

Improving Services for People with Learning Disabilities from Minority Ethnic Groups:

Appendix 1 Results of a National Survey of Partnership Boards

Chris Hatton

**Professor of Psychology, Health and Social Care
Institute for Health Research, Lancaster University**

Summary

Just over half of Partnership Boards (51%) completed questionnaires.

Information

Most Partnership Boards (74%) provided detailed information on the ethnicity of people with learning disabilities known to local services, although fewer Partnership Boards (46%) provided information on the expected population of people with learning disabilities in their area. Where Partnership Boards provided this information, less than a quarter of the expected population of people with learning disabilities were known to services; White people tended to be over-represented and South Asian people under-represented within services.

Partnership Boards typically used 2001 Census information to calculate the expected population of people with learning disabilities in their area. The numbers of people with learning disabilities known to services were most often obtained from electronic databases maintained by social services or learning disability services.

Electronic databases were felt by Partnership Boards to be the most useful source of information, as long as they were integrated across services and staff recorded information comprehensively. Having dedicated workers to gain information directly from people from minority ethnic communities and to maintain the database, were felt to be essential in gaining good quality information.

Partnership Boards without detailed information often reported that they had competing priorities and a lack of time to collect information, or that they had not been able to engage with the small minority ethnic communities in their area.

LDDF funding

Only 10% of Partnership Boards reported spending part of their LDDF allocation on improving services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities in 2003-04; this figure had risen to 22% in 2004-05. Partnership Boards spent an average £19,900 of their LDDF allocation in 2004-05 on several initiatives, most commonly funding development workers and training staff.

Many Partnership Boards (16%) reported that ethnicity issues were routinely built into all initiatives funded by LDDF money, although very few gave details of how this was achieved. Although many Partnership Boards (32%) reported that there were no obstacles to using LDDF money, some Partnership Boards (18%) mentioned competing priorities for the small pot of LDDF funding as an obstacle.

Strategic planning

Around half of Partnership Boards reported that they had reviewed their strategic plans to take account of people from minority ethnic communities, although few Partnership Boards provided details of these reviews.

Partnership Boards

Just over half of Partnership Boards (52%) reported that they had changed some aspect of their operation to take account of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities. This most commonly involved setting up an ethnicity subgroup (29%), appointing an ethnicity champion (11%) and attempting to increase the number of members from minority ethnic communities, including staff (10%), local organisations (11%) and users or carers (16%).

Partnership Board strategies to improve services for people from minority ethnic communities included gaining information (18%), engaging local minority ethnic communities (9%), developing strategy documents (19%) and recruiting development workers to work with minority ethnic communities (9%). A minority of Partnership Boards (10%) reported that all their strategies routinely considered people from minority ethnic communities, although little detail was provided.

Achievements

Achievements were mentioned by over half of Partnership Boards (55%). These reflected the strategies mentioned above; training staff and raising awareness of relevant issues within services (11%) and local communities (6%); commissioning research into local ethnicity issues (9%); recruiting development workers (9%); and developing strategic action plans (7%). Some Partnership Boards also mentioned changes to local services, such as the development of day services for a specific ethnic community (9%), using person-centred planning with people from minority ethnic communities (7%), making short-term breaks more accessible to people from minority ethnic communities (6%) and developing advocacy/self-advocacy services for people from minority ethnic groups (6%).

Obstacles

Most Partnership Boards (84%) mentioned obstacles. Most of them concerned the nature of the local area; small minority ethnic communities (28%), small authorities with limited resources (5%) or large rural authorities with scattered minority ethnic communities (4%), resulting in difficulties in working strategically (7%). These Partnership Boards were more likely to report a lack of information (18%) and engagement with local minority ethnic communities (21%).

Although some Partnership Boards reported that competing priorities (13%), a lack of staff time (11%) and a lack of resources (12%) were major obstacles, similar numbers of Partnership Boards mentioned organisational obstacles such as a lack of organisational commitment (11%), the operation of Partnership Boards (10%) and problems in staff recruitment, training, retention and promotion (11%).

