



MME Council

RESEARCH, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

ETHNIC DISPARITIES AND INEQUALITY IN THE UK

A CONSULTATION RESPONSE

FROM THE

RPA CONSORTIUM

SUBMITTED 30 NOVEMBER 2020

Research, Policy and Advocacy Consortium
Consultation Response
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*The UK Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities launched a call for consultation entitled “Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK: call for evidence” on 26 October 2020, with a closing date of **30 November 2020**.*

The following response has been compiled by the Migrant and Minority Ethnic Council (MME Council) in consultation with, and including contributions from, a range of partners which we have collectively termed the Research, Policy and Advocacy Consortium (RPA Consortium).

References, and a list of the names of the contributors, are given at the end (p.14ff). Please contact the MME Council, mmecouncil@gmail.com, for further information.

RPA Consortium Response

The RPA Consortium prepared responses to questions 1-4 and 7-10 as set out below.

Question 1: “What do you consider to be the main causes of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK, and why?”

1.1 Legacies and dynamics

We consider the legacy of the long era of enslavement and colonial exploitation to lie at the root of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK today. The dynamics of systems and mechanisms built over centuries cannot simply be switched off overnight, nor indeed dismantled or addressed in the space of a few years. The material, psychological, social and economic effects of such systems will take not only time, but concentrated, fully resourced, and carefully calibrated effort to deconstruct. *It is not clear that such a concentrated effort has yet been systematically undertaken in the UK.*

We welcome this consultation as an opportunity to address this profound set of problems, and urge that the scale of the task be met by a commensurate national effort to do justice to the issues. In particular, *we welcome this opportunity to bring a Northern Ireland perspective to bear on the question of ethnic and racial disparities in the UK.*

While the general principles of a response to inequality will be broadly applicable across the UK, it is important to take regional differences into account - and nowhere is this more significant than in Northern Ireland, where the legacy of the Troubles, and the tendency of political issues to be viewed through the reductive binary lens of ‘Unionist versus Nationalist’ discourse, has historically tended to crowd out other socio-political matters. This has had particular relevance for approaches to identifying and addressing the racial and ethnic disparities in Northern Ireland (NI).

1.2 *Prejudice in Northern Ireland*

NI was once dubbed the 'race hate capital of Europe' by the media (Knox 2011). Public attitudes surveys provide an important indicator of opinion and behaviour in the general population. Importantly, attitudes can shape policy and practices, and vice versa.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) is a cross-sectional survey recording the views of a representative sample of 1,200 adults living across NI (www.ark.ac.uk/nilt). The Young Life and Times (YLT) survey focuses on the lives of 16 year olds (www.ark.ac.uk/ylt). These surveys have included questions on attitudes towards people from different ethnic communities.

Attitudes towards different groups can be shaped by many factors, including knowledge of culture. NILT data suggests a lack of knowledge: in 2019, 37% disagreed with the statement 'I personally know quite a bit about the culture of some minority ethnic communities living in NI'. Among YLT respondents in 2019, 16% said that they were very or a little prejudiced against people from minority ethnic communities, indicating that prejudice against other communities is evident in young people (Devine, 2019). This is important, given that attitudes shape our behaviour. In 2019, 45% of YLT respondents said that they have personally witnessed racist bullying or harassment in their school (ibid). While 29% of YLT respondents socialise or play sport with people from a different ethnic background to themselves, 33% did this sometimes, and 34% did so rarely or never (ibid).

There is public awareness that racial prejudice exists in NI. In 2016, 39% of NILT respondents thought that there was 'a lot', and a further 47% thought that there was 'a little'. More recently, in 2019, 30% of NILT respondents thought that there is more racial prejudice in Northern Ireland now compared to 5 years ago, 33% think it is about the same, and 24% think it is less now. However, the proportion of people describing themselves as very prejudiced (4%) or a little prejudiced (25%) is much lower than the proportion saying that they are not prejudiced at all (69%).

