility of the RRLO. Leadership should be given from the top and, since February 2000, governing governors or deputy governors have been required to chair the RRMT – a change that was supported by a Nacro training programme for governors. Governors have also been asked to introduce and conclude diversity training sessions for staff.

Relationships in prison

- **A real effort must be made to tackle racism in prisons, not only by using the formal complaints procedures but also by a programme of education for all who live and work behind the walls.** Improvements to the complaints procedure include a new generic request/complaints form with a 'tick box' for racial elements; a new racist incident reporting form complements this. These new forms are more widely available than previously. The new local diversity training package, (see page 13) is expected to have been delivered to all prison staff by 2005. The Prison Service is considering the implications for prisoners in respect of education in diversity issues.
- **The Prison Service should ensure it will be able to comply with the *Human Rights Act 1998*.** All staff were provided with guidance leaflets on the *Human Rights Act* (HRA). Posters are displayed throughout the prison estate. Training for senior staff,

including governing governors and area managers, has taken place. Follow up briefing sessions on the consequences of the HRA for the Prison Service have also been offered. In a number of cases the courts have held that Prison Service practice was incompatible with the Human Rights Act, but these have not so far involved race issues.

- **The mismatch of perceptions between staff and prisoners needs to be explored in more detail.** The Prison Service has commissioned research specifically to look at the impact of different cultural perceptions of staff and prisoners and a report, *Perceptions of Race and Conflict*, was due to be published shortly at the time of writing. Increasing numbers of prisoners attend discussion or issues groups and the majority of prisons have prisoner representation on RRMTs. The Director General's Advisory Group on Race meets in a prison establishment quarterly and has separate discussions with groups of minority ethnic staff and prisoners before each meeting.

Racist incidents

- **High priority must be given to reducing the under-reporting of racist incidents, and to tackle the lack of confidence in the fairness of the system.** A new racist incident reporting form for use by prisoners, staff, visitors and others – featuring greater confidential access and a receipt slip – was issued across the Service in September 2002 (PSI 45/2002). A standardised log has been piloted to record all racist incidents and this log must be presented to the race relations management team in the prison at every meeting. Following the publication of the Nacro report, the then Director General went on record stating that he would see a large increase in the reporting of racist incidents as a sign of growing confidence – a view

supported by Nacro as there was clearly massive under-reporting of incidents at the time of our earlier survey. The number of reported prisoner complaints rose from 340 in 1997/98 to 1,886 in 1999/00. Comparative figures for 2000/01 show the previous annual figures to have almost doubled to 3,179 and emerging figures for 2001/02 show a further increase to a total of 4,532. This is a 13-fold increase since 1997/98 and an increase of 240% since 1999/00.

Community links

- **Staff need to be given more information and guidance on making outside community contacts which benefit prisoners during their sentence and in preparing for release.** There are some particularly positive examples of work with local organisations which demonstrate to staff the added value of external contacts and community links. These include the Leicester Black Prisoner Support Group and the project set up by Partners of Prisoners (PoPS) with Buckley Hall, Moorland, Risley, Hindley and Styal. However, in many prisons links with local minority ethnic community groups remain weak. Nacro helped produce a booklet *Get Linked* published in June 2002 by the Prison Service's Prisoner Administration Group. The booklet provides advice on establishing external contacts with community agencies generally and minority ethnic groups specifically. It is available on the Prison Service website and has been widely distributed at training and other events for relevant prison staff.
- **The Prison Service should make it mandatory for prisons to invite representatives of community groups to join the RRMT.** Most prisons (around 75%) currently have outside representation from

the community or voluntary sector on RRMTs. The Prison Service has agreed to consider increasing the current recommendation to a mandatory requirement as part of the PSO review process following receipt of the CRE investigation report.

- **The Prison Service should commission further research into the different responses from women shown in this survey, including more Asian women, to assess the impact of imprisonment on family and community ties in different communities.** Action for Prisoners' Families has been commissioned by the Prison Service to look at this at Cookham Wood and Eastwood Park. The Women's Estate and Policy Unit are also in discussion with Nacro about initiating a national study into the regime needs of minority ethnic women prisoners which is likely to focus on two or three prisons.
- **The Prison Service and Home Office should take a new look at the concept of 'community prisons' put forward in the Woolf report as a means of building bridges to the wider community that would benefit all prisoners and make the work of prison staff easier.** The Director General and ministers remain enthusiastic about the Woolf concept and the possibility of replacing Victorian inner city local prisons with purpose built prisons which would hold prisoners of varying security categories. This work has been taken to an advanced design stage but the very serious population problems and the diversion of effort into speedily providing additional capacity have delayed piloting the concept.

Other key developments

In addition to those areas specifically mentioned above, other relevant developments within the

What has happened since 2000?

Prison Service since publication of Race and Prisons include:

