



**Findings and Recommendations from the *Shaping  
the Future* Seminar Series, November 2011 –  
February 2013**

**Draft Discussion Paper, October 2013**

*The seminar series was a partnership endeavour. We are extremely grateful to all participants who offered their time and expertise.*

## Introduction

Between November 2011 and February 2013, ROTA delivered the *Shaping the Future* seminar series, which considered some of the main challenges facing London's BAME children and young people and their families, following a difficult economic period and wide-spread policy reforms and public spending cuts. The seminar series, which was attended by over 500 people, included two regional events, five local events, five workshops with young people, two workshops with parents, and a two day training programme for representatives of children and young people's community organisations. Participants represented London's BAME communities and their organisations and a wide range of statutory organisations with responsibilities for children and young people's services. Activities took place in Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Southwark & Lambeth.

This draft discussion paper summarises the key findings and recommendations from the report on the seminar series under the following broad themes:

- The persistence of racism and race inequality in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Britain
- Legislative and policy tools
- Criminal justice and *stop and search*
- Education
- Non-formal education
- Employment
- Aspiration and opportunity
- The pressures on young Londoners
- Community cohesion
- The BAME voluntary and community sector

## Main findings

### The Persistence of Racism and Race Inequality in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Britain

The seminars found that racism and race discrimination continue to persist in British society, and are frequently evident in the school system and in higher education.

- Racism and race inequality persist in new and emerging forms and in a denial of racism that sees it as 'no longer an issue'.
- The voice of BAME communities is key in addressing inequality, yet BAME people are under-represented in senior statutory roles and democratic processes, such as Learning Trust board members, head teachers, QCs and senior judiciary members, Police Chief Superintendents and Chief Inspectors.
- School exclusions represent a most direct and persistent form of discriminatory practice in schools and continue to have a disproportionate impact on BAME young people and their families.
- African-Caribbean boys are at risk of more acute racism, often linked to unfairness and a lack of transparency in behaviour management systems in schools and in the criminal justice system.
- Early, negative labelling of BAME students has a damaging effect upon educational progress, but social stereotyping and cultural assumptions about Black pupils can be embedded in schools.
- Because of stereotypical associations with 'gangs' or 'danger' Black male students often feel criminalised and treated with suspicion, leading to 'overvisibility' and unwarranted accusations that may lead to exclusion.
- African-Caribbean pupils were almost four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school in 2009-2010 than the school population as a whole. In some local areas where the seminars were held, this disproportion is even more severe.
- There are many types of informal exclusions of young black males within the classroom, which contributes to a sense of isolation from their peers.
- BAME students are under-represented in the 'elite' universities. Widening Participation teams in many universities are not fulfilling their quotas. Information about Widening Participation programmes is very selective and parents are often not aware of them.
- BAME communities are very concerned that many recent changes in legislation and public policy and spending would impact adversely on BAME communities. In education particular concern was expressed about the loss the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and services in nearly all London boroughs, the failure of the Pupil Premium to adequately target educational support at BAME pupils at risk of educational disadvantage and the inadequacy of equality impact assessments of policy changes.

## Recommendations

National government should:

- Undertake an impact assessment of the absorption of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG).
- Develop a central support package that enables schools to ensure the pupil premium addresses educational disadvantage linked to racial inequality as well as socio-economic disadvantage and to share good practice.

## Legislative and Policy Tools

- Some legislation and tools previously available to BAME communities to challenge decisions affecting their children and families have been removed.
- The language of equality is being lost to public discourse

## Recommendations

- Statutory bodies to take positive action steps to ensure most disadvantaged young people are engaged in the development of policy and practice.
- The race equality movement to reframe the discussion on race equality to explore and learn from racial advantage; to speak in terms of assets and aspirations most often and to nurture youth leaders and a sense of consciousness about race equality.

## Criminal Justice and Stop and Search

- Stop and Search, the most visible manifestation of discriminatory practices within the criminal justice system, persistently and disproportionately affects BAME people.

## Recommendations

- For the BAME sector to advance a race equality movement that is linked with other, more powerful, social justice movements, such as teachers' movements and children's sector campaigns. With unpopular issues, the BAME sector should first seek to influence more powerful social justice movements to take on issues, and, once this has been achieved, to influence statutory policy and practice itself.
- For police practices to take account of the lived experiences of local people, many of them from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic communities. Models of community policy and policing by consent to be implemented far more consistently and with substantive involvement of young people.

## Education

- Although some progress has been made in recent years, educational inequalities remain a considerable concern among London's BAME communities, still in 2013.

