1976 and all that …

As we witness the beginning of the end for the Commission for Racial Equality and gear up for the arrival of the CEHR (Commission for Equality and Human Rights), it seems appropriate to look back at the year of the CRE’s foundation through the pages of the Runnymede Bulletin of the time, with contemporary comments from Rob Berkeley.

In 1976 the Race Relations Act was passed, and the Commission for Racial Equality came into being. Thirty years ago, the debate on race relations was no less lively, and no less crucial to the politics of the UK. Public services, housing, education and immigration were all key battlegrounds in race relations, as they remain today.

Runnymede played an important role in the debates of that year – intervening where appropriate to provide research, facts and information so that those who wanted to pursue a racist or xenophobic agenda could be more effectively challenged. The Runnymede Bulletin (then an A5 news sheet published eight times a year) tracked the passage of the Race Relations Bill through Parliament. Alongside its coverage of legislation, the Bulletin reported on how race equality issues in education, health, housing, immigration were then being addressed.

Here we highlight some of the key issues raised in the Bulletin in 1976 and reflect on how they resonate with the events of 2006. At the start of this year’s Black History Month, it is a timely reminder that although each generation has its own experiences of inequality and struggle, we ‘stand on the shoulders of giants’ who have walked difficult paths to get us to where we are today.

As highlighted elsewhere in the pages of this Bulletin, Runnymede continues to use research to challenge racism and racial inequality. We live in different times but the tone and content of debate is remarkably similar. The passing of the CRE highlights the importance of strong, independent voices maintaining a focus on race equality and working with government and others to build a successful multi-ethnic Britain.

Bulletin of Feb 1976

The Race Relations Bill

Two Runnymede publications were launched to promote an informed discussion on the Race Relations Bill.


The Race Relations Bill – A Briefing Paper. This paper presented and analysed recommendations for the reform of the Race Relations Law made by organisations such as the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, the Race Relations Board, the TUC, political parties and the Standing Conferences of Asian, Pakistani and West Indian Organisations (pub Jan 76).

RB 2006: The government has promised an overhaul of equality legislation during the life of this parliament. A Green Paper is expected in early 2007 followed by legislation as a result of the deliberations of the Discrimination Law Review and the Equalities Review. How we ensure that the widest number of people can use this as an opportunity to ensure that legislation meets the needs of our society for another generation remains a significant challenge.

1 For further comparison of the immigration debates over a similar period see What’s New about New Immigrants in Twenty-first Century Britain? by Runnymede’s Rob Berkeley, Omar Khan, and Mohan Ambikaipaker (2006), published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.

2 Copies of early Runnymede Bulletin back issues can be supplied at the cost of photocopying and postage.

3 The terminology used in some of these extracts is that of the reportage of the time – 1976.

4 At a conference to mark the twentieth anniversary of the RRA, Lord Lester gave the keynote speech. The content of that speech is still available from Runnymede as The Politics of the Race Relations Act 1976.

5 Available as a photocopy, charged at the cost of photocopying and postage.
April Bulletin 1976

Runnymede Report on the Race Relations Bill Second Reading

Introduction by Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary, the Bill was deemed to give effect to the four principles contained in the White Paper, Racial Discrimination (Cmnd. 6234, September 1975):

1. The clear recognition that the vast majority of the coloured population would remain permanently in this country
2. Members of racial minorities were entitled to full and equal treatment regardless of colour, race or national origins
3. There was a clear limit to the amount of immigration the country could absorb and it was in the interest of the minorities themselves to maintain a strict control over immigration, and
4. The success of legislation depended upon the leadership of Government and Parliament and on the response of society as a whole.

Leader of the Shadow Cabinet, William Whitelaw, during the debate raised two questions which he said were vital to the success of the Bill and to race relations policy in general. First, was the policy of strict control of immigration working satisfactorily? And secondly, was it seen to be doing so?

Alan Beith supported the Bill from the Liberal Bench, adding that legislation alone would not be sufficient, though could significantly influence a change in attitudes. Unlike previous legislation, he said, ‘it was not a counter-balance or accompaniment to new legislation restricting immigration’, as it was ‘quite undesirable that … legislation to deal with the 2005 election campaign. The Conservatives, as part of their ‘Are you thinking, what we’re thinking?’ campaign, posted the slogan ‘It’s not racist to campaign, posted the slogan ‘It’s not racist to impose limits on immigration’. More recently Ruth Kelly noted: ‘it is clear that we need a controlled, well-managed system of immigration that has clear rules and integrity to counter exploitation from the far right’. Despite many attempts, immigration and race relations remain yoked together in our debates.

Illegal Immigration

In response to a question in the Commons on 12 February, Roy Jenkins had responded with the answer that 188 Commonwealth citizens and foreign nationals had been detained as illegal entrants. On the accuracy of net balance figures for immigration, calculated from embarkation and admission reports, Mr Jenkins announced that Sir Claus Moser would be inquiring into the circumstances in which some embarkations appeared to have been counted twice.

May Bulletin 1976

Council Housing

Following a Runnymede report Race and Council Housing in London (September 1975), which found that BME tenants were becoming concentrated in the poorer quality, inter-war council estates, the Greater London Council [then a significant provider of social housing] investigated its own letting procedures (as distinct from individual borough housing policies). The main findings of the random sample of nearly 900 GLC-housed families were that, although there did not appear to be any discrimination over access to GLC housing, non-white families were being allocated the poorer-quality individual dwellings, and these lettings were concentrated on the less desirable inner-city estates, e.g. 54% of lettings on 10 problem estates in a 12-month period went to non-white families.

RB 2006: The hypotheses advanced to explain the findings could be reproduced in today’s newspapers with little modification: homeless families get put in less desirable properties – and a higher proportion of non-white families are homeless; immigrants prefer to live with other members of their community; they are more prepared to accept the first offer made as the housing from which they were moving was worse; less aware of options open to them, maybe because of language difficulties; and so on. Though today we would also have to include the suggestion that segregation was chosen by separatist minority communities intent on undermining ‘British’ values, and is not the result of discrimination and historical patterns of settlement.

Parliament

In the House of Commons the question of how many Rhodesian residents were eligible to settle in the UK was being discussed. It was reckoned that there were 80,000 citizens and maybe another 80,000 who could ‘claim the right of abode by reason of patriality’. In response to a question by Sir Anthony Royle as to how many of the estimated 10,000 people of Asian descent in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) held British passports, David Emmas, the Minister of State at the FCO, said they had no information, and that contingency plans for the admission of Rhodesian residents would be the responsibility of the Home Secretary.

RB 2006: Our immigration system remains outside of the auspices of the Race Relations Act and so decisions can be made on racist grounds such as this. The Annual Report of the Immigration Race Monitor now highlights where race impacts on decision-making, but the Home Secretary reserves the right to make decisions on this basis.

In the House of Lords, the Secretary of State was asked by Lord Avebury to take action regarding the allegation that Asian women attending Leicester General Hospital’s antenatal clinics were being asked to produce their passports before being given care. Leicester AHA and any other health authority would be asked to use the standard methods of checking eligibility to receive NHS treatment.

RB 2006: As noted in Runnymede Bulletin 346 (June 2006) the NHS is once more being required to check citizenship status before providing healthcare, regardless of the impact on public health or emergency services.
June Bulletin 1976

British Passport Holders Expelled

Asian UK passport holders expelled from Malawi in May arrived at Gatwick – forerunners of 250 who had been served with expulsion orders. Much debate in the Commons focused on estimates of the numbers of UK passport holders resident in African countries who would have a right to come to Britain if expelled – Norman Tebbit raised the Kenyan question on 14 April 1976, for example. On 17 May the Under-Secretary of State was asked to consult the Home Secretary with a view to setting up a national resettlement bureau to deal with immigration ‘so that the burden did not fall on the local authorities alone’. The Government’s reply to this and the question from Norman Tebbit is the familiar ‘no contingency plans … were necessary’. (Runnymede prepared a Briefing Paper on the status and admission of UK passport holders.)

Aitken, Powell and the Hawley Report

Jonathan Aitken moved a Commons debate on 24 May on the ‘changing demographic character of Britain’ calling on the Government to make a clear and accurate statement of its immigration policy in the face of the need for controls against ‘the vicious crime of illegal immigration’. Enoch Powell, speaking in support of Aitken, quoted extensively from a Foreign Office report by one D.F. Hawley whose picture of widespread corruption in respect of family reunion was later rebutted by a Runnymede report (see below). Powell went on, in his usual vein, to link immigration with crime and disorder and a culture of fear on the streets. Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary, attacked Powell’s association of immigration with crime and violence and said that ‘good race relations marched hand in hand with a firm policy on immigration’.

RB 2006:Veritas, the former party of ‘TV celebrity’ Robert Kilroy-Silk, has used a similar association to justify its anti-immigration stance. Its current leader comments on their website:

‘The UK cannot even, under the human rights law, stop convicted murderers, rapists and child sex offenders from coming here . . . In January 2007 [sic] Romania and Bulgaria will become members of the EU and many of their citizens and criminals will come to our country. Our government is too timid to do anything about it.’

July Bulletin 1976

Powell and Hawley

Enoch Powell’s 24 May speech was widely criticised by minority ethnic and other organisations, the TUC and individual trade unions, Community Relations councils and more. The Hawley Report itself, quoted extensively by Enoch Powell in support of banning or limiting family reunion, was summarised in the July Bulletin. As were the comments of Alex Lyon, former Minister of State at the Home Office, who had been under ‘sustained attack’ from officials upon his handling of Immigration Control, culminating with the Hawley Report. Mr Lyon, while advocating a firm control of immigration, had insisted that a Labour Government should also be humane and flexible. Alongside many criticisms of the Hawley Report’s accuracy and tendency to be ‘misled by mythology’, Lyon declared himself not unsympathetic to a quota system for settlement.19

The Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan, said in Parliament on 27 May: ‘There is a difference between controlled entry and the abuses which are taking place and to which attention has been directed. It is in the interest of the communities themselves, and it is certainly the desire of many of the leaders, that these abuses and evasions should not be practised.’

