Less Equal Than Others

Charity receives funding to tackle race inequalities in prison

Clinks will find solutions to inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people in prisons across England and Wales, thanks to new funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Clinks will commission much needed research and make practical recommendations to address the existing barriers for BAME offenders accessing key rehabilitation services. The research will focus on four key areas:

- Accommodation, mental health, family, and employment services

Clinks welcomes this investment in tackling race inequality in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and challenging the over-representation of BAME groups in prisons that is increasing year-on-year.

- The BAME prison population increased by 67% from 11,200 in 1997 to 18,753 in 2005. By 2008 BAME offenders represent 27% of our prison population but only 9% of the general population.

Clive Martin, Director of Clinks, says “This offers an exciting opportunity to address the causes of re-offending amongst Black, Asian and ethnic minority offenders who, are on the margins of society, and are so often the last in line to receive the services they need to go straight. We need to give these individuals an equal chance to play a fulfilling and responsible role in society”.

The issues faced by BAME offenders encompass mental health issues, lack of employability, unsuitable accommodation, and poor family relationships. If left unaddressed Clinks know that these issues will cause people to re-offend at great cost to society and the taxpayer.

Clinks, supported by over 150 Third Sector organisations, led the Race for Justice campaign to end the inequalities faced by BAME communities within the Criminal Justice System. Clinks continues to work towards this aim in partnership with Government and the communities they serve. The Race for Justice campaign and supporting publication - ‘Less Equal Than Others - Ethnic minorities and the criminal justice system’ makes recommendations that provide practical ways forward to provide much needed change in the CJS.

Example Race for Justice Recommendations:

“Recommendation 6: The Department for Communities and Local Government should identify and disseminate good practice by the BAME Third Sector. This will help to ensure that local and national government funding is effective in areas of greatest deprivation and highest crime”.

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“Recommendation 11: BME offenders, former offenders and their families - the users of CJS services - should be involved and consulted with by CJS agencies to help make provision more effective and appropriate”.

- Ends -

Notes to editors

1. About Clinks (www.clinks.org)
Clinks is the only national charity that solely supports those third sector organisations working with offenders and their families. By providing advocacy, campaigning, training and support to the sector Clinks aims to support an independent, vibrant and well resourced third sector, working in partnership to promote the rehabilitation of offenders. We have over 300 member organisations that support and guide us.

2. About Race for Justice (www.raceforjustice.net)
Race for Justice is the campaign to end the inequalities faced by black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and strengthen the voice and role of the voluntary sector in the criminal justice system. The campaign is led by a coalition of voluntary sector organisations working with BME offenders and their families. The Campaign launched in Autumn 2008 and published ‘Less Equal Than Others’ to highlight the continuing disadvantage of BME offenders in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales.


3. The Tackling Race Inequalities Fund (TRIF)

- Applications were invited for two-year strategic TRIF funding between £200,000 and £450,000 for national and regional organisations best placed to support the Government’s work to tackle race inequalities. Applications were received from 127 organisations from a broad spectrum, including national organisations who want to expand their work with BME communities such as MIND, the mental health charity or Age UK (consortium of Help the Aged and Age Concern).

- For a list of successful TRIF project applications visit http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/trifstatement.

4. A snapshot of current disproportionality
In order to highlight the discrimination and disproportionality against BAME men and women who find their way into the CJS we have compiled the figures below, which emphasise the continuing need to address the persistent racial inequalities in the CJS.

- The BAME prison population increased by 67% from 11,200 in 1997 to 18,753 in 2005.
• By 2008 BAME offenders represent 27% of our prison population but only 9% of the general population.
• Black people are 8 times more likely (and Asian people twice as likely) to be stopped and searched by the police than their white counterparts.
• People from BAME communities are almost 4 times more likely to be arrested than their white counterparts.
• People from BAME communities are less likely than their white counterparts to receive a caution for similar offences.
• People from BAME communities are more likely than their white counterparts to be prosecuted for similar offences, less likely to receive bail, and more likely to receive longer sentences.
• Youth justice statistics show a disproportionate number of young black people entering the CJS. They are less likely to receive unconditional bail, and receive longer custodial sentences for similar offences than their white counterparts.
• Prison often excludes BAME offenders from its regime, this includes access to key resettlement services and being locked in their cells for longer than their white counterparts. Both HM Prison Service and HM Inspectorate of Prisons have independently identified this problem.
• ¾ of prisoners report they do not have paid employment to go on release from prison. In 2006-07 the gap between the employment rate for the minority ethnic population and the total population was 14%.
• A 1/3 of prisoners report they have no accommodation on release from prison. Stable accommodation can make a 20% reduction in re-offending. BAME groups are less likely to access these services.
• People from BAME communities with mental health problems represent about 10% of the UK BAME population, but in prison this rises to approximately 20%.
• Emerging evidence shows that family based interventions are effective in reducing re-offending but there needs to a greater understanding of the impact of these on BAME offenders.