

Right From The Start

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Introduction

An unequal society is not at ease with itself

It is essential that everyone concerned in the early years of children's lives is involved in:

- Countering racism at all levels of Government and in early years practice;
- Promoting equal participation and a sense of belonging in early years settings;
- Ensuring that settings are active participants in their local communities/neighbourhoods; and
- Creating opportunities for all workers, children and their families to take a positive role in creating a harmonious society.

Here in the United Kingdom we are facing a time of serious worries and tensions – including fear of terrorism, unrest between some communities and a rise in the number of racist attacks. The impact of recent events and on-going trends (both inside and outside the UK) is causing us to ask basic questions about the way we live our lives and the ways we organise our communities. Issues of gender, culture, ethnicity and religion/belief in particular remain factors of contention, concern and debate. Across the country many people are urgently seeking solutions to these concerns, in order to restore calm, confidence and trust in our communities. The opening up of dialogues, the analysis of funding, education and housing patterns, and the commitment to take determined action against racist violence all illustrate the seriousness with which the current situation is being addressed.

But at the same time, there are also instances of prejudice, ignorance and hatred feeding negative attitudes and leading to destructive behaviour. Such occurrences underpin the present tensions – tensions that are fuelling previously dormant racism (particularly against Muslims), tensions that are frustrating attempts to alleviate poverty and disadvantage and that are raising the levels of anxiety

that exist between differing communities. Significantly, tensions between some black and other minority ethnic communities appear to be increasing.

By contrast, people who live in a society free of these tensions would not be apprehensive about cultural and religious differences, would not engage in racial harassment and abuse, and would not fear terrorist attacks from within.

If we are to reduce existing tensions and face the future as a harmonious society,¹ there are clearly actions that need to be taken at all levels – nationally and locally, by Government, within our communities, within our schools and early years settings,² and in our own personal lives.

One essential area is that of work with children in their earliest years. These are the years when the foundations of subsequent attitudes and behaviour are established. This is a period of intense learning for children, and also a time when family members are most involved in their care and education. Wherever they live, whether rural, suburban or urban, they are all part of our multicultural society.

This stage therefore provides a critical opportunity for children to begin the process of learning to appreciate each other equally and to be positive about those who are differ-

¹ *Harmonious*: over recent years, in the field of 'race relations' this word has become associated somewhat negatively and perhaps sentimentally with concepts of people living side by side but not really fully communicating with, understanding or accepting one another. This is because the inequalities structured into our society caused by racism are not addressed. I believe this should be reclaimed as a positive word whose origins are in music - the various instruments or voices playing together, in their differing roles as notes to create a harmony of sound each contributing equally to the whole. In such harmony there is no hierarchy between the instruments or voices, each complementing the other(s) and uniting together to make a totality more profound than the individual parts.

ent from themselves, as well as recognising the many similarities. There is an opportunity to learn from each other, to be open and broad-minded, to share experiences and to feel comfortable within each other's cultural backgrounds, not feeling threatened by cultural diversity but welcoming it as a fact of life. There is also an opportunity for children to unlearn any prejudiced attitudes and behaviour that they might have already learnt. In such an environment children are more able to thrive as learners and less likely to be apprehensive about people who are unfamiliar, either in their everyday settings or in the wider world. They can learn to be confident, to be proud of their cultural environment, as well as valuing those of others. As they grow, they can develop a basis from which they can contribute to a society where cultural, religious and ethnic differences are accepted and valued, and where racist attitudes and behaviour are challenged in positive and sensitive ways.

Because families are potentially an integral part of this learning process, there is also an opportunity for their involvement too. There is an opportunity for families to consider their views about people from a variety of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, to evaluate their own attitudes towards them in the context of the society in which we all live, and to provide positive support on racial equality for their own children in their home lives.

But perhaps the greatest opportunity, with the greatest rewards, is the opportunity to develop a cohesive and inclusive early years setting, where children, their families and those who work with them all take steps towards a shared objective of belonging and equality for all, both inside the setting and outside in the wider community.

Whether these opportunities are taken up by those in the early years field depends on many factors – the commitment, knowledge, understanding and skills of early years workers; the support they receive from their managers/governors and local authorities; and the laws and policies that Ministers and Government departments develop to assist this process.

If we are to begin to break down the barriers that sustain community tensions, if we are to provide every child with the basis for future success and the fulfilment of their dreams, it needs to be recognised that these earliest years in the lives of children and their families are crucial. Rather than an *ad hoc* response, a comprehensive strategy is an essential starting point if this process is to be truly effective.

It is well established but, strangely, often not understood by those who do not work directly with young children that racially prejudiced attitudes leading to prejudiced behaviour and discrimination develop in the earliest years of a child's life (references listed under Ammons in Lane 2006). They are learned and reinforced, often unconsciously, from all that surrounds young children – from family members, other adults, peers, toys, books, posters and the media. Children from all ethnic backgrounds may be learning negative attitudes to others – environmental influences are very powerful. Children themselves also often perpetrate and perpetuate racist attitudes and behaviour independent of the adults around them – peer influences can be very powerful.

At the same time as children may be learning racist attitudes from their environment, these attitudes are continually being reinforced and perpetuated by the way children (and adults) perceive, interpret and make sense of the world around them. In this world, many black and other minority ethnic people experience disproportionate poverty and disadvantage. Their enforced position of racial inferiority may then be used, largely unconsciously, in an erroneous fashion to explain and justify to children their existing racist attitudes and assumptions. In the relative absence of black people in positions of power and authority in British society, there is little evidence to counter these assumptions, thus perpetuating the false explanations of why some black and minority ethnic people live in poverty and disadvantage: that they (rather than racism and other factors) are responsible for their own circumstances.

If we are to break this cycle of racist attitudes and behaviour reinforced by false explanations, we need to think very carefully about all that is done with young children (and their families) and to provide them with opportunities to consider, analyse and evaluate any negative attitudes that they may have already learned. Unless specific action is taken to counter this process and alternative explanations of poverty and disadvantage are provided, these attitudes and behaviour may continue into adult life, as well as into succeeding generations of children. We need to work with children and their families to help them unlearn attitudes and behaviour that are based on stereotypes, assumptions and misinformation about those who are different from themselves. We need to observe children to assess whether they are influencing and reinforcing negative attitudes among themselves. We need to break down prejudiced attitudes

towards people perceived to be different, whether through their culture, their language, their religion, their ethnicity, their skin colour and physical features; attitudes based on false hierarchies of importance, value and worthiness.

Racism³ damages all children, those who are subjected to it and those who perpetrate it. There is much evidence to demonstrate the way it damages children subjected to it, but less on the way it damages its perpetrators - for example, by inculcating false notions of superiority; blunting sensitivity to others; encouraging the belief that black and other minority ethnic people are somehow less human; and – in the failure to provide a full range of information from which children can make their own judgements – distorting perceptions of reality.

It is now well established that the maximum benefit to children's learning and well-being comes where workers and families are fully involved, as equals, in supporting children together. Early years settings, where family members meet workers when they bring and collect their children, provide one of the most significant opportunities for interaction and positive communication. Together, they can learn about and experience communities different from their own.

Moreover, initial and on-going discussions about the setting's equality policy can provide considerable potential for interaction. Given the intimacy of the family relationship, it is important to involve families as much as possible in understanding and supporting the work on racial equality done with their children – they are the critical (although not the only) influencers of their children's attitudes and behaviour. Where workers and families work together for equality and share the reasons for doing it in an environment of mutual trust, the potential exists for transforming pre-existing racist attitudes and behaviour and for developing that sense of belonging that arises in a group with shared objectives.

Early years workers and families are all also members of their local community and, as such, are potential advocates for equality there as well. Their knowledge of working to counter racism in early years settings means they are particularly well placed to exert influence in the world outside. If early years settings see themselves as advocates for their local community, as belonging to it rather than being an insular enclave within it, then they will be aware of what is

happening, or not happening, there or within their community. They will know whether there are community tensions, racial harassment or hostility between groups and be alert to signs of dissension between individuals in the setting or on the periphery of it. They will, as a consequence, be receptive to the way children perceive their world and better able to respond to, learn from and understand them and their families. As advocates, they will be able to take action to support their community or members of it, and, by learning from such experience, they will better reflect the needs of the community within the early years setting. They may, in the process, become aware of any of their own previous complacency, thus reinforcing the need for open-mindedness.

If we are to break down the tensions between communities that may affect the present and future lives of us all, we need to take personal and collective responsibility. We need to be proactive, rather than just hoping 'it will all go away' or lulling ourselves into a false sense of security that these issues will never affect or concern us. We need, in essence, to focus on the shared objective of a harmonious society and to be active (in the long, medium and short term) at all levels of society in a variety of ways.

A critical area of action is to ensure that young children 'make a positive contribution' by being involved with the community and with society itself (the fourth outcome of the Government's paper, *Every Child Matters*). For example, by walking round and learning about their local area, or visiting areas where people who may be less familiar to them live and work (after appropriate preparation), children will be contributing their acceptance of differences as a positive experience.

Similarly, workers and family members need to be encouraged, both as individuals and collectively as people who are all involved in the early years, to understand from their experiences in the setting some of the barriers to equality, and to see beyond the immediate environment to the wider world in which the children will grow up. They need to utilise the experience derived from working with children in the cause of equality to take specific steps to break down barriers between individuals and groups within their local community. Some of these barriers will exist on both sides; while barely articulated, they may be expressed in body language and engender apprehension but, nevertheless,

³ *Racism*: All those practices and procedures that, both historically and in the present, disadvantage and discriminate against people because of their skin colour, ethnicity, culture, religion, nationality and/or language. It may be helpful to see the 'practices and procedures' as belonging to a 'package' of components, any or all of which may be present in any particular situation: racial prejudice, racial discrimination, racial harassment, racial hatred/violence, racial stereotyping, racial assumptions, cultural racism, ethnocentrism, institutional racism, structural racism, state racism.

NB: Some of the current debate about multiculturalism, valuing diversity, segregation and integration tends to distract the focus from an examination of the key issue of racism.

² Early years settings' include all forms of provision where children are cared for/educated, both in the maintained sector run by local authorities (nursery schools, nursery classes, early excellence centres, children's centres) and the non-maintained sector run by a variety of organisations, groups and individuals (voluntary, independent and private - playgroups, pre-schools, crèches, childminders, nurseries - community, private or neighbourhood nurseries). Sure Start local programmes, where they still exist, are organised by a variety of organisations.

be readily removed following tentative overtures towards communication. The encouragement to take down such barriers may derive from any source, including leaders and family members. While sceptics may see this as an unrealistic aspiration, it could equally be perceived as a way both of benefiting children in the long term and beginning the process of building up social/community cohesion, albeit in apparently small ways.

Clearly, many tensions may arise within a community, ranging from virulent racist activity only susceptible to legal redress, to individual prejudices that may be decreased through personal contact. Early years settings – by being welcoming, open-minded and receptive to a variety of ways of doing things - provide an ideal context for making inroads into entrenched but not necessarily hostile patterns of behaviour in local communities. Such small beginnings can be catalysts or precursors of ways to enjoy life together in the wider context of our multicultural society. The opportunities should be seen as being equally important for all ethnic groups and communities, some of which currently face serious dislocation, especially in terms of economic deprivation and sheer poverty.

These tensions in our society need to be urgently addressed. Recently, there have been several cases where schools have actively campaigned to support asylum-seeking families in their fights against deportation. Such instances provide a model for advocacy, empathy and wider community action. Taking a proactive role in learning to appreciate different ways of living, making friends with and talking with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, shopping for and trying out unfamiliar foods, sharing common experiences - all these things can begin to break down isolation and develop an understanding of what it really means to belong to a multicultural society. It entails more than simply knowing people from different cultural backgrounds, for example in a work situation - it requires that we re-orientate our thinking, learning to care for and understand each other right across cultural backgrounds and boundaries.