From their responses to this survey, Partnership Boards seem to be moving at different speeds. There seems to be progress in the number of Partnership Boards that are able to report:

- Good information on the numbers and needs of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities in their local area
- Using LDDF funding to promote new initiatives to improve services for people from minority ethnic communities
- Changes to the operation of the Partnership Board to raise the profile of people from minority ethnic communities and develop strategies to improve services
- The development of action plans and strategies to improve services for people from minority ethnic communities that are “owned” by the Partnership Board
- Organisational leadership and commitment to improving services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities
- Some movement from information gathering and strategy development to changes in services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities.

However, some Partnership Boards responding to this survey reported that improving services for people from minority ethnic communities was not a high priority, resulting in a lack of strategic leadership and action. Poor information, small numbers of people from minority ethnic communities in the local area and a lack of engagement with local minority ethnic communities were given as reasons for not pursuing strategic action, rather than as factors stimulating such action.

Clearly, the Valuing People Support Team has been successful in raising the profile of ethnicity issues amongst many Partnership Boards and helping Partnership Boards to make progress. However, such progress is not universal, with some Partnership Boards requiring further support and encouragement to engage seriously with people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities.

Introduction

From the publication of Valuing People onwards, it has been recognised that people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities receive a relatively poor deal from existing services (Department of Health, 2001, 2004; Mir et al., 2001). Valuing People has given Partnership Boards the responsibility for leading improvements in services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities. Several initiatives have assisted Partnership Boards in this task, including:

1. Legislation, particularly the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)
2. *Learning Difficulties and Ethnicity: A Framework for Action*, commissioned by the Valuing Support Team and Department of Health to provide practical guidance to Partnership Boards (Valuing People Support Team, 2004)
3. A national good practice network run by ARC and funded by the Department of Health
4. Regional ethnicity networks, set up by the Valuing People Support Team with DH funding support
5. A leadership training course for some Partnership Boards to conduct in-depth strategic work to improve services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities, funded by Valuing People Support Team and the NHS Leadership Centre
6. A number of grants from Department of Health, for example to develop training capacity in this area and provide relevant materials for those responsible for race equality schemes
7. Helpful initiatives by other agencies, including CSCI, Disability Rights Commission and Commission for Racial Equality.

Dr Stephen Ladyman, Parliamentary Secretary of State for Community at the Department of Health asked for a report concerning the progress made by Partnership Boards in improving services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities. To assist in the production of the report, the Valuing People Support Team has commissioned the national survey of Partnership Boards discussed here.

The Survey

A short questionnaire for Partnership Boards was developed by the author in consultation with the Valuing People Support Team and the Learning Disability Taskforce Sub-group on Ethnicity. The questions were closely linked to the expectations of Dr Ladyman in his video speech to Partnership Boards for the launch events of *Learning Difficulties and Ethnicity – A Framework for Action*. The questionnaire asked for the following information:

