

For the Second Question and Answer session of the morning this time it is **Fiona Mactaggart** and **Trevor Phillips** who are answering the questions, with **Samir Shah** in the chair.

(Samir Shah, Runnymede Chair)

Trevor, thank you very much. Well we have overrun a bit, we have about ten minutes or so for Questions and Answers, so I'll ask you again to say who you are and try to keep the questions as brief as possible. I'll take four to start and I'll go back to the panel.

Questions:

[Q1]. For the last two and a half years I've been working for an extremely successful inter-cultural arts regeneration project which has had a funding equivalent of £487,000. We are now in a situation where we are looking for new funding and find again and again that funding is not continued for successful projects but is given to new projects that look innovative but end up just reinventing the same old wheels, so that very little changes in the community. I'd like the Minister's comments on that please.

[Q2]. I'm wearing a couple of hats this morning – representing Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (we're a community outreach development office) and I'm here also as a member of the community association. My remit is recruitment and retention of BME staff within Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. In 2001 the right honourable Home Secretary at the time, Jack Straw, set targets for 2009, which is having a workforce representative of the community they are serving. What I'm suggesting to the panel is that basically not much has changed. When are we going to start moving away from the tokenistic gesture to pumping real resources into recruitment and retention. Not only recruitment but also retention. Trevor, you mentioned earlier on where BME members could all make a difference in the community they serve. That's my question, thank you.

[Q3]. There are some flaws inside this strategy and I'll probably write directly to Fiona about it rather than take these up with you here and now. Trevor made two points that really stood out: society is looking at us as white and non-white, and the point that really stuck with me is that different groups have different needs. I think it is quite important that we recognise that the African (obviously I'm African) community doesn't benefit from being labelled as black, and just as we don't say brown-Asian we shouldn't say black-African. And I think that cultural disinheritance from our own ancestral identity perpetuates this ignorance about us as diverse people, and if we could (and this is a question to both parties because I really want a response on this), surely we should now be in an era like in America, like across the world, where we divorce ourselves from colour-based labelling and terminology and refer to people specifically by their race or the group of people who they assign themselves to, like Asians. I know a lot of people from Asian communities who don't like being labelled Asian, and this is the way to actually encourage more respect for the individual identities of disparate groups.

Chair: Could you turn it into a question? That would be very helpful.

[Q3] (contd). Well, that's the point, do they agree with this strategy that instead of perpetuating a colour-based ideology that they now actually go towards true race equality, which means moving away from labels and that's showing respect to the diversity in minority communities.

Chair: Thank you very much. Let's take that. The first question was about funding and funding new projects at the expense of successful old ones. Fiona do you want to address that?

Fiona Mactaggart replies:

Yes. I was just looking up a table so I was a bit distracted. The point you make about the traditions of funding being over-focused on innovation is actually a general point about the funding of voluntary organisations. I haven't got a magic solution but let me just tell you two things. One, I know that it's serious. Two, we're developing a strategy across government to see whether we can get more intelligent funding in a number of ways. First of all, less burdensome accountabilities so that if you've got funding from more than one source you don't have to constantly fill in accountability reporting forms of the same information to lots of different sources if the funding comes from different bits of

government. We're making some progress on that. I discovered in one analytical pilot that one organisation had been asked for 900 separate pieces of information.

Secondly, how to actually get more strategic, de-verer funding, which includes longer-term funding. Now there are a couple of ways of doing longer-term funding. One is grant funding and there is a case for less focus on innovation and more focus on investment. One of the things that I'm also trying to do is to help groups look at creating stability funding by being less dependent on one source of income, because I think that's often part of the problem. Actually helping them look at whether they can earn some money as well as get grants. Whether they can get contracts, and whether we can ensure that if those contracts are made with government they can be longer term. It seems to me that a local youth service, for example, may do much better, by contracting with an arts project for some of its youth work, than some of the youth work that I occasionally see in our local communities.

So I think there's a chance of progress and one of the things that I hope to be launching in the next couple of months is the review of the funding compact and one of the specific issues that it will address. I haven't got an answer yet, but the review will specifically address this issue of the length of funding time and the difficulties that people have in continuity.