This may extend to participation in local community activities, both social and political, where knowledge about the wider issues of concern can be shared. Settings might, for example, have a voice in commenting on or contributing to national or local government consultation documents, or even actively raising specific issues of concern. Early years settings can champion acceptance of the way diversity adds to the richness of the local community, as well as the idea that friendly and accepting personal behaviour is part of the process through which society at large learns to live at ease with itself. The critically important work done in the settings and within the local authority can establish principles

of valuing cultural diversity even in areas where there is a limited range of different cultural backgrounds and where it may not be generally recognised that racism exists. Plans can be made for people to engage in and become familiar with their nearest multicultural community, not as 'tourists' or voyeurs but as active and open-minded participants in a beneficial learning experience.

Government also has a vital role to play in ensuring that people working with young children, as well as the early years services supporting them, are provided with effective tools to undertake the necessary work. Government can provide the necessary policy and legislation, as well as the whole raft of guidance, support, training, funding and resources required for implementation. Some of the requirements are already in place, and the Government since 1997 can be credited with the first genuine commitment to a constructive long-term early years strategy.

The main focus, however, has been on equality of access and the acknowledgement of cultural differences (worthy issues in their own right) and not on the racial discrimination that can severely limit the life opportunities of children and their families. This means that the issue of children who are developing attitudes of prejudice from their environment, that may be the precursors of discrimination in adulthood, has not been addressed. It is of increasing concern that children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds are learning prejudiced attitudes to others. Although, at present, the power to put such attitudes into discriminatory practice as they grow up lies largely with white people, any prejudiced attitudes may foster future community tensions. It is therefore important to address such attitudes at this early age from wherever they originate. Nor has Government, either at national or at local level, built upon or even recognised the potential of those working in the early years field, including the settings, to become advocates for their own communities and so to support community cohesion. It is clearly essential that such issues are addressed and taken more seriously than hitherto.

Importantly, Government needs to raise the level of debate about the way our society sees itself. It needs to identify, acknowledge and address the key factors that lead to tensions and unease, and to begin (holistically and in conjunction with those already active in the field) to break into the cyclical perpetuation of racist attitudes and discrimination, which reinforce institutional racism and aggravate its consequences. This requires that the Government makes the links between racism in institutions and communities and the development from an early age of racial attitudes and behaviour in children - as did the Macpherson report on the Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence - and take

action to address this (Macpherson 1999). Children are not born prejudiced: priority must be given to encouraging the acceptance of differences and the unlearning of prejudice as an integral aspect of our future. Government needs to focus on defining the objective of a society to which everyone feels they can belong and to take steps to put this ideal into practice. Given that we all have a stake in the attainment of such an objective, we all have a part to play.

We do not need to know everything about each other or even to like each other in order to respect and accept one another. We can continue to live our lives as we always have done and still value and respect those who choose to live differently. But getting to know one another and sharing common interests and experiences does deepen our mutual understanding, and meeting as equals in our domestic everyday activities is more likely to break down barriers than is the attempt to relate across geographical distances.

The creation of a harmonious society will not happen by chance or by osmosis. In line with *Every Child Matters*, we need to plan for it, developing a strategic approach which will extend across all services for children. The earliest years of children's lives provide a crucial starting-point for the process of breaking down the barriers which prevent everyone in our society from participating fully in what it has to offer and developing a sense of belonging.

That sense of belonging should be all-encompassing; the diversity of our society includes males and females, white, black and other minority ethnic people, disabled and non-disabled, gays and lesbians, young and old, refugees and asylum seekers, Travellers and Gypsies, people with different educational needs and from different socio-economic, linguistic, religious/belief, cultural and family backgrounds and from different lifestyles.

In 2003 the national Early Childhood Forum⁴ devised a definition of the term 'inclusion' whereby the achievement of inclusion depends on the existence of equality:

'Inclusion is a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging.'

This definition may be helpful in considering racial equality within the context of an integrated approach to all the diverse aspects and inequalities of our society, at all levels of Government and in early years settings. A sense of belonging, in other words, is a useful measure by which to assess equality.

Because racism puts black and other minority ethnic people at a disadvantage and the majority white people at an advantage, in order to rectify this imbalance it may be necessary for white people to forego some of their advantages. For example, for everyone to have a sense of belonging, existing groups/settings may need to examine the way they operate, and when people from different cultural backgrounds join such a group, it may be necessary to change some of the ways the group operates in order that everyone can feel they belong equally.

Because the factors underlying the present tensions largely revolve around ethnicity, culture, religion (particularly Islam) and racism, this paper focuses specifically on these issues. It attempts to analyse within a historical context the way racism is at present being addressed in the early years field. It identifies some of the key obstacles to countering such racism, from Ministerial level, through national and local government departments, through to early years settings. It then offers suggestions for ways of breaking down existing barriers at the various levels with a view to ensuring racial equality for all, and posits the benefits that would thereby accrue both to children and to society as a whole. In essence, it suggests contributions that could be made by everyone involved in the early years to the reduction of tensions in society, the encouragement of equality and the fostering of a sense of belonging.

⁴ The Early Childhood Forum is a national organisation representing some 45 professional and voluntary organisations that work with young children and their families.

The Background: A National Perspective

Human rights are not just for children in distant countries. They are for children in this country too – the children we live with, that go to school at the bottom of the road, that share our neighbourhoods and that cause trouble and hurt people.
— Report of Children's Rights Alliance of England, November 2005

Although black people have lived in Britain for centuries, it was only after the Second World War, when there was a shortage of labour, that significant numbers of initially Caribbean and later Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people migrated here. This section considers racial equality issues and the effects on young children from the period when black and other minority ethnic families were migrating to Britain to the present day.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY YEARS SERVICES TO 1997

Apart from the period of the Second World War, up until 1997 the state considered responsibility for very young children to lie with their families.

In the sixties, the issues facing black children (mostly of Caribbean origin) were erroneously ascribed as due to 'cultural deprivation' and inadequate parenting and, consequently, programmes of 'compensatory education' in nurseries were recommended. This led to the problematisation of black families in general, the stereotyping of their children's abilities and the failure to recognise the real impact on their lives of racism, migration and poverty.

In the seventies and eighties, Asian families began to migrate to the UK, thus raising awareness on the part both of Government and of related agencies of their specific needs, particularly the need to learn English (van der Eyken 1979). The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) began to identify issues around racism and the early years in the context of the Race Relations Act 1976 and its implications for practice. Other organisations and individuals also campaigned for an anti-racist approach in training, resources and policies. As a result of effective lobbying by these organisations, specific actions on racial equality and daycare registration were brought on to the statute in the Children Act 1989 (the first time that the issue had been addressed in legislation) and helpful pointers were included in the guidance on the Act.

In 1981, the Home Affairs Select Committee identi-

fied the disproportionate need of 'ethnic minority' families (particularly 'West Indians') for childcare and English language support and, as a result, the Department of Health and Social Security recommended that local authorities be required to review and assess the nature and extent of their services and the needs of ethnic minority communities.

But while the issue of assisting children in learning English began to be addressed, much of the training for work with young children, the materials on child development and the resources for play did not take account of culture or ethnicity, thus allowing assumptions and stereotypes about the behaviour and potential of black and other minority ethnic children to pass unchallenged and to become widespread. A disproportionate number of African Caribbean children were given places in social services day nurseries, taken into care and allocated to schools for the 'educationally subnormal' (Coard 1971). This compounded an already existing tendency to see such families and their children as 'problems'.

An important development, resulting from external pressure, occurred in the late eighties, when the National Nursery Examination Board (the organisation mainly responsible for the awarding of qualifications to nursery nurses) reviewed their curriculum practices and support for particularly inappropriate training resources, and funded anti-racist training for their staff. This was a significant step in breaking down stereotypical attitudes and practices in nursery nurse training nationally.

From the early eighties to the early nineties, significant national reports were published which highlighted issues of racism in schools generally, as well as the importance of establishing high expectations of all young children, free of stereotyped views about cultural backgrounds. (Rampton 1981, Swann 1985, DES 1990)

In the nineties, some local authorities took their Children Act responsibilities for equality particularly seriously, in

inspecting settings and providing positive support for anti-discriminatory practice. Gradually, the focus moved from the assimilation of minority ethnic children to the beginnings of the idea of integration on the basis of equality. Discussions about the relative merits of multiculturalism and anti-racism in education abounded, with the concept of multiculturalism regarded by anti-racists as important but insufficient when it came to countering racial hierarchies.

Many influential publications and articles elaborating on these issues were published up to and during the nineties.⁵ Key organisations ran conferences and training on anti-racist practice and produced resources to address issues of racial equality. Interestingly, apart from a few pioneering local authorities, the voluntary sector took a more positive stance in addressing the issue than did the maintained sector.

However, despite some effective work and the beginnings of a recognition that racial equality issues were indeed important, the situation facing black and other minority ethnic children and their families only served to highlight the lack of accessible childcare and the generally inadequate organisation of the early years services. Crucially, with a few notable exceptions, racial equality was seen as essentially being about black and other minority ethnic people, rather than about the way racism impacts on everyone in society. It was seen as a 'problem' for urban areas and not an issue of concern across the board.

In order to identify the actions that need to be taken to ensure racial equality in early years services and society as a whole, it is important to understand the history, consequences and context of past experiences. And racial stereotyping, misinformation, assumptions and prejudice do not disappear overnight: they still abound today. (A longer version of this history can be found in Appendix A.)

GENERAL EARLY YEARS SERVICES SINCE 1997

The election of the new Labour Government in 1997 her-

alded a fundamentally different approach to the needs of young children, with a particular commitment to reducing the number of children living in poverty. It is now recognised and accepted that the state, as well as parents, has a role to play and a responsibility for giving children an equal start in life and in early years services. It is accepted that these years are crucial for many children in determining their future and that investment in the early years can have long-term, positive and lasting effects. This was demonstrated by the Headstart programme in the United States, although the positive effects, though proven, were not taken seriously for many years.

1998 saw the launch of a comprehensive National Childcare Strategy which aimed at making available quality, affordable childcare (from birth to the age of 14 and including out-of-school provision), backed up by significant funding. Although the United Kingdom still has a way to go in comparison with some other countries, the historical legacy of state neglect has now been reversed: we now invest more per child in the pre-primary years than any other European country, even though participation in pre-primary provision is increasing (OECD 2005). While the agenda has sometimes seemed to focus on the basis of getting family members into employment (and consequently off benefits), in comparison with the situation that existed prior to 1997, giant strides have been made.

However, the Government has been criticised for inadequate consideration of the needs of the children themselves; for not specifically targeting the essential causes of poverty; and for demanding positive outcomes within a time-frame too limited for real and effective changes to take place. Nevertheless, a recognition of the importance of the family's role in caring for children - as well as the state's responsibility for providing support - is firmly on the agenda. The Sure Start⁶ local programmes and children's centres demonstrate this Government commitment to all-round family support and

⁵ Influential publications about racial equality up to 1997 include:

- Coard, B. (1971) *How the West Indian child is made educationally subnormal in the British school system*. New Beacon
- Commission for Racial Equality (1989 revised 1996) *From cradle to school: a practical guide to racial equality in early childhood education and care*.
- Derman Sparks, L. and the ABC Task Force (1989) *Anti-Bias Curriculum: tools for empowering young children*. NAEYC, Washington, USA. Available from National Children's Bureau
- DES (1990) *Starting with Quality: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the quality of educational experiences offered to 3 and 4 year olds*. Chaired by Angela Rumbold
- DHSS (1984) *Services for under-fives from ethnic minority communities: Inter-Departmental Consultative Group on Provision for Under Fives – Report of a Sub-Group on Provision of Services for Under Fives from Ethnic Minority Communities*
- EYTARN/Early Years Equality (EYE) - a variety of relevant publications on training, practice and policy-making
- Elfer, P. (ed) (1995) *With Equal Concern: training materials to ensure daycare and educational provision for young children takes positive account of the 'religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background of each child' (Children Act 1989)*. National Children's Bureau

open up a way of including family members in working for equality along with their children. While the recent early evaluation report on these Sure Start local programmes states that, although they have made a difference to large numbers of parents and children, they have not reached some of the most disadvantaged, it cautions against coming to negative conclusions so soon after the programmes have come into operation (Sure Start 2005a).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (to which the United Kingdom signed up in 1989) has set the tone for the right to equal treatment internationally and requires its articles to be incorporated into domestic law. Article 2 concerns non-discrimination.