- BAME communities are concerned that many of the educational reforms, such as changes to the Ofsted framework, which now has less of a focus on equalities, loss of ethnic minority achievement services and grants, and expansions of free schools and academies, will result in a reversal of progress over recent years in addressing educational inequalities.
- BAME communities have limited influence on education services: BAME people are under-representation in the capital's classrooms (particularly men), as senior managers in schools and on bodies that oversee education; BAME families have limited influence on school systems – they often do not know what their rights are. Where there are BAME governors, they and their children are at risk of harassment on raising issues of inequality at a school governance level.
- Access to quality education services, particularly in deprived inner London wards, limits the educational opportunities available to BAME children and young people, and, if not adequately addressed, could go on to have generational impact.
- Many teachers and schools want more support to enable them to address attainment gaps between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
- School exclusions represent a most direct and persistent form of discriminatory practice in schools and continue to have a disproportionate impact on BAME young people and their families.
- Stereotyping in too many schools is limiting educational opportunities and the achievement of BAME pupils (through setting, behaviour management, and access to extra-curricular activities).
- Many BAME pupils with mental health issues are misunderstood and misdiagnosed with learning or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, leading to inappropriate treatment.
- Wide-spread social and economic inequalities in London exacerbate the sense of disaffection and futility felt by some young Londoners.
- Black History has been deprioritised in many schools.
- The Greater London Authority (GLA) has made insufficient effort to engage BAME communities, in particular those who have faced the greatest educational disadvantages historically, in work they are progressing to improve education services in the capital.

## Recommendations

- GLA to establish an advisory group including representatives of communities that have experienced the greatest marginalisation in education to advise on the delivery of GLA's education programmes.
- GLA to resource and facilitate a mentoring and support programme to nurture potential school leaders from BAME communities that are under-represented at senior levels in schools.
- GLA to support voluntary organisations to work to enable disadvantaged BAME communities to positively influence the education system. This work could include support for parents to become effective governors and raising awareness among BAME communities about how to influence decision-making in education.
- Local authorities, school alliances and academy chains to coordinate good quality Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities for teaching staff at various levels on key local equality and inclusion issues. Specific issues that may need to be focused on include: Fairness in behaviour management processes; tapping into cultural and religious capital to support the progress of learners; improving the academic language proficiency

across the curriculum of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL); addressing controversial and sensitive out-of-school issues that impact on educational attainment (e.g. impact of gang association on vulnerable girls); meeting the specific needs of Roma pupils in schools; responding to the psychological, social and cultural factors which may impact on asylum seeker and refugee pupils; teaching and learning strategies that support newly arrived pupils at early stages of English language acquisition; understanding and responding to the educational needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SENs) who belong to additional equalities groups (BAME pupils with learning difficulties face greater barriers to appropriate academic support than other pupils with learning difficulties); teaching and learning to support the academic progress of pupils with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; compliance with the Equality Act 2010, in particular ensuring and evidencing tangible outcomes.

- GLA to support alternative routes to teaching for gifted and talented Londoners from disadvantaged communities. This should involve a paid, practice-based, teacher training programme. Voluntary organisations should be engaged to identify potential trainees and provide training to enable them to address any skills gaps and get ready for a paid, practice-based, teacher training programme. The project should provide on-going mentoring during Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) and early career phases to ensure high retention rates.
- GLA to develop specific school improvement packages targeted at senior school staff to support them in addressing attainment gaps faced by learners at risk of educational disadvantage but not targeted through the pupil premium.
- Schools to continue to monitor the performance of BAME groups that are most at risk of educational disadvantage and to undertake specific action in response to under-performance at whole school policy and classroom practice levels.
- Schools and local authorities to undertake specific steps to recruit and retain teachers from BAME communities that are under-represented in the teaching workforce and ensure career progression for such teachers.
- Schools to encourage staff to undertake CPD opportunities aimed at addressing educational inequalities and supporting the academic progress of pupils who are not targeted through pupil premium but still at risk of educational disadvantage.

## **Non-formal education**

- Voluntary sector youth initiatives play an important role in providing non-formal educational opportunities to young BAME Londoners who are most at risk of exclusion from mainstream education. Such initiatives, however, are particularly under-resourced and have been disproportionately impacted by public spending cuts.
- Youth initiatives are highly regarded for providing training, mentoring, peer support and encouraging leadership skills.
- Knowledge-sharing and know-how on accessing higher education is not being widely communicated to BAME students and their parents.

## Recommendations

- The statutory sector to resource voluntary sector youth initiatives including inter-youth support and mentoring, homework clubs and support for life skills outside the classroom to improve employability.
- The GLA to recognise the positive impact of youth services in encouraging success and leadership as a significant factor in tackling the detrimental effect of exclusions and in adopting a 'youth-first' approach to success.
- The BAME sector to support young people to take on local campaigns to ensure work experience programmes are maintained in areas where young people may be less likely to have the necessary social capital.
- The BAME sector to monitor the access which young BAME people from disadvantaged urban areas have to quality work experience programmes, vocational programmes and apprenticeship schemes.