Following on from this coverage was a preliminary report of the findings of Akram and Elliot, published by Runnymede as Firm but Unfair?,21 on the genuineness of procedures for right-of-entry claims from the Indian Sub-continent. These two community workers had gone to Pakistan for Runnymede in February 1976, visiting applicants’ villages, and establishing that a genuine claim was the norm, compared to assertions that had been made in the Hawley Report.

September Bulletin 1976

The Race Relations Bill is Passed

The third reading of the Race Relations Bill saw the Bill passed, as amended in Committee, on 8–9 July after 23 hours of debate. One of the approved amendments was the title of the new commission – no longer the Race Relations Board or the Community Relations Commission, but the Commission for Racial Equality. Significant amendments approved at this stage included giving the Commission the power to draft codes of practice on the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities (new Clause 9), and conferring statutory duties on local authorities to ‘work towards’ the same (new Clause 6). Clause 65 gave the Commission more freedom to choose how to support complainants in their disputes. Clause 69, on incitement to racial hatred, was removed from the Bill and added to the Public Order Act 1936.

The then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, said that ‘it should be recognised outside the House that the broad thrust of the Bill is supported by the Opposition Front Bench and the majority of the Conservative Party’. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, William Whitelaw, said that although there were still points of disagreement with the Government on the legislation, ‘we hope that it will have some success’. The House passed the Bill by 82 votes to 3.

The First Chair of the Commission was Conservative MP, David Lane, who had been Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office in Ted Heath’s administration of 1972–4, and was then a member of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration (see October, overleaf).
### October Bulletin 1976
**Activities of the SCRRI**

The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration made a series of recommendations on the organisation of Race Relations Administration to which the government responded – largely negatively and with complacency.

#### Comment from Tom Rees, Runnymede's Director:
"The long-delayed Government response to the Select Committee's report on the administration of race relations in Government has dashed any hopes that the delay might be due to the size of the intended Government effort. It largely passes over the Select Committee's main message that there should be a much firmer grip on policy from the Home Office and that in the hitherto neglected interest of ethnic minorities individual government departments should strengthen themselves modestly. The comprehensive strategy mooted in last year's Home Office White Paper Racial Discrimination will if it ever appears, need stronger machinery for monitoring, formulating and implementing policy than this year's Home Office is proposing."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed by Select Committee</th>
<th>Response by Government</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. That there should be a Minister of State for Equal Rights.</td>
<td>Not needed as it would merely duplicate the responsibilities of the Home Sec.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. HO should have a much improved establishment concerned with race relations and sex discrimination</td>
<td>Staff already increased, liaison between staff already satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. More depts to have more or some staff engaged in race relations work and adopt more positive policies</td>
<td>Departments already do this; sufficient specialist staff already employed; where this isn’t done – DoE, DHSS – it would be inappropriate to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Civil Service Dept should create a special Equal Ops Employment Unit and monitor recruitment policies and practice</td>
<td>Satisfactory arrangements already in place in each dept and in the Civil Service Dept. While accepting the importance of monitoring, government rejected the idea of keeping records of racial or national origin within the Civil Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Make more provision for monitoring in particular education and housing authorities.</td>
<td>Sufficient provision already made. Collection of statistics of pupils of overseas origin ‘would serve no educational purpose’; keeping records in relation to housing of minorities – government’s opinion had already been given in the White Paper on Housing (Cmnd.6232)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Equal Rights Commission should be entitled to receive Departmental records and reports relating to monitoring and report on them to the Select Committee</td>
<td>Although the CRE should be free to scrutinise and criticise Govt policies, as Ministers were answerable to Parliament for the policies of their departments it would be inappropriate for the Commission to have any responsibility for checking their monitoring activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Statutory inclusion for members from the minority communities on the Commission or any of the other committees relating to race relations</td>
<td>No. It did, however, claim to be conscious ‘of the need to select individuals of high calibre who can speak for the minorities with experience and insight’.</td>
</tr>
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#### Citizenship and Nationality

Between 1973 and 1976 Conservative and Labour governments had been promising to tidy up citizenship law by establishing a citizenship of the UK in a new relationship to the rest of the Commonwealth and separate from the then ‘Colonies’. Runnymede published at that time Ann Dummett’s *Citizenship and Nationality*. Aside from the requirements to separate out issues of the end of empire and colonial citizenship, there were the requirements of EEC law and freedom of movement, those of international law, and the difficulty of defining the character of the UK in a way that ‘is neither racialist nor incoherent’.

The synopsis of recommendations from Runnymede and other quarters were that a ‘new measure should be based on the concept of shared rights and obligations under the law, enforceable in the courts; that nationality should rest on a basis that does not involve discrimination by race or sex. A new law should be discussed as what it is: a major constitutional measure of importance to everyone in the United Kingdom expressive of the character and aims of our society.’

#### A Catalyst for Change

The Commission for Racial Equality is marking its 30th anniversary by convening an international two-day event on 27 and 28 November. It will be the first event of its kind in Britain, and will bring together the whole of Britain’s race relations community, as well as having a strong international presence.

The CRE Race Convention 2006 will be held at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, in Westminster, London. If you are interested in equality and social justice, this Convention will provide a unique opportunity to:

- Debate equality and social justice, especially our progress towards race equality and what needs to be done next
- Hear leading UK and international speakers
- Take part in discussions and workshops
- Network formally and informally with delegates and speakers
- Interact with leading politicians, community leaders, academics, media commentators, and private and public sector leaders
- Discuss integration, national identity, the social affects of migration, uniting communities, racism, the meaning of ‘diversity’, what equal opportunities means to employers, and the challenge of free speech, particularly in the arts and the media.

For details visit the CRE Race Convention 2006 website: http://www.raceconvention2006.com/home.html

### RB 2006: Another present-day concern had a strong public presence in 1976, as reported in the October Bulletin, where Runnymede was responding to the failure of Conservative and Labour governments to establish a UK citizenship law.

### From Then to Now

Thirty years of radical change in British society are only barely reflected in a comparison of debates between now and then. Yet in the discussions of a committed and visionary group of activists, politicians and researchers we can see the kernels of our current race relations debates. There has been progress, but only due to the tenacity of individuals, organisations and communities. As the debates rumble on (as they must), and institutions change (as they will), the focus on delivering race equality in the UK must not be lost. We may have come a long way but, as highlighted in the other pages of this issue of the Bulletin, the struggle continues.
Runnymede Today

In March 2001, when I formally took up tenure as Runnymede’s Director, I sketched out a three-year work programme designed to follow up the recommendations of the Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (The Parekh Report) and to enlarge the policy areas on which we would build new evidence bases, project by project, to support our contributions to building a successful multi-ethnic society. Behind this work programme there lay a purposeful development plan for building a secure and sustainable future for Runnymede – including its human resources, governance and funding.

Over the last five years, Runnymede has maintained its traditionally ‘quiet’ approach to progressing its work, its thinking and its influence on policy. Many new projects have been developed, carried out and reported in the pages of this Bulletin – covering a range of issues in education, criminal justice, community cohesion, health, political inclusion/participation and identity.

The physical space we occupied at LFWE mirrored, maybe influenced, the way we worked: with our team spread out in six small rooms, our projects tended to be established and delivered independently of each other. Although we fostered consultation with our constituencies through direct project involvement with steering groups, wider reference groups and public seminars, we were nonetheless what I think of as an ‘inward-looking’ organisation.

Over the last two years, this has changed markedly. New staffing structures internally, a deliberate move towards programme areas rather than individual projects, and an increased public presence have all contributed to a new way of working for us, one that will be developed and enhanced over the coming years.

Our new office space, a converted Victorian warehouse tucked behind Liverpool Street Station, marks this change appropriately. With two floors of open-plan offices, including a seminar area, we have already noticed a difference in our internal communications. Beyond that, the space will allow us to hold some of our own events here, bringing our colleagues, policymakers and the public more broadly into Runnymede, creating what we hope will be a visibly ‘outward-looking and dynamic environment, which we believe will enhance our work greatly.

But physical space is only one ingredient, and not even the most important. A range of new and longer-term funding for programme areas and strategic policy research has been secured. We have been able to appoint more staff, develop programmed approaches to tackling key areas of social policy, and make connections across all our projects and associated activities to deliver a comprehensive range of outcomes.

Three strategic objectives have been in progress over the last year; and the boost in human resource capacity from new staff appointments will help us accelerate over the next two years and beyond.

Objective I extends our engagement with a wider range of people and communities in each Government Office region and across various public policy disciplines, to include policymakers (central and local government), community-based organisations, and public servants/practitioners (e.g. teachers, NHS staff/health workers and youth workers).

By this means, we expect to:

• Build greater understanding among policymakers and practitioners from among the different contexts in which race relations operate to improve policymaking and practice;

• Promote wider public debate about the key policy issues to be faced in building a successful multi-ethnic society – issues influenced by research, comment and analysis;
Office Move Acknowledgements
As many readers will know, moving offices can be a stressful time for any organisation. We benefited greatly from the volunteer help of many individuals who helped to make our move a relatively easy (almost enjoyable) experience, and they all deserve a mention here:

British Land plc and Broadgate Estates offered us pro bono advice on a range of issues related to managing a building. In particular, Jim Campbell of Broadgate Estates arranged for us to meet with Gary Martins from Acuity Management Solutions to take advice on preparing for and managing the move, as well as facilities management issues for our new building; next came Kevin Bennett from Broadgate Estates with very sound advice and guidance on revamping our Health & Safety policies and practices to reflect the new self-management situation we now find ourselves in. Jim arranged further help for us too — Henrietta Evans from British Land and Andrew Stafford, David Powell, Paul Oldbury, Martin Emslie, Robert Pike, Tony Penny, Mike Thornton and Jim himself, all from Broadgate Estates, spent a day with us helping with our main archiving records. As a research charity, we carry a lot of paperwork in this office and the task of keeping the archives up to date and in good order is a difficult one; weeding it down in preparation for a move is even more difficult, so their help was great indeed! And to top it off we received a donation of 200 rather swish magazine file boxes from them for our in-office archive to show off the new-found filing order.

Interns and former team members also gave their time to help us: Nicola Rollock, Sam Rock, Teresa Quinlivan, Sonah Jalloh, Kiren Kaur, Alfred Nkansa-Dwamena, Katalin Halasz and Sofia Hamaz.