- The then Director General of the Prison Service (now Commissioner of Corrections), Martin Narey, signed up to the CRE Leadership Challenge.
- *The Prison Discipline Manual* was updated to include four offences which dealt with racially aggravated and racist offences.
- A minimum eight hours per week was made mandatory for race relations liaison officer duties with regular reviews by governors and area managers.
- Language Line was contracted to provide subsidised phone line translation services to help prisoners whose first language is not English.
- Embassy training days, hosted jointly by the Prison Service and National Probation Service, provide embassy and consulate staff with the opportunity to exchange information in relation to foreign national prisoners.
- By August 2002 minority ethnic staff made up 4.9% of the Prison Service's workforce, an increase from 3.2% in 1999/2000. Between April 2001 and March 2002 7.9% of staff recruited and 6.3% of staff promoted were from minority ethnic groups. Between April 2000 and March 2002 10% of fast track promotion candidates have been from minority ethnic groups.
- Six 'Walls of Glass' events were held around the country, developed by the RESPOND Outreach Team, to reach minority ethnic communities, explaining the work of the Service and highlighting career opportunities.
- A system was introduced to monitor and disseminate lessons from complaints of racial harassment and discrimination that have led to a formal investigation and those that go to employment tribunal.
- Initial diversity training for the Prison Service Management Board, area managers, governors, heads of groups, chaplains, investigating officers and boards of visitors was completed in advance of the national roll out of staff diversity training.
- The diversity aspect of training for Job Simulation and Assessment Centre assessors (who assess applicants and promotion candidates) was enhanced. Mandatory assessment of challenging inappropriate remarks/behaviour at Job Simulation and Assessment Centres was introduced.
- An instruction was issued to prohibit recruitment, transfer and promotion of staff belonging to an organisation deemed to be racist by the Prison Service, eg the National Front, the British National Party and Combat 18. Staff were given notice that membership of such organisations will be considered to be gross misconduct that may result in dismissal. This stance has been supported by the Prison Service trade unions.
- Key audit baselines on race relations were re-assessed to see how best the Prison Inspectorate's expectations can be accommodated.
- A wider range of diversity testing for promotion candidates was introduced and candidates not promoted if they fail the prescribed exercises.
- The Home Secretary's 2002 milestone Employment Target became one of the 13 Prison Service key performance indicators.
- The What Works in Prison Strategy Board has approved a programme of work for its Diversity and Equality sub-group. This includes addressing issues such as developing or expanding the content of offending behaviour courses and extending provisions for monitoring courses.

- Nominated training officers, equal opportunities officers and RRLOs have attended a new diversity training course to develop facilitation skills.
- Under the *Race Relations (Amendment) Act*, in April 2002 the Prison Service published its race equality scheme and action plan.
- A new staff appraisal system was launched. The form includes a section for the manager's manager to complete which requires them to state whether the report has been completed in accordance with the guidelines on diversity and equality policies.
- A cell sharing risk assessment form was introduced to identify high risk prisoners and increase protection of those who are vulnerable.
- The annual staff survey includes questions on perceptions of harassment, discrimination and bullying.
- Prison Service orders on recruitment and filling vacancies encourage diverse composition of recruitment boards and assessment panels.
- Mandatory training for recruitment and promotion board members includes diversity and equality issues.
- The Prison Service has developed a race relations area of their website (accessible from www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/life).
- Maqsood Ahmed has been appointed as the Prison Service's Muslim Adviser. At the time of writing, he had facilitated the appointment of full time Imams within seven prisons.
- The Prison Service has commissioned work to improve opportunities for prisoners from minority ethnic groups to access accredited offending behaviour programmes.
- The Staff Code of Conduct has been strengthened to include racially motivated offences and to emphasise that racial harassment and discrimination and racially motivated convictions constitute gross misconduct.

Conclusion

This report has documented a range of actions taken since 2000 by the Prison Service in line with the main recommendations of Nacro's Race and Prisons report. While an enormous amount remains to be done to combat racism and promote race equality across the prison system, there is now a comprehensive range of policies and an unprecedented mood of determination at the most senior level to eradicate racism from the Prison Service.

The Prison Service is working to build the same determination within individual prisons by such means as a greater degree of involvement by governors on race relations management teams; the formal allocation of minimum hours to race relations liaison officers; the development of diversity training; and the use of disciplinary procedures. In the past, minority ethnic staff and prisoners have justifiably complained that no one was ever disciplined in prison for racist behaviour. Now staff are much more likely to be disciplined and, in appropriate cases, dismissed (for example, recently at Newbold Revel, Brixton and Frankland). Recent research into decisions on parole, home detention curfew and release on temporary licence has found that minority ethnic prisoners are receiving an appropriate proportion of favourable decisions: it is difficult to believe that similar results would have been found a few years ago.

The issue for the Prison Service remains, as always, translating commendable policies into reality on the prison landing. Prisons Inspectorate reports into individual establishments show that the priority prisons give to race equality work remains variable in

practice and disturbingly dependent on the enthusiasm and commitment of individual senior staff. For example, inspection reports published in late 2002 included reports on:

- a prison in which race relations matters were enthusiastically managed, there was excellent monitoring of data and effective handling of racial incidents
- a prison in which the race relations liaison officer had been given only four hours to do his work in the previous six months, there was a backlog of complaints of racism and a shocking amount of racist graffiti throughout the establishment
- a prison with a proactive approach to identifying racial incidents, impressive race relations monitoring and an impressive system for highlighting concerns and triggering action
- a prison with a worryingly high level of alleged racial abuse (especially from staff on one wing and in the segregation unit), no effective monitoring systems and no sense of a positive effort to promote diversity.

Despite these disturbing variations, there is no doubt that the overall trend in the Prison Service is towards an increasing understanding of the unacceptability of racist conduct and appreciation of the necessity to translate racial equality into practice. Ultimately, staff are the key to progress. Race relations in prison will only be truly improved when every staff member understands, accepts and acts on his or her duty to ensure equality and respect for every prisoner and every member of staff.



changing lives
reducing crime

Race and prisons: Where are we now? A race and criminal update

This report examines the action taken by the Prison Service since the publication of Nacro's report *Race and prisons: a snapshot survey* in 2000. The report made 23 recommendations to promote race equality in the prison system. This update documents the Prison Service's response to each recommendation. It concludes that, while a great deal remains to be done to promote race equality across the prison system, there is now a comprehensive range of policies and an unprecedented determination at senior level to eliminate racism from the Prison Service. The task for the Service remains translating commendable policies into reality on every prison landing.

£5.00