## Employment

- Programmes to enable meaningful and sustained employment are not impacting on young BAME people. Statutory employment programmes are failing to use the expertise of BAME organisations who know most about the aspirations and needs of disadvantaged BAME communities.

## Recommendations

- BAME sector to influence large private sector companies to deliver proactive, positively active, effective outreach programmes – to support gifted and talented young BAME people from disadvantaged communities, who may not have succeeded in compulsory education, to gain meaningful employment.

## Aspiration and opportunity

- Young BAME people's aspirations and confidence are thwarted by a lack of opportunity in accessing the skills and knowledge for progressing through education into employment.

## Recommendations

- Local authorities, school alliance, academy chains and sponsors to improve the nature of vocational training on offer to young people in and after compulsory education. Young BAME people from disadvantaged urban areas to have more influence over the development of vocational education programmes that exist.

## The pressures on young Londoners

- Social and economic inequalities exacerbate the sense of disaffection and futility felt by some young Londoners.
- The negative influences of gang culture and the lure of the street disproportionately impact upon young BAME people living in London.

- The August 2011 riots in London had a greater negative impact upon BAME communities and a key factor in involvement was thought to be the failure of society to inspire marginalised young people and the education system more generally.
- Sustained and meaningful youth forums and leadership programmes that provide a platform for young people to make recommendations or shape approaches to policing for example, can publicly affirm young people's contribution to the society in which they live.

### **Recommendations**

- The BAME sector to work in greater partnership with youth organisations and take targeted and specific steps to open up the race equality movement to young people. This would include: specific communication strategies targeted at young people; opening up programmes, such as those aimed at enabling BAME communities to hold authorities to account, so that they are accessible to young people; opening employment opportunities with race equality organisations to younger people; adequately resourced youth-advisory groups; supporting young people to lead social action and policy influencing projects on issues of importance to them.
- The BAME and youth sectors to collaborate on projects that support youth-led spaces where consciousness can be raised about race equality, experiences can be articulated and explored and responses developed. Outcomes from this to shape the policy influencing work of race equality organisations.
- For the BAME sector to take on campaigns aimed at supporting the sustainability of youth organisations in inner London boroughs.
- For local authorities to ensure that youth initiatives, which have a central role in ameliorating community pressures through developing leadership skills, providing training opportunities and employment programmes are fully supported.

### **Community cohesion**

- There are tensions in relationships between different ethnic communities and between different equality groups, which threatens community cohesion in boroughs such as Tower Hamlets.
- Many young people aspire to move out of the area they grew up in, which they see as disadvantaging their educational, employment and economic prospects.

### **Recommendations**

- EHRC to implement public awareness raising campaigns about the persistence of racism and its impact on individuals as well as mainstream society. EHRC to take steps to address racism within the public sphere and to create safe places for mainstream society to talk openly about racism without fear.
- For the BAME sector to undertake positive action measures to address the under-representation of young BAME people from disadvantaged urban communities in paid leadership roles.

### **The BAME voluntary and community sector**

The sector was examined for how it was meeting frontline needs and tackling race inequality:



- Public spending cuts are felt most keenly in London's BAME voluntary and community sector and affect its ability to meet growing frontline needs and also in undertaking effective policy influencing work.
- In many boroughs there is no adequately resourced mechanism through which BAME communities can have strategic dialogue about their communities' futures.
- In improving the effectiveness of the sector, individual organisations should be supported in finding ways to increase their impact and greater collaborative working should be encouraged.

## **Recommendations**

- A coalition of BAME and young people's organisations to work together to implement ideas about engaging the public more effectively in their work, including fundraising to support 'A movement built on self-determination, resilience and agency' so that the strength of the work of the race equality sector is not dependent on the ideologies of whichever political party is in power at the time. Key race equality organisations to develop a strategy for developing an independent grant fund through income generation from BAME middle classes, business people and private sector organisations to support the sustainability of the race equality movement.

## **Concluding remarks**

Despite some undoubted progress having been made in addressing racism in our country, there are concerns that inequalities continue to adversely affect young BAME people in the education systems, employment and criminal justice systems. Discriminatory practices in schools have a lasting effect on pupils and will continue to do so until BAME people are better represented in positions of influence and authority. There are still proportionately fewer BAME students in higher education, and strategies for accessing better education and employment prospects are having a limited impact. Youth engagement is key to building up the movement for race equality and justice. Increased support for race equality organisations to involve young people in shaping policy and strategies e.g. around education, policing and community cohesion would go some way to addressing this.

### What is ROTA?

ROTA is an action research and social policy organisation focused on issues impacting on Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

As a BAME-led organisation, all ROTA's work is based on the principle that those with direct experience of inequality should be central to solutions to address it. Our work is actively informed by the lived experiences of BAME communities and their organisations.

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