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Race Equality

Consultation Paper 136

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Background

This consultation paper is presented as the first stage in the development of new Party policy in relation to race equality. It does not represent agreed Party policy. It is designed to stimulate debate and discussion within the Party and outside; based on the response generated and on the deliberations of the working group a full policy paper will be drawn up and presented to Conference for debate.

The paper has been drawn up by a working group appointed by the Federal Policy Committee and chaired by Merlene Emerson. Members of the group are prepared to speak on the paper to outside bodies and to discussion meetings organised within the Party.

Comments on the paper, and requests for speakers, should be addressed to: Jonathan Everett, Policy Unit, Liberal Democrats, 8 – 10 Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AE. Email: policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk

Comments should reach us as soon as possible and no later than Friday 28th September 2018.

Further copies of this paper can be found online at www.libdems.org.uk/policy_papers

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1. Context and strategic direction

1.1.1 The policy working group on *Race Equality* aims to develop a range of policies that would improve race equality in the UK. One's race and ethnicity impacts on different aspects of one's life –housing, education, employment opportunities and much more – and the working group aims to develop policies that will promote race equality across the board. The ultimate aim is to develop policies that provide practical and bold solutions to these problems.

1.1.2 Britain has made significant progress towards race equality, but there is still a long way to go.¹ The working group has taken evidence on a broad range of subjects and in each of these areas there are clear challenges that demand policy solutions. This consultation paper is structured according to the areas in which the group has taken evidence:

- Poverty
- Health and social care
- Housing and homelessness
- Criminal justice
- Education
- Employment and entrepreneurship
- Arts and media
- Political participation
- Laws and the relevant legislative framework

Each section of this paper details how race inequality manifests itself in each of these contexts.

1.1.3 The emphasis on race equality – with other equalities – is a central Liberal Democrat value. The preamble to our Constitution clearly states our vision of “a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and

¹ The government's recent [Race Disparity Audit](#) gives an overview of the situation.

community” and rejects “all prejudice and discrimination based upon race”. We want policies that ensure that individuals are empowered to achieve their potential by breaking down the barriers that stand in the way of BAME² people at each stage of their lives and ensuring that – at an early stage – the fundamentals that will allow them to succeed are in place.

1.1.4 While the group is considering a wide range of topics, there are limits to the scope of this work. For example, we do not touch upon issues around the hostile environment, which has been addressed more comprehensively in Policy Paper 131 *A Fair Deal for Everyone: Prosperity and Dignity in Migration*. However, the hostile environment is a prime example of the type of institutionalised racism that still exists in the UK today. When we consider issues around topics like health and education, the group is not focusing on wide structural issues and is looking instead at targeted interventions that would tackle barriers and empower individuals.

1.1.5 The Party already has a range of strong policy proposals concerning race equality and this consultation paper seeks to build upon and update these. The Party’s 2017 *General Election Manifesto*, Policy Paper 120, *Expanding Opportunity, Unlocking Potential* (2014) and Policy Motion *A New Approach to Race Equality* (2013) all contain a wide range of relevant policy. In this document we have identified the key issues and questions that previous policy has addressed and sought to update them so that they are relevant to today.

1.1.6 It is worth stressing that this process will produce a policy document that sets out the policies regarding race equality that would be enacted by a Liberal Democrat government. It is not a document that seeks to comment on race equality within the party. However, for the Party to be plausible on this issue it is vital that the

² Throughout the document we use the terminology BAME. We recognise that this isn’t entirely satisfactory (and remain open to alternatives), but for the time being this is preferable to BME or People of Colour.

recommendations of the Alderdice Review³ are taken to heart and implemented – but further comment on this process is beyond the scope of this working group.

1.1.7 This paper sets out a series of questions and there will be further questions available online at www.libdems.org.uk/policy-working-groups in due course. In light of the responses to these questions, the working group will draw up detailed proposals for debate at Party Conference in Spring 2019.