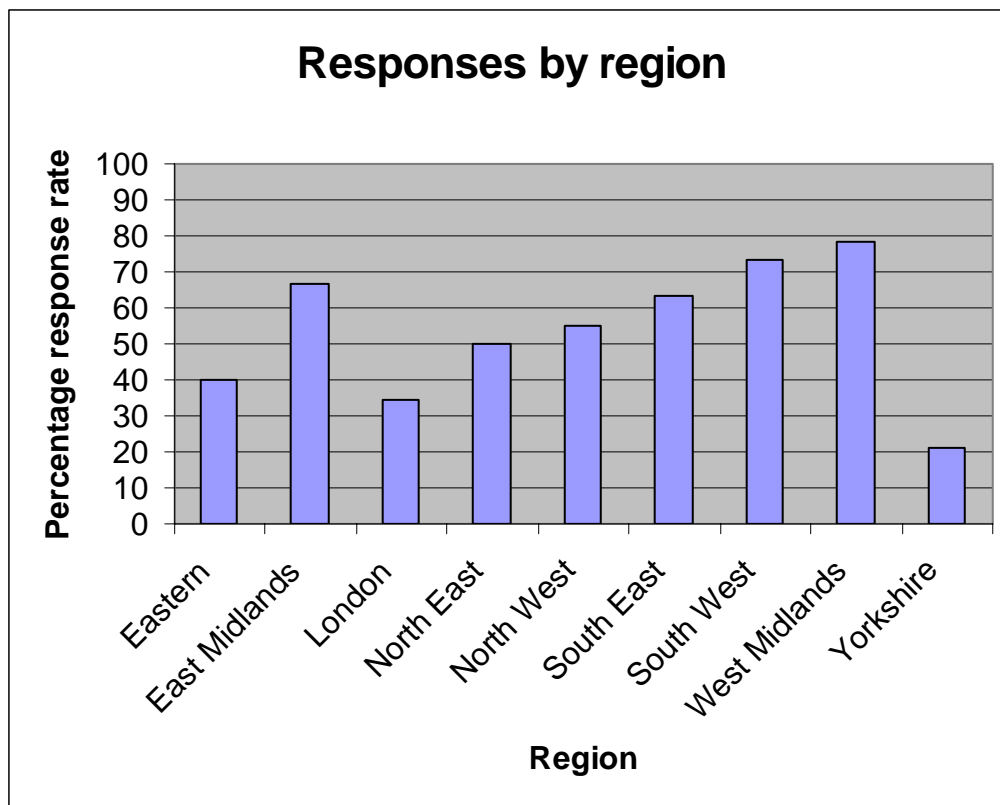
1. Did Partnership Boards have information on the expected numbers of people with learning disabilities in their area and the actual numbers of people known to services, broken down by ethnic group? What helped and hindered Partnership Boards in getting good information?
2. Did Partnership Boards spend any of their Learning Disability Development Fund allocation on initiatives to improve services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities and if so, how much and on what?
3. Have Partnership Boards reviewed their plans and strategies to make sure they meet the needs of people from all ethnic communities in their area?
4. Have Partnership Boards changed anything about how they operate to account into account people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities?
5. Are there any initiatives that Partnership Boards are particularly proud of that they would like to share with others?
6. What have the biggest obstacles been to improving services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities?

The questionnaire was sent electronically by the Valuing People Support Team to all Partnership Boards in England in December 2004. Two reminders were sent to non-responding Partnership Boards with additional copies of the questionnaire. All questionnaires received by 28 February 2005 are included in this report.

Results

Who Responded?

Completed questionnaires were returned by 82 Partnership Boards, a 51% response rate. The highest response rates were from Partnership Boards in the West Midlands, South West, East Midlands and South East. The lowest response rates were from Partnership Boards in Yorkshire, London and Eastern.



What Information Is Available?

We asked Partnership Boards whether they had any information on the number of people with learning disabilities they would estimate would be living in their area, broken down by ethnic group. We also asked Partnership Boards to provide us with the actual number of people with learning disabilities known to services in their area.

- Almost half (38 Partnership Boards; 46%) of responding Partnership Boards provided detailed information on the estimated number of people with learning disabilities in the area by ethnic group

- A substantial majority of responding Partnership Boards (61 Partnership Boards; 74%) provided detailed information on the number of people with learning disabilities known to services by ethnic group
- Most Partnership Boards also had information on more detailed ethnic categories (53 Partnership Boards; 65%) and age bands (55 Partnership Boards; 67%) across ethnic groups, although fewer Partnership Boards had any information on religion (36 Partnership Boards; 44%), support needs (34 Partnership Boards; 41%), specific services used (33 Partnership Boards; 40%) or carers (33 Partnership Boards; 40%)
- Many Partnership Boards reported that the broad categorisations of ethnicity used in the Census did not identify important ethnic and religious groups in their local area, such as Irish, traveller and Jewish communities. Information using the more detailed Census ethnic categories and religious categories were required to gain information that was useful for local planning purposes.