The second question was about labels. I don't have an answer about labels. I don't think government should generally be deciding people's labels. I can give you a process which might help. The ONS (Organisation of National Statistics), which decides classifications used in the census, has a consultation about those classifications, and of course classifications are disputed. You know they will continue to be disputed if you get your way, but of course they are disputed because they are about people's identity. There's a tension between having broad simple categories and having categories which can be de-ver and dilled down to small things. But there is a process that ONS initiate of consultation about the census, and I would argue that one of the things you should do is raise that in the context of that consultation. But the demand needs to come from people who are affected by the decision.

Chair: There was another question, a middle question about targets ...

Fiona Mactaggart responds:

The reason why I'm slightly distracted is because I was looking for a table which is in the Race Equality and Public Service document – now I'm not sure that it is in the final version – which is about looking at this issue of recruitment results, retention results and so on. The one thing that I constantly say to people is: your job is to keep people safe. Actually, if you are trying to encourage in an overcrowded household the use of smoke alarms, it's probably a good idea to have someone out there arguing for it who speaks the language of the mother of the household. She is the person who is likely to be at home, who may well not have access to English, certainly when it comes to the kind of English that she might be asked about fitting one of these things. Communicating with that mother in her own language will help make that household, even neighbourhood, safer. So, you know, it's actually an obvious thing to do because it produces results.

What I'm really glad to see is that some fire services have seen that and are running the kind of project that I think you were hinting at. Which is delivering results, because I know that it's going to benefit people in overcrowded houses who are more at risk. We are tackling the overcrowding but let's also tackle the risk; and one of the ways of doing that is ensuring that we've got this kind of recruitment and retention that you talked about.

Chair: Trevor, do you want to pick up on any of this?

Trevor Phillips replies:

Yes, on the second and third points very quickly. Let me just remind you what I think Charles Clarke said – something right, which is that we've got to keep up the pressure, but that we ought not to constantly say nothing's happened. And I don't think that is what you were implying or what you were saying. But I think there is a danger that we get ourselves into a frame of mind which somehow suggests that the efforts of all the people in this room over the last 10, 15, 30 years have added up to nothing. Well that's just not true. We may not have got to where we want to get to, but we have got somewhere; and I just want to say something about this issue of hitting the target.

We had an agreement with the Ministry of Defence 5 years ago. The last couple of years it had been voluntary.

[tape is changed over ...]

... money and resource on diversity and equality, and I know the distinction between the two but actually, people would rather put money into it than the police. I need hardly say anything more to emphasise to you that success is not just about the amount of money you have put in. It's about what you do. So, I think we need to think about this rather cannily... And let me just remind you (a CRE Public Service announcement here), race equality schemes run out at the end of May. This is a really good moment to get everybody, all 43,000 public bodies, to re-think what they are doing because they have got to have a new scheme and it has got to be better. That's something I can say, blanket, for everybody. It has got to be better and we are looking for it to be better, and we are looking to you to tell us, not every small thing, but where things are not being done.

On the point about the labelling, can I just make this response. I understand exactly how you feel but I think we ought not to get too hung up in public policy terms about labels, that the categorisations are for a very specific purpose. They are about allocation of resources, and understanding what groups of people are at a disadvantage. And in a sense it doesn't matter what you call people from that point of view. [I am just coming on to your point.] From that point of view it doesn't matter what you call them, the most important thing is we must know what is happening to them.

Now, on a question of what I as an individual might or might not want to be called, I will just say this. Let's not think of identity as something that only exists in one way. I am an African but I am a lot of other things besides; and the thing, frankly, that adds up to me and what I like to call myself is black British – because I am very black in all sorts of ways that you wouldn't imagine but I am also very British, actually equally in all sorts of ways you wouldn't imagine, and I like both of those things. So when you talk about labels, let's not force everybody into a box constructed for them by someone else.

Chair: Thank you. I will take one more set of questions.

[Q4]. Why is the Minister advocating a two-tier system, I mean, in terms of devolution? The situation in Wales for ethnic minorities is a lot worse than in England. All this policy, these documents do is make that difference greater because there isn't a commitment from the devolved governments. Thank you.