Question 1: What do you think is the most serious barrier to race equality in the UK today?

Question 2: How would you prioritise the nine areas that are covered in this consultation paper? Are there any important areas that we have missed?

Question 3: Are there parts of the public sector that you think are institutionally racist? How does this manifest itself?

³ [Race, Ethnic Minorities and the Culture of the Liberal Democrats](#) (2018)

2. Poverty

2.1.1 The correlation between race equality and poverty is fundamental. Poverty is known to be a key determinant of people's life chances – if BAME people are more likely to live in poverty, then this will have knock-on effects that impact every aspect of their lives.

2.1.2 The evidence suggests that, despite improvements in opportunities between generations, problems have emerged, eg with cuts to the benefits system, that affect ethnic minorities more than other groups. All ethnic minority children suffer from higher poverty rates than white British children; the most severely affected are Pakistani and Bangladeshi, of whom 50% and 40% live in poverty, respectively.⁴

2.1.3 One important means of escaping poverty is education, yet many who are poor are unable to make the most of their education. Many poor students must juggle both studying for classes and working a job to support themselves or their families. This often results in academic underperformance that limits academic and career opportunities and makes it harder to escape poverty. This has contributed to the number of BAME young people out of work for more than a year increasing by almost 50% since 2010.

2.1.4 As we consider how to best resolve poverty issues, we should be careful not to treat all BAME groups as one. We cannot assume that everyone who is BAME faces identical challenges: different communities face different challenges: the causes of poverty among Gypsy, Roma, and Irish Traveller populations (GRT) are liable to be different from the causes of poverty among Bangladeshis. The causes of poverty may be due to high numbers of exclusions at school, or it may be because there is greater pressure on some communities to provide care for elderly relatives. Addressing the race equality in

⁴ The Runnymede Trust: [The budget's impact on Black and Minority ethnic people](#) (2015).

poverty requires a detailed understanding of the problem and solutions that are tailored for individual groups.

Question 4: Are you aware of any challenges faced by particular BAME groups that might increase their chances of living in poverty?

Question 5: What measures can be taken to ensure that all BAME communities know what public services and benefits are available to them?

Question 6: How can social services, education, health and benefits systems be adapted to support communities who live migrant lifestyles, such as travelling people, boat-dwellers and migrant workers?

3. Health and Social Care

3.1.1 All people, regardless of their background, have a right to access the health and social care they need to live long and fulfilling lives. It is well-known that the UK's health and social care services are under extreme pressure and – as a result – they are failing the most marginalised populations.

3.1.2 Studies have shown that life expectancy differs substantially between different BAME groups. This is particularly marked when considering the disability-free life expectancy (which is the average age that an individual is expected to live free of disability), which ranges from 67 years for Chinese women to 55.1 years for Pakistani women. Over half of these groups have significantly lower disability-free life expectancies than white British men (61.7 years), with Bangladeshi men (54.3 years) faring worst.⁵ BAME patients also suffer more often from misdiagnoses or unfair treatment, particularly of mental illness. 'Race-based' mental illness diagnoses (e.g. based on negative stereotypes) explain over 50% of disparities between ethnic groups, according to several studies.

3.1.3 Some BAME patients are affected even more than others. Amongst GRT populations, life expectancy is 10-50% shorter than that of the general population. Contributing factors to this gap include but are not limited to: GPs' insistence on having proof of identity and permanent address, 'anticipation of discrimination' based on ethnicity, and healthcare professionals' 'lack [of] knowledge, confidence and expertise' in different cultures.⁶

3.1.4 Health inequalities afflict ethnic minorities of all ages, but they hurt the elderly worst of all. One recent study showed that, even after controlling for socio and economic disadvantage, elderly BAME people

⁵ Wohland et al. [Inequalities in healthy life expectancy between ethnic groups in England and Wales in 2001](#). (2015).