Thanks also to Trustee Clive Jones, who was able to secure a donation of some new furniture to improve our working environment, and to JFM Movers, who offered a superlative service on moving day.

- Share innovative practice and policy responses to benefit a wider range of communities;
- Promote mutual understanding between communities, leading to greater cohesion;
- Engage more communities in the processes of policymaking;
- Consolidate the informed, authoritative and independent voices so they speak more audibly on the issues facing a multi-ethnic Britain, in order to exert a positive influence on public opinion.

Objective 2 is our commitment to develop our formal networks and partnerships with a wider range of people who are working in policymaking and practice across the public services, in academia and in the voluntary and community sectors, both in and outside London.

In doing so, we expect to see:
- The policy analysis and engagement that we and others undertake become not just better informed but more widely developed through systematic exchange and structured, purposeful discussion;
- Sustained and sustainable dialogue created between national, regional and local levels, which impacts directly on race relations and community cohesion, in order to improve policymaking and implementation;
- Local issues and concerns being allowed to inform central government policymaking, national-level campaigning and policy/strategy development;
- Understanding and cohesion between communities improved through the development of dialogue about policy relating to race equality.

Objective 3 is where we develop a facility for forward thinking in terms of race relations, to encourage creativity and evidence-based activity in research, policymaking and practice.

By doing this we will be able to:
- Support policymakers with data and information that prepare them to clearly anticipate new issues and trends in race relations;
- Read across between academic research and government/policy priorities on how to improve race equality and community cohesion;
- Publicise effective strategies based on robust analysis and engagement with leading-edge thinking about race relations.

In the June issue of the Bulletin (2006, no. 346, p. 24), we outlined the six priority areas in which we are expanding and developing our work. These include: (1) race and the equalities agenda; (2) choice in the public services; (3) multiculturalism/integration/segregation/cohesion; (4) hyper-diversity; (5) mixed heritage; and (6) human rights and race.

Over the summer months we recruited our new staff, all of whom have now taken up post. In the pages that follow new and ‘old’ team members (re)introduce themselves to you and outline their areas of work. Their words speak for themselves; and I hope readers will see what it is I see: an exceptional group of talented and committed individuals who, together as a team, will ensure that Runnymede is able to deliver its programme of work and continue to contribute to the

Thank You to Our Supporters
Special thanks are due to our major project and programme area supporters, who make our work possible: Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Robert Gavron Charitable Trust, Esmé Fairbairn Foundation, Lloyds TSB Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, City Panachial Foundation, Churches Commission for Racial Justice, Friends Provident Foundation and the Connecting Communities Plus Strategic Grants Programme of the DCLG. Other foundations and trusts make regular smaller donations, and there are many individual donors who have supported us over the years. Without your support, our work would not be possible. We are indebted to you all.
realisation of a successful multi-ethnic Britain.

Two team members have excused themselves from contributing introductory pieces to this section, but are in fact key to the success of Runnymede. Ros Spry, who has edited this Bulletin since 1999, along with all of our other publications, and who ensures that what we publish about ourselves is exactly what we think and mean to say, deserves special recognition, and to maintain her preferred behind-the-scenes profile. We were also joined by Simon Mercer in July 2006 as Office Administrator. Simon is taking up the challenge of ‘doing everything’ with enthusiasm and good humour – a trait much needed in this kind of role!

We are grateful to the people and the organisations who have enabled us to make these current changes – of programme emphasis and of location. Our thanks to them are expressed in more detail on the facing page.

Rob Berkeley

Joined Runnymede in December 2001 as Senior Research and Policy Analyst. Currently Deputy Director

I started my career helping to establish the Oxford Access Scheme, a student-led organisation at the University of Oxford that aims to encourage young people from minority ethnic backgrounds to enter Higher Education, especially to elite institutions where they remain woefully under-represented. This experience confirmed my belief in education and its transformative potential – not just for individuals but for whole communities. It also highlighted for me the power of people working together to change the society in which they live. I went back to my studies and completed a DPhil at Oxford looking at exclusions from school, to closely examine the damage that denial of education can create. During the course of my doctoral research I met so many inspirational teachers and individuals that I became convinced that better policymaking could enable their work to be even more effective. A strong sense of justice, a belief in the potential of all humans, a will to understand our society, and a commitment to better policymaking drive my work as Deputy Director of Runnymede, and underpin the projects that I support the Runnymede team in delivering.

I joined Runnymede in 2001 to lead the follow-up to the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. This work gave me the opportunity to develop a wide-ranging brief, speaking to policymakers, activists and community organisations about policy from housing to sport to education. As Deputy Director I continue this broad-ranging approach – keeping a watching brief on all policies related to race equality and conducting projects which work across different areas of social policy. I also work to identify the themes that link our projects and build programmes that reinforce our key messages on race equality.

Increased capacity within the organisation will allow us to respond more regularly to requests for input into conferences and other events, enable us to engage with a wider range of government departments and other organisations in their consultation processes, and deliver a series of shorter; more topical, briefing papers and think-pieces. Over recent years, we have worked hard at maintaining the quality of research that Runnymede undertakes; we can now extend the quantity of that research to make an even more effective influence in policy debates and action in this area.

Communication of our message is a key part of my role and I am especially looking forward to working with colleagues to improve our means of sharing our findings with and learning from a wider group of people. This September we are establishing the Runnymede Academic Forum, working with leading academics to share learning and build greater collaboration between research and policy activity. We are also setting up a Regional Network. This network will involve a small group of key people from each government office region in England, plus Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We know that race relations take on very local dynamics, yet policy is very centrally driven. We believe that the Regional Network will offer a space to reflect on regional and local issues in race equality, and help us to work with others to define research that has an impact on race equality nationally. Committed to finding spaces for people to work to improve race equality, our new Network and Forum will help to build up a clearer picture of the key interventions that an organisation like Runnymede can make for positive change.
By improving our ability to listen to people across the country, working with a wider group of policymakers, engaging new communities in our work through community studies, and continuing to develop innovative and insightful research, I hope that Runnymede becomes an even more effective institution. I still work with the Oxford Access Scheme, as well as being a school governor, chair of Black Gay Men's Advisory Group and a Trustee of the Naz Project London. For me, the key is improving access to opportunity so that people can reach their full potential, individually and collectively. How do we go about ensuring that race and ethnicity do not act as a barrier to this potential? Runnymede is now in a great position to contribute to finding out.

Sarah Isal

Joined Runnymede 2001 as a Research Associate on UKREN. Currently Senior Research and Policy Analyst on the European and the Criminal Justice Programmes

I have worked at Runnymede for five years in different capacities and have been fortunate to see the organisation grow and change in a positive and dynamic way, and to contribute to those changes myself.

Before coming to Runnymede, I worked for the UK Office of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), which initiated my interest in the European anti-racist agenda and the belief that going beyond national frontiers adds real value to policy and research work, especially in matters of social justice.

My biggest role here has been taking on the European policy programme mainly through coordinating the UK Race & Europe Network (UKREN). I started as a Research Associate on a particular project for UKREN, which consisted of consulting with UK NGOs on their demands and expectations in preparation for the World Conference Against Racism in 2001. UKREN itself has changed over the last 10 years of its existence and is now entering a new phase with great developments and equally great challenges which, as UKREN Programme Director, I am looking forward to engaging with.

My other role within Runnymede since 2003 has been the development of projects in the criminal justice field, including a major piece of research on preventing racist violence and more recently on anti-social behaviour.

UKREN – From informal ad hoc networking to project leader and policymaking

UKREN has moved from being a loose network of organisations interested in European race equality policy developments, and informing its UK counterparts of these developments, to a formalised structure with 165 member organisations, an independent management committee and a separate strand of core funding to carry its work forward. UKREN has also become the official UK Coordinator for a Europe-wide network – the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) – based in Brussels, which was set up to provide a collective view of what European NGOs working in the field of anti-racism want from the European Union, as well as to inform national networks of what is emerging at EU level in the area of anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

What next for UKREN and European policy work?

The role UKREN has set for itself in the next few years is three-fold:

Role 1. To expand our network of UK-based organisations interested in European anti-racism policy and provide them with information in the form of local or national seminars, briefings and consultations. In 2006, we organised a local seminar in Bristol to explore how EU policy was relevant to the South-West, and a local seminar in Huddersfield, which looked at counter-terrorism and racism. The latter was attended by over 60 organisations, and both seminars provided the opportunity to expand our membership and raise awareness of the importance of EU policy for the work of NGOs in their locality.

Role 2. To act as an effective relay to ENAR in the UK, circulating to members information produced by ENAR, and ensuring that UK issues of concern to our members and relevant to the European policy situation are fed to ENAR, who in turn take them into account in their work programme and presentations to European institutions. ENAR produces a wealth of information of use to UK NGOs, including weekly emails, factsheets and newsletters on specific topics. It also organises conferences and consultations and requires UKREN to coordinate the participation of UK members at these events.
Finally, UKREN supports ENAR campaigns when needed, the most recent example being the consultation around the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities, which will see the organisation of a roundtable to inform participants about the Year and how useful it might be for them, as well as hear what they would like to get out of it (see p.17). These feed directly through from ENAR to Europe’s institutional decision-makers.

Role 3. To develop and run projects both as partners or leaders, around specific policy areas that are relevant both at national and European level. UKREN has for instance acted as one of the UK partners for the European Migration Dialogue project, run by the Migration Policy Group in Brussels, which aims to establish and manage a network of civil society organisations at European level and to secure the involvement of civil society in the design and implementation of just and successful immigration and integration policies. UKREN has also recently set up a new European project that aims to create a citizenship toolkit for young European Muslims (see p.17 for a report of the project’s initial phase). This is UKREN’s first project as lead organisation and will be a great opportunity to showcase its value in both the UK and Europe.