A consistent pattern within the NILT data over the past 15 years is that there is a hierarchy of acceptance of different groups depending upon the level of personal contact involved (social distance). While most respondents would be willing to accept someone as a tourist or a local resident, they are less accepting in terms of friendship or relative by marriage. Importantly, there is a hierarchy of acceptance according to background. Thus, acceptance is higher in relation to Eastern Europeans, followed by Muslims. Acceptance is lowest in relation to Irish Travellers.

In 2019, 65% of NILT respondents think that it is our duty to provide protection to refugees who are escaping persecution in their home country. However, a much lower proportion (39%) think that Northern Ireland welcomes refugees (Michael and Devine 2018).

1.3 *Institutional considerations*

In the UK as a whole, the (post-)colonial context in terms of the whiteness/blackness division shapes, most importantly, a racialised structure with respect to poverty, inequality, unequal access to housing, health, education and the labour market in the UK. This context is also

visible though in the sectarian situation in Northern Ireland, which we believe further compounds racial and ethnic disparities in this context. This is most explicit in the cases of paramilitary racist violence and hate crimes; but it is also endemic to the governmental approach.

During the twentieth century, successive governments argued that NI had ‘no problem’ regarding racial discrimination or inequality because immigration was low (Crangle, 2018). This left thousands of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) residents neglected, forcing them to rely on NGOs or private sources to access basic services, such as interpreters and language education, which in other regions were provided by local authorities. This historical unevenness of provision shows the need to recognise the regional and local specificities that characterise the UK’s various places of migrant settlement. A lack of attention to providing opportunity and identifying challenges to access, participation and the flourishing of minority groups has similarly fed into other aspects of life in NI for such groups.

Since 1998, consociational power-sharing which was designed to manage the ethno-national divisions in NI, has created a system of government where the operative political identities remain ‘green and orange’. Those new to the region, commonly termed ‘newcomers’, who are not easily associated or recruited in either camp, find difficulty engaging fully socially or politically in the province. Their positionality as an ‘ethnic other’ means that the dominant ethnic parties, who are protective of the final status of Northern Ireland, are either unsure how to frame their political message to newcomers or see little value in garnering minority voter support. As a result, newcomers find the spaces to create meaningful political or social change in the Province limited (Mikhael, 2021).

The lack of adequate service provision for BAME communities in Northern Ireland has persisted into the current day. NGOs fill ‘a gap in service provision’ (McAreavey, 2017). While this support is welcome, such organisations offer only short-term solutions that serve as ‘shock absorbers to structural causes of inequalities’ (McAreavey, 2017: 165). The work of such NGOs is valuable; however, they should *supplement* rather than *substitute for* government funding and intervention.

Looking ahead, the post-Brexit situation across the Island of Ireland may trigger or reinforce other divisions. The centenary celebrations of Northern Ireland occur within the same time period. We anticipate that these may well impact on the experience of, outlook and continued lack of attention for new minority ethnic groups, international migrants, asylum seekers, and newcomers - at large - to this divided society, in addition to ongoing social and economic rifts of the settled communities (Vieten & Murphy, 2019; Murphy & Vieten, 2020).

Question 2: “What could be done to improve representation, retention and progression opportunities for people of different ethnic backgrounds in public sector workforces (for example, in education, healthcare or policing)?”

2.1 *Data transparency*

Transparent data on representation at various levels of public organisation in tableaus that allow for public access, analysis and accountability in terms of staff composition and

progression is essential. The [Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard](#) is a good model for taking the first step of transparency towards equality, diversity and inclusion. Action to address representation gaps, either sector specific or within institutions along the career ladder, including affirmative action, should be identified, with accountability to the authorities whom are responsible.

2.2 Policy and assessment interventions

In line with the idea of ‘gender mainstreaming’, all-encompassing institutional strategies should be developed to include and make visible the contribution of ethno-national minorities. Levers and drivers should be utilised to reward indications of change in representation, but also in institutional cultures where disparities are addressed. Particular care should be taken to note where assessment is enacted – such as selection, promotion, committees which make decisions, those in leadership or decision-making positions – and that those persons and cultures are progressive in building pluralistic cultures and representation across organisational structures.