⁶ Cemlyn et al. [Inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers: A review](#) (2009)

more often report poor, limiting health, which suggests an underlying systematic problem.⁷

Question 7: What do you believe are the most problematic barriers to equal access to health and social care?

Question 8: How can we improve medical staff training to help them better understand the diverse medical and healthcare needs of different ethnic groups?

Question 9: How can we boost opportunity for greater social integration especially for elderly BAME people?

Question 10: What further steps need to be taken to ensure NHS boards better represent their staff and patient populations?

⁷ Evandrou M, Falkingham J, Feng Z, et al. Ethnic inequalities in limiting health and self-reported health in later life revisited. [*Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2016](#); 70:653-662.

4. Housing and homelessness

4.1.1 Access to a secure and affordable home is essential if people are to fulfil their potential: a good home helps students perform better in school and aids physical and mental health. Unfortunately for BAME groups, affordable housing can be difficult to find and living conditions are regularly of too low a standard: in 2011, BAME groups had higher levels of overcrowding than white British in all English and Welsh districts and this has especially worsened for Black communities.⁸

4.1.2 There is also a degree of intergenerational inequality in housing. While home ownership has risen among older populations, fewer than half of the millennial generation (those born between 1981 and 2000) are expected to own their own home by the age of 45. Because, as highlighted in §2, BAME communities are more likely to be poorer and because there is underinvestment in social housing, this disproportionately affects young BAME people. Additionally, older people are less likely to live with relatives than they were before, while at the same time the number of single childless adults living in their parents' homes has skyrocketed.⁹

4.1.3 Perhaps because of these issues, homeless people are disproportionately BAME: one in three homeless households aren't white, compared to one in seven households in the general population and, in the past five years, homelessness has risen five times faster among BAME than white people.¹⁰

4.1.4 There is a question of integration that is related to housing: as Liberal Democrats we want everybody to be able to live in homes in safe, clean and friendly well-integrated neighbourhoods. As recognised in the government's recent green paper on *Integrated Communities* this

⁸ The Runnymede Trust: [Ethnic Differences in Education, Employment, Health and Housing in Districts of England and Wales, 2001—2011](#) (2014).

⁹ Resolution Foundation: ['Home Affront: Housing across the generations'](#) (2017)

¹⁰ Shelter, [BAME homelessness matters and is disproportionately rising](#) (2017)

is not currently the case. Part of the reason of this is likely to be economic, as poorer BAME communities seek affordable housing, and a portion of the cause is likely to be choice – groups seeking to live together for a greater sense of community. It is important that we recognise that integration is a two-way process: hostile rhetoric from Government Ministers and parts of the media (particularly towards migrants) can make whole communities fearful of attempting to mix. An approach to integration and that is going to work must recognise this.

4.1.5 Some of the consequences of the marginalisation of BAME and migrant communities has been seen in the Grenfell disaster. These communities have lacked a clear voice and political influence, resulting in unsafe living conditions.

Question 11: Do you know of examples of projects that have effectively tackled housing shortages or segregation? If so, please give examples.

Question 12: Are there any changes that could be made to the private rental sector that would help BAME groups access housing?

Question 13: How do we ensure that BAME communities are empowered to demand safer housing?

Question 14: To what extent should we seek to further integrate communities? If greater integration is desirable, how should we go about achieving it?

5. Criminal Justice

5.1.1 Government should uphold the rule of law for all citizens, yet our current law enforcement and criminal justice system consistently disproportionately targets BAME populations. Although they are less likely to use drugs, police search Asian and Black people for drugs at 2.5 and 6.3 times the rate of white people, respectively.¹¹ There are also concerns about the court system: in 2016 Asian and Black offenders were both given longer average custodial sentences than white offenders. For men the average sentence of Black and Asian offenders was 25 months for each group compared to 19 months for White offenders; for women it was 14 months for both Asian and Black offenders compared to ten months for White offenders.¹²

5.1.2 There are many factors that could be contributing to this: among these is the fact that the police and criminal justice professions are not representative of the general population – particularly at a senior level. According to 2014 statistics, only 6% of senior judges, 8% of National Offender Management Service practitioners, and 5% of senior police officers in England and Wales were from an ethnic minority.¹³

5.1.3 BAME people are mistrustful of the police. This affects their likelihood to wish to work for the police and makes it difficult to achieve more representative police force. Some BAME groups are so mistrustful of the authorities that they avoid them altogether, even when they need their assistance most. This is particularly problematic since BAME groups tend to have a heightened risk of suffering discrimination, hate crimes, and hostility.

