



RUNNYMEDE TRUST WRITTEN CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO:

**From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together
(Home Office)**

10 October 2008

Contact details:

The Runnymede Trust
7 Plough Yard
London EC2A 3LP
Tel: 020 7377 9222

Email: info@runnymedetrust.org

Web: www.runnymedetrust.org

We welcome the opportunity to submit our thoughts and views on the Policing Green Paper. The Runnymede Trust is an independent policy research organisation focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society. Our mandate is to promote a successful multi-ethnic Britain – a Britain where citizens and communities feel valued, enjoy equal opportunities to develop their talents, lead fulfilling lives and accept a collective responsibility, all in the spirit of civic friendship, shared identity and a common sense of belonging. The criminal justice system (CJS) has long been of special concern to us.

While the consultation poses some important questions, we believe that there are, in particular, two particular issues, central to the promotion of race equality, that have been overlooked. These relate to: 1) Stop and Search procedures; and 2) The recruitment of Black and minority ethnic police officers.

Stop and Search

1. We would like to remind the Home Office that our central concern about stop and search continues to be the disproportionate application of the procedure to young Black men in particular. While we support the most effective use of police human resources, we do not believe that a simple reduction in the length of the form will address the continued problem of disproportionality and call on the Home Office to tackle this as a priority. It is important not to lose sight of why monitoring police stops became a necessity in the first place.

2. When Sir William Macpherson charged the police force with institutional racism, he was commenting on “the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin”, which “can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people”. Part and parcel of this institutional racism has been the criminalisation of minority ethnic groups in general, and of young black men in particular. Central to this process of criminalisation are stop and search practices, where black and Asian people are far more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than their white counterparts. This kind of disproportionality has contributed greatly to the volatile relations between the police and minority ethnic groups. While the disproportionality has not been reduced since the introduction of the stop and search form, the current procedures do allow us to monitor the situation and highlight areas where the police could perform better. Indeed, the information made available through collecting data on stop and search has been very useful for analytical purposes, and has led to an increased understanding within the police service of its own practices in terms of racial profiling and stereotyping.
3. We are not objecting to the simplification of police monitoring. This should, if properly implemented, be beneficial for all. However, the Green Paper states the intention to reduce “the amount of information that officers collect when recording crimes by 80% in 80% of cases”, but does not explain what this would entail. We urge the government not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, and to continue to collect the important information on who gets stopped and why.

Diversity and Leadership in the Police Service

4. We welcome the intention to recruit a more ethnically diverse police force, especially at senior levels. The relatively high number of minority ethnic PCSOs compared to PCs demonstrates that this is by no means an impossible task. It also shows that the underrepresentation of black police officers is not due to a disinterest amongst minority ethnic groups in pursuing careers in law enforcement agencies. We are therefore pleased that the Government has voiced a commitment to design policies to address this disproportionality. However, the Green Paper is somewhat thin on actual strategies. Recent claims made by a number of high ranking BME officers is cause for alarm, bringing into question as it does the commitment of senior leaders to resolve the lack of senior BME officers. The fact that the Black Police Association is now discouraging minority ethnic groups from joining the force is a clear indication of how serious the current situation is. Although a more transparent selection, accreditation and appointment system is mentioned in section 3.36, a concrete strategy to prevent institutional racism in the recruitment process is not explicitly or convincingly outlined, nor does making the top ranks of the police more representative appear to be high up on the list of priorities. We believe that the government must now set out a clear strategy to address how it intends to better understand and challenge this internal culture so that the recruitment and retention of minority ethnic staff can finally be addressed.
5. We would urge the Government to make this a top priority. The recent turmoil within the Metropolitan Police has shown the damage discrimination against black police officers can do

to relations between the police and minority ethnic communities. These events have damaged the police service's reputation and severely undermined the confidence in the capital's police.

Thank you for considering our response and the concerns and issues we highlight. We look forward to learning the result of the consultation process, as well as seeing a Race Equality Impact Assessment.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this response, please contact Rob Berkeley (Deputy Director) at the Runnymede Trust, 7 Plough Yard, Shoreditch, London EC2A 3LP Tel: 020 7377 9222.

The Runnymede Trust
10/10/2008

Further information about the Runnymede Trust can be found on our website –
www.runnymedetrust.org