From the 26 Partnership Boards who gave information on both estimated and actual numbers in a form enabling comparison, 90.1% of the estimated population of people with learning disabilities was White, 1.9% was Black, 5.9% was Asian, 1.4% was Mixed and 0.7% was Chinese or Other. Within the population of people with learning disabilities known to services, 93.4% was White, 1.7% was Black, 3.0% was Asian, 0.1% was Mixed and 0.8% was Chinese or Other. However, only 21.5% of the total estimated population of people with learning disabilities was actually known to services.

Taken together, this pattern of information suggests that there is a considerable shortfall in services for people with learning disabilities across all ethnic groups. However, this shortfall is not constant across ethnic groups; White people with learning disabilities are over-represented and Asian people with learning disabilities are under-represented within services.

Information on the estimated number of people with learning disabilities in the local area was usually obtained by combining information on the general population living in the local area with information on general prevalence rates of learning disability to calculate estimated numbers of people with learning disabilities across different ethnic groups. The general population information was most commonly obtained using the 2001 Census. Partnership Boards used a range of prevalence estimates to estimate the number of people with learning disabilities in their area; most commonly the figures of 25 per 1,000 (people with mild learning disabilities) and 4 per 1,000 (people with severe learning disabilities) suggested in the Ethnicity Framework Audit Tool.

Information on the actual number of people with learning disabilities known to services were collected using a wide variety of methods, including:

- Social services electronic databases concerning people with learning disabilities (31 Partnership Boards; 38%). NHS (3 Partnership Boards; 4%), education (3 Partnership Boards; 4%) and integrated (4 Partnership Boards; 5%) databases were rarely used
- Access to a Learning Disability Register (5 Partnership Boards; 6%)
- Using data from statistical returns to the Government, such as the Referral, Assessment and Packages of Care (RAP) returns (5 Partnership Boards; 6%)
- Collecting information directly from support workers, managers and service providers (11 Partnership Boards; 13%)
- Collecting information from assessments, referrals and individual plans (13 Partnership Boards; 16%)
- Conducting meetings, consultations or local research projects with people from minority ethnic communities (9 Partnership Boards; 11%)
- Using local data from the 2001 Census (16 Partnership Boards; 20%).

Partnership Boards reported a number of factors that helped them get good information concerning people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities. One crucial factor was having a good electronic database containing information on people with learning disabilities, typically:

- A centralised, specific database for people with learning disabilities set up by services for people with learning disabilities, typically based on referral and assessment data inputted by service personnel (15 Partnership Boards; 18%)
- A Learning Disability Register (3 Partnership Boards; 4%).

For some Partnership Boards, general Local Authority information resources and personnel were reported to be helpful (7 Partnership Boards; 9%); as was 2001 Census data (4 Partnership Boards; 5%), child disability databases (2 Partnership Boards; 2%) and information collected for statutory returns or performance management purposes (3 Partnership Boards; 4%). However, for such information systems to work effectively, a number of supports needed to be in place, including:

- Ensuring that staff record ethnicity, religion and language accurately for every person with learning disabilities they come into contact with (10 Partnership Boards; 12%); staff training is crucial for this to make this happen (3 Partnership Boards; 4%)
- Having dedicated workers, firstly to maintain contacts with local minority ethnic communities and secondly to maintain the database (7 Partnership Boards; 9%)
- Ensuring that information is collected directly from people with learning disabilities and their families (4 Partnership Boards; 5%) in the appropriate language, either by interviewers with the appropriate language skills or through the use of interpreters (6 Partnership Boards; 7%);

Other Partnership Boards had also found useful ensuring that the recording of ethnicity was mandatory (1 Partnership Board); requiring that service providers give ethnicity data as part of contract monitoring procedures (1 Partnership Board); and discussing information requirements with managers (1 Partnership Board).

