

CENTRE FOR EDUCATION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY IN SCOTLAND

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**APPROACHES TO RECORDING, ANALYSING,
MONITORING AND RESPONDING TO RACIST
INCIDENTS IN SCOTTISH EDUCATION
AUTHORITIES AND SCHOOLS: AN INITIAL
ATTEMPT AT AN OVERVIEW –**

REPORT SUMMARY AND SOME KEY ISSUES ARISING

This piece of work, undertaken in agreement with the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), aims to “give an indication of the national picture” of how Education Authorities (EA’s) record, analyse and monitor racist incidents (RI’S) in the school sector.

Nearly all 32 Scottish authorities were known to have developed Race Equality Schemes (RES’s) and/or Race Equality Policies (REP’s) to meet their initial responsibilities under the RR(A)A – the former are corporate whole local authority (LA) documents, the latter apply specifically to EA’s and the schools for which they are responsible.

However, there was wide variation across the country in the extent to which the Act was being implemented both in terms of its basic requirements and its provisions for institutionally mainstreaming race equality in schools and in relevant managerial/administrative procedures.

One core area where information was limited related to the processes by which racist incidents (RI’s) were recorded, monitored and responded to, both at school and education service levels. Also, little appeared to be known nationally about the numbers of incidents occurring, their nature and type, the profiles of victims and perpetrators, trends over time and the strategies employed in “dealing with” them, in the short term and strategically.

Note: a racist incident as identified in Sir William MacPherson’s Report on the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry (1999) is “any incident that is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person”. This approach enables inclusion, at the recording stage, of incidents which, on investigation, are confirmed as being of a racist nature and

those which are found not to be so. It is an inclusive approach, intended to counteract the historical tendency for individuals and organisations to underreport incidences of racism – perhaps by a factor of anything between 16 and 30 (Clark I and Moody S, Racist Crime and Victimisation in Scotland, Scottish Executive 2001.

- 1.1 The purpose of the exercise as ‘to give an indication of the national picture’ of Education Authorities’ (EA’s) approaches to recording, analysing, monitoring and responding to racist incidents (RI’s) in schools in Scotland.**
- 1.2 Information was gathered by CERES in late 2004.**
- 1.3 Responses were received from 30 out of 32 Scottish EA’s, 94% of the total.**
- 1.4 In many cases it was more difficult to access information than had been expected. Internet searches of education authority websites produced few results.**
- 1.5 EA-based race equality staff as members of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act Education Network provided invaluable assistance as, in the main, did directors and managers of education services.**
- 1.6 For a variety of reasons, the quantity and quality of information received varied widely and less detailed material was made available than was expected, particularly regarding profiles of victims and perpetrators, responsive institutional action and publication.**
- 1.7 Though some EA’s with relatively large black and minority ethnic populations tended to gather and publish more comprehensive data, practice among smaller, (semi-) rural EA’s varied widely. Some were much more diligent than others, in which residues of ‘there’s no problem here’ outlooks seem to persist.**
- 1.8 EA’s use a variety of instruments to record racist incidents in the first instance. These also vary in the means and routes employed in monitoring and responding to evidence gathered. Some adopt a primarily in-house approach based on systems located within the education service. Others use forms designed and processed by Multi-Agency Racist Incident Monitoring (MARIM) groups, which have a broad membership**

among public bodies and are geographically linked to police authorities or divisions.

- 1.9 The police often act as a MARIM group's lead agency, where their main interest is racist crime though they may monitor incident data on behalf of other members.
- 1.10 In-house recording may focus on the discrete identification of RI's or may signify them as a distinct category of bullying. Some racist incident recording (RIR) procedures allow for detailed data capture regarding those involved, (eg on ethnicity, gender, age) others provide much less information. The systems used by some EA's may appear to contradict the Lawrence Enquiry RI definition.
- 1.11 The most commonly used RIR instruments are updated versions of the ex-Strathclyde Regional Council Tackling Racist Incidents Within the Education Service (TRIWES) forms.
- 1.12 There are advantages and disadvantages attached to each RIR system, relating in particular to user-friendliness and to monitoring issues which arise. The use of different base-years [calendar, financial (April–March) and school (August–June)] is a further problem. Identifying 'intentionality' is an important procedure and should be generally adopted.
- 1.13 It would benefit consistency and comparability greatly if agreement could be reached on recording and monitoring formats and on the base-year to be employed – for education the school year makes most sense.
- 1.14 The quantity and quality of guidance and support provided to enable RI recording and monitoring varied from the non-existent to the considerable. It appears unlikely that school staff will record RI's unless suitable importance is attached to the procedure and unless it is associated with ongoing quality improvement in overall school performance.
- 1.15 It is very important that RI's are contextualised within an anti-discriminatory framework and seen as a key component in meeting the 'positive duty' aspects of the RR(A)A and other equalities legislation. Some EA's have been developing such an approach for years, others are beginning the process, but in some cases it seems not yet to be underway.

- 1.16** As in other fields recently studied by CERES, it is vital that this key race equality function does not become the restricted province of committed specialists. The latter remain of great importance, but they need more support. Mainstreaming is required.
- 1.17** From the relatively limited data available over a significant time period, the following general patterns and trends emerge.
- most EA's with long-term RIR experience record a rising trend, but this is not universal
 - where overall numbers are relatively low rising, falling and fluctuating trends are identifiable.
- 1.18** It is difficult to determine whether high figures reflect relatively high incidence, or reflect a more rigorous anti-racist approach; low figures present the same problem, no figures, especially for an entire EA, suggest a non-operational recording system. The calculation of RI's as a proportion of the total pupil population would enhance comparability.
- 1.19** Males are disproportionately involved in RI's as victims but especially as perpetrators. Females are disproportionately present as victims rather than perpetrators. Where recorded, intentionality among perpetrators is rising. This is a worrying trend.
- 1.20** RI's occur much more frequently in primary than in secondary schools; one EA places the peak ages for perpetrators at 9/10 and 13/14; this is not interpreted as evidence that everyone 'grows out of racism', especially since race-related crime recorded by the police has tended to rise dramatically over time, much of it committed by young men who have left school. It is therefore important that school children of all ages learn that racism is unacceptable.
- 1.21** There are technical and institutional difficulties associated with RI recording and monitoring. These were noted in some detail by one EA. Unless a resourced and systematic approach is taken to addressing these issues, it is likely that the factors at work which discourage or disable the process will continue in their effects. More effective mainstreaming is a prerequisite for ensuring that recording does take place and that appropriate analysis and responses are developed. This is the only reliable means of addressing the 'gap in the middle' and of countering any tendencies to 'self-exoneration'.
- 1.22** Moving to such a position will present a significant challenge in some areas, where tackling RI's remains a low educational priority because it is

assumed that racism only occurs in the presence of significant numbers of black and minority ethnic people, or that lack of specific RR(A)A-related funding justifies inaction. The former perspective, which is in direct contradiction of the general duty of the RR(A)A, is on the decline, but it's expression has not entirely disappeared.

1.23 Despite such influences and some EA's nervousness and/or reluctance about the generation and publication of data, HMIE and the CRE are agreed that the establishment of an effective RIR system is a key element in good educational practice and in complying with the RR(A)A. Only by such means may victims of racism obtain greater institutional protection in the education system, where, in the public service arena, most RI's occur. Where evidence of an improving agenda exists it requires to be supported and sustained. Where complacency or non-compliance are the norm, action to change it is needed

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