Criminal Justice
Our ongoing work on criminal justice has focused mainly on ways to deal with racist violence. The most recent research looks at anti-social behaviour’s links to racial harassment with the aim of reducing both, and follows up on the project whose findings we launched last November. At that time we were investigating successful interventions in tackling racial harassment and wanted to find out whether Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) were effective in such instances. Building on the discovery that crucial information was not available from central government sources, it became important to pursue the potential use of ASBOs in dealing with racist behaviour. Given the trend for black and minority ethnic individuals to be over-represented in the criminal justice system, it was also relevant to assess whether the same could be said for the serving of ASBOs. The research revealed real problems in the way the anti-social behaviour agenda is implemented and monitored, problems that equally inhibit the finding of answers to our initial questions. The implications in terms of policy are significant and will be fleshed out in a report to be published in October 2006. This report, like many of its predecessors, exemplifies Runnymede’s role in highlighting the kind of issues that, often sidelined by policymakers, have an enormous impact on the lives lived in the various communities that make up Britain today. 

Debbie Weekes-Bernard
First joined Runnymede on secondment in 1998. Currently Senior Research and Policy Analyst on the Education Programme

In September 2006 I took up a new position here as Senior Research and Policy Analyst, Education, after the completion of a research project which has explored the processes of educational choice-making among BME parents and children. I have been conducting educational research for over 10 years, at Runnymede and elsewhere, and my taking up of this new position will enable me to both widen and deepen my present commitment to education. Combining it with a recent interest in law, I aim to develop an education programme which will incorporate work on human rights as they affect parents and children within the education system.

I began my research career at Nottingham Trent University, conducting doctoral research on identity work undertaken by African Caribbean young women and project research on the impact of school exclusions on young BME pupils. Much of this research work has been within the area of education, though all of it has concentrated on the various aspects of social exclusion which operate to construct the identities of young people from BME backgrounds. My work with Runnymede dates from this period: I was seconded from my role as Research Fellow in Nottingham to conduct a year-long action research project at Runnymede, exploring African Caribbean male underachievement in schools. Following this work, I also contributed to the Complementing Teachers handbook, and worked for a time on the Real Histories Directory before taking up the post of Research Associate on the School Choice and Ethnic Segregation project. To add to my education expertise, I have recently become interested in law, particularly human rights law, and having completed a conversion law degree in 2005 I aim to expand our programme of education research by
bringing together the increasingly important areas of rights with work on racial equality and community cohesion.

Transitions
The SRPA post itself performs a major role within the Runnymede Transitions programme, which has been devised to enable us to achieve a longer-term focus for our educational research and policy work as well as to develop a more coherent picture of where interventions can be more successfully targeted. Runnymede has undertaken much work in education over the years, mostly on a project basis, which has allowed us to build up areas of expertise in specific areas, especially those of policy, practice and academia. In moving from project-based work to a wider educational programme, we will be able to develop more explicit links between our current and future education projects, with longer-term objectives in the areas of social cohesion and race equality.

In my role as SRPA I will be working to promote the Transitions programme through a range of forums, conferences, advisory groups and the media. The focus of this innovative programme of work will be those transitions that occur at various stages within the education system for pupils, parents, teachers and schools. Linking at these crucial stages is of great importance for making a strong and definable voice heard in education policy circles. Through our new programme we have a great opportunity to increase the influence of Runnymede’s educational work and consolidate our impact on policy and practice. By making links both within the programme and across the other projects that we conduct, we will develop more opportunities to highlight the strategies we believe necessary for the promotion of social cohesion and the reduction of racial inequality within the education system.

Over the next year therefore I will be concentrating on the dissemination of our three current education research projects – School Choice and Ethnic Segregation, on which I worked as Research Associate, and BME Parents, which is currently exploring ways that BME and refugee parents can more effectively support the education of their children. Both of these report this autumn.

Faith Schools and Community Cohesion – a long-term project which runs from September 2006 to October 2007 – will explore the challenges to and/or opportunities for community cohesion provided by faith schools.

Time is also allocated for assessing BME pupils’ school exclusion patterns, building on work Runnymede originated in 1997, and reported in Black and Ethnic Minority Young People and Educational Disadvantage, and revisiting projects of good practice I covered while on secondment to Runnymede in 1998, and reported in Improving Practice: a Whole School Approach.

Vastiana Belfon

Like many others, I first joined the Runnymede ‘family’ on a temporary basis, replacing the then Projects Officer while she was on maternity leave. I
returned a little over a year later to maintain the Real Histories Directory website. My degree in Modern Languages is only tangentially relevant to my work at Runnymede but having previously worked as Editor, African-Caribbean Programmes at the BBC and as the Executive Editor with publishers Writers & Readers, my varied interests covered both diversity and education, so working on the Directory was an attractive proposition.

The Real Histories Directory was set up nearly three years ago as an online tool for teachers, parents, pupils and the wider community to encourage and support teaching and learning about cultural diversity in the UK. It has continued to evolve and has become an indispensable guide to resources that are available across the nation. We are constantly transforming the Directory and, with the help of Sonah Jalloh, here on work experience from Bristol University during the summer, we will soon be adding new features as described in more detail on page 15.

The qualification of having a 12-year-old daughter who has recently made the transition from primary school to secondary school, with its attendant apprehension, excitement and traumas, recommended me for Runnymede’s new education project for Black and Minority Ethnic Parents. Together with Jessica Sims, one of Runnymede’s Research and Policy analysts, and with funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, we have been researching the best ways to encourage parents, particularly those of Black and Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Refugee and Asylum-seeking children, to engage more effectively with their education, and for schools and teachers to support them. It is clear from research that parental involvement with schools as well as teaching at home are vital components in a child’s educational attainment levels and our own survey indicates that our target group of parents are no less committed to their children’s education than any other group; in fact, they attach high importance to the value of education. However, it is also apparent that there are barriers to their interaction with schools and other official agencies.

Our aim is to make recommendations about the kinds of strategies that schools can apply to encourage parental involvement using examples of best practice nationwide. We will also provide parents with the information, advice and guidance they need to overcome the obstacles they perceive and to participate more confidently in their child’s academic life. We will, at the end of the project, produce a series of accessible fact sheets aimed at parents but with supplementary guidance for teachers and schools.

I have come to Runnymede to run a project that will explore the extent to which faith schools impact significantly on the ethnic segregation of schools, how they can contribute to or detract from community cohesion, and what this might mean for good race relations.

A long tradition of religious involvement in education in the UK, a willingness from government to work with faith-based organisations, and the injustice of the previous administration’s reluctance to extend state funding to non-Christian faiths, have made faith schools an integral, yet contested, part of the education system. Many critics have argued for the separation of faith and state, some on the basis that faith schools are necessarily divisive. More recently, much negative media has focused on Muslim schools, and the role of faith within these has been questioned.

In the wake of the terrorist bombings of 11 September 2001, Tony Wright, a member of the Commons Select Committee, claimed: ‘Before September 11 it looked like a bad idea; it now looks like a mad idea.’ The debate was revisited in 2005 when David Bell, the Chief Inspector of Schools, commented: ‘I worry that many young people are being educated in faith-based schools with little appreciation of their wider responsibilities and obligations to British society.’ We will be offering a considered approach to the crucial questions at hand. The project will engage a range of individuals concerned with community relations and education – which will allow us to establish a learning dialogue.

Savita Vij
Joined Runnymede August 2006.
Research Associate for the Faith Schools and Community Cohesion project
Evidence, discussion and findings will be drawn together into a final report accompanied by a briefing paper. This will contribute credible data – some quantitative, but mainly qualitative – detailing a wide range of lived experience. A national one-day conference to bring together parents, teachers, policymakers and young people will be held to discuss the report and promote further discussion and reflection on policy and practice in the promotion of community cohesion.

The research background that I bring to this project is interdisciplinary, across policymaking, academia and journalism, focusing on the everyday politics of multiculturalism and contemporary ethnic/faith identities. This includes a critical evaluation of the Community Cultural Awareness Programme run jointly between Birmingham University and the Education Equalities Unit at Birmingham City Council. My PhD thesis specialised in the politicisation of second-generation British Hindu identities, which also led to my undertaking the first Hindu Youth Report (2001) with the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.

Over the last few years I have worked with Ethnic Media Group as a journalist, sourcing news and providing commentary on current affairs. I've recently launched an online magazine and events organisation, Cultivasion, to create a platform mainly for younger South Asians from a range of beliefs and backgrounds to be a source of debates about lived culture, society and politics in all their complex and contradictory guises.

My role as a Research Associate with the Runnymede Trust builds on my key interest – to facilitate open conversations around the future of inter/intra-ethnic multicultural relations in Britain. I hope to contribute to national debates around community cohesion and ‘Britishness’ by engaging with lived experience and pluralised discourses.

If you would like to find out more about the faith-based schools project or join the discussions please e-mail: S.Vij@runnymedetrust.org

Omar Khan
Joined Runnymede in 1999 as a temporary Admin/Research Assistant.
Currently a part-time Research and Policy Analyst

Although I’m not one of the new members of Runnymede’s staff, having worked for the organisation since December 1999, I have recently become involved with current research projects. Until 2001 I contributed to the Bulletin mainly, writing regular book reviews and analyses of demographic and electoral issues in Britain. At the end of this period I wrote the initial research report for the project on Perpetrators of Racist Violence (Khan 2002), a background piece that identified the relevant areas of research and provisionally reviewed some policy measures.

I had begun my PhD in Political Science at the University of Wisconsin in 2001, but returned to the UK in 2002 when I transferred to the University of Oxford. Since then I have continued to contribute to the Bulletin, often translating the more abstract elements of my research in political philosophy for its readers on such subjects as group rights, collective responsibility and preferential policies.

The latter topic, often discussed in Britain under the rubric of positive action, is the topic of my doctoral research. Adopting an explicitly normative framework, I am investigating whether and how justice can allow preferential treatment for members of disadvantaged groups, taking the case of India as my principal example. A 15,000-word summary of some of the more relevant aspects of this research, linking the Indian and theoretical debate to Europe and Britain, is published in September 2006 in the Runnymede Perspectives series and circulated with this Bulletin.

As I approach completion of my doctorate I have been able to work more frequently for Runnymede again. This work has allowed me to think about how a research agenda can be discussed more widely in public and in particular how it can relate to public policymaking. The experience has been especially rewarding because of the cooperative nature of much of Runnymede’s work and a sociable office environment that contrasts nicely with the dusty and sometimes solitary surroundings of research libraries.