However, Partnership Boards also reported a wide range of problems in gaining good information on people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities. Although Partnership Boards did find electronic databases useful, they often reported problems that limited their helpfulness for planning purposes:

- Most importantly, a database is only as good as the information entered into it, and many Partnership Boards (32 Partnership Boards; 39%) reported that databases were often incomplete, with staff frequently not recording ethnicity, religion or preferred language of the service user
- Also important was that some databases were not set up to collect information on ethnicity, religion and preferred language that Partnership Boards needed for strategic planning (19 Partnership Boards; 23%)
- Databases were also rarely integrated across services or age groups and could use inconsistent definitions of learning disability, resulting in patchy, incomplete information or information on particular age groups (16 Partnership Boards; 20%). One Partnership Board also mentioned that the Data Protection Act imposed severe restrictions on the sharing of information across services
- Although some Partnership Boards reported that improvements were being made to databases, the change process often resulted in data not being available for a period of time (6 Partnership Boards; 7%).

- Some Partnership Boards reported that they had a lack of expertise and resources concerning the information systems being used in their local area (5 Partnership Boards; 6%).

Beyond the use of databases, Partnership Boards reported broader reasons for the difficulty in gaining good information. Some of these reasons concerned services themselves, particularly the service having competing priorities (4 Partnership Boards; 5%) and time pressures (5 Partnership Boards; 6%). Two Partnership Boards (2%) reported that it was difficult to convince staff of the importance of collecting good information without a critical mass of senior staff committed to improving services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities.

A second set of difficulties concerned the lack of relationship between services and local minority ethnic communities, in particular the resources, effort and skills required to effectively engage local minority ethnic communities (13 Partnership Boards; 16%). Partnership Boards also mentioned difficulties in getting good information when there were small numbers of people from minority ethnic communities in the area (2 Partnership Boards; 2%); when people were not known to services (2 Partnership Boards; 2%) and when local minority ethnic communities did not understand learning disability (1 Partnership Board; 1%).

How is the Learning Disability Development Fund being used?

We asked Partnership Boards about whether they were spending any of their Learning Disability Development Fund (LDDF) allocation on ethnicity issues, in both the 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 LDDF allocation years.

- For 2003-2004, 59 Partnership Boards (72%) reported receiving an LDDF allocation. However, only eight of these Partnership Boards (10%) reported spending some of their LDDF allocation on ethnicity issues in 2003-2004; spending an average £26,400 on ethnicity issues (an average 13% of their total LDDF allocation)
- For 2004-2005, 64 Partnership Boards (78%) reported receiving an LDDF allocation. Eighteen of these Partnership Boards (22%) reported spending some of their LDDF allocation on ethnicity issues in 2004-2005, spending an average £19,900 on ethnicity issues (an average 13% of their total LDDF allocation)
- Five Partnership Boards (6%) that had not allocated LDDF money to ethnicity issues so far reported that they planned to make ethnicity a priority for LDDF funding in 2005-2006.

Partnership Boards used their LDDF allocations to stimulate a wide range of local initiatives, including:

- Workshops and strategy days for users and carers from minority ethnic communities (2 Partnership Boards; 2%)
- Training for staff and the Partnership Board on ethnicity issues and the Race Relations Amendment Act (4 Partnership Boards; 5%)
- Development workers to engage with local minority ethnic communities (6 Partnership Boards; 7%), including the development of specific services such as short-term breaks (1 Partnership Board; 1%)
- The development of groups for users and carers from minority ethnic communities (3 Partnership Boards; 4%)
- Starting up an ethnicity subgroup of the Partnership Board (1 Partnership Board; 1%)
- Starting a leisure group for young people from minority ethnic communities (1 Partnership Board; 1%)
- Starting a drop-in service for Asian carers potentially interested in person-centred planning (1 Partnership Board; 1%)
- Developing self-advocacy for users from minority ethnic communities (3 Partnership Boards; 4%)
- Raising awareness of people with learning disabilities amongst minority ethnic communities (2 Partnership Boards; 2%)
- Altering assessment procedures to be inclusive of all local communities (1 Partnership Board; 1%)
- Conducting research into the needs of local minority ethnic communities, including travellers (2 Partnership Boards; 2%)
- Piloting general service initiatives with users and carers from minority ethnic communities (1 Partnership Board; 1%)
- In three areas with very high proportions of users from minority ethnic communities, using LDDF money to ensure that all service initiatives are relevant to and used by people across all local ethnic communities (3 Partnership Boards; 3%).