The most important recent Government document setting the future agenda for children, including the early years, is *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2003), published as the result of the Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. This lays out a comprehensive approach to the development of services for children, based on five key outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and economic well-being.

While all of these have implications for racial equality, although Victoria was black and issues about racism were raised in the Inquiry, racial equality as such is not addressed directly, either in this document or, effectively, in the subsequent series of documents which amplify the commitments made for the early years in *Every Child Matters*. Most of these are sensitively written but refer to racial equality, if at all, only in terms of access, achievement, cultural differences and disadvantage, rather than emphasising the need to counter every form of racial discrimination, including institutional racism. This would be of less importance if a key document had initially established these principles, but in the absence of such a document, the omission suggests either a lack of a real commitment to racial equality or a failure to understand the impact of racism.

Similarly, in her reply to a Parliamentary question on the

targets she had set for expanding the number of childcare places for minority ethnic children and the progress that had been made towards meeting these targets, Beverley Hughes (Minister for Children) wrote:

- that childcare for such children would be covered in the wider duty within the Childcare Bill to secure sufficient places to meet the needs of all parents;
- that the major barriers that such families faced in accessing childcare related to cost and information – both of which issues would be addressed by the Bill by the focus on the needs of lower income families and the information duty respectively; and
- that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires all listed public authorities to promote equality of opportunity and ensure that they take account of race equality in their service delivery, which includes child care.

(Written answer to Paul Goodman MP, the Shadow Minister for Childcare, House of Commons, 23 January 2006)

This answer made no reference to the possible existence of racial discrimination or other aspects of racism (institutional or otherwise), and omitted to point out that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 does not cover the voluntary, independent and private sectors of childcare, which provide the majority of childcare places.

Some of the documents with the most significant implications for racial equality are included in Appendix B; comments on the consultation documents with regard to racial equality are also available. The research commissioned by the Government into the effectiveness of early years provision (including data on ethnicity) is listed in Appendix C.

The positive role of the state - though still opposed in principle by some - has generally been accepted as a necessary adjunct to a society where concern for individuals, including children, is felt to be important. The much vilified 'nanny state' is, perhaps, on the way out; this opens up the

possibility for the state and its citizens of identifying and addressing issues of mutual concern. One such is the well-being of all children, including the abolition of racism and its damaging effects. Another is the sense of unease and sometimes fear that appear to be gathering pace in our society as a result of external and internal factors and events.

RACIAL EQUALITY AND EARLY YEARS SERVICES SINCE 1997

Since the low ebb evident in 1997, the Government has taken an increasingly positive approach to the needs of black and other minority ethnic children and their families in terms of childcare and education. There has been a considerable shift, from minimal acknowledgement of racial inequality to the recognition that this is an issue that cannot be ignored. At last it is beginning to be accepted across the early years services that the ethos of caring for children is inseparable from a concern about equalities.

Government has not, however, paid sufficient attention to the implications of racial disadvantage, discrimination and, in particular, institutional racism in the way the early years services operate in practice. It has not made the necessary links between the way young children learn racial attitudes and behaviour and its own commitment to issues around social cohesion. It has neither taken a lead in addressing the general reluctance to counter racism at large and the vilification of particular ethnic and religious groups and asylum seekers by certain sections of the media, nor taken sufficient and appropriate positive steps towards the creation of a harmonious society.

There is a difference between Government documents written by early years practitioners which are generally based on anti-discriminatory principles, and documents written by civil servants who are less familiar with these principles. Consequently, policies and other related documents have tended to vary; and while sometimes they recognise key issues, they invariably fail to acknowledge the potential impact of racism on those key issues. They are written as if the society in which the early years field exists is in some sense neutral, and they fail to acknowledge the deeply embedded nature of racism and its consequent implications for workers, children and their families from black and other minority ethnic groups. For example, although the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* have implications for racial equality they do not cover all aspects of implementing it. The director of the Early Childhood Unit at the National Children's Bureau identified the need for a sixth outcome which she defined as 'being equal – feeling that you belong' (Owen 2006). Critically, the statutory duty to comply with the requirements of the amended Race Relations Act 1976 (amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) 2000 Act) is not systematically built into such

policies and related documents.

For example, in DfEE/DfES/QCA frameworks/support and curriculum guidance, written by practitioners, the following terms are common: access, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, differences and similarities, celebrating cultural variety, a sense of belonging, respect, learning English as an additional language (EAL), appropriate resources, considering different viewpoints, particular needs, stereotyping, being alert to injustices, equality of opportunity, consultation, anti-discriminatory practice, valuing of the home language, an inclusive ethos; and, to a lesser extent, racial discrimination, disadvantage, equality and the law. Compared with similar documents prior to 1997, this represents a significant shift.

On the other hand, policy documents for local authorities and for organisations set up by Government in support of children as part of the implementation of its childcare strategy (for example, neighbourhood nurseries, children's centres and children's trusts) vary both in their coordination and linkage with other documents and in their acknowledgement of racial equality issues. They are often *ad hoc* in their response to diversity, sometimes making significant omissions (for example, about the need for ethnic monitoring and the requirements of legislation) and failing to include racial discrimination against black and other minority workers as a factor in the subject under discussion (for example, in children's workforce discussions – see Appendix B for details). While issues basic to the principle of childcare for all who need it - such as equality of access for minority ethnic families - feature regularly, the focus tends to fall on the families themselves rather than on the provision available, the welcome the families might receive and the cultural appropriateness of the learning environment or the attitudes of the workers. A clearer understanding of the issues and a training that will help bring about the necessary changes are therefore crucial and vitally important factors in making equality of access a reality.

Although Sure Start commissioned guidance on the Race Relations (Amendment) Act for local authorities and officers responsible for equality issues (Lane 2004), the duty of Sure Start itself to ensure and require effective ethnic monitoring of its own policies, training materials and research is not yet apparent.

Although individuals have made valiant attempts to raise issues of racial equality both inside and outside of Government departments, the lack of a comprehensive, strategic approach means that they usually fall low on the childcare agenda overall.

This low level of priority extends also to consultation and information-sharing on the implementation of the childcare

- European Commission Network on Childcare/EYTARN (1994) *Challenging racism in European childcare provision: report of a seminar held in Leeds UK*.
- Greater London Council/ILEA (late 1980s) *Working Together: good practice guidelines for GLC/ILEA day nurseries*
- Inner London Education Authority (1986) *Nursery Rhyme or Reason: report of the working party on the care of the under-fives*
- OFSTED (undated, approx 1995) *Nursery Education Inspection: Guidance on equality of access and opportunity*
- Pre-school Learning Alliance (1996, revised 2001) *Equal Chances: eliminating discrimination and ensuring equality in pre-school settings*
- Rampton, A. (1981) *West Indian children in our schools*. HMSO
- Save the Children (1993) *Equality, a basis for good practice: a resource for everyone working with young children*
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (1994 + reprints) *The early years: laying the foundations for racial equality*. Trentham Books.
- Swann, Lord. (1985) *Education for All* HMSO

⁶ Sure Start was the name given to the early years department of the DfES. Its name has now been changed to the Sure Start, Extended Schools and Childcare Group, part of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate of the DfES.

strategy and the various elements contributing to it. The proportion of black and other minority ethnic people in the national workforce equates approximately to their representation in the population as a whole, with London having the highest percentage and the West Midlands appearing to be under-represented (Sure Start 2004). They are not, however, usually involved in national consultation procedures, advisory bodies or discussions about the development of policy, and are often under-represented in national and regional conferences. While this is unlikely to be intentional, it is of some concern that the issue has not been formally identified and taken seriously. Reasons behind the inadequate representation of black people in such fora appear not to have been examined nor have steps been taken to rectify the situation. Very recently, a national seminar aimed at giving voice to black and other minority ethnic staff in the early years field was organised by the workers themselves. This is being followed up by the setting up of a national network designed to address the issues raised above and to define a national voice for expressing concerns, ideas and representation at all levels (Voices of black workers 2006).

Although Government documents consistently refer to the need to recruit more black and other minority ethnic workers into the early years workforce generally, the fact that a disproportionate number of those at present employed appear to occupy lower status posts is not mentioned. (In the Childcare and Early Years Workforce Survey 2002/03, managers identified the ethnicity of staff but not their level of employment.) Similarly, there were - and to some extent still are - disproportionately few black and other minority ethnic people undertaking training /education/ leadership courses for work in the early years and in further, in-service or initial teacher education. Guidelines aimed at addressing aspects of this under-representation do not appear to have had any impact on the situation (Lane 1999).

This all indicates an urgent need for rigorous ethnic monitoring (collecting, analysing and evaluating ethnic data), as required by the amended Race Relations Act, to include all levels of the workforce, all forms of training, resources and consultation, and all mechanisms for decision-making and assessment across every aspect of the early years, from Government to the settings themselves. The evaluation should then indicate what action is needed to rectify any discrimination or inequalities revealed.

However, at present, there is a reluctance to establish effective monitoring mechanisms, so processes are seldom in place at any level of Government or in early years settings. It is difficult to understand the possible reasons for this. Lack of familiarity with monitoring, fear of revelations of discrimination and a general inability to understand what

racism is and is not may all contribute to this reluctance. People may be lulled into a hope that there is in fact no discrimination in their present situation, and so there is no need for such data analysis. In addition, in the absence of confident assurances of a genuine commitment to implement race equality principles, many black and other minority ethnic workers and their families remain apprehensive about what the data will be used for.

What is therefore required is training/education and support which will enable people to understand the principles of monitoring, and the way it can identify barriers to racial equality and support progress. It is important that this should be seen as concerned simply with the identification of racial discrimination rather than being a punitive or blame-inducing exercise.

For some time there have been concerns about the low achievement levels of some ethnic groups of children when they enter primary school. Assessment by the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) at the end of the Reception Year of a representative sample of children indicates that Irish Traveller, Roma/Gypsy, Pakistani and Bangladeshi children, as well as children whose first language is not English, tend to underachieve. However, this data should be treated with caution, as some of it is of poor quality. Moreover, as many of the teachers doing the assessment were generally agreed to have been inadequately prepared for the task, some of it may have resulted from observation potentially susceptible to stereotyping (DfES / Sure Start 2005a).

Black African and Black Caribbean children also underachieve, albeit to a lesser extent. However, according to data from a few local authorities under the former baseline assessment (carried out when children entered primary school), African Caribbean children out-performed all other ethnic groups, although their achievement levels declined rapidly through all the subsequent key stages (Gillborn and Mirza 2000), and some local authorities now report that African Caribbean children achieve highly at Key Stage One (KS1). One large urban authority, however, reports that African Caribbean children, having previously outperformed all other ethnic groups at baseline assessment, performed less well than white children when the Foundation Stage curriculum was implemented (Gillborn and Warren 2003). This suggests that the Foundation Stage curriculum -or the way it was implemented - benefited white children more than African Caribbean children.

These apparent discrepancies and contradictions clearly need further analysis. They point to the need for: more accurate data collection; effective training of those doing the assessment through the FSP on children from a variety of cultural backgrounds; an analysis of the potential influ-

ence of the language of the assessor on the results; and an examination of the role of the early years in children's future attainment levels. This has particular implications for the serious and well-documented underachievement of some black and other minority ethnic group pupils in their later schooling, particularly Black African, Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys, and both Irish Traveller and Gypsy/Roma boys and girls (DfES 2004).