2.3 Evaluation of policies and initiatives

Evaluation of equality, diversity and inclusion regulations and initiatives should be undertaken, to ascertain their impacts. This should include consultation with the persons and groups they are intended to benefit, to ensure their fitness-for-purpose. Not only should this involve the issue of numbers and representation, but also the nature of their participation and voice within the evaluation process. One cannot undertake evaluation or research on minorities using majority opinions and perspectives; nor on those marginalised using the experiences of the in-group.

People of ethnic minority backgrounds working in the public sector should be consulted on the factors influencing their decisions to seek employment in their organisation, as well as the main barriers and difficulties they or their peers may face during the application stage, training and being retained within the organisation. Organisational procedures need to be improved to ensure that feedback is acted upon. Use of tailored interventions with different groups to address the specific issues they face is recommended.

Question 3: “How could the educational performance of school children across different ethnic and socio-economic status groups be improved?”

3.1 Act on recommendations of research

In a report ‘Education Inequalities in Northern Ireland: Final Report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland’ produced in 2015, a number of recommendations were made for how educational performance could be improved to address racial and ethnic disparities in education.

- More attention and action to address low attainment for Irish Traveller children

“A persistent inequality identified in the literature and quantitative analysis is the low attainment of Irish Traveller children. Irish Traveller children had

much higher rates of non-achievement than any other groups – for the combined years 2008-2012, two-thirds (67%) of all Irish Traveller school leavers did not achieve any GCSEs. The literature highlighted the work that has been undertaken recently with respect to Irish Traveller education and has highlighted recommendations made on improving access, attendance and attainment of Irish Traveller children” (Burns, Leitch and Hughes 2015: 202).

- Recognise the needs of, and increase the understandings for the parents of, newcomer children

“... a lack of recognition of diversity in the needs of Newcomer children and a lack of understanding of the Northern Ireland education system by Newcomer parents may present a barrier to educational equality. Furthermore, the funding available to support Newcomer children, or the lack thereof, and the attitudes of schools towards Newcomer children may present both a barrier and enabler to educational inequality. Finally, unrecognised multiple identities, particularly in relation to disability and special educational needs, may present an additional barrier to educational equality for Newcomer and minority ethnic children” (Burns, Leitch and Hughes 2015: 203).

- Address the barriers to accessing grammar education for minority ethnic and newcomer status children

“Findings on access to different school types by minority ethnic background and Newcomer status revealed that children from minority ethnic groups or Newcomer children were slightly less likely to attend controlled schools than other types of schools. In support of findings from the literature review, minority ethnic and Newcomer children were more likely to attend nongrammar secondary schools and represent a greater share of children within the integrated sector. A range of factors that represented barriers to accessing grammar education were identified in the literature and qualitative research including the use of tests to determine admission and lack of knowledge of the educational system” (Burns, Leitch and Hughes 2015: 201).

- More research required to understand the intersectional concerns in the attainment proportions for BAME pupils

“... attainment proportions in 2011/12 were slightly lower than the attainment proportions of white pupils” (Burns, Leitch and Hughes 2015: 201).

“... while female attainment at GCSE and A Level increased between 2007/08 and 2011/12 in the general (and mostly white) population, the proportion of minority ethnic females achieving GCSE and A Level attainment targets decreased dramatically in the last five years. These attainment trends have therefore revealed emergent inequalities which may

need further exploration to determine the reasons for them” (Burns, Leitch and Hughes 2015: 202).

3.2 *Reduce discrimination*

In today’s increasingly ethnically and racially diverse schools, ethnic minority children from an early age are vulnerable to social exclusion and discrimination based on minority group membership.

Research on ethnic and religious minorities in European countries, like Muslim minorities in Belgium, has shown that their experiences of discrimination from their teachers and peers affected their school performance negatively (Baysu, Celeste, Brown, Verschueren, & Phalet, 2016). Ethnic minority students were also more likely to have negative relationships with their teachers (such as feelings of rejection) compared to their majority (or native) peers; this in turn negatively affected minority students’ engagement and belonging in school over time (Baysu, Hillekens, Deaux & Phalet, 2020).