In addition, a further 13 Partnership Boards (16%) reported that ethnicity issues were routinely built into all LDDF initiatives undertaken by the Partnership Board. However, very few of these Partnership Boards provided examples of how this was achieved. One Partnership Board, for example, had set a target that all new service initiatives had to include at least a proportionate number of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities.

Of those Partnership Boards commenting on the use of LDDF money for ethnicity issues, the largest number (26 Partnership Boards; 32%) reported that there were no obstacles to them using LDDF money for ethnicity issues. However, other Partnership Boards reported a variety of obstacles to using LDDF money for ethnicity issues:

- Competing priorities (15 Partnership Boards; 18%)
- LDDF money often already being allocated to other priorities (7 Partnership Boards; 9%)
- Not enough LDDF money (6 Partnership Boards; 7%)
- Small numbers of people from minority ethnic communities in the local area (3 Partnership Boards; 4%)
- A lack of local information concerning people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities (3 Partnership Boards; 3%)
- Ethnicity not being recorded as a priority category in statutory returns to the Department of Health (3 Partnership Boards; 3%)
- Lack of organisational time and leadership (2 Partnership Boards; 2%)
- Problems recruiting relevant staff (1 Partnership Board; 1%).

How is strategic planning progressing?

We asked Partnership Boards if they had reviewed their strategic plans in a number of areas to take into account the needs of people from minority ethnic communities; 75 Partnership Boards (91%) responded to this question. Although the figures varied from area to area, in general around half the Partnership Boards reported that they had conducted reviews of their strategic plans in the areas of:

Person-centred planning	39 Partnership Boards (48%)
Health	34 Partnership Boards (41%)
Quality assurance	29 Partnership Boards (35%)
Workforce development	29 Partnership Boards (35%)
Housing	37 Partnership Boards (45%)
Modernising day services	42 Partnership Boards (51%)
Employment	35 Partnership Boards (43%)

However, few Partnership Boards provided details or examples of how the reviews had been conducted, or what the results of the reviews were. Examples of reviews and their consequences included:

- Completing an Impact Assessment as required by the Race Relations Amendment Act
- Review the workforce strategy of services for people with learning disabilities to ensure compliance with the general Local Authority workforce diversity strategy
- Developing a specialist day service for South Asian users
- Developing a flexible short-term break service, with South Asian users a priority group for this service
- Producing good practice guidance concerning person-centred planning with people from South Asian communities
- Developing a project concerning person-centred planning with families from minority ethnic communities
- Recruiting a development worker to work with people from minority ethnic communities on individualised services
- Working with the local Jobcentre Plus to increase the diversity of the workforce in services for people with learning disabilities
- Setting specific targets concerning the involvement of users from minority ethnic communities across a range of services.

How are Partnership Boards performing?

We asked Partnership Boards if they had reviewed their own performance in relation to people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities, and if so, what action they had taken.

Most Partnership Boards (59 Partnership Boards; 72%) reported that they had reviewed the operation of the Partnership Board, although it was not always clear that this was with reference to people from minority ethnic communities. Just over half of Partnership Boards (43 Partnership Boards; 52%) also reported that they had changed some aspect of the structure, responsibilities or membership of the Board. Common changes included:

- Setting up an ethnicity, equality or diversity subgroup of the Partnership Board (24 Partnership Boards; 29%)
- Ensuring that the Partnership Board included users and/or carers from minority ethnic communities (13 Partnership Boards; 16%), often with support from a development worker where necessary
- Increasing representation on the Partnership Board by staff and professionals from minority ethnic communities, including development workers appointed to work with people from minority ethnic communities (9 Partnership Boards; 11%)
- Having a designated ethnicity champion on the Partnership Board (8 Partnership Boards; 10%)
- Inviting representatives from organisations representing minority ethnic communities to join the Partnership Board (9 Partnership Boards; 11%), although these invitations were often not successful.