In addition to regular Bulletin contributions, in the last year or so I have co-authored (with Rob Berkeley and Mohan Ambikaipaker) a research report on ‘Who are the New Immigrants in Britain’ (for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation), concentrating on the demographic and theoretical elements. In February I travelled...
My first degree is from San Francisco State University where, studying International Relations, I acquired a particular interest in the State’s responses to diversity. This initial interest has developed into the core of my educational and recent work and interning experience where I have focused on the study of minority–majority ethnic relations and social injustice. During my undergraduate studies I started to travel, and a study abroad exchange with the International School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Universiteit van Amsterdam led to an MSc in Nationalism and Ethnicity at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2005. There I focused my coursework not only on the theoretical and empirical study of nationalism and ethnicity, but also on theories of ‘race’, multiculturalism, migration and governance. While researching for my dissertation on Commonwealth immigration and its convergence with British national identity I became familiar with the work of Runnymede, and, enthused by their policy research orientation, I applied for an internship.

I began my internship with Runnymede in order to gain experience working in the voluntary sector and with diversity and equality issues. Specifically, I’ve so far worked on preparation for the Northern Ireland Youth Summit, which was coordinated in part with the greater Northern Ireland Race Equality Strategy Action Plan, initiated to set the agenda for race equality in Northern Ireland. The Youth Summit lets young people from minority ethnic communities have their say on the action plan, and gives them a space to express their views on Northern Ireland, racism and their hopes for the future.

Researching race equality and discrimination in Northern Ireland, I prepared background fact-sheets accompanied by a presentation at the Summit for the participants, and helped to facilitate the workshops during the day.

Now, taking up one of Runnymede’s new posts of Research and Policy Analyst, I have the responsibility of contributing to the new Community Studies programme and helping support the main research areas. My first Community Study focuses on the Vietnamese community. I feel it is particularly important to study the Vietnamese in the UK because of their exclusion from the broader communities’ debate. Not being very numerous they have often been overlooked, and their perceived cultural similarities with the Chinese community means they are often mistakenly seen as having the same concerns and needs. As with all underrepresented communities, the Vietnamese community is unique and its members deserve to have their own space within integration and diversity debates in UK.

Through this community study, I have become acquainted with many community organisation members who have become very interested in my work as it coincides with their plan for a celebration of 30 years of integration in the UK. Through a series of in-depth interviews with community members it has become apparent that the general matter of integration is still a salient issue, particularly on the subject of intergenerational tensions. Now the task at hand is presenting a picture of the Vietnamese community that represents their concerns and
their unique place in British society alongside a certain loss of their inner diversity and complexity.

As an introduction to one of Runnymede’s main research streams, education, I have been working with Vastiana Belfon on a project to support BME Parents in the thorny subject area of school selection. We are engaged with how to help schools interact with parents from BME backgrounds and support their children’s education at school. In the process I have had the opportunity to research the British education system and gather best-practice case studies of parental involvement from education professionals around the country. I will also be helping Vastiana write up the series of fact-sheets that will be made available for both parents and schools.

Kjartan Sveinsson

Currently working on the Community Studies and Criminal Justice follow-up programmes

Large as a result of my travelling the world, where I developed a thirst for knowledge about the nature of cultural diversity, I decided to study social and cultural anthropology. Anthropology, of course, is a discipline dedicated to understanding the dynamic relationship between social difference and sameness. It seemed, however, that with every question anthropology answered, two new ones were raised. The only way out of this stalemate, I felt, was to put my academic training into practice and learn about diversity first hand.

Alongside studying for my BA at the University of Iceland, I worked in a shelter for socially isolated adolescents. Part of my responsibility was setting up and running a programme for a group of recent immigrant teenagers, the aim of which was to support them in their adaptation to Icelandic society. This was a great challenge, not least because virtually no academic research had been done on the subject. For this reason, I applied for a research grant from the Icelandic Innovation Fund and the Ministry of Education (Iceland) to conduct such a study. The research, which took place in the summer months of 2002, focused on the assimilation and adaptation strategies adopted by adolescent immigrants of Eastern European background in Iceland.

After this I worked as a nurse assistant/group leader at the Psychiatric Unit for Adolescents, University Hospital of Iceland. I left this post to do an MSc in Social Anthropology at the LSE, London. Again, race and ethnicity featured strongly in my final dissertation, which was on Andean notions of Self and Other and the boundaries between the two.

On leaving the LSE, I took up freelance research for the London Probation Service, completing two qualitative studies. The first focused on the social circumstances of young African-Caribbean men in Southwark who had served, or were serving, a custodial sentence. The aim of the research was to explore the meaning the offenders attached to their offending behaviour, what they perceived to be the biggest obstacles to their leading a life without offending, and what they found to be the greatest threats to their personal development once out of prison or young offenders’ institution. The second was a case study on the Prolific and Other Priority Offender (PPO) scheme in Southwark. This aimed to investigate how Prolific and Priority Offenders have experienced the Southwark PPO scheme, and how they feel it has impacted on their life and behaviour. The purpose of the study was to identify areas in which Probation can enhance its services to PPOs.

I feel strongly about issues relating to racial, economic and social justice; the aim of all the work I have undertaken, whether academically or in practice, has been to develop strategies to include socially excluded groups and individuals. My post here as a Research and Policy Analyst on both the Community Studies and the Criminal Justice programmes will allow me to proceed along this line of work, and to make a contribution towards a fair and multicultural society. As an anthropologist and qualitative researcher, I firmly believe that people’s actual experiences of the world should be every bit as valued as their statistical representation in research.

Among other things, my role at Runnymede is to conduct a number of studies on the various ‘hidden’ communities in Britain, those who do not appear on any ethnic monitoring forms and have a marginal place in political, economic and social discourse. In addition, I will be contributing to larger research projects on issues as diverse as employment, education and the criminal justice system.
What the Real Histories Directory offers in 2006 and beyond

Launched in 2003, the Real Histories Directory has been maturing steadily since. It’s currently in the capable hands of Vastiana Belfon, who updates us on its current status in Black History Month 2006.

The Real Histories Directory was launched as an online tool to enable schools, teachers, parents and the wider community to locate resources that would help with the teaching of and learning about cultural diversity in the United Kingdom. The concern at Runnymede had been that while the designating, in 1987, of a month in which there would be a focus on Black history was welcome, there was still a danger that for the remaining eleven months of the year, the subject could easily be forgotten. In addition, Runnymede hoped to counterbalance the general tendency to equate Black History with African-American history to the detriment of the Black British contribution.

Originally, the Directory focused primarily on Black British history, but the nature of the Directory and the way in which it is maintained – with submissions from outside contributors and research within Runnymede – means that we have been able to respond better to the needs and interests of the audiences that the Directory is designed to serve. Therefore the Directory has continued – and continues – to evolve.

There are now nearly 750 resources listed in the Directory ranging from books, toys, fabrics, performance artists, theatre groups, museums, libraries and galleries, to essential guides to government policy and legislation, education networks, professional bodies, community groups and educational websites. The intention now is to expand the scope of the Directory to include relevant resources in Europe.

At first, too, the Directory focused specifically on Black and Minority Ethnic communities, but it now includes resources for African, Caribbean, Black British, Gaelic, Welsh, Chinese, Kurdish, Turkish, Vietnamese, Bosnian, Afghan and Korean communities as well as Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian faith groups.

In addition, teachers, parents and students can find details of events that might interest them on the events pages of the website: we cover exhibitions, talks, workshops, theatre, music and dance performances; there are job vacancies too, and calls for conference papers.

The website gets around 1000 hits a month from individuals and organisations throughout the UK and also in Australia, Canada and the United States, as well as more than 13,000 entries on Google. We have responded to requests for information on Black History Month from schools across the country and have been able to point teachers in the direction of many of the resources available in their area such as performance artists, museums, galleries, tours and lesson plans.

Interestingly, though we have not yet analysed the significance, the most viewed entry is that for Shisha, an international agency for South Asian arts and crafts that can put schools and colleges in touch with British-based artists. This is followed closely by Black Success Stories and the Brighton & Hove Black History Project. The site is, not surprisingly, viewed most often by visitors in London, then the South-West and, next, the North-East of England.

Since our focus is on education, it might be useful for us to note that the LEAs that browse the website most often are those for Newcastle Upon Tyne, Birmingham and Hackney.

Armed with the kind of information that we are able to gather on visiting patterns and the feedback that we get from schools and teachers, we’re now looking at the ways in which the Real Histories Directory can evolve.

This summer, Sonah Jalloh, who is studying at Bristol University, joined us to help with the process and to research our new feature: beginning in September we will, each month, focus on one subject that is of particular interest to educators and/or parents. It may be a subject that is of current topical interest, one that needs to be debated, or a curriculum area that should be explored. So, we may initiate a debate on faith schools, or sex education, or perhaps teaching cultural diversity in Science or Maths.

Because of the timing, we will begin with a focus on Black History Month, looking at how it has developed, the ways in which schools and communities across the country commemorate it and the kinds of resources that the Directory can provide. These focus pages will also provide the opportunity for dialogue and debate with visitors to the site. Is a Black History Month appropriate for a multicultural society? What exactly is ‘Black History’ in the 21st century? Should we scrap Black History Month?

Continued discussion and input from interested parties is essential if the Directory is to remain relevant and indispensable and we welcome comments from visitors to the site on both the subject highlighted each month and on ways in which the Directory can better serve its target audience in future.
On 8–9 July 2006, 23 young Muslims from five European countries came together with three prominent Muslim academics and thinkers for the first stage of UKREN’s new project entitled ‘Towards Active Citizenship for Young European Muslims’.

The project idea has developed in response to increasing concern that many young people from Muslim communities are on the fringes, marginalised and alienated. Though there is much dialogue about this, UKREN felt that there should be more activity around addressing these issues in a way that is appealing to young Muslims.

Current mainstream discussions on citizenship amongst academics and policymakers do not relate effectively to Muslims. In the context of many of the attitudes imposed from outside on Muslim communities and organisations, debates are often followed by questions that ask ‘why don’t Muslims buy into these discussions?’ and ‘why don’t Muslims do what we are suggesting?’