Even in the absence of overt discrimination, the presence and salience of negative stereotypes about their minority group’s competence affected their performance negatively (Baysu et al., 2016). This is referred to as “stereotype threat”. Stereotype threat experiments have demonstrated that situationally induced negative stereotypes of low academic ability have debilitating effects on the academic performance of stereotyped group members (Steele et al., 2002). Complementing experimental evidence of negative effects of stereotype threat, Massey and his colleagues found longitudinal evidence of cumulative stereotype threat effects on the grades of African American students in the United States (Massey et al. 2006).

3.3 *Increase intergroup contact*

What studies have indicated is that environments of learning and development that involve increased inter-group contact and relationships between minority and majority groups, such as (religiously) mixed schooling, have been influential in decreasing the negativity of young people in NI towards immigrants (Doebler et al 2017).

Moreover, evidence from the Shared Education model rolled out in NI – which, uniquely within the UK, has an education system divided on ethno-religious lines, with around 94% of pupils attending predominantly co-religionist (Catholic or Protestant) schools – suggests that “irrespective of school type, intergroup contact at school is strongly associated with more positive orientations to the ethno-religious outgroup” (Hughes et al., 2013). Indeed, evidence indicates the shared education approach “has enhanced opportunities and outcomes for pupils, improved pupil learning and broadened curriculum choice”. Furthermore, teachers and principals report that collaboration has improved their capacity in many significant ways as well, whether this is through the formal or informal sharing of experience, access to resources and expertise, or opportunities for professional development and learning (Gallagher et al., 2020).

Further research should be undertaken to investigate whether such an approach could be generalised beyond the NI denominational context. It is likely that not only would ethno-religious prejudices and tensions be ameliorated by such an approach, but that learning

outcomes in general would be improved. Additional research to comprehend the experiences of access, performance, and flourishing of children and teachers of racial and ethnic minorities within such Shared Education model is required. The award gaps noted in the other UK nations, when it comes to BAME participants, is not as readily probed nor addressed in NI.

3.4 Address school policy and principles

School diversity policies and ideologies matter. Schools often have distinct approaches to cultural diversity, conveyed through their websites or other documents. In a recent large-scale study including more than 3,000 students in 66 Belgian secondary schools, results showed how school diversity policies affect grades and belonging of ethnic minority and majority adolescents (Celeste, Baysu, Meeusen, Kende, & Phalet, 2019). In schools with culturally-pluralist (or multiculturalist) policies, all students reported higher grades, but the effect was stronger for minority students who reported higher grades and belonging by year's end. In contrast, schools with colour-blind and assimilationist policies saw grades and belonging go down among minority students.

Researchers have found (Baysu et al., 2020) that in the schools that support culturally-pluralist and equality policies (according to students' own reports), both ethnic minority and majority students experienced more positive teacher-student relationships. Opportunities for intergroup contact such as friendships with majority students were also related to more successful school careers for ethnic minority students across several European countries (Baysu & de Valk, 2012).

3.5 Create awareness of the value of plural identity integration strategies

We know from research in the UK (Brown, Baysu et al., 2013) and Belgium (Baysu, Phalet & Brown, 2011; Baysu & Phalet, 2019), that ethnic minority adolescents and children prefer an integration or dual identity strategy where they want to combine their heritage cultures and identities with the majority culture(s) and identity(ies), and we know that this is beneficial for their school outcomes. At the same time, it can be hard to have a dual identity or to choose integration, especially when the school context communicates messages of devaluation of their minority ethnic identities and cultures, either through discrimination or negative stereotypes. Those with dual identities may be caught in crossfire and can be more vulnerable to negative outcomes when the schools as a representative of the majority group and culture do not accept and value their identities (Phalet & Baysu, 2020).

Question 4: “How should the school curriculum adapt in response to the ethnic diversity of the country?”