Most Partnership Boards (51 Partnership Boards; 62%) reported that the Partnership Board had developed strategies to improve services for people from minority ethnic communities. A wide range of strategies were reported, with the most common including:

- Gaining more information, including analysing existing databases, conducting audits and commissioning research (15 Partnership Boards; 18%)
- Producing a report containing strategic recommendations (10 Partnership Boards; 12%)
- Recruiting development workers to work with people from minority ethnic communities (7 Partnership Boards; 9%)

- Developing links with minority ethnic communities (7 Partnership Boards; 9%)
- Developing a strategic action plan concerning people from minority ethnic communities (6 Partnership Boards; 7%)
- Producing an Equality Impact Assessment, as required by the Race Relations Amendment Act (6 Partnership Boards; 7%)
- Developing more accessible information for people from minority ethnic communities (4 Partnership Boards; 5%), including translating Partnership Board materials, producing translated booklets and working with local Race Equality Councils to raise awareness of services amongst minority ethnic communities.

Fewer Partnership Boards mentioned the following strategies:

- Working through the Ethnicity Framework (3 Partnership Boards; 4%)
- Taking part in regional initiatives (3 Partnership Boards; 4%)
- Taking part in the National Leadership Programme (2 Partnership Boards; 2%)
- Developing advocacy for people from minority ethnic communities (2 Partnership Boards; 2%)
- Supporting staff from minority ethnic communities and increasing the workforce (2 Partnership Boards; 2%).

A small number of Partnership Boards (8 Partnership Boards; 10%) reported that all their strategies routinely considered people from minority ethnic communities, although there was very little evidence provided to support these statements.

What are Partnership Boards proud of?

Over half of Partnership Boards (45 Partnership Boards; 55%) reported an achievement since the introduction of Valuing People that they would be happy to share with others, concerning people from minority ethnic communities. An extremely wide range of achievements was reported, largely reflecting the Partnership Board strategies reported above. Achievements reported by more than one Partnership Board included:

- Training staff and raising awareness concerning ethnicity and culture (9 Partnership Boards; 11%)
- Commissioning research into the numbers and needs of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities (7 Partnership Boards; 9%)
- Recruiting a development worker to work with people from minority ethnic communities (7 Partnership Boards; 9%)
- Recruiting more staff from minority ethnic communities (7 Partnership Boards; 9%)
- Using person-centred planning to improve supports for people from minority ethnic communities (6 Partnership Boards; 7%)
- New day services developed for a specific ethnic community (6 Partnership Boards; 7%)
- Developing action plans with a high priority placed on ethnicity and culture (6 Partnership Boards; 7%)
- Developing advocacy and self-advocacy schemes relevant to people from minority ethnic communities (5 Partnership Boards; 6%)
- Raising awareness of people with learning disabilities and services amongst minority ethnic communities (5 Partnership Boards; 8%)
- Setting up an ethnicity subgroup of the PB (4 Partnership Boards; 5%)
- Making short-term break services more accessible to people from minority ethnic communities, particularly in terms of offering “women-only” short breaks (4 Partnership Boards; 5%)
- Developing support groups of carers from minority ethnic communities (3 Partnership Boards; 4%)
- Conducting an Equality Impact Assessment (3 Partnership Boards; 4%).

What obstacles have Partnership Boards encountered?

Finally, we asked Partnership Boards if they had encountered any obstacles in 2004 to improving services for people from minority ethnic communities. The vast majority of Partnership Boards (69 Partnership Boards; 84%) reported

obstacles in 2004, with four Partnership Boards (5%) reporting no major obstacles.