The Government has commissioned several research projects on minority ethnic group children, their inclusion in early years provision, and the use of childcare by families from minority ethnic groups (see Appendix D). It is of concern that none of the very specific and key recommendations in the 2003 Inclusion Report (Sure Start 2003) appear to have been implemented. Furthermore, some excellent publications specifically dealing with racial equality issues in schools have been produced by Government departments, the principles of which could be adopted by Sure Start for early years services (the DfES Aiming High series 2003/4, DfES 2005, OFSTED 2001).

Where any research or reports involve children and their families from black and other minority ethnic groups it is always important to ensure that those commissioning and conducting/writing them are familiar with the cultural backgrounds and childrearing practices of the families and have an understanding of the impact of racism on such communities. Furthermore they need to be aware of the potential cultural bias in any measures used in assessment as well as of stereotyping and ethnocentric assumptions in the assessment process itself. There are concerns that some research and reports may have taken insufficient account of these principles. While maintaining objectivity researchers and report writers must be alert to these factors and be open to questions when any apparently negative results are found. In such circumstances any possible valid and alternative explanations of the results should be sought from appropriate members of the relevant communities before coming to final conclusions.

In the voluntary sector:

- Research has looked at childcare through the eyes of black and other minority ethnic parents (Daycare Trust 2003);
- The Early Years Trainers Antiracist Network/Early Years Equality (EYTARN/EYE) has continued to lobby Government departments on addressing racism, as well as producing publications on policy and practice (EYTARN 2001, Baig with Lane 2003, Houston 2004);
- The Early Childhood Unit of the National Children's Bureau has produced a guide to sources of information

on working with young children from minority ethnic groups and a paper on equalities and listening to young children (NCB/Sure Start 2004, Road 2004);

- Save The Children, the Refugee Council and Salusbury World have published guides/support on working with young refugee/asylum-seeking children (RC/STC 2001, STC/Salusbury World 2004).
- Race Equality Teaching (formerly Multicultural Teaching) has published a specific edition on the early years (RET 2006).

Other indicators of an increasing national recognition of the importance of addressing equality issues in general, and racial equality issues in particular, include:

- A recent significant increase in the number of articles about racial equality issues in all national early years journals;
- The setting up of a few early years consultancies who are working on racial equality issues;
- The fact that most national early years organisations include racial equality in their remit (to varying extents);
- The DfES/Sure Start funding of a pilot training programme, through EYE, for local authorities in the North West and West Midlands, an MA leadership/management module on equalities in Birmingham, and two training packages, *Equality Matters and Inclusion Matters*, through the National Children's Bureau;
- The very considerable success of Persona Doll Training in helping children throughout the country to address racial prejudice and discrimination, to empathise with people who are different from themselves, and to develop an understanding of fairness and unfairness and the confidence to be able to stand up for themselves and others when faced with discrimination and prejudice;
- A huge increase in the availability of high-quality resources for children, such as books (including dual language), jigsaws, dolls (with a range of skin colours, physical features, hair textures), posters, play people, range of skin tones in paints/crayons/paper, etc;
- Increased availability of books, resources, videos, etc, on equality issues for adult training/education;
- Standard 9 (Equal Opportunities) of the National Standards and its accompanying guidance and the National Occupational Standards address equality issues;
- All national initial training/education - teacher education (TDA), FE courses (CACHE, Edexcel, BTec, City and Guilds etc.), foundation degrees, early childhood studies degrees - address equality issues, although in various depths

- and with varying degrees of effectiveness;
- A few local authority early years departments have set up on-going training courses on equality/in-service training/education on racial equality which are undertaken by voluntary/independent organisations or by the local authority itself, although there has been no assessment of their effectiveness. A very small number of groups and individuals have devised training/education schemes delivered in progressive stages which address all inequalities, a measure which is more likely to have a constructive impact;
 - The regulation/inspections by OFSTED of early years settings, assessing them in accordance with a detailed inspection framework (maintained sector) and the Equal Opportunities Standard of the National Standards (non-maintained sector). This includes assessment of cultural development and equality of opportunity and the promotion of anti-discriminatory practice, with detailed supportive guidance. OFSTED has grouped the National Standards and criteria for inspecting care and nursery education under four of the ECM outcomes for children. Standard 9 is grouped under the fourth – ‘making a positive contribution’ (OFSTED 2005). It is not clear how the other outcomes will be assessed in terms of racial equality;
 - Practice guidance is now available for Sure Start children’s centres, published at the same time as the early report of the National Evaluation of Sure Start (Sure Start 2005b). Compared with previous Government publications it seems to be effective, sensitive and comprehensive, addressing key issues such as the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. This represents a significant and welcome change.

However, there is still:

- No independent assessment of the effectiveness of training/education either at initial or in-service levels;
- No independent assessment of the competence of trainers to train/educate on equality issues;
- No independent assessment of the competence of inspectors to inspect for equality, either in the maintained or the non-maintained sectors;
- No accreditation scheme for training/education;
- No national guidance or support for Equality Coordinators in settings (ECOs) as to how to develop practice for equality.
- No requirement or recommendation for local authorities to appoint Area Equality Coordinators to support, train/educate and advise ECOs in the same way as for Area SENCOs.

Consequently, it is difficult to know whether the work that is currently being done towards racial equality is generally effective. A recent review of the methods of tackling the roots of racism concludes, depressingly, that most interventions are unsuccessful, and that most measures are not evaluated in terms of their ability to address the causes of racism (Bhavnani, Mirza and Meeto 2005).

In the present climate, with the pressure of work programmes, it is perhaps to be expected that, while positive steps have been taken towards including minority ethnic children and their families on this agenda, the reality of racism and its impact on children and their families from all ethnic backgrounds - let alone the implications of racism for the wider society - have not yet been taken seriously into account by Government. For example, advisory/consultative groups on equality set up by committed individuals in both the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and Sure Start came to be viewed negatively by both organisations and were therefore closed. There has been no concerted effort on the part of Government to recognise and address the way that racist attitudes and behaviour are invariably handed down through generations – a fact which extends the task of addressing racism far beyond the children themselves. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. Without intervention, racism will not disappear - it can only fester, as it has done for hundreds of years.

The importance of the role of all those involved with young children in countering the development of racial prejudice and thus taking forward the task of society being more at ease with itself has yet to be recognised by Government. Government does not yet appear to have made the link between community cohesion and the need to work with young children in inculcating positive attitudes and behaviour on diversity issues. Perhaps there is a fear that the idea that early years settings could become advocates for their communities could lead to media accusations about ‘the nanny state’ rather than providing a real opportunity for the promotion of community cohesion.

Given the urgency in the present social and political situation (with the rise of Islamophobia, the hostility shown towards refugees, asylum-seekers and other migrants, and racist attacks) of encouraging community cohesion in Britain, other Government departments and interested organisations may exert pressure to give this a higher priority on the childcare/education agenda. However, the Home Office document on racial equality and community cohesion, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* (2005), for example, refers to the early years but, like all the other documents identified above, only in terms of equality of access for minority ethnic groups.

An opportunity for making the link between the early years, when children learn racial attitudes and behaviour, and community cohesion is, yet again, being missed. It is this vital missing link that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

COMMENTS ON THE PRESENT SITUATION

The above sections - while clearly showing that some progress has been made in raising the awareness of some of the difficulties facing minority ethnic children and their families - nevertheless indicate critical gaps in the steps being taken to address racial discrimination, its institutional aspects and the implications for all young children. There is not yet a common understanding in Government and elsewhere of the relationship between the early age that children learn racial attitudes and behaviour and their possible subsequent development along the path of bias, hostility, hatred and violence as they grow towards adulthood. Until this causal connection is countered, the path towards disruptive, racially motivated behaviour and alienation within local communities will remain potentially open. Ultimate responsibility for addressing this problem comprehensively lies with the relevant Government departments and their Ministers. This would include responsibility for ensuring that appropriate support and funding are available, so that early years practitioners (the workers) clearly understand the problems and

can implement agreed solutions.

While a few settings may indeed be providing an effective anti-racist experience for children and their families, it is rare that they would see themselves as belonging actively to the local community or as advocates for it. Nor are they likely to have clear awareness of their potential role in breaking down barriers to cohesion, both in their local community and in society as a whole.

Local authorities/partnerships vary enormously both in their commitment to and in their practice for racial equality, with only a few having effectively embarked on the path towards equality and inclusion. Government departments have yet to be given the clear authority by Ministers to pursue anti-racism, and Ministers themselves do not yet appear to have a clear understanding of the urgent need to tackle racism head on - not in a strident, confrontational manner which would only feed the flames of media sensationalism, but realistically and responsibly, devising a strategy that incorporates all levels of Government and early years practice. By including all equality issues, this strategy would defuse the potential arguments of those who classify everything connected with anti-racism as ‘politically correct’. Such a strategy, including a holistic analysis of the issues raised above, must be an essential prerequisite for the Government’s agenda of respect, community cohesion and strengthening society.

Some Of The Barriers To Racial Equality And Community Cohesion

If the children, family members and workers involved in early years services and provision are to work together towards equally valuing and respecting each other, and so towards a harmonious society, then clear objectives need to be identified, together with the plans of action necessary to achieve them.

It is well known, however, that such objectives are never achieved without a struggle. Barriers and obstacles - some tangible, some less so - are likely to interfere with progress, not just at the local authority/early years services and provision level but also at Government departmental and ministerial levels. Although local authorities/early years services and settings act independently, these various levels impact on each other in practice. The higher the level, the greater is the potential for determining the actions of those lower down, through legislation and Government requirements. While it is clear that Government requirements alone are insufficient to bring about the commitment and practical implementation required, by focusing on particular objectives and providing support and training/education for a better understanding of what is needed and why, they can be used to begin the process towards change.

But in order to ensure that actions for positive change are as effective as possible, it is important to identify the possible barriers and consider how to overcome them. Inevitably, whatever the reality, a long list of barriers may in itself appear daunting, as indeed may some of the particular barriers identified and the associated priority issues for action. However, even though it may not be realistic to require that the necessary changes should be made within a short timescale, the following does provide a framework for action.

So far, though, there has been a notable lack at all levels of an active commitment - a political will - to tackle racism in its widest sense. Despite the actions of some individuals, institutional resistance and the concomitant reluctance to give the issue priority continues to frustrate progress. We

are not, however, concerned here with attributing blame for whatever has or has not happened in the past. Our concern is that the actions required for progress should be pursued from here on.

General barriers which may be operating *at all levels* include:

- A lack of commitment to and understanding of the statutory duties under the amended Race Relations Act;
- A real fear of tackling racism and the backlash that might ensue;
- A fundamental misunderstanding of what racism is, particularly institutional racism;
- A failure to know and understand how racial attitudes and behaviour are formed and perpetuated;
- A lack of knowledge about the fact that racial attitudes are formed from an early age.
- A failure to recognise the critical importance of specific planning for racial equality in the early years and to ensure that the appropriate organisational framework is put in place;
- A failure to ensure an effective ethnic monitoring mechanism in all aspects of the early years at all levels for workers, children and their families;
- A failure to ensure that families and communities of all ethnic backgrounds are equally consulted about issues affecting their lives;
- A failure to understand that some actions that are believed to be positive are, in effect, tokenistic;
- A failure to understand that racism, and particularly its institutional aspects, can only be tackled effectively by devising a strategic, comprehensive approach which will involve all stakeholders at all levels, rather than *ad hoc* responses which are invariably doomed to failure;
- A reluctance to listen to the voices of black and other minority ethnic people on their experiences of racism;
- A failure to evaluate the effectiveness of

training/education in racial equality;

- An inadequate understanding of the way racial disadvantage and poverty reinforce and justify racist attitudes and behaviour in the absence of a countervailing perception of black and other minority ethnic people in positive positions of power and authority;
- A failure to ensure that both the maintained and the non-maintained early years sectors are required to address racism equally;
- A refusal to consider change, despite being well-informed about racial equality issues (such an attitude can sometimes mask what is essentially racial prejudice);
- An inability to see the links between the need for community cohesion and the potential role of early years settings in breaking down barriers and becoming advocates for their local communities;
- A lack of recognition of the potential for fully involving family members, as well as early years workers and children themselves, in actively pursuing ways of breaking down barriers between people and focusing on the shared objective of a harmonious society where everyone feels able to participate and belong;
- A lack of understanding of the fact that all forms of inequality, discrimination and oppression are interlinked and of the consequent need to adopt an integrated approach to counter them effectively.