¹¹ LSE, [The Numbers in Black and White: Ethnic Disparities in the Policing and Prosecution of Drug Offenses in England and Wales](#) (2013).

¹² Ministry of Justice, [Average length of custodial sentences](#) (2016)

¹³ Institute of Race Relations: [Criminal justice system statistics](#) (2014).

5.1.4 Hate crime, which doubled in England and Wales within the first several months following the Brexit vote, is especially concerning – it seems representative of a normalisation of racism and xenophobia.

5.1.5 There have been notable rises in knife crime and fatalities that are particularly impacting young black people. Enhanced stop and search does not seem to be resolving these problems. There has been a recent success in Glasgow in combatting knife crime through a Violence Reduction Unit, which adopts a public health approach to knife crime, which involves multiple agencies working with schools, hospitals and local communities. This approach seems to have been successful and the working group is intending to propose a wider adoption of elements of this approach. This is an area where this group will work with the newly established policy working group on Crime and Policing.

Question 15: How might we foster greater engagement between law enforcement and different BAME communities?

Question 16: What interventions would you suggest to prevent young people joining gangs and falling prey to drug dealers?

Question 17: How can we increase diversity in law enforcement and legal professions?

Question 18: How should Government protect BAME British citizens when facing racial profiling and prejudicial legislation at Immigration checks, police checks and courts in other countries?

6. Education

6.1.1 Liberal Democrats have a proud history of promoting universal education and opportunity: this is particularly important for BAME children, some of whom are not getting the start in life that they should. Education inequality worsened in nearly half of all districts in England and Wales from 2001-2011,¹⁴ and this trend has continued. This is a problem that affects some groups more than others, particularly the GRT community: they are around five times less likely to achieve five or more good GCSEs than the general population.¹⁵ GRT pupils also have by far the highest rates of both fixed period and permanent exclusions, which is surely a contributory factor to these educational outcomes.

6.1.2 The ethnicity of teaching staff likely plays a role in perpetuating inequality. Teachers who resemble their pupils can serve as role models and allies against discrimination, but they too can face discrimination and unfair treatment because of their race. Unfortunately, 60% of existing BAME teachers surveyed expressed a desire to leave the workforce, despite a passionate commitment to the vocation because they are often overlooked for promotions and challenging projects.¹⁶

6.1.3 There is also inequality in the higher education system. While there has been some progress – all ethnic minority groups have seen a rise in their share of the total student population – there is still a problem of BAME people not attending the most prestigious universities. As with other areas in this document, poverty is likely to

¹⁴ The Runnymede Trust: [Ethnic Differences in Education, Employment, Health and Housing in Districts of England and Wales, 2001–2011](#) (2014).

¹⁵ Department of Communities and Local Government: [Progress report by the ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers](#) (2012).

¹⁶ The Runnymede Trust: [Visible and Invisible Barriers: the impact of racism on BAME teachers](#) (2016).

play a role in this: seven of the ten worst performing universities in the country in terms of admission of students from different economic backgrounds are Russell Group universities.

Question 19: What extra measures can we take to reduce exclusions which may adversely impact on BAME – and especially GRT – students?

Question 20: How do we improve workplace culture to attract BAME teachers and keep them in the classroom?

Question 21: What steps should we take to improve BAME representation on school governing boards? Are further legal rights around paid leave for public duties needed?