Many of these obstacles concerned the nature of the areas within which Partnership Boards were operating. Many Partnership Boards (23 Partnership Boards; 28%) reported that the small number of people from minority ethnic communities in their area was an obstacle to service improvement. These Partnership Boards were often small authorities with limited resources (4 Partnership Boards; 5%) or large rural authorities (3 Partnership Boards; 4%); in either case minority ethnic communities were often small, scattered and not concentrated in large communities (8 Partnership Boards; 10%), resulting in work being done individually rather than strategically (6 Partnership Boards; 7%) and a difficulty in maintaining staff skills and expertise (2 Partnership Boards; 2%). In contrast, one Partnership Board reported that the huge range of ethnic communities in the locality was an obstacle to delivering uniformly high quality services to each community.

Many Partnership Boards reported a lack of knowledge or information about minority ethnic communities (15 Partnership Boards; 18%) and/or inaccurate information (12 Partnership Boards; 15%). This often was associated with difficulties in engaging with local minority ethnic communities (17 Partnership Boards; 21%) and difficulties in finding people who do not currently use services (3 Partnership Boards; 4%). A small number of Partnership Boards reported that people from minority ethnic communities were reluctant to come forward to accept culturally insensitive services (5 Partnership Boards; 6%) or were suspicious of the motivations of service providers (1 Partnership Board; 1%).

A consistent theme amongst Partnership Boards was the low priority given to working with people from minority ethnic communities in the face of competing priorities (11 Partnership Boards; 13%). Some Partnership Boards suggested that a lack of resources was a major obstacle to improving services for people from minority ethnic communities (10 Partnership Boards; 12%); and a lack of dedicated staff time was also mentioned (9 Partnership Boards; 11%). However, organisational obstacles involving the co-ordination of different agencies and a lack of organisational commitment (9 Partnership Boards; 11%) were reported by a similar number of Partnership Boards, along with problems in the operation of Partnership Boards themselves (8 Partnership Boards; 10%) and problems in recruiting, training, retaining and promoting suitable staff (9 Partnership Boards; 11%).

Conclusions

From their responses to this survey, Partnership Boards seem to be moving at different speeds in improving services for people with learning disabilities from

minority ethnic communities. There seems to be progress in the number of Partnership Boards that are able to report:

- Good information on the numbers and needs of people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities in their local area, with some evidence of Partnership Boards putting substantial efforts into improving the quality of their information and attempting to reach out to new communities
- Using LDDF funding to promote new initiatives to improve services for people from minority ethnic communities, including a small number of Partnership Boards where ethnicity issues are routinely addressed within general LDDF initiatives
- Changes to the operation of the Partnership Board to raise the profile of people from minority ethnic communities and develop strategies to improve services
- The development of action plans and strategies to improve services for people from minority ethnic communities that are “owned” by the Partnership Board.
- Organisational leadership and commitment to improving services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities, even in some areas with small and scattered minority ethnic communities
- Some movement from information gathering and strategy development to changes in services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities.

However, some Partnership Boards responding to this survey reported that improving services for people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities was not a high priority, resulting in a lack of strategic leadership and action. Poor information, small numbers of people from minority ethnic communities in the local area and a lack of engagement with local minority ethnic communities seemed to be given as reasons for not pursuing strategic action, rather than as factors stimulating such action.

Clearly, the Valuing People Support Team, with support from the Department of Health and the ethnicity sub-group of the Task Force, has been successful in raising the profile of ethnicity issues amongst many Partnership Boards and helping Partnership Boards to make progress. However, such progress is not universal, with some Partnership Boards requiring further support and encouragement to engage seriously with people with learning disabilities from minority ethnic communities.

References

Department of Health (2001). *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century*. London: The Stationery Office.

Department of Health (2004). *Valuing People: Moving Forward Together – The Government's annual report on learning disability 2004*. London: Department of Health.

Mir, G., Nocon, A. & Ahmad, W. with Jones, L. (2001). *Learning Difficulties and Ethnicity*. London: Department of Health.

Valuing People Support Team/DH (2004). *Learning Difficulties and Ethnicity: A Framework for Action*. London: Department of Health.