Specific barriers include:

AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL

- A failure to recognise the need to build the requirements of the amended Race Relations Act into all legislation and policy concerning children;
- An apprehension about the implications of addressing institutional racism seriously, as opposed to accepting the need to deal with overt discrimination;
- A failure to ensure the entitlement of all children to racial equality and the means to implement it, in laws, policies and procedures, as has been prescribed for children with special needs;
- A fear of the possible negative results - including ethnic monitoring - if the amended Race Relations Act is enforced;
- A fear of a media backlash;
- A fear of dealing with existing media distortion of issues around racism;
- A failure to see the causal links between the importance of the early years in children's attitude/behaviour formation and:

- Disadvantage;
- Poverty;
- Lack of educational opportunity;
- The continual reinforcement of negative attitudes towards refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants;
- Concepts of Britishness;
- A society not at ease with itself; and the consequent need to take a holistic, strategic approach to address this;
- A failure to provide appropriate, specific funding to ensure the implementation of racial equality;
- A failure to ensure that both maintained and non-maintained sectors are treated equally in the requirements made on them to counter racism;
- A failure seriously to address or provide effective solutions for the causes of unrest in society, including poverty and disadvantage;
- A failure to ensure that all OFSTED inspectors have sufficient understanding, knowledge and skills to inspect for racial equality and effective equality policies.

AT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL

- Insufficient time allocated to the effective consideration of issues of racial equality or its prioritisation;
- Poor knowledge of what it means to implement the amended Race Relations Act both in practice and in documentation;
- Insufficient focus on the critical importance of ensuring that racial equality issues are fully addressed in the way local authorities/Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) organise their early years services and appoint their staff;
- A failure to require that coherent ethnic monitoring mechanisms are implemented across the non-statutory early years sector as they are in the statutory sector;
- A failure to take positive action across Government departments on the recommendations of independent analyses to address the poverty and disadvantage which may lead to social unrest;
- A lack of coordination among those writing policy documents and guidance on racial equality, resulting in the lack of a unified approach and some significant omissions;
- A failure to recognise and ensure that only those who are knowledgeable about racial equality issues are involved in relevant research or advisory groups;
- A lack of awareness of the critical importance of ensuring that any research or reports involving children and their families from black and other minority

ethnic groups is conducted/written by people who are familiar with the cultural backgrounds and childrearing practices of the families and have an understanding of the impact of racism on such communities. They must be aware of the potential cultural bias in any assessment measures and of stereotyping and ethnocentric assumptions in the assessment process itself. They must be open to questioning any apparently negative results and seeking alternative explanations from appropriate members of the relevant communities before coming to final conclusions.

- A failure to acknowledge that appointing knowledgeable people to advisory groups is not the same as providing such people with decision-making powers;
- A failure to ensure that those commissioned to produce training materials, guidance and policy documents have a real understanding of the implications for racial equality on the work undertaken;
- A failure to monitor the lasting effectiveness of racial equality training/education in early years services or to identify effective trainers;
- A failure to provide detailed guidance on building the implications of the amended Race Relations Act into new services, such as neighbourhood nurseries and children's centres;
- A failure to ensure that the non-maintained sector is subject to the same requirements to address racism as is the maintained sector;
- A failure to ensure that ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) funding or its equivalent is available to the non-maintained sector as well as to the maintained sector;
- A failure to ensure that the practical implications of the amended Race Relations Act are built into the initial commissioning of research;
- A reluctance to acknowledge and address the damaging consequences of racist attitudes and behaviour of some family members, believing such issues to be outside their particular remit, resulting in an exclusive focus on children and workers to the detriment of the significance of family members on children's lives. (Such attitudes can only impede the effective development of policies for equality and fail to support local authorities and settings in addressing the issues);
- A failure to devise and promote effective strategies for practitioners in early years settings for dealing with racist incidents and name-calling;
- A failure to take account of specific recommendations for racial equality made in research reports

they have themselves commissioned;

- An ignorance or failure to notice the lack of black and other minority ethnic representation on consultation/advisory groups, in responses to consultative documents and at national and regional conferences, and of consequently doing nothing to rectify the situation;
- A failure to provide local authorities and settings with a rationale for and practical information on the way they, as members of their local communities, might take a positive role in the general fostering of community cohesion;
- A lack of insight into the importance of setting the agenda across all early years services and settings for the work with young children and their families which will facilitate the creation of a harmonious society;
- A failure to take adequate means to assist settings sited in areas of deprivation (where many black, asylum-seeking and other migrant families often live) and racist activity, where parents cannot afford the fees to attend and are afraid to leave home because of their experiences of harassment and its potential.

AT LOCAL AUTHORITY/EARLY YEARS SERVICES LEVEL

- A failure to see racial equality issues as important, especially in largely white suburban and rural areas;
- Insufficient consideration of the importance of ensuring that racial equality is fully addressed in the way the early years services are organised and in staff appointments;
- A failure to devise an equality policy with an effective monitoring mechanism and to ensure that settings do likewise, including those in the non-statutory sector;
- A failure to identify and address poverty, disadvantage and racism as potential causes for social unrest and to allocate appropriate funds;
- Many workers not being aware of what they don't know - an assumption that any issues that need to be addressed are in fact being so;
- A failure to address the fact that some settings in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors do little to counter racism;
- A failure to acknowledge that very few have had effective training/education in racism/racial equality issues and are generally inexperienced in tackling the issues;
- The enormous variation that exists among authorities as to levels of awareness of the issues;
- Infrequent acknowledgement, in training/education programmes and elsewhere, of the need for family members to be as involved as possible

in all work with children on equality issues;

- A failure to address the disparity between the positive work being carried out with children in settings on racial equality and conflicting messages/information possibly being propagated by family members;
- A failure to devise mechanisms to support settings in addressing the racist attitudes and behaviour of some family members, despite recognition of their damaging effects;
- A lack of recognition and understanding of their potential role in encouraging settings to view themselves as members of and advocates for their local communities;
- A failure to provide practical information and support for settings on working with young children and their families towards the goal of a harmonious society and encouraging an open-minded and non-judgemental attitude towards the differences that exist between people;
- A failure to ensure that an ECO is appointed and trained for every setting, as required by Sure Start guidance to EYDCPs in 2002;
- A failure to recognise the critical importance of appointing an Area ECO to coordinate, support and advise ECOs in settings (local authorities until recently were only required by Sure Start to appoint Area Special Educational Needs Coordinators [SENCOs], not Area ECOs);
- A failure to ensure that settings develop strategies to deal effectively with racist incidents and name-calling and are supported in doing so.

AT EARLY YEARS SETTINGS/PROVISION LEVEL

- A reluctance to identify equality as a priority, especially in terms of training/education;
- A lack of training/education, especially in the private sector;
- A scarcity of effective trainers;
- Low level of qualifications/experience in general;
- Low pay, low status, significant turnover of workers;
- A lack of funding for training/education, as well as of cover to provide for the consequent absences;
- A lack of understanding of the purpose of training/education and how to make best use of it, often due to poor educational skills and/or lack of motivation;
- The resistance of some workers and family members, especially in largely white areas, to racial equality issues;
- A reluctance to devise policies for equality and appropriate ethnic monitoring systems;
- A fear that the pursuit of anti-racist work with children

will provoke a racist backlash (this is even true of some who have done training on the use of Persona Dolls);

- An apprehension about what terminology to use to describe people: a fear of 'getting it wrong' and 'being accused of being racist', thus inhibiting free discussion;
- A reluctance to address racism for fear of potential consequences, despite a recognition of the negative impact of racist attitudes and behaviour on children and adults (this may even result in a refusal to consider potential courses of action);
- A lack of understanding about what constitutes a racist incident or how to deal with it;
- A general apprehension about relating to people from a cultural background different to their own, often for fear of 'getting it wrong', rejection or intruding into someone else's personal space, resulting in a reluctance to engage in the common courtesies of life;
- A failure to plan specific action with families to ensure that equality work with children is, so far as possible, reflected at home;
- A lack of guidance and support for ECOs, such that they often feel unable to undertake their tasks, become stressed, and fear uncovering a hornets' nest if they raise controversial issues;
- An assumption that a black or minority ethnic worker is the 'racial equalities person', regardless of their experience and/or knowledge;
- A low level of general political awareness about the divisive effects of racism, and little confidence as to how to deal with it in positive ways, especially with family members;
- A failure to see their particular setting as an integral part of the local community, acting as its representative and advocate and thus representing them more effectively in their practice;
- An inability to fully appreciate how work with young children and their families at this level could extend their horizons to the wider world, encouraging an attitude of open-mindedness and minimising social disruption;
- A failure to recognise the fact that children absorb their attitudes to differences between people from each other, often thus perpetuating and reinforcing prejudices.
- A lack of recognition that establishing an ethos of trust among workers within a no-blame culture is basic to addressing racism effectively.

A consideration of the potential barriers to racial equality at all these levels provides an overall perspective on some

of the commonalities and differences, and thus points to the actions necessary to achieve racial equality. If we are to begin to break down the cyclical perpetuation of racism and all its consequences for children and for the future stability of our society, the importance of the role of the early years

needs to be fully recognised. The following section identifies those actions that might be taken at all levels of the organisation of the early years – from ministerial, through national and local government, to early years settings themselves – to remove the barriers.

Priority Issues For Action

Priority must be given to actions that will ensure:

- Racial equality in the early years; and
- An understanding of the importance of the role of workers, children and their families in establishing a harmonious society.

The effective addressing of racism should be seen as a continuing process rather than as a 'one off' activity. Nor should it be seen as a choice - not only because racism is morally wrong or because every child has a right to equality, but because its damaging effects are encouraging major social disruption, both in the UK and throughout the world.

But in order to begin to address it effectively, racism needs to be properly understood. If racism and its implications are shrouded in fear and ignorance, then there is likely to be an avoidance of directly tackling them. Where people feel guilty about racism or try to lay the blame on others, such attitudes tend to divert attention from properly addressing the issues. Essentially, where people or institutions get hung up about racism, it is unlikely that anything much will be achieved. Racism is a complex, multi-faceted issue and, particularly because of its historical and economic origins, it may appear impossible to dismantle. Thus a calm, clear analysis of the field is essential. While the overcoming of racism may seem a daunting task, every positive action taken towards addressing it is a step towards removing it entirely. But because effective removal can only be the result of a long-term process, certain actions must be given priority within an overall strategy.

In order to effectively implement a strategy for racial equality in the early years which will involve and include workers, children and their families in addressing potential tensions in our society, action needs to be taken at all levels, from ministerial to the settings themselves. It is important to recognise, moreover, that actions taken now may not be shown to be effective for a generation, until the children themselves become parents.

To break down the barriers listed in the section above requires sustained, effective action in all relevant policies, practices and procedures within a comprehensive strategy, from ministerial level downwards and across all aspects of the early years.