UKREN’s project seeks to address these matters by involving Muslim young people and practitioners from different EU countries in order to identify common issues that face Muslims as citizens in Europe, discuss what citizenship means and could mean, and explore ways to engage young Muslims in active citizenship and leadership.

The meeting, chaired by UKREN Management Committee member Mohammed Aziz, brought together a diverse group of individuals for a lively discussion on the future of active citizenship for young European Muslims.

Tariq Ramadan, Muslim scholar and Senior Research Fellow at the Lokahi Foundation; Tariq Modood, Professor and researcher at the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at Bristol University; and Emel Abidin Algan, former director of the Islamic Women’s Organisation in Berlin (seated R–L in the second photo opposite) provided an absorbing, insightful start to the weekend’s discussions with their contrasting and complementary conceptions of the potential for active citizenship among Muslims in Europe.

Discussion points ranged around the nature of citizenship, interrogated the missing dimensions of citizenship for young Muslims, and questioned how ideas about citizenship can be developed in such a way that they can then be successfully presented to young people. Barriers to citizenship – particularly in the current political and social atmosphere surrounding Muslims – emanating from the media, general attitudes, legal and political institutions and also from ‘within’ Muslim communities were addressed as a starting-point for developing solutions and an understanding of current
citizenship contexts and trends. There was broad agreement that it is valuable to work critically with, as opposed to against, current wider national and European citizenship frameworks. As one participant stated: ‘in the name of our legal integration, we are critical towards your policies and practices’. Attention was also directed to the ways in which national and European models of citizenship and Islamic legal traditions around citizenship complement and strengthen each other, from which develops an original and extremely constructive understanding of citizenship that is easily accessible to young Muslims. Celebrating Muslim culture and heritage and the fact that Muslims as a group are linguistically and culturally rich and diverse with a long European history, were both highlighted as important elements in empowering young Muslims as citizens.

The outcomes of the roundtable will be captured in a report forming the backbone of the next phase of the project. As well as its contribution to sustaining an important and much needed network of Muslim youth practitioners across Europe, the other main outcome of the project will be the publication of resource material, to be used by youth workers in the course of active citizenship programmes with Muslim young people. To be published in the form of a toolkit, this resource material will contribute to the empowerment of young Muslims through fulfillment of its main aims, which are to:

• promote a better understanding of relevant legislative and constitutional frameworks for citizenship;
• highlight the ways in which Islamic tradition and citizenship frameworks in Europe complement each other;
• promote the use of national legal frameworks as the grounds on which to demand and argue for rights and equal treatment;
• encourage critical loyalty to social structures;
• highlight gaps between citizenship ideals and citizenship practices;
• encourage engagement in domestic affairs.

Building on the outcome of this initial roundtable, the project will pursue a wider consultation with young people and youth workers through national focus groups in Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK. Outcomes will feed into the final toolkit.

For further information, contact Sarah Isal, UKREN Programme Director [s.isal@runnymedetrust.org].

Sofia Hamaz, who wrote this report, has been working at Runnymede on the initial stages of the UKREN project Towards Active Citizenship for Young European Muslims, and on Anti Social Behaviour Orders. In addition, Sofia has been running a study support service for secondary school pupils in Hackney Libraries, and is about to begin an MPhil in Migration Studies at Oxford, through which she plans to look at how Citizenship Education can be used to tackle racism.

European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

Ten years after the 1997 European Year Against Racism, the European Union has decided to give new impetus to the fight against all forms of discrimination, in particular in employment, education, housing, and in access to good and services. National-level funding will be made available for awareness-raising activities and projects during 2007. Funding will be allocated to activities that address different grounds of discrimination, and partnerships between organisations working on different grounds are strongly encouraged.

A UKREN/NCVO consultation seminar

UKREN is organising a half-day seminar on the afternoon of 20 October 2006 in partnership with NCVO and with the active support of the European Commission UK Representation Office. The aim of the seminar is to:

• provide information on the upcoming Year 2007 to organisations working on discrimination;
• facilitate a space for networking between UKREN’s member organisations and NGOs working on other discrimination grounds;
• provide an opportunity for brainstorming on joint projects that could be financed within the framework of Year 2007;
• generate ideas, priorities and feedback, all of which will be relayed to the European Commission through the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) to help it plan the activities content for the Year.

For more information and to participate in the consultation, contact the UKREN Secretariat [s.isal@runnymedetrust.org].
Muslim Women’s Experiences of Higher Education

The European Social Fund has supported a new piece of research into how Muslim women experience higher education and how well or poorly prepared they feel for their subsequent entry into the world of work. The research, led by Dr David Tyrer who is based at Liverpool John Moores University, was published in July under the title Muslim Women and Higher Education: Identities, Experiences, Prospects. Fauzia Ahmad of the University of Bristol, who was involved in the research, summarises the report’s findings.

Until very recently research on British Muslim women university students and graduates has been limited to small subsets within larger studies of South Asian Muslim women and labour markets, or discussed within debates around inclusion and widening participation for ‘non-traditional’ students (a term that has racialised and class-specific connotations), based on social class and (to a lesser extent) ethnicity. Much of this research has pointed towards the high value placed by South Asian families on education and the securing of academic qualifications, but has also highlighted discrepancies within South Asian groups with relatively lower rates of higher education participation amongst Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, especially amongst women. While some earlier analyses indicated that ‘culture’, religion and patriarchal constraints (or ‘purdah’) played instrumental roles in restricting Muslim women’s educational and economic participation, recent studies suggest that the issues are more complex and cannot be reduced to single, monocular factors.1

Higher education, stereotypes and social change

Very little is known yet about Muslim women’s motivations for entry into higher education, levels of support received from families, schools and colleges, or women’s experiences of higher education and university processes such as recruitment, careers advice and future employability. The ways in which experiences of university influence Muslim women’s identities remain similarly under-researched, though this has not deterred the media from putting out clichéd portrayals of Muslim women as ‘rebels’ against their religion and cultures and ‘leading double lives’ while at university. Such Orientalist representations of Muslim women needing ‘liberation’ and salvation from their supposed oppressive religion and cultures point towards an assumed incoherence and inadequacy of Muslim identities. Obsessions with veils, burqas and ‘arranged marriages’ persist in public discourses about Muslim women. Such preoccupations obscure and ignore social change and lived realities.

London-based research findings

Responding to a gradual increase in numbers of Muslim women entering university, earlier research I conducted in London,2 on Muslim women’s motivations for and experiences of higher education and its impact on their identities, called for an urgent need to review negative assumptions about Muslim women, their families and attitudes towards higher education.

The research found that the possession of a degree was viewed as a sign of upward social mobility and social prestige for daughters and their families, but also empowered Muslim women to ‘stand on my own two feet’. The academic achievements of ‘pioneer women’—women who are the first in their families to enter higher education—serve as role models and catalysts to encourage other women from their families and social circles into higher education. Women and their families often also viewed the possession of a degree as an asset when thinking about future marital prospects and partners. It also reflected an awareness of the endemic nature of racism in society and changes in family structures.

Rather than acting to cause women to ‘turn their backs’ on religion and culture, higher education encouraged women to rationalise and further shape their identities as confident Muslim women. Another of the most significant findings to have emerged from this work was the positive role attributed by many women to their parents, and in particular their fathers, in encouraging their higher education. This represented a direct challenge to stereotypes about ‘oppressive’ Muslim families and attitudes towards women’s education and employment.

Themes explored nationally in the ESF Study

The newly published European Social Fund-supported report summary Muslim Women and Higher Education: Identities, Experiences, Prospects, launched in July and documenting the project led by Dr David Tyrer based at Liverpool John Moores University, has built upon this earlier work, exploring a number of similar themes at a national level. It adds to a growing body of research, including the EOC’s recently published interim findings on ethnic minority women in the workplace.3

Significantly, the LJMU work has sought to explore the implications of Muslim women’s experiences for
the development of ‘joined-up’ Equal Opportunities in higher education and the impact of routine institutional activities on the experiences of Muslim women students and their subsequent employability.

The research was based on 105 interviews with 93 women studying in 15 universities across Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Birmingham and London. A number of interviews were also conducted with practitioners employed in the HE sector, in areas such as service delivery, careers, equal opportunities and recruitment, for their views on university equal opportunities policies and practice.

The LJMU study explored Muslim women’s motivations, experiences and identities. It also examined the pre-enrolment events, such as recruitment and admissions, through to the post-graduation experiences of job-seeking or further study. In the process it illustrates the extent to which universities and their various routine functions influence the lives of Muslim women students – in a range of ways such as employment outcomes, but also how university structures and services contribute to the wider racial gendering of the labour market. The report points to the ways in which Muslim women students seek to centre their own agency and resist the institutionalised discourses that structure their experiences of university and the graduate labour market.

A complex interplay of factors
With a wide range of courses of study (from medicine and related degrees, arts, humanities and social sciences, to courses in ‘Disaster Management and Technology’), and their differing backgrounds and preferences, Muslim women students presented a picture of their lives at university as a complex interplay of factors, balancing and negotiating their positions and responsibilities as students, daughters, friends, classmates. Women’s experiences of university life were gendered and racialised by these diverse experiences, but also by the ways in which university structured their access to space provisions, networks, opportunities, and even notions of what it meant to be a ‘normal’ student.

For instance, Aisha noted that she felt other people tended to categorise her in very specific ways that impacted on her social experiences of university life, by describing how she sometimes felt she was perceived as ‘alien’ by fellow students, staff and Muslim men. Other students spoke of a sense of being ‘Othered’ by fellow students and outside the ‘mainstream’ when unable to participate in ‘normal’ student social activities that centred on bars and pubs.

The LJMU research also uncovered a number of areas of concern around racism and racist stereotypes and the ways these structure Muslim women’s experiences of university from recruitment into higher education to the provision of careers advice. During the course of the research there was evidence of far-right white racist activities in some universities (along with claims of institutional inertia in dealing with the problem), allegations of racist discrimination by universities (including some which made the national press), and localised instances of racist behaviour (ranging from examples of graffiti through to classroom incidents).