[Q5]. How does the Government plan to ensure that racial equality is embedded within schools and is not just a simple bolt-on? Given that numerous under-performing schools need to set targets for GCSEs, they often see the race card as a problem, especially in mainly white areas and I am an educational equality officer on three estates in Kings Norton, Birmingham. What initiatives does the Government have with regard to teacher training and equality in the sense that I know numerous teachers that are unaware of the fact that racial abuse and harassment actually is a crime. So maybe something needs to be done within teacher training, and that's because many of them see racial abuse in school as merely bad behaviour.

[Q6]. This morning, Fiona, you spoke about continuing the Macpherson process, in particular I am talking about in relation to scrutiny of 'stop and search', and this question is specifically for the Government. When will immigration officers, who are exercising increased powers of arrest, and who are accompanying police on stop and search exercises in workplaces and at tube stations in London, when will they be subject to the same level of scrutiny as the police?

Chair: Thank you. OK. The first question was about Wales. We already had a question about Wales. Fiona, do you want to add anything?

Fiona Mactaggart replies:

Yes. The strategy has been developed in consultation with the Welsh administration and they will produce their action plan. Now, that doesn't sound to me like a two-tier system; it sounds to me like following through the consequences of devolution. You are right that there's a real job to make progress in Wales, and actually the new Race Equality Scheme that the Welsh Assembly have

developed is showing progress and I am not going to suddenly unpick devolution because of an area where Wales isn't doing as well as I had hoped. What I am going to do is work with them and make sure that they'll do as well as the people of Wales have a right to deserve.

The second question was about how we can embed this in schools and not just make it a bolt-on. Key to that is the counting issue that Trevor talked about. Actually, if you make sure that a school doesn't look like a success to Ofsted, if it is still allowing particular classes of children to bump along the bottom, to be missed out of the examination success rates and so on, and is claiming success when they are missed out of it, I think that's going to make quite a difference for the schools.

We tried very hard, and I was disappointed in a way when you said 'how is it not just going to be an initiative?' The point about the approach of this strategy is that this is not a new initiative. It is actually rather boring. That's one of the reasons why I didn't do a kind of whizzy speech but tried to kind of grind through it with that powerpoint presentation because it is about delivery. It's not about inventing fantastic new targets and so on, it's just about trying. Trying to help people do the job that they should have been doing anyway. Trying to give them the tools which enable them to do that better. Now that will include, in the work that I was talking about, tackling racism, some specific support about dealing with inter-racial bullying and about educating teachers around that. It will include specific targets about increasing the proportion of teachers in education drawn from ethnic minorities. They are there and I believe, as a former teacher, that when the workforce in teaching better represents the children who are learning, then it's not a panacea but it helps. It actually helps to build aspiration, it helps to build communication, it actually improves the quality of the teaching.

I was a primary teacher and I was convinced that one of the reasons for some of the childish behaviour that I encountered amongst boys is that there were so few male teachers in primary schools. So I do think there are issues that we need to address here. I think they are being addressed in a fairly practical way. They are not going to give you a magic bullet – they are just not, you know. What we are saying is we are going to target better. We are not putting in huge new resources but clever targeting, thinking things through properly, and this will make a difference.

On Pascal's point, immigration officers are currently subject to the Independent Race Monitor. It's not as widespread as the Lawrence process but it is a mechanism to ensure the race impact of what immigration officers do is being reported on and measured.

Chair: Trevor - do you have any final words?

Trevor Phillips sums up:

Just a word on Wales. You will probably, or you might not, be aware that we rejected the National Assembly of the Welsh Government's Race Equality Scheme for a whole variety of reasons. What I am pleased to be able to say is that Roger Morgan and Edwina Hart, who is the Minister responsible for it, went away, worked with our people in Wales, and came back with a pretty damn good scheme. So things can be made to change. And I think now they have got that – and they have got it – and there are some real things in it which involve money and targets and deadlines, I think you should see a quickening of action in Wales.

The Second Question and Answer session ends here.