Priority action *at all levels* should include:

- Ensuring an understanding of what racism is and what it is not;
- Ensuring an understanding of the way racial attitudes are formed and perpetuated;
- Ensuring an understanding of how, in the absence of a countervailing perception of black and other minority ethnic people in positive positions of power and authority, racial disadvantage and poverty serve to reinforce and 'justify' racist attitudes and behaviour;
- The development of a strategic, comprehensive approach to tackling racism and its institutional aspects, involving all stakeholders at all levels;
- Ensuring that racial equality issues are addressed in the organisation of early years services and in all worker appointments;
- Ensuring that an effective ethnic monitoring mechanism is in place for the early years, which can assess the impact of actions and policies on black and other minority ethnic group workers, children and families;
- Ensuring that families and communities from all ethnic backgrounds are equally consulted about issues that affect their lives;
- The provision of opportunities to listen to the voices of black and other minority ethnic people on their experiences of racism;
- A holistic approach to addressing the causal links between the importance of the early years and:
 - Disadvantage;
 - Poverty;
 - Lack of educational opportunity;
 - The continual reinforcement of negative attitudes towards refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants;
 - Concepts of Britishness;

- A society not at ease with itself.
- A recognition of the importance of working with young children to develop positive attitudes and behaviour towards those who are different from themselves, and to unlearn negative attitudes and behaviour;
- A recognition that work with children on racial equality issues must involve family members, such that the messages received by children from home and from early years settings are consistent;
- A recognition that action aimed at addressing racism is most effective when there is an integrated approach to all inequalities;
- Ensuring an understanding of the principles of the amended Race Relations Act;
- Ensuring that these principles are applied in the non-maintained sector as well as in the maintained sector;
- Ensuring that early years workers, children and families understand and accept that, together, they play a potentially important role in their local communities in promoting cohesion and in bringing about a harmonious society.

Specific actions should include:

AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL

- Engaging the political will to take action to address racism and its institutional aspects;
- Ensuring that action is taken to remove the grounds for the existence and flourishing of racist activity – in other words, addressing the disadvantages experienced by many people, both black and white, in their day-to-day lives: poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, low pay and limited educational opportunities;
- Ensuring that the requirements of the amended Race Relations Act are built into all legislation concerning children;
- Ensuring that the organisation of the early years includes a mechanism for the provision of racial equality measures together with an ethnic monitoring mechanism;
- Ensuring the entitlement of all children to racial equality and the means to implement it, in laws, policies and procedures, as has been prescribed for children with special needs;
- Ensuring that all government departmental documents, training/education materials and guidance involving children have a coherent and comprehensive approach to equality;
- Ensuring that legislation, policy and guidance about community cohesion across all relevant government departments takes account of the

- importance of working with young children and their families as part of any strategy to promote it;
- Taking action against the media's demonisation of Muslims, Islam itself, and refugees/asylum seekers and other migrants and against its tendency to belittle work done with young children to counter racism;
 - Provision of the funding necessary for the implementation of the racial equality agenda;
 - Taking action to ensure that local authority councillors understand and support the need for specific work on racial equality in the early years.

AT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL:

- Ensuring that the requirements of the amended Race Relations Act to monitor any impact on black and other minority ethnic groups are built into all relevant documents, guidance, policies, training/education materials, research, standards, inspection frameworks - for example, *Every Child Matters*, as well as all documents implementing it and documents on special needs;
- Ensuring the monitoring by ethnicity of all aspects of departmental policies, practices and procedures;
- Building in effective consultation procedures for families and communities from all ethnic backgrounds on issues affecting their lives;
- Addressing the potential causes of social unrest, by taking positive action to remove poverty, disadvantage and racism within communities, and providing guidance and support for local authorities to follow suit;
- Providing detailed guidance in relation to the amended Race Relations Act for the setting up of new services/projects (for example, children's centres) and their implications for ECOs and monitoring processes (see paper by Early Years Equality submitted to DfES/Sure Start, October 2004);
- Acknowledging the facts of racism and ensuring a coordinated approach on issues of racial equality in the creation of all relevant documents, guidance, policies, training/education materials, advice, research reports, national occupational standards, national standards, support frameworks and curriculum materials and inspection frameworks (for example, *The Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce*);
- Ensuring that any research on children generally, or on equality issues specifically, is conducted by those who have the understanding, knowledge and skills necessary to take account of inequalities, and that any advisory group for such research should include members with these qualities;

- Ensuring that any research or reports involving children and their families from black and other minority ethnic groups is conducted/written by people who are familiar with the cultural backgrounds and childrearing practices of the families and have an understanding of the impact of racism on such communities. They must be aware of the potential cultural bias in any assessment measures and of stereotyping and ethnocentric assumptions in the assessment process itself. They must be open to questioning any apparently negative results and seeking alternative explanations from appropriate members of the relevant communities before coming to final conclusions.
- Ensuring that all advisory, support and consultative groups reflect, as far as is possible, the ethnic diversity of our society (for example, in consultation on the Early Years Foundation Stage);
- Welcoming the establishment of the 'Voices of black workers group' and encouraging its contributions to discussions in the early years field, its recommendations on policies and practice and its representation on decision-making bodies;
- Ensuring that all early years services have effective equalities policies, including a policy statement, an implementation programme and a monitoring mechanism;
- Ensuring that the impact of local authority equality policies is properly monitored.

Specifically in the field of training at Government departmental level:

- Prioritising the funding and establishment of a core of effective equality trainers and, if necessary, providing training for them, in order to train other trainers comprehensively on equality issues, thus building up a nationwide group of effective trainers on equality issues;
- Setting up mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of training/education on racial equality;
- Surveying and evaluating the equality components of all existing training/education in further, higher and in-service courses at all levels (in liaison with the Teaching and Development Agency for Schools [TDA], the National College of School Leadership, the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education [CACHE], other awarding bodies and other forms of in-service courses – local authority, voluntary organisations and independent groups), and recommending appropriate and effective modules;
- Ensuring that training is provided to

implement these modules;

- Ensuring that effective training/education on the amended Race Relations Act and anti-discriminatory policies and procedures is provided for all those who work with or for children (including civil servants), those on all initial and induction courses, inspectors, Area ECOs, leaders/managers of settings (including National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership - NPQICL), and the governors/management committees of settings;
- Ensuring that training/education is provided for all those responsible for equality issues in Government departments involving children;
- Ensuring that the training of primary school head teachers (in National Professional Qualification for Headship) includes an understanding of the specific issues relating to the early years and the Early Years Foundation Stage, and ensuring equality in the appointment, training/education and support of ECOs for Foundation Stage classes in schools;
- Considering how local authorities can be trained to support settings in the principle of being active members of and advocates for their communities, promoting community cohesion, and disseminating practical information to that end.

Specifically within Sure Start, Extended Schools and Childcare Group:

- Taking account of racial disadvantage and discrimination in all aspects and at every level (including leadership and management) of workforce development, recruitment and training/education, initial and in-service (for example, in the children's workforce strategy);
- Monitoring implementation of equality policies, practices and procedures in local authorities;
- Undertaking a mapping exercise to identify availability of resources, training/education materials, training courses, trainers and effective practices on racial equality, their location and their efficacy, and thus identifying the gaps that need to be filled for a comprehensive and effective approach to implementing racial equality across all early years services and settings (as exemplified by members of the Sure Start Equality and Diversity Group in 2003);
- Requiring every local authority/EYDCP to appoint Area ECOs to advise, support and organise training/education for ECOs in early years settings, in the same way as they have been required to appoint Area SENCOs;

- Requiring all local authorities to ensure that every setting appoints and trains an ECO, as required in DfES guidance to EYDCPs in 2002;
- Requiring all local authorities to provide EMAG support or its equivalent to maintained and non-maintained sectors alike;
- Ensuring that effective equality policies are integrated into all forms of early years provision for children;
- Requiring that early years settings in the non-maintained sector address racism in the same way as is required in the maintained sector;
- Publishing guidance for local authorities and settings on how to collect, monitor, analyse and evaluate ethnic data appropriate to all relevant policies, practices and procedures;
- Identifying the importance of policies on racist incidents, name-calling and harassment, and devising models of good practice for their implementation;
- Taking serious account of and implementing the recommendations made in *Sure Start's Inclusion Pilot Projects Summary Report* (2003);
- Ensuring access to support for children in the non-maintained sector learning EAL (English as an Additional Language) in the same way as in the maintained sector through the ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG); or, if this grant is removed, making the case for funding for EAL support in both sectors;
- Developing guidance for local authorities on the importance of taking institutional racism seriously and ensuring a strategic, comprehensive approach towards the elimination of racism and the implementation of racial equality, involving all stakeholders at all levels;
- Providing regular opportunities for the voices of black and other minority ethnic people subjected to racism to be heard and encouraging local authorities and settings to do likewise;
- Developing guidance and support for local authorities and settings in dealing with the racist attitudes and behaviour of family members;
- Developing guidance for local authorities on elaborating on the *Every Child Matters* outcome of 'making a positive contribution' and community and social involvement and their practical implications for children;
- Seeking out and publicising examples of effective practice where settings have promoted the cause of community cohesion as active members and advocates of their local communities;
- Drafting a guide for local authorities and settings

which will lay down the rationale for settings viewing themselves as active members and advocates of their local communities in promoting community cohesion, incorporating recommended practical measures.

AT LOCAL AUTHORITY/EARLY YEARS SERVICES LEVEL:

- Encouraging a positive commitment to taking institutional racism seriously;
- Developing a comprehensive strategy to eliminate racism and promote racial equality across the authority or setting, involving all stakeholders at all levels;
- Ensuring that settings in the non-maintained sector address racism in the same way as is required of those in the maintained sector and monitoring their performance;
- Working with all local communities in addressing poverty, disadvantage and racism with a view to removing potential causes of unrest;
- Ensuring that the early years service and the settings for which it is responsible have in place equality policies whose implementation is continually monitored;
- Establishing the comprehensive databases necessary for the monitoring of the implementation of the service's equality policy, as well as those of the settings;
- Ensuring that families and communities from all ethnic backgrounds are consulted equally about issues affecting their lives;
- Providing guidance for settings on the importance of appointing managers who have the skills, knowledge and understanding to implement equality measures, and providing training and support for those already committed to doing so;
- Ensuring that racial equality principles are addressed in the procurement of all training/education in the early years;
- Providing effective training/education for settings that will address all inequalities, incorporating an integrated approach on legislation, anti-discriminatory practice, terminology, using Persona Dolls, policy-making (including on name-calling) and implementing change in settings;
- Providing support for settings on how they might work with children in 'making a positive contribution' and community and social involvement (the fourth outcome of *Every Child Matters*);
- Taking action to support families in areas of deprivation and racist activity who live in fear of harassment and establishing settings in such areas;
- Supporting the early years service and settings

- in breaking down racist and other negative attitudes and behaviour in local communities, encouraging in children, their families and workers an open-mindedness to differences and taking positive action to engage the various local communities in communicating with and befriending one another and sharing experiences;
- Encouraging and supporting the use of Persona Dolls to help address children's negative attitudes to differences between people and consequent negative behaviour, and encouraging children to consider issues of social justice, to establish a vision of a better society and to work towards achieving it;
- Appointing an Area ECO to support, advise and train ECOs in settings, with the support of a knowledgeable advisory group;
- Ensuring that every setting (including schools) appoints and trains an ECO as required by the DfES guidance of 2002;
- Ensuring that every setting has in place a policy and effective procedures for dealing with racist incidents, harassment and name-calling, and that workers are familiar with their practical implementation;
- Developing guidance and support for settings in addressing racist attitudes and behaviour of families;
- Providing a forum for the voicing by black and other minority ethnic people of their experiences of racism;
- Considering, in consultation with black and other minority ethnic workers, the possibility of setting up a black workers group that can share ideas and make recommendations for the implementation of equality policies;
- Setting up support groups for workers interested in sharing ideas, experiences and information in their equality work;
- Identifying particular needs relating to EAL, and providing information on parental and staff support for encouraging home languages while learning English and related issues;
- Understanding and supporting the principle of an integral approach to all inequalities, while accepting the potential need for specific support/training on particular aspects of any inequality;
- Ensuring the promotion of community cohesion with practical advice by encouraging settings to view themselves as active members and advocates of their local communities.

