

## **Putting People First: Equality Matters**

*Providing appropriate services for BME people (CSCI Info – August 2008)*

The key to achieving appropriate social care services for black and minority ethnic people is personalised support that addresses the needs of the individual, rather than adapting services based on generalisations about cultural requirements.

Personalisation is at the core of the Putting people first protocol,<sup>4</sup> which describes the vision and commitment for the transformation of social care. Yet, personalised services cannot be achieved for black and minority ethnic people by just responding to individual needs as they arise. Services need to take a systematic approach to removing barriers that may prevent black and minority ethnic people receiving appropriate support. These barriers include organisational processes or assumptions and the behaviour of individual staff, which may amount to either intentional or unwitting discrimination. Black and minority ethnic people told us that they want:

- accessible information about services leading to options about which services they use
- control over decisions about their future
- services that recognise differences in people's cultures, without making assumptions
- support from staff with positive and respectful attitudes towards them
- services that enable them to have contact with people that are important to them and to be connected to communities
- to feel safe and be free from discrimination
- opportunities to give feedback and to improve services.

Despite race equality legislation being in place for 30 years, the experience of black and minority ethnic people using social care services is still very variable. The majority of the people that we spoke to said that they would recommend the service to another black or minority ethnic person and that staff were suitable. However, only around half the people felt that their needs as a black and minority ethnic person were adequately considered at their last assessment and around one quarter said that they had faced prejudice or discrimination when using services, with over half the people aged under 60 reporting this. Examples included both direct discrimination such as verbal abuse and indirect discrimination such as the failure of services to provide information in the person's preferred language or assumptions being made on assessment. Many, particularly older people, had low expectations of services, were uncertain whether discrimination had occurred or were reluctant to report concerns – so providers are not necessarily getting the feedback that they need to improve.

Services specifically set up for black and minority ethnic people were often valued but not everyone had the opportunity, or wanted, to use these options. To offer choice, race equality must be tackled by all social care services. Only 37% of providers told us that they had taken specific action to address equality for black and minority ethnic people. Even allowing that some services may have under-reported work carried out on a day-to-day basis to provide appropriate services to black and minority ethnic people, this figure reinforces the need for services to take further action in the future.

To remove unwitting institutional discrimination and ensure that they provide an appropriate service to black and minority ethnic people, service providers need to develop a strategy for race equality that includes:

- reviewing policy and practice, including publicity, admission or assessment procedures and complaints processes
- providing opportunities for staff to develop their understanding of race equality,

particularly enabling staff to look at their own values and attitudes and to develop communication skills

- working with black and minority ethnic people using the service to raise expectations of the quality of service that they are entitled to and to enable them to report any concerns
- taking appropriate action when discrimination does occur
- ensuring care and support are personalised to meet the individual communication, cultural and social needs
- Considering ways to raise awareness of the service and make the service more appropriate for communities that are not currently using it.

Section 16 (starting from page 54) includes the '*Checklists for Action*' which gives a suggested order for putting the good practice points in the bulletin into action. Some of these points will benefit all people using services.

**The document is available to download at:**

<http://www.csci.org.uk/professional/default.aspx?page=7226&csci=2548>

(The bulletin is available in six different languages)