Question 22: How can we improve BAME admissions to Russell Group universities?

Question 23: Would any reforms to the curriculum help BAME groups? If so, what changes would you suggest?

7. Employment and Entrepreneurship

7.1.1 We believe that everyone should have an equal opportunity to further themselves through well-paid careers that reflect their talents and potential. The economy, as it currently stands, fails to provide this for BAME people: many struggle to even enter the workforce, let alone earn enough to financially support themselves.

7.1.2 Even after a prestigious education BAME graduates find employment opportunities disproportionately hard to come by. BAME alumni of Russell Group universities were more likely to be unemployed or otherwise economically inactive than their peers, despite receiving a high quality education.¹⁷

7.1.3 There are myriad challenges facing BAME people seeking employment. Unpaid internships – many of which require finding the right connections, taking time off from school or work, living in central London, etc – hold many poor students back from gaining the work experience that enhances their career prospects. Foreign-sounding names are a major stumbling block: CVs with English-sounding names get three times more interview offers than those with Muslim ones. This could well be linked to deeply-ingrained attitudes towards race: some research has suggested that nearly half of people (44%) agree that ‘some races are born harder working than others’.¹⁸ The unfortunate result is that over half a million BAME workers (523,000) are ‘missing’ from the labour market.

7.1.4 Another area of vulnerability for BAME workers is the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and of the ‘gig’ (self-employed) economy. With new technologies and sectors displacing old ones, many BAME employees from the old sectors are now left out of work and unprepared to adapt. Furthermore, there is a risk that as AI becomes

¹⁷ The Runnymede Trust: [When education isn't enough: Labour market outcomes of ethnic minority graduates at elite universities](#) (2014).

¹⁸ The Runnymede Trust: [Integration is not a one-way process](#) (2018).

more common in the recruitment process, racial biases – subtle and unsubtle – will become engrained and codified in a manner that makes job interviews harder-still to come by.

7.1.5 There are also significant issues with our current reliance on unemployment as a measure of economic activity. Unemployment figures alone do not give enough information for our purposes because they do not measure low-paying and part-time work, where BAME groups tend to be active and have little chance of mobility. Understanding underemployment – particularly as the gig economy grows – is increasingly important.

7.1.6 Entrepreneurship is important for BAME communities as almost all BAME workers are more likely to be self-employed than white British workers (especially Pakistanis and Bangladeshis). We should also consider how to best foster entrepreneurial spirit amongst BAME workers, so they can better support themselves and improve their pay.

Question 24: What steps could we take to make recruitment function more fairly?

Question 25: How can we reduce unpaid or unadvertised internships?

Question 26: How do we safeguard against discrimination by AI or computer algorithms against those in the BAME population?

Question 27: What can the Government or local councils do to provide the infrastructure to support entrepreneurs and those who want to start their own business?

8. Arts and Media

8.1.1 The arts and media sectors play a crucial role in the cultural life of the UK. BAME people contribute greatly to theatre, film, TV, art etc when they are given the chance to, but many cannot. Unpaid internships sift out many BAME students early on, because they cannot afford to support themselves. Those lucky enough to land a job become frustrated with assignments 'pigeon-holing' them into BAME topics, thus drastically limiting future career paths. This is a particular issue among journalists, who are often asked to focus on equality-related topics, and means that many leave the profession in frustration – which is surely a factor in 94% of journalists being white.

8.1.2 The lack of involvement of ethnic minorities in the media, contributes towards negative representations of BAME groups. This, in turn, impacts general societal attitudes: 78% of people from all ethnic backgrounds believe that media portrayal of minorities encourages discrimination: among specific minorities that percentage is even higher, with 94% of Pakistanis sharing that belief.¹⁹

8.1.3 Wrapping work placements into a greater number of degree programmes could give BAME students a way to get work experience in the arts and the media. Mentors for arts and media students would also be able to provide support and networks to help them get into and move through the industry. Encouraging art and media institutions to move outside of London and into other communities might also help improve access, by reducing the need for people to move to London to access internships.