AT EARLY YEARS SETTINGS/PROVISION LEVEL

- Transforming settings into havens of security,

- comfort, peace, refuge, support and empathy for all – in other words, as microcosms of an ideal world;
- Ensuring that selection criteria for the appointment of managers/heads/leaders reflect equality issues and include as an essential requirement commitment to supporting equality in practice;
- Where a manager/head/leader is already in post, ensuring the provision of training in equality issues as a priority;
- Ensuring that an effective equality policy is in place and that its implementation is monitored;
- Analysing and evaluating monitoring data on levels of achievement;
- Ensuring that, even where a setting is not covered by the statutory requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act to address racism, it nevertheless complies with the principles of the Act;
- Ensuring that there is in place an effective policy and procedures for dealing with racist incidents, name-calling and harassment, and that workers understand the implications and are trained in implementation;
- Encouraging and supporting children in the recognition of racist incidents and name-calling, and giving them the confidence to support each other so all know that the wronged child is not alone;
- Including in equality policies responsibility for actively promoting community cohesion, so addressing the causes of much social unease;
- Providing workers with specific opportunities to examine their own attitudes within an environment of no-blame, trust and respect;
- Providing opportunities to discuss issues of concern, for example, the terminology by which people are described;
- Identifying the training needs of workers required for implementation of the policy;
- Encouraging discussion about the way racism operates, making it clear that there is far more to countering racism than simply celebrating the festivals of other cultures;
- Establishing a priority list for the addressing of equality issues, in which critical importance is balanced against the ease of attainment;
- Developing practical and sensitive guidance, training/education and support for addressing racist attitudes and behaviour of family members;
- Observing children on a regular basis to identify prejudiced attitudes and behaviour (such as name-calling) and to establish whether such incidents affect or influence other children, and if so, how;
- Ensuring that equality issues feature on the

- agenda of every workers' and family meeting;
- Appointing an ECO who is committed to implementing equality and ensuring that she/he is supported by management and trained appropriately;
- Planning training courses in progressive stages on equality or taking advantage of local authority courses, where these are effective;
- Encouraging staff to join equalities support groups;
- Developing children's concepts of racial prejudice and discrimination appropriate to their ages and encouraging empathy with people different from themselves on a regular basis (for example, by use of Persona Dolls);
- Using Persona Dolls to encourage children to consider issues of social justice and to develop a vision of a better society;
- Involving families in every aspect of working for equality such that children, their families and workers can together 'own' the equality policy both in principle and in practice;
- Taking specific action to break down racial hierarchies of language, skin colour/physical features, culture, ethnicity, religion/belief;
- Ensuring that all are welcomed to the setting equally and encouraged to participate and belong;
- Ensuring that families and communities of all ethnic backgrounds are equally consulted about the practices and procedures of the setting;
- Engendering a sense of the setting as an active member/advocate of the local community, and an ethos through which all stakeholders feel personally responsible for building friendships and promoting community cohesion;
- Working with children to encourage them to 'make a positive contribution' by actively learning about their community as well as the wider multicultural society;
- Encouraging the development of mediation skills, so as to establish positive relationships both inside and outside the setting and to discourage apprehensions and anxieties about people who are different;
- Considering strategies/ideas to trigger the interest of those not at present interested in equality issues;
- Encouraging open-mindedness about ideas, people and places, the acceptance of differences and the breaking down of barriers between people;
- Encouraging children to develop models of caring relationships from which others can learn;
- Helping children to learn about and understand different body languages;
- Providing a forum for the voices of black and other minority ethnic people regarding their experience of racism;
- Identifying specific activities which workers, families and children can enjoy together – meals/picnics, discussions, visits to other places, trips to shops specialising in items from particular cultural communities;
- Taking specific actions on a regular basis in majority white, rural and suburban areas to devise ways of enabling children to learn positive attitudes and behaviour towards those who are different from themselves and to break down notions of racial superiority.

The implementation of these recommendations over a period of time should go a long way towards breaking down the barriers to racial equality.

The Benefits Of Promoting Racial Equality And Community Cohesion In The Early Years

Notwithstanding the fact that the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality are worthwhile objectives in their own right, there are real benefits to be gained for all children - as well as for society as a whole - from everyone involved in the early years taking specific actions, as individuals and collectively, to promote racial equality and community cohesion.

THE BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN INCLUDE:

- Instilling confidence in themselves and their abilities, thus empowering them;
- The ability to take personal responsibility for challenging prejudice and discrimination wherever it is seen;
- The development of open-mindedness and an intellectual curiosity which will encourage them to welcome opportunities to learn and to be receptive to finding out about the wider world, free of stereotypes and assumptions;
- The development of the intellectual skills and critical thinking necessary to considering a range of viewpoints before coming to a conclusion;
- The development of an understanding and recognition of all forms of inequality, their commonalities and their differences;
- The ability to begin to make sense of the world around them and the way poverty, discrimination and disadvantage determine many people's life chances and experiences;
- The development of concepts of fairness and justice and an awareness of how unfairness and injustice might be addressed;
- Positive self-esteem and a supportive and empathetic attitude towards those who are different from themselves;
- A pride in their own culture without feeling it is superior to those of others and a willingness to

value equally the cultures of others and to recognise their special occasions and celebrations;

- The enjoyment of belonging to a group where everyone is valued equally, and an appreciation of all those who live and work in the local community;
- A sensitivity to the differences between people and the consequent breaking down of existing barriers;
- An increasing awareness of the value and enjoyment to be found in belonging to a multicultural, multilingual, multifaith (or no faith), multiethnic society;
- An end to the perpetuation of racially prejudiced attitudes from generation to generation;
- Freedom from the harmful effects of racial prejudice, both on victim and on perpetrator;
- The development of support and mediation skills;
- The recognition that prejudiced people can change their behaviour and become positive about the differences that exist between people.

THE BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY INCLUDE:

- A general reduction in racial prejudice;
- Members of differing communities taking positive steps to understand and accept each other's common humanity;
- The development of mechanisms for addressing alienation both between differing communities and between individuals from differing communities, such as friendships and other solutions developed in early years settings;
- The development of a confidence in addressing the apparent racial and cultural differences that can lead to alienation;
- A greater receptivity to opportunities for a sensitive exploration of tensions, misunderstandings and alienation;
- A reduction in misunderstandings, tensions

- and alienation between communities;
- A reduction in the monetary cost of dealing with the consequences of tensions between differing communities;
- An ability to address situations of potential conflict in an open-minded way within an environment which encourages the expression of, and listening to, different opinions and viewpoints;
- A recognition that much of mutual benefit can be learned from people from a variety of cultural backgrounds;
- An ability to give, to take and to compromise where appropriate;
- A recognition that open discussion within an accepting environment can often help resolve apparently insoluble problems;
- The eradication of the fear of 'difference' and 'being swamped by an alien culture' by means of group activities involving people from a variety of cultural backgrounds;
- The establishment of a network of friendships that support community cohesion and resist future dissension;
- The enjoyment of belonging to a multicultural society where people accept, learn from and value one another;
- The creation of a harmonious society.

Conclusion

Racial equality in early years services and settings is only possible if a national strategic approach is adopted across all levels of Government. Any measures taken by an individual setting to facilitate the creation of a harmonious society (through workers, children and their families) can only be

effective where anti-racist policies, procedures and practices are already being implemented. Anything less than this is likely to result at best in changes that are only temporary, and at worst in the perpetuation of inequality. The will for change must be the starting point.

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Appendix A

History of early years services to 1997

Apart from the period of the Second World War, up until 1997 the state considered responsibility for very young children to lie with their families. While some local authorities organised free nursery schools and classes, others did not. There were also some private sector fee-paying nurseries in existence. During the sixties, playgroups began to be established in the voluntary sector, empowering parents as advocates for children and encouraging parental participation. By the early eighties, the non-maintained sector had organised itself under what are now the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA, for private provision), the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA, for playgroups/pre-schools in the voluntary sector) and the National Childminding Association (NCMA, for childminders).

During the sixties beliefs about black children (mostly of Caribbean origin) wrongly focused on their needs as being due to 'cultural deprivation' and inadequate parenting and, consequently, programmes of 'compensatory education' in nurseries were recommended. This led to the problematisation of black families in general, the stereotyping of their children's abilities and a failure to recognise the very real effects of racism, migration and poverty on their lives. Some research findings also failed to recognise the possibility that assessment could be culturally loaded, using inappropriate measures and conducted by people insufficiently knowledgeable or skilled for work with families from unfamiliar cultural backgrounds (Gregory 1969, Pollack 1972).

During the seventies and eighties Asian families began to migrate to the UK. The ensuing increase in the number of minority ethnic young children raised the awareness of both Government and relevant agencies as to their needs (van der Eyken 1979). Publications and filmstrips on anti-racist practice from the Council on Interracial Books for Children in the United States began to have an influence on those working with young children. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), together with a multi-ethnic group of people

involved in the early years, began to identify issues around racism and early years services and practice in the context of the implications of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Following on from this initiative, the Early Years Trainers Anti Racist Network (EYTARN, later Early Years Equality), the Working Group against Racism in Children's Resources (WGARCR), the Voluntary Organisations Liaison Council for Under Fives (VOLCUF, later the National Early Years Network [NEYN]) and other individuals campaigned, in a variety of ways, for all training for work in the early years to incorporate racial equality issues; for learning resources to reflect accurately the reality of children's lives; and for specific policies to counter racism and the learning of negative attitudes to differences between people. As a result of effective lobbying, the Children Act 1989 incorporated specific action on racial equality and daycare registration into the statute and more widely into guidance on the Act – the first time that the issue had been addressed in legislation.

In 1981 the Home Affairs Select Committee identified the disproportionate need of ethnic minority families for childcare (particularly 'West Indians') and English language support, and in its *Report on Racial Disadvantage* suggested that local authorities, together with Government, should ensure more provision, perhaps seeking Section 11 funding (Government funding to support children in learning English as an additional language) to do so (HMSO 1981). As a result (and after consultation with the CRE group, other professionals in the field and 'Afro-Caribbean and Asian' workers), the Department of Health and Social Security published a widely disseminated report on services for under-fives from ethnic minority communities (DHSS 1984). It recommended that local authorities be required to review and assess the nature and extent of their services and the needs of ethnic minority communities. It also called for more research into those needs.

While issues around assisting children to learn English

began to be addressed, the majority of training for work with young children, materials on child development, childcare and education, and resources for play did not take account of culture or ethnicity, thus allowing assumptions and stereotypes about the behaviour and potential of black and other minority ethnic children to prevail unchallenged. African Caribbean children were, disproportionately, given places in social services day nurseries, taken into care and allocated to schools for the 'educationally subnormal' (Coard 1971). This compounded an already pre-existing situation where such families and their children were seen as 'problems'. These children are now, of course, the parents and possibly grandparents of today's children.

Members of the CRE group met several times to discuss racial equality with Board members of the main organisation awarding qualifications to nursery nurses (the National Nursery Nurse Examination Board [NNEB]). As a consequence the Board took positive action to review their curriculum practices and support for particularly inappropriate training resources, and agreed to fund anti-racist training for their staff. This was a significant step towards breaking down stereotypical attitudes and practices in nursery nurse training nationally.

From the early eighties to early nineties, important national reports were published highlighting issues of racism in schools generally, together with the importance of encouraging high expectations of all young children, free of stereotyped views about cultural background (Rampton 1981, Swann 1985, DES 1990). During the eighties, Racism Awareness Training (RAT) was widely practised and publicised. While some was said to be effective in leading to a better understanding of the reality of racism, much made participants feel guilty about being white and induced resentment against anything to do with racial equality. Its damaging legacy is still remembered today.

At the same time, some sections of the media instigated a politically motivated attack on anything to do with anti-racist education, ridiculing it as 'politically correct' nonsense. Myths were devised and perpetuated that proved almost impossible to counter – for example, *Baa Baa green sheep*, a myth with no foundation in fact and of which the memory is still alive today. Individuals and some local authorities were vilified for working to promote racial equality. The agenda for dismantling racism in the education system was put back many years, leaving a legacy of guilt, personal humiliation and a reluctance to pursue the objective again.