4.1 Curriculum reform

From young children through to higher education, educational curricula and programmes aiming to promote positive inter-community relations could further explore the idea of solidarity (in the forms of activism or protest) as an empathy-based, respectful action on behalf of others (Burns et al., 2016). As recently as 2015, the relation between sectarianism and anti-immigrant negativity amongst young people in NI was noted as significantly higher

than GB, particularly towards specific BAME groups, such as Muslims and Eastern Europeans (Doebler et al 2017).

Northern Ireland should not be presented merely as a region of emigration, but also of immigration. In the NI context, projects could be established encouraging pupils to get to know migrant communities and NGOs in larger population centres such as Belfast, Derry and elsewhere.

For instance, history curricula should include an emphasis on the arrival and presence of ethnic minorities and migrants, their contributions, and the histories of Northern Ireland's relations across the world. Engagement with the Black curriculum and related initiatives within museums and cultural institutions should be encouraged. Development Education or Global Education can be drawn upon to increase awareness of migration patterns and international relations.

4.2 Capacity building

To ensure the implementation of such curricula, teacher training around responsiveness to their changing student body, and particularly ethnic relations, should be offered. This should include intercultural awareness and anti-racism. Materials development should be supported.

Question 7: How could inequalities in the health outcomes of people in different ethnic groups be addressed by government, public bodies, the private sector, and communities?

7.1 Increased resources for newcomers and frontline staff

Research indicates that increased resources to support newly arrived communities and training supports for frontline staff are needed to address inequalities in health outcomes of people in different ethnic groups. In addition, more widespread knowledge, of how certain health issues have been politicized in NI, is also emerging as a key requirement for addressing inequalities in health outcomes.

For example, a 2017 scoping study (Bloomer et al, 2017) on the incidence and understandings of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Northern Ireland found that:

- healthcare workers needed specific training on how to recognise and treat FGM-related issues including how to respond to psychological trauma and complications that can arise during pregnancy or childbirth;
- there were significant gaps in terms of service provision and specialist care for members of affected communities;
- there is a lack of support for affected communities to take the lead in effecting cultural change in their communities.

These findings were broadly in line with a previous trend, where

“In the UK, efforts to reduce FGM/C have focused on punitive legislation without at the same time sufficiently empowering women in the

communities concerned to engage in debate, change attitudes and create alternative ways of affirming their cultural identity” (Dustin, 2010: 19).

A subsequent wider review (MacNamara et al, 2020) of the academic literature relating to genital cutting practices more broadly, and centring Northern Ireland as a case study, concluded that:

- FGM/C has historically been politicized in line with global North gender norms – i.e. the centrality of the gender binary in organising gender with key masculine norms (e.g. toughness and resilience) and feminine norms (e.g. fragility and vulnerability) used as a framework for interpreting the harms of genital cutting practices.
- Other forms of non-therapeutic genital cutting have not yet been adequately politicized – e.g. intersex surgeries on infants so that they may be more ‘normal’ or male infant circumcision.
- Given the fact that FGM/C has been politicized in isolation from other procedures, double standards are now evident across Western cultural, legal, and medical discourses
- Inappropriate or inadequate responses and supports, a lack of recognition that caregivers need to be better informed, and a lack of cultural competencies on the part of service providers are barriers to sustainable change in relation to genital modification procedures in Northern Ireland. Focus group participants clearly supported the laws against FGM/C but they also stressed that cultural change needs to prioritise changing people’s ‘mentality’. The wider academic literature indicates that a more widespread change in thinking is arguably needed in relation to all forms of non-therapeutic genital cutting.

To counter the discrepancies in societal and healthcare worker attitudes toward (and knowledge of) genital modification procedures by children’s gender and cultural background, the links between these procedures need to be fully considered (MacNamara et al, 2020). The ethics of - the similarities and divergences between - the potential and actual harms of, and the reasons for, all genital modification procedures are not fully addressed in UK health, policy and legal contexts.

Question 8: “What could be done to enhance community relations and perceptions of the police?”

8.1 Black Lives Matter Protests

In the Northern Ireland context, this question is currently particularly pertinent, as a result of the PSNI’s handling of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry in June. Questions were raised as to why fines and Fixed Penalty Notices were handed out to attendees at those protests, while other gatherings, on beaches, at funerals, and even at other demonstrations, did not provoke such a response. A report from the NI Policing Board (see Evidence Box 8 below) on the policing response to the Covid pandemic noted that even the PSNI’s own Ethnic Minority Police Association believed that the “PSNI adopted the wrong approach to the protests”.