Mediated experiences within and outside university
Unsurprisingly, women’s perceptions of vulnerability to racism and Islamophobia were related to their experiences within and outside university. For example, Yasmin’s feelings of being at risk of racism were related to incidents she had been subjected to. Institutional factors such as timetabling had an impact on these incidents as she felt that:

Early lectures and late lectures were very hard for me because I feel I have to think of my own security and my own safety and there is a high risk of me being attacked and I face verbal abuse every day...It’s not to do with the colour of my skin, I don’t think – it’s only since I’ve been looking like a Muslim. The way I dress – that’s what triggers it off.

(Yasmin, 24, Sociology and Public Policy Management, Pakistani)

Experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination varied greatly, and covered many aspects of university life. By far the most common manifestation reported by women was verbal abuse and harassment. Other variants ranged from regularly facing irritating racist questions, being expected to act as spokespeople for Muslims and Islam, reading racist representations of Muslims in set course texts, and being subjected to a wider general atmosphere of hostility, particularly in the wake of 9/11.

A significant number of accounts highlighted experiences of anti-Muslim racism linked to the hijab. While Islamophobia is frequently discussed in gender-blind ways, the emphasis placed on hijab by many of our respondents in their discussions of Islamophobia suggests there are clear gendered dimensions to anti-Muslim racism. Many women reported feeling that men and women experience Islamophobia in different ways, and that this was linked to their greater visibility as Muslim women. To many of our respondents, this marked Muslim women as particularly vulnerable to anti-Muslim racism and to stereotypes about Muslim women’s passivity.

Equal ops for students as well as staff
Despite the plethora of examples of Islamophobia offered by respondents, serious problems have emerged around university structures for combating anti-Muslim racism. These reservations cover three areas.

First, interviews with university and students’ union staff raised concerns about general Equal Opportunities structures. Some respondents felt that many universities prefer to structure Equal...
Opportunities work through their Human Resources departments and ‘foib off’ students to their Students’ unions. Given the historically ambivalent relationships between unions and Muslim students in some universities, further difficulties could emerge.

Concerns were therefore raised about university Equal Opportunities work being treated by some institutions as primarily a staffing-related issue and being structured in ways that prevent Equal Opportunities practitioners from fulfilling their universities’ responsibilities towards students.

Second, there were concerns too about broader approaches toward Equal Opportunities work - those that emphasise cultural diversity but fail to pay adequate attention to the problem of racism. These concerns manifested in reports by Muslim women of being subjected to anti-Muslim stereotyping and treated unequally even in universities that have gained attention for the supposed quality of their provisions for Muslim students. Based on the accounts of respondents, university policies covering religious needs were not always capable of guaranteeing ‘bare minimum’ standards of treatment let alone countering anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination. Examples cited included inconsistency in the availability and quality of access to prayer and wudhu (ritual cleansing) facilities for women.

Alongside prayer rooms, halal food availability is a particularly significant provision for Muslim students, as well as being a very symbolic means of recognising the presence of Muslims on campus. However, halal food provision, even amongst universities with large and visible Muslim student populations, also emerged as extremely inconsistent and often of poor quality.

Third, concerns were raised by some about a reported unwillingness of universities to acknowledge and address racism by name. This was most clearly exemplified by the absence of any reference to Islamophobia from any of the Equal Opportunities policy documents of the universities attended by respondents. Few women knew who was responsible for equal opportunities in their respective universities. Neither did they feel that they had been consulted in the development of Equal Opportunities policies.

Misleading ‘categories’ and formalised identities

The interviews also highlighted ways in which defining racialised categories, such as those on ethnic monitoring forms, were interpolated through the routine university functions and the discourses of university life. Racial categories were central to the ways in which certain identities were perceived as more or less worthy of being recognised and formalised, as Latifa noted in relation to the absence of an ‘Arab’ category:

What I find strange about them is, I don’t know if I’m answering your question, is that they always say things like, you know, white, Black; mmm, this, that and ‘Asian’. But they never say, like, ‘Arab’. It’s really weird they never put ‘Arab’...it’s really weird ‘cause I have to tick the ‘Mixed’ one or the ‘Other’, d’you know what I mean? It’s like ‘Reject’ (laughs)...the only box I tick is ever, is ‘Other’ or ‘Mixed’, and then I just write, there’s no space to write it but I just write what I am ‘cause I never really know what to tick.

(Latifa, 20, Arab and Islamic Studies student, Moroccan-English)

There was similarly little understanding of why universities were even carrying out ethnic monitoring, and why Muslim identities, which the majority of women in the research preferred to assert, were not accounted for in these processes.

Such responses represented a major theme in the interviews. It suggests a need for greater transparency for the reasons and uses of ethnic monitoring by Equal Opportunities departments to enable students to understand how monitoring is used in universities. It also suggests a need to re-evaluate current forms of monitoring based on racialised classifications, which were felt to be unhelpful by many respondents in this study, to one that allows students options to self-identify, for example as ‘Arab’ or ‘Muslim’.

Racist and gendered expectations of Muslim women as oppressed, subservient and underproductive, were also found to be central to shaping wider expectations of them as workers, and to a large extent defined the barriers and obstacles Muslim women face in the varying contexts of the labour market. Women tended to link these attitudes directly to their experiences of higher education, including teaching practices, underlining the need for joined-up equal opportunities practice. Similarly, employability outcomes were perceived to be reflections of the type of university Muslim women enrolled in, with the greater likelihood of many Pakistani and Bangladeshi (in particular) students enrolling in ‘new’ universities. Several women believed this to be a potential barrier to labour market success, noting how having attended a ‘good’ university made them more employable. Many women also felt that careers advisers did not fully understand the specific barriers facing Muslim women graduates in the labour market, such as racism and Islamophobia.

Equal treatment will send out the right message

The research shows that meeting the needs of Muslim women students more effectively can break down barriers and misconceptions and counteract the experience of being ‘Othered’ that many women spoke of. It can reinforce the legitimacy of their needs, debunk assumptions, myths and stereotypes, and send out the message that the university is committed to ensuring that Muslim women students are treated equally, and ends with a number of recommendations. The need for clear ‘joined-up’ strategic work on Equal Opportunities within the higher education sector cannot be emphasised enough.
Any assessment of government policy concerning multiculturalism, civil liberties and women in 21st-century Britain has to begin with Amrit Wilson’s *Dreams, Questions, Struggles*. And it is a good place to begin the hard work of getting beyond the new public policy of political correctness about community cohesion and integration. This emergent discourse, which plainly imagines Asian communities as caught up in a culture clash with an imagined ‘host’ nation, rides roughshod over the intricate complexities explained by Wilson’s ethnographic study of contemporary British Asian women.

The framework of a culture clash substitutes a complacent nativism about British values for what is much more required – a robust enquiry into the multiple and contradictory forces at work in shaping contemporary gender inequalities. And in the current political environment, where the risks of alienating sections of the Asian community and delivering them into the hands of extremist ideologies is a serious worry, any unwillingness to grasp the broad significance of Asian women’s own analysis of problems in Britain, as offered in Wilson’s book, would be both foolhardy and dangerously short-sighted.

Asian women’s individual struggles and organised social movements have for the past forty years played a critical, if unsung, role in shaping the course of British multiculturalism and social policy. Whether the issue is domestic violence, honour killings, immigration control, sweatshop labour or religious fundamentalism, Asian women have developed robust analyses of sociological problems that point to the interaction of both dominant British cultural norms as well as Asian patriarchal projects in shaping the ordering of social subordination and the gender oppression of British Asian women.

The liberation of Asian, and particularly Muslim women, is today a contested issue in the debate around multiculturalism all over Europe. The image of the oppressed Muslim woman, veiled in the hijab or nikab, has become a rhetorical touchstone that adds to the moral justification of western foreign policy interventions in the Islamic world and succeeds in provoking fears about multiculturalism codding illiberal cultures within European nation-states.

Wilson shows how the truth is far more complex than these tabloid-level understandings of how the oppression of Asian women takes shape in the present moment. The assertion that British values and the British state apply coherent policies towards women’s civil rights and liberties is unmasked as Wilson shows how a zealous discharge of immigration control policies has produced a long series of anti-women human rights failures, such as the abominable ‘virginity tests’ of the 1970s and the current Two-Year rule.

The state’s immigration discourse continually contradicts its own edicts on women’s equality and progressive social values as it moves along in the quixotic fight against that immigration bogey – the sham arranged marriage. In practice, these rules trap women who are victims of domestic violence into years of abuse and male violence, as well as leaving them subject to deportations into the very countries that British foreign policy claims to want to liberate from authoritarian clutches.

With excellent qualitative research drawn from actual cases, Wilson highlights many horror stories, including an example in 2002 when the Home Office cited an Amnesty International report that disclosed the existence of a whopping figure of six women’s shelters in the whole of Pakistan as the basis for its decision to deport a woman facing imminent threats of violence from her husband’s extended family. Despite the realities of globalisation, telecommunications and the diasporic nature of British Asian families, the Home Office stated, in its letter to the woman in question: ‘there is no reason to suspect that anyone in Pakistan is aware of the problems you have had with your husband in the UK’.

These contradictions glare in the light of the re-emergence of ideologies of patriarchal control that have occurred, as Wilson claims, within many of South Asia’s communities in their long transition from peasant societies to capitalist and transnational diasporas. Wilson aims at a broad canvas of Asian communities now resident in Britain – Sikhs from the Punjab region, Azad Kashmiris and East African Gujaratis – but less visible South Asian communities, such as Sri Lankan Tamils who arrived en masse in the post-1980 refugee settlement, do not figure as much in her study. Her assertion is that there is a common struggle against South Asian forms of domestic, sexual and familial relations.

Wilson makes a strong case by mapping out how contestations of the division of domestic labour, the pressures of commodified beauty images, women’s freedom to control their own sexuality and marriage choices do indeed cross-cut different communities, and form the terrain where a strategic political unity can be forged in struggle.

At the same time, however, the broad canvas that Wilson attempts leaves an impressionistic feel. For example, male dominance is dichotomised, with South Asian male dominance largely appearing as a phenomenon of the personalised private sphere, whilst western male dominance is inferred through the institutional behaviour of the state. Also, by raising questions about the future course of Asian women’s politics, Wilson has identified a critical tension between carrying out everyday advocacy and culture-specific service provision and mobilisation for social transformation. And yet this important topic is raised only in the final chapter, with the discussion ending as abruptly as it began.