8.1.4 Networking and who-you-know is very important in this sector. The working group took evidence that has suggested that projects that cater exclusively for BAME people have been cut since the introduction of the Equalities Act in favour of projects that cater for all

¹⁹ The Runnymede Trust/*The Independent*: [Media coverage of ethnic minority Britons 'promotes racism'](#) (2014).

protected characteristics. This has meant that BAME people have been edged out of these projects. Our approach must ensure that the specific issues facing BAME people are properly tackled.

Question 28: Should we monitor or audit employers in the arts and media sector for BAME participation?

Question 29: How do we open doors to careers in arts and media for BAME aspirants?

Question 30: What arts and media institutions could be moved away from London to improve access to opportunities?

Question 31: Given the importance of representation in the media, would you support policies to promote more representative casting decisions? What type of policies would you support?

9. Political Participation

9.1.1 We believe that Parliament should represent the diversity of its population, but for BAME candidates there are barriers to entry into politics that must be addressed.

9.1.2 While BAME activism has increased, it has yet to translate into immediate political impact. Campaign costs are prohibitive for many prospective candidates. In 2014, it cost £34,400 (twice the national average salary) to become an MP, while the average MP salary was around £67,060, giving incumbents a financial advantage over their challengers.²⁰ Ethnic minorities also lack access to networks of political elites who could advance their campaigns.

9.1.3 Not surprisingly, underrepresentation in Government discourages BAME people from political participation. Black people, for example, are four times less likely to be registered to vote,²¹ and thirteen times more likely to feel that politics does not represent them or reflect their concerns than their white counterparts.²²

9.1.4 BAME voters have a right to representation that truly represents them. Breaking down barriers to entry – eg, through proactive talent spotting and networking assistance – may help.

Question 32: Do you perceive that there is an issue with political participation? If so, please provide details

Question 33: What measures could promote wider participation in politics and make progression less reliant on networks?

Question 34: Would you support legislating to allow all-BAME shortlists?

²⁰ *The Spectator*: [It costs £34,000 to become an MP. No wonder they expect higher pay](#) (2014).

²¹ The Runnymede Trust: [Integration is not a one-way process](#) (2018).

²² The Runnymede Trust: [Why black people don't vote](#) (2016).

10. Legislative Framework

10.1.1 None of the previously suggested policy measures for advancing racial equality are viable without the proper legislative framework to support them. There are already measures in place to protect the essential rights of BAME individuals.

10.1.2 The current legislative framework rests on three main pillars: The Human Rights Act of 1998 (HRA) and associated legislature passed in the UK; international human rights treaties signed and ratified by the UK – including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand. However, there are procedural challenges to bringing complaints where unlawful treatment or discrimination occurred before 1 October 2010. There was also a dilution of the duty to conduct Equalities Impact Assessments.

10.1.3 The HRA outlines positive and negative obligations for the Government to uphold and enshrine rights in UK law. These include: absolute rights (which Government cannot violate under any circumstances); limited rights (which Government can limit only under circumstances specified by ECHR); and qualified rights (which require maintaining a balance between individual and Government needs and rights, including those of wider society). If there is legal basis and legitimate aim, and maintaining free society requires it, Government can interfere with qualified rights.

10.1.4 Scotland and Wales each have their own corresponding acts (The Scotland Act 1998 and Government of Wales Act 2006 respectively) that prohibit violating ECHR rights.

Question 35: Are there any changes that we could make to the law that would help promote race equality?

Question 36: How can we incentivise councils, government bodies, etc. to become more accountable (e.g., willing to be more open about their race/ethnicity data in relation to jobs

or salaries)? How might we make sure that audits happen?

Question 37: How do we ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are properly conducted – rather than turned into a tick box exercise – and genuinely seek to understand the wide-ranging impacts of the changes in the law (e.g. welfare reforms)?