We endorse the Policing Board’s Recommendation 11, that the “PSNI should hold discussions with the organisers of the Black Lives Matter protests on future co-operation to ensure peaceful protests are facilitated and that both sides understand the positive obligations of the police and the key role of the organisers”; and their Recommendation 12:

“It may also be useful for the PSNI to create an Independent Advisory Group on protests and to co-opt representatives of those organisers (this IAG should not deal the traditional challenges and debates surrounding parades and protests in Northern Ireland which are the focus of many other forums and processes)”.

In particular, we would underline the last element of this recommendation, and broaden it in scope: the PSNI, and other institutions in NI, should include representatives of migrant and minority ethnic communities on Advisory Groups distinct from, but of equal status to, those dealing with the ‘traditional challenges’ we previously summed up under the heading of ‘Unionist versus Nationalist’ discourse.

Perception of the police as racist is also provided by the police racial profiling of migrants in their operations around ports, bus and train stations, and in areas of connection and movement between the Republic and NI, and NI and GB.

8.2 *Border issues*

Groups like End Deportation Belfast, and journalists like Luke Butterly, have consistently highlighted a pattern of racist operation in the policing of the border (by police and Border Forces). Consistently, people of colour and racialised people have been stopped and asked for proof of their identity. Often people have ended up in the Larne Detention Centre as a result of that discriminatory policing. Many were deported to their own countries, after days spent in detention.

It is notable that the border between the South and the North is not well known by people from other countries and on multiple occasions people have travelled without knowing they were crossing the border. There is no sign to indicate that people are crossing the border when they move by bus from Dublin to Belfast or Derry (and vice versa). The lack of willingness to signal the border is a highly political matter locally, but it is a matter for which foreigners pay - often with detention and then deportation.

There should be alternatives to policing immigration offences by placing people in detention centres such as that in Larne. Keeping people in what can only be described as a prison is another way in which racism becomes evident and gets ingrained in our society. This racist attitude is also evident in how former offenders are deported at the end of their sentence, in spite of having served their time in prison, and in spite of sometimes having spent the greatest part of their life in the UK. The UK is the country that most recur to deportation flights in the wider European Context (Brandariz and Bessa, 2020), in spite of it receiving the lowest number of applications for asylum ([United Nation Refugee Agency, 2020](#)).

These practices even if not specific to Northern Ireland converge to shape a racist environment, while they build on colonial legacies and anti immigrant sentiments (Bosworth, 2017; Aliverti and Bosworth, 2017). The Windrush scandal was a testament to the racist attitude of the Home Office.

Additionally, asylum seekers are kept in poverty by their current weekly allowance of £37.75 per week, while they are forbidden to seek employment, incredibly constraining their lives. In

contrast to what happened to Universal Credit allowance which was raised of £20 per week during the Covid-19 pandemic, the asylum seekers allowance remained the same in spite of numerous calls to raise it ([Freedom from Torture](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Refugee Council](#), [and many more](#)), once again demonstrating a racist attitude towards people of different colour or different origin, who are seeking international protection.

As a UK wide report shows, the pandemic has further highlighted how asylum seekers and migrants were discriminated against as they were released from detention centres in terrible situations, in many cases without access to the bare necessities (Degenhardt, 2020). Organisations and NGOs that work in the field closed down, leaving migrants and asylum seekers without access to food, clothes, medicines, and facing difficulties in accessing specialised services that are offered to citizens or refugees. All these actions reveal racist attitude and contribute to shape racist society. Research is needed to understand practices of detention and deportation of immigration detainees within and from NI, especially in light of Brexit.

Key reform moments, like the BLM protest, matter in terms of the policing response, which can either seek to create feelings of exclusion or inclusion. The PSNI response clearly failed and as such undermined approaches to policing that were thought to be mainstream policy in NI as a result of the institutional changes made in the wake of the Troubles.