The uneven development of new class relations between women within similar communities and cutting across different ethnic communities is arguably a pertinent question, but it receives what’s largely an incidental and anecdotal treatment. Recent research on South Asian women’s domestic violence shelters in the US has indicated that even within such activist spaces a significant middle-class discipline can be enforced on working-class women, and this is one element among the structures of gender oppression. In Britain, some women’s groups have taken the entrepreneurial route of going into the child-care and nursery business. Departures such as these from the visionary social movement dreams of an earlier era do not easily recompose themselves in sympathy with previous alignments. But for British Asian women, and those who work in solidarity, Wilson has surely reopened the debate.
Irregular Migrants

The JCVI (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants) is an independent national organisation which has been providing legal representation to individuals and families affected by immigration, nationality and refugee law and policy since 1967. Rhian Beynon writes about their latest publication on the case for regularising irregular migrants.

The UK has up to 570,000 irregular migrants consisting of, among others, clandestine or trafficked migrants, failed asylum-seekers and overstayers. All these groups have either entered or stayed on in the UK in an unregulated immigration capacity. They live with the constant fear of deportation, and are effectively without means to enforce their rights using legal remedy. Potentially they comprise one of the most disadvantaged segments of the population.

Regularisation is the name of the process which would enable them to earn official recognition and authorisation of their right to live in the UK as legal immigrants, and, freed from the threat of deportation, be better able to realise their rights as members of UK society.

Regularisation, by capturing hitherto lost taxation and other revenues, could net the Treasury up to £1 billion a year, as opposed to the potential £4.7 billion cost of deporting the entire irregular migrant population. Aside from the potential cost benefits, there are pressing human rights reasons for regularisation. Much migration, regular or irregular, results from global inequity. When irregular migrants’ participation in UK society goes unrecognised, there is a danger that global injustice is being reproduced here.

With the introduction of managed migration, workplace surveillance, the national identity register and the new immigration rules by 2008, a whole new era of immigration control is upon us, characterised by surveillance of the new immigrant population within. At the current rate of 20,000 deportations a year, it will take at least another 25 years to remove the irregular migrant population. The Home Office’s Director of Enforcement and Removals concedes that it is an untenable strategy to follow up individual visa overstayers for deportation, and he does not know how many failed asylum-seekers have complied with Home Office written notices to leave. Thus any party in power that does not consider regularisation as a policy solution is simply ‘making a rod for its own back’.

Convincing though the sheer weight of political reality is, the overwhelming argument in favour of regularisation is that it is good for recognising migrants’ rights and good for everyone’s rights. While it should be recognised that UK nationals and both irregular and regular new migrants may all be prone to some level of exploitation, irregular migrants have no way of practically enforcing their employment rights and thus are at particular risk of exploitation, injury and worse. In turn this is not good for regular migrant and UK workers. For if exploitative employers can always turn to a workforce that is overly compliant out of fear of being removed from the UK, how will this help uphold equality in the workplace? And how can the Government begin to talk about ending child poverty when the children of irregular migrant parents may be subsisting on the lowest wages? Irregular migration reinforces existing patterns of inequality because statistics for failed asylum-seekers and those detained under the Immigration Act powers suggest the majority are visible minorities.

Regularisation is not a stand-alone solution to irregular migration. It should be part of an overall ‘package’ of immigration reform because irregularity is a by-product of regulations. Furthermore, it would not be realistic to propose automatic regularisation for the entire irregular population. To protect individual migrants from falling back into irregularity, to reassure the public that regularisation is not a free-for-all, and to ensure membership of British society is valued, a carefully managed process is needed.

However, its disadvantages can be limited and its chief benefits for social justice and integration outweigh any perceived problems. Above all, regularisation would give people who contribute to our society a stake in it, assure them of a way to access rights and help to ensure that the UK is a more just and integrated society.

JCWI’s suggested model for a one-off time-limited regularisation and immigration reform includes:

- Any irregular migrant here for at least two years who can meet some additional criteria, i.e. a record of employment or character testimonials from the local community, should get five years’ temporary leave to remain with the chance to earn indefinite leave to remain. Anyone who can show they are a victim of trafficking and exploitation should be treated similarly, regardless of the initial period of residence granted.
- Anyone who can show they have been here for seven years should get automatic leave to remain based on residence. This could be part of a permanent regularisation process.
- The Government should sign up to the major international conventions which protect migrant rights.
- Non-EEA economic migrants who enter in unskilled categories are currently given sharply restrictive leave to remain which may be an incentive to fall into irregularity. This group should be given a longer period of temporary leave with the opportunity to earn the right to settle permanently.
- All asylum applicants and failed applicants who cannot be deported should have the right to work.
Pensions Reform Proposals and BME Communities

Runnymede’s response to Security in Retirement, HMG’s pensions system proposals, was submitted to government in early September in the form of a background document, a discussion paper and a set of case studies. Our key findings are summarised below. Among them we note those proposals adopted in the White Paper that will benefit black and minority ethnic pensioners of the future, and those that the White paper did not take up.

Key findings
Our report demonstrates that although some of the proposed changes to the pensions system will benefit Britain’s BME communities, they fail to address those inequalities that arise specifically from the disadvantaged employment situation and low incomes of minority ethnic communities. These issues require further consideration as part of the pension reform process.

The White Paper’s proposed reforms do offer improved coverage for those with interrupted work histories, particularly for those involved in child-rearing and other forms of care-giving, and will reduce the spread of means-testing to some extent. The expectation that people will work for longer may prove problematic for those in poor health, and those facing multiple disadvantage in the labour market, who may still leave the labour market in their 50s and will face the prospect of a longer wait before being allowed to claim retirement benefits.

Proposals adopted in the White Paper
Those that will specifically benefit the BME pensioners of the future include:

1. Reducing the contributions base from its current level of 44 years for men (39 for women) to 30 for all, and abolishing the minimum requirement for engagement in paid work;
2. Allowing earnings from more than one job to be aggregated, for contributions purposes, bringing more people within the scope of National Insurance;
3. Changing the Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP) to a system of weekly tax credits for BSP and S2P;
4. Individualisation of benefit in place of dependency on ‘breadwinner’ entitlement;
5. Linking increases in state pensions with average earnings rather than prices.

The proposed changes to S2P are welcome, and the changes to HRP would considerably improve the position of those women who spend many years raising families or caring for elderly relatives. Adoption of a 30-year contribution period, as proposed in the White Paper, would make a significant difference both to carers and others with an interrupted work record, but will not ensure complete pensions coverage. Individualised benefits will also considerably improve the financial autonomy of retired BME women in future, by providing them with an independent source of income.

In terms of BSP, restoring the link with average earnings rather than prices would also help to alleviate poverty and reduce reliance on means-testing. However, the rejection of a flat-rate universal state pension would mean that many minority ethnic pensioners are likely to continue to rely on means-tested benefits. While the creation of personal accounts would extend the opportunity of making private pension provision to people who do not currently have access to an occupational scheme, and provide a modest level of employer contribution, it is likely to have a limited impact on the majority of minority ethnic people of working age because their disadvantaged economic position allows them to save only a modest amount, if anything, from their earnings. Only quite major changes in the employment position of ethnic minorities will enable them to make adequate provision for their own retirement.

Proposals not adopted in the White Paper
Those that could potentially have benefited future BME pensioners include:

1. A flat-rate pension for all, rather than a two-tier structure with an earnings-related component;
2. Access to S2P for the self-employed;
3. Depending on the residence criteria adopted (this would need to be conditional, e.g. 10 of the last 20 years, rather than a set period, or make allowance for particular situations, e.g. for forced migration), universal entitlement based on residence rather than contributions;
4. Entitlement to claim the state pension (BSP) earlier than the State Second Pension (S2P) could benefit low-paid workers or those with health problems but would be offset by loss of means-tested benefits for some.
The over-representation of BME groups in low-paid work, including low-income self-employment, means that they are disadvantaged by any element of pension provision tied to individual earnings. Although S2P is set to become flat rate over time, there is still an earnings threshold. Moreover, the decision not to extend S2P to the self-employed, a group which is unlikely to take up personal accounts, means that there is likely to be little improvement in their pension position.

The Pensions Commission’s proposals to move to a universal basis for entitlement to BSP based on residence rather than contributions, would be of significant benefit to people from minority ethnic groups with interrupted work histories. Although some will benefit from the proposed provision for carers, many experience multiple or prolonged periods of unemployment which will not qualify them for anything beyond BSP. For as long as BME groups continue to experience disadvantage in the labour market, contributory pensions reflect this disadvantage. For those who come to the UK as adults, however, any potential advantages to be derived from residence-based provision would be dependent on the period of residence adopted.

While there is some merit in the possibility of being able to claim BSP before the S2P, as proposed by the Pensions Commission (and which the White Paper proposes to keep under review), thus reducing potential inequities caused by increases in the state pension age, this will be of doubtful practical benefit to those on the lowest incomes, for whom this income will simply be deducted from their means-tested benefits.

Case studies produced for us by the Pensions Policy Institute illustrate many elements from the sets of circumstances touched on above.

From Consultation to Bill

In preparing to move to the next stage of pensions reform and prior to the introduction of a Bill, government should seriously consider the impact of each and every proposal outlined in Security in Retirement on specific black and minority ethnic groups. Our analysis shows that there are some benefits, but there are also disadvantages for certain BME groups. Most notably, unless inequalities in the labour market are addressed, inequalities in state pension coverage will continue to exist. For those already on low earnings there could be a set of prevalent work patterns among the BME communities whose impact on their capacity to live with any comfort in retirement is not much ameliorated by the White Paper proposals. Government’s final proposals must take care not to worsen the already marginal financial position.

for All 2007

ENARgy

Education & Work:

Muslim Women’s Experiences of Higher Education

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ASBOs and Race Equality

A direct follow-up to Runnymede's 2003/6 work on Preventing Racist Violence, this report by Sarah Isal will be launched at the House of Lords on 2 November. See our website later in October for information about the report’s content and its availability.