At about the same time, the Women's Committee of the Greater London Council (GLC) published reports from their

Black and Ethnic Minority Working Group on childcare (GLC 1986 and 1987), and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) published a report on the potentially unlawful requirement for nursery nurses to have the NNEB qualification (ILEA 1980s).

Some local authorities took their Children Act responsibilities particularly seriously, supporting anti-discriminatory practice in settings and instituting monitoring inspections. Gradually, the focus on minority ethnic children moved from one of assimilation to the beginnings of the idea of integration on the basis of equality.

Discussions about the relative merits of multiculturalism and anti-racism abounded, with multiculturalism seen by anti-racists as important but inadequate to counter racial hierarchies.

Influential publications and articles elaborating on these issues were published. EYTARN, in particular, organised conferences (including one sponsored by the European Commission on challenging racism in European Childcare Provision [EC/EYTARN 1994]) and training on anti-racist practice and procedures, and wrote publications in support of this work. The ILEA-supported Afro-Caribbean Educational Resource Project (ACER), Save the Children, the NEYN, PLA and NCMA also organised training and produced resources to address issues of racial equality. Interestingly, apart from a few pioneering local authorities (for example, Berkshire and the ILEA, which published its own anti-racist documents, much influenced by Berkshire's, and required every school and nursery to produce its own policy), the voluntary sector was addressing racism in a more positive way than was the maintained sector.

However, despite some effective work and the beginnings of a recognition that racial equality issues were indeed important, the situation facing black and other minority ethnic children and their families only served to highlight the lack of accessible childcare and the overall lack of organisation of the early years services – often called the 'under-fives muddle'. But, crucially, with a few notable exceptions, racial equality was seen as being about black and other minority ethnic people, rather than about the way racism impacts on everyone in society. It was seen as a 'problem' of urban cities and not an issue of national concern.

It is important to understand the history, consequences and context of past experiences in order to identify the actions which need to be taken to ensure racial equality in early years services and the wider society in the future. Racial stereotyping, misinformation, assumptions and prejudice do not disappear overnight: they still abound today.

Appendix B

Some significant Government documents published after 1997

Children's Fund (2000) – aims at tackling disadvantage in every LA by identifying at an early stage children aged 5-13 at risk of social exclusion and making sure they receive support to achieve their potential, working in partnership with other agencies to deliver preventative services to meet the needs of communities.

DfES (2003) Every Child Matters – key green paper responding to the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, setting out a whole raft of measures for improving the outcomes for children – creating Sure Start children's centres, extended schools and the Common Assessment Framework. Refers to differing outcomes by 'race' and to the achievement levels of some minority ethnic groups and offers a commitment to raise attainment levels by a national strategy and to 'encourage' more black and ethnic minorities into the children's workforce, but does not mention racial equality or discrimination.

DfES/DH (2003) Children's Trusts – aims to bring together all services for children and young people in a specific area, underpinned by the Children Act 2004, with a duty to cooperate and to focus on improving outcomes for children, moving towards integrated and responsive services and specialist support.

DfES (2004) Every Child Matters: next steps – sets out the purpose of the forthcoming Children Act and the next steps for bringing about changes to children's services.

DfES (2004) Every Child Matters: change for children – sets out a national framework for children, young people and maternity services, to provide services to support parents from pregnancy onwards and build services around the needs of children. Refers to 'staying safe' from discrimination.

DfES, HM Treasury, DWP, DTI (2004) Choice for parents: the best start for children: a ten-year strategy for childcare

- aims to give every child the best start in life in terms of choice/flexibility of childcare that is available, of high quality and affordable. Refers to 'ethnic minority' families being disproportionately in poverty and facing significant barriers to access to affordable and appropriate childcare. Includes a commitment to ensure that the suggestions from the Inclusion Pilot Projects will 'underpin' the implementation of this strategy, particularly in recruitment of ethnic minority staff and monitoring of the take-up.

Children Act 2004 – provides the legal underpinning of *Every Child Matters*: change for children, encouraging integrated planning and a wider strategy for improving children's lives, and clarifying accountability.

National Service Framework for children, young people and maternity services (2004) - sets out national standards for children's health and social services and the interface of services with education.

Education Act 2005 – establishes shorter sharper inspections, extended schools and 'wraparound' childcare.

Childcare Bill 2005 (Childcare Act 2006) - requires local authorities to take strategic lead in shaping future provision and delivery of early childhood services, including quality of provision and improving outcomes for children under five and their families. Places duty on local authorities to meet needs of working parents, provide them with information, and reduce inequalities in achievement. Introduces the Early Years Foundation Stage and reforms and simplifies the childcare and regulatory framework. HMCI has a duty to keep the Secretary of State informed about the contribution of early years provision to the well-being of children and its quality and standards. It requires local authorities to take steps to identify parents who are unlikely to take up

childcare to benefit their children. There is no mention of the need for provision to be culturally appropriate or to take account of children's ethnicities, linguistic or religious backgrounds, or of the role of the early years in ensuring social cohesion in local communities.

Children's workforce strategy (2005) – proposals for raising status of early childhood workforce within a coherent framework of qualifications, etc. This fails to:

- Examine barriers to equal representation of black people in workforce (ie - racist attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, institutional racism);
- Consider that staff from black and other minority ethnic communities are disproportionately to be found at lower levels than are white people;
- Address the disproportionately few early years qualified black teachers. As the new children's centres require qualified teachers to be responsible for specific areas of work, there are therefore few black people who can take on these responsibilities;
- Mention the need for ethnic monitoring or the statutory requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act;
- Identify the critical need for training the trainers, initial, in-service and leadership training in order to ensure that future/existing staff are committed to equality principles. (Some initial training on racial equality in the voluntary sector is very good and often better than in initial teacher education. It cannot be assumed that teachers have a better understanding of racism than do voluntary sector trained staff.);
- Mention positive action (J Lane's *Opening up access to qualifications and training for candidates from minority ethnic groups* [CACHE] fell on stony ground);

Common Assessment Framework (2005) – nationally standardised approach to assessing children's needs holistically and how to meet them, shifting focus from the consequences of difficulties in children's lives to initial prevention, including an accountability mechanism. No ethnic monitoring included.

Common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce (2005) – Annexe of 'relevant legislation' fails to mention amended RRA or SDA but refers to DDA. Skills/issues listed include:

- Effects of non-verbal communication, different cultures interpret differently;
- Treat all people fairly, avoiding assumptions;
- Appreciate diversity of family networks, differing family networks;
- Knowledge of laws;
- Current legislation (although RRA and SDA not mentioned);
- Knowledge that assumptions, values and discrimination can influence practice and prevent equality of opportunity.

NB: Contains nothing on embedded, institutional nature of inequalities.

Early Years Foundation Stage – combines *Birth to Three Matters*, *the Curriculum for the Foundation Stage* and *the National Standards*.

National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership - qualification in key issues, including integrating education/care, to lead new children's centres, etc. Pilot programme 2004-05. 400 to be trained from Sept 2005. Trainers bid to conduct course. No specific equality structure – awaiting response re. monitoring course content and participants from National College for School Leadership who organise the course.

NB: All of the above laws and documents should be monitored by ethnicity, as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, and the impact on black and other minority ethnic children and their families assessed.

Other actions:

- Appointing a Children's Commissioner;
- Sure Start Children's Centres - to establish services for young children in a coordinated way so as to determine positive outcomes for children and their families - developed from Sure Start local programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries and Early Excellence Centres, many based in schools;
- Extended schools (to provide care for children outside school hours);
- Re-organisation of local authorities to provide children with better support.

Appendix C

Research on various forms of early years provision which include aspects on minority ethnic groups:

Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education (2005) Children of the 21st Century: from birth to nine months Millennium Cohort Study – Of mothers with a baby of 9 months, white mothers were the most likely to be working full-time (39%), with Indian, mixed origin, and Black African mothers following on. Black African and Black Caribbean mothers had the highest proportion working part-time. The overwhelming majority of Bangladesh and Pakistani mothers were not in employment.

DfES/Institute of Education, University of London (1997-2004) The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project – A national longitudinal study of young children's development, ages 3-7. Issues concerning minority ethnic children have not, so far as is known, been collated from the research and identified and analysed overall. Results include:

- Evidence that pre-school experience has an important influence on young children's cognitive development, especially in integrated settings, nursery schools and classes and where staff have higher qualifications;
- The British Ability Scale (BAS) scores for White European, Black African, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Mixed Heritage and Other groups were all lower than the White UK group;
- Pre-schools can benefit children learning English as an additional language (EAL);
- Minority ethnic children (especially children of

Black Caribbean and Black African heritage, who attend for the longest number of hours) are more likely to be in local authority centres than others and least likely to be in private day nurseries;

- The lowest socio-economic classifications of semi-skilled, unskilled, unemployed include higher proportion of minority ethnic families than the higher socio-economic classifications;
- Local authority centres have the lowest socio-economic profile;
- A child with EAL is associated with lower overall cognitive development but the effect largely disappears when non-verbal cognitive development is considered – ie, the effects are mitigated by language;
- According to staff, Black Caribbean, Black African and Mixed Heritage children showed greater anti-social behaviour, but these results should be treated with caution;
- Results identify differences in particular aspects of social/behavioural development in different ethnic groups;
- Children not having pre-school experience are more likely to be from minority ethnic groups, particularly Pakistani and those with EAL.

The findings include more detailed information on specific aspects of particular ethnic groups, not recorded here.

Appendix D

Research on racial equality issues since 1997:

Daycare Trust (2003) *Parents' eye: building a vision of equality and inclusion in childcare services.*

DfES (2005) *Ethnicity and Education: the Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils. Research Topic paper RTP01-05.* Until recently the scanty data from local authorities on baseline assessment showed African Caribbean children performing highest when they entered school. Although not yet really reliable, the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP: measuring progress against the early learning goals) since 2003 shows that African Caribbean children have fallen behind white children.

DTI, Women and Equality Unit (2004) *The role of childcare in women's labour market participation: a study of minority ethnic mothers.* Study of attitudes, difficulties in relating work to childcare responsibilities, particularly for minority ethnic mothers. Perceived lack of cultural/religious sensitivity in services especially for Muslim mothers.

Gillborn, D. and Mirza, HS. (2000) *Educational Inequality: mapping race, class and gender – a synthesis of research evidence.* OFSTED.

Sure Start (2003) *Sure Start: for Everyone - promoting inclusion, embracing diversity, challenging inequality. Inclusion pilot projects summary report.* The recommendations include:

- The DfES/LA to be monitored for inclusive language/anti-discriminatory practice;

- A need for ethnic monitoring/using the Race Relations (Amendment) Act;
 - A need for local authority named officers to monitor data across settings;
 - A need for designated equality posts at local authority/setting levels;
 - A need for mandatory training for local authority /OFSTED/ setting staff;
 - A re-think of all training, including leadership/training the trainers;
 - An enforcement of National Equal Opportunities Standard;
 - A need for designation of Centres of Excellence on equalities;
 - Ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) funding to be accessible to voluntary, independent and private (VIP) sector;
 - A need for new funding to implement all the above.
- None of the above has, as far as is known, yet been implemented.

Sure Start (2005) *Use of childcare among families from minority ethnic backgrounds.* Looked at family characteristics, use and difficulties of using childcare, parental evaluation and information on childcare. Findings include the fact that black families are more likely to use formal childcare, linked with lone parenthood/full-time work (compared with white families working part-time), and have greater difficulty finding childcare.

“How we learn from each other is key to social cohesion, leading to improved awareness and self-confidence, greater self-esteem and self-motivation. Community cohesion applies to the whole population and the realisation of everyone's aspirations, hopes, beliefs and individual needs.”

— Lord Herman Ouseley *Member of the House of Lords, Chair of FIRST, Non-Executive Director of Focus Consultancy Ltd, Vice-President of Local Government Association, Former Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality*

Jane Lane (*advocate worker for racial equality in the early years*), with much appreciated comments on the draft text from anti-racist workers in the early years.