While policing has taken significant leaps to manage culturally sensitive divisions in regard to the traditional divisions in NI it is clear that other sections of society have been left behind. We recommend increasing the role and capacity of the PSNI council of minority police officers to engage with relevant communities – again something that could be generalised across the regions of the UK.

8.3 *Local Community Initiatives*

Local grassroots initiatives, such as the Bilingual Community Safety Advocacy (Chinese and Polish) project in Belfast, provide a potentially fruitful model for developing trust and confidence in the police service. The project developed the role of community advocates, who liaised between their communities and the police and provided bilingual advocacy. The project created channels of communication and provided early insight into any perceived build up of tension in and between the communities (OPENCities, 2015).

Question 9: “What do you consider to be the main causes of the disparities in crime between people in different racial and ethnic groups, and why?”

9.1 *Hate crimes*

In Northern Ireland, there remains much work to be done in relation to hate crimes. The [most recent PSNI statistics](#) show a reduction in the annual total for racism-motivated hate incidents and crimes for NI. This should be welcomed – though cautiously, for two reasons. Firstly, the level is still unacceptably high, coming a close second only to sectarianism across the six hate motivation categories employed (racist, sectarian, disability, faith/religion, homophobic and transphobic), something that is all the more concerning given

the disparity in sheer numbers between the two main traditional communities and the migrant and minority ethnic communities. Secondly, that there was a reduction in numbers of incidents and crimes across four of the six categories may in part indicate that, with the circumstances that prevailed during restrictions this year, there was simply less opportunity for incidents to occur.

9.2 *Systemic disparities*

In relation to the criminal justice system as a whole, there has been concern internationally that minority groups can experience worse outcomes in the system (Lammy, 2017; Spohn, 2015; United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 2015). In many cases, minority groups have been found to be more frequently stopped by the police, charged with an offence and imprisoned, although experiences can differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction (Cochran & Mears, 2015; Kutateladze, Andiloro, Johnson & Spohn, 2014; Lammy, 2017; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2011). Concerns have also been expressed that while imprisoned, minority groups are more likely to experience worse outcomes, as demonstrated through an over-representation on prison disciplinary processes, limited progression on prison incentivised regimes, poorer relationships with staff and tendency to feel treated more unfairly than other groups (Mears & Bales, 2010; Lammy 2017; Liebling, 2008; Liebling, Arnold & Straub, 2011).

Some have argued that the disparate outcomes minority groups can experience in the criminal justice system can be explained by over-policing poorer, marginalised groups, resulting in discriminatory practices which exacerbate social divisions and marginalisation (Spohn, 2015; Tonry, 1995; Wacquant, 2001). Others question whether minority groups are both exposed to more social deprivation and/or criminogenic needs, which contribute to a greater involvement in crime, and/or serious offending, and worse outcomes in the criminal justice system (e.g. Beaver, DeLisi, Wright, Boutwell, Barnes & Vaughn, 2013; Umbach, Raine, Gur & Portnoy, 2018).

Recent research explaining disparate outcomes while in prison suggests that while there may be an element of discretion involved in some disparate outcomes in prison, many differences in outcomes may be reflective of wider inequalities occurring outside of prison in society and due to variations in offending histories (Butler, McNamee & Kelly, 2019).

However, understanding of the reasons for this disparity remains limited until further research is conducted investigating the possible interplay between individual, societal and discriminatory practices, (Mears, Cochran & Lindsey, 2016).

Question 10: “Can you suggest other ways in which racial and ethnic disparities in the UK could be addressed? In particular, is there evidence of where specific initiatives or interventions have resulted in positive outcomes? Are there any measures which have been counterproductive and why?”

10.1 *Representation and participation*

In terms of addressing ethnic and racial disparities through democratic participation and voice, the basic step of increasing ethnic minority groups' involvement, in advisory groups to

inform the development of policy and guidance governing how this policy is enacted, would go some way towards reducing inequality.

