

Factsheet

The Race Equality Duty & Violence Against Women

What is the Race Equality Duty?

The Race Equality Duty (RED)¹ came into force in 2001 following the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. It requires listed public bodies in England, Wales and Scotland to take steps to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination.
- Promote equality of opportunity.
- Promote good relations between different racial groups.

This is known as the 'general duty' and is enforceable by judicial review proceedings and anyone can take this action. In addition, many listed public bodies are subject to specific duties, including publishing Race Equality Schemes every three years, which are enforced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In addition, inspectorates and regulatory bodies should monitor for performance against the duties.

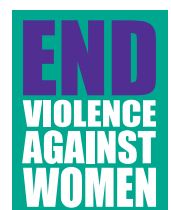
There are statutory Codes of Practice for England and Wales and for Scotland, as well as guidance for specific sectors (e.g. criminal justice and education) and on issues such as ethnic monitoring and procurement. These are available on the Commission's website.

There are also public sector duties to promote equality on the grounds of gender and disability.

Violence against ethnic minority women

Violence against women is both a cause and consequence of women's inequality and can have a devastating impact on individual victims, affecting their mental and physical health, as well as employment and educational opportunities. But it is also a serious problem for society more broadly; government research puts the cost of domestic violence alone in England and Wales at £23 billion a year.

Whilst ethnic minority women experience violence – such as domestic violence and sexual violence – that other women experience, they can also be more vulnerable to specific forms of violence such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, crimes in the name of honour and trafficking for sexual exploitation.



Many ethnic minority women face additional barriers accessing services, for example if their first language isn't English. Furthermore, women with uncertain immigration status have no recourse to many public funds, e.g. ineligibility for housing benefit limits access to refuges which means they may be trapped in a violent relationship.

- 85% of victims of forced marriage are female².
- It is estimated that 86,000 women and girls in the UK have undergone female genital mutilation and 7000 girls are currently at risk³.
- Each year, around 600 women in England and Wales experience domestic violence, immigration and no recourse to public funds problems⁴.

How can the Race Equality Duty address violence against women?

Here are just some of the ways that the RED can address violence against women:

- In their Race Equality Schemes schools and colleges should ensure they have appropriate policies in place for addressing forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other culturally specific forms of harm.
- Local authorities should identify the needs of ethnic minority women in their area who experience violence and ensure that specialist women's voluntary sector services are adequately funded.
- The Police, Crown Prosecution Service and other public bodies should disaggregate statistics by race/ethnicity and gender with respect to violence against women.
- Advice and support services must be accessible to women from minority communities who may fear seeking help from outside their communities.
- Public bodies need to ensure that staff are trained on the needs of ethnic minority women so that anti-discrimination policies and best practices – e.g. guidelines on forced marriage – are implemented by schools, police forces, social services and other agencies.

1 The Race Equality Duty is contained in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 1971.

2 *Forced Marriage: A wrong not a right*, Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2005.

3 Source: FORWARD www.forwarduk.org.uk.

4 Source: Southall Black Sisters' evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on immigration control, 2006.

To download ***Tools for Change***, a toolkit of factsheets and enforcement letters, and for more information on violence against women go to www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk.

For more information on the Gender Equality Duty go to www.equalityhumanrights.com.