In the judicial system, where appropriate, the use of alternative approaches (e.g. restorative approach) should be encouraged, in place of harsher criminal justice sanctions, which may only serve to further increase inequality, stigmatisation, over-policing and reoffending. Access to higher education, and across the pipelines into postgraduate studies and academic research, is an avenue towards increasing the authoritative voice and participation of members of groups which have experienced racial and ethnic disparities. In Northern Ireland, there is a dearth of such attention on and transparent evidence about the academic pipeline.

10.2 Addressing and reducing discrimination

In addition to matters related to education (see Q3), the importance of addressing stereotypes or assumptions about the professions open to BAME communities should be examined, so as to address the pigeonholing regarding occupations that has entrenched economic segregating and limited social mobility (Delargy 2007; Crangle 2018).

10.3 Accelerate anti-racist interventions

Addressing paramilitary racist violence and hate crimes is a priority. It has been acknowledged by elements of the criminal justice system in NI, including the paramilitary, that there has been 'targeting of ethnic minorities' and confirmation that the UVF was behind 'orchestrating' racist attacks. The state has a responsibility to tackle this profoundly serious dimension to racist violence. This is a dimension of race relations that is specific to NI and arguably more serious than such crimes in GB generally (McVeigh, 2015).

10.4 Relationship building

Spaces of learning and development that involved increased inter-group contact and relationships between minority and majority groups, such as higher education and (religiously) mixed schooling, have been influential in decreasing young people's negativity towards immigrants (Doebler et al 2017). It should be noted that these are limited opportunities: only 7% of primary and secondary schooling in NI is not divided between the Protestant and Catholic communities. However, around 50% of 18 year olds were enrolled in higher education in 2018/ 2019 ([NISRA 2020](#)). While indications are that this may improve the majority mindset, and hopefully impact positively on hate crimes against minority groups, the experiences of participation of minorities within these settings, are very much under-researched, particularly in the higher education sector. The enrolment rates suggest very few students from minority groups enter higher education, particularly those identified as Travellers ([NISRA 2020b](#)).

In terms of building better relationships, one study – small in scale, though it accords well with the experience of a range of intercultural organisations – of an initiative in Dungannon in Northern Ireland may be instructive. Scrantom & McLaughlin (2019) investigated the psychosocial benefits of a cross-community, cross cultural dance programme for youth in NI;

Heroes on the Hill. The programme was designed by DU Dance and implemented in Dungannon, which is a small yet unique Northern Irish town, with a relatively large proportion of international immigrants. The programme brought together 70 young people of various races/ethnicities and backgrounds who may not have otherwise interacted.

They participated in 12 music and dance rehearsals in small groups and then performed publicly for their community. They formed supportive relationships with the facilitators, gained self-confidence through mastering the skill of dance, and their cultural traditions were affirmed by being integrated into the dance and final performance. Ten young people were interviewed before the programme and eight followed up after the programme. Findings from the interviews revealed bullying and racism to be rampant themes throughout the interviews, with the children recounting both their own experiences as victims, or what they have witnessed. Most instances of this bullying stemmed from perceived differences and 'otherness'.

Results showed how the programme fostered understanding of diversity and inclusion. After the programme, young people reported forming friendships with others from different backgrounds and coming to the realisation that 'we are all the same'. The programme was shown to be successful in promoting inclusion and fostering acceptance of others, by supporting their integration with each other and increasing their self-confidence in a context where their "differences" are not always accepted or appreciated by the community.

Programmes such as these should not be underestimated in their dynamic ability to address such complex issues; in fact, they should be considered crucial in promoting integration, diversity, and inclusion in Northern Ireland and beyond.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, while we welcome this opportunity to engage on these crucial matters, the problem of ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK is on such a scale and of such a systemic nature that no private individual, no group of NGOs or researchers, and no consortium of voluntary and community sector organisations has the power to provide a solution. Nor should the responsibility for producing such a solution be seen to lie in the private, voluntary or community sector.

It is the responsibility of government – at a UK level and in the devolved institutions – to bring the scope, the authority, the resources and the power which only it commands to the task of overcoming the institutional racism that lies at the root of the disparities and inequalities addressed in this report.

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