

The Race Equality Foundation promotes race equality in social support (what families and friends do for each other) and public services (what 'workers' do with people who need support).

We do this by:

- exploring what is known about discrimination and disadvantage
- developing evidenced-based better practice to promote equality
- disseminating better practice through educational activities, conferences, written material and websites.

As part of a project highlighting best practice in black and minority ethnic mental health, we interviewed several organisations who dealt with people who are or have been in detention. Many organisations were examples of best practice, and had developed models to help support those going through the asylum system. There were also common issues that these groups were encountering:

1) Lack of funding

All of the groups we spoke to who worked with people in detention and/or refugees and asylum seekers were in a precarious financial situation. There is clear, and at times overwhelming, demand for services including: advice and destitution relief, wellbeing programmes, social and befriending activities, physical health promotion, and TB, HIV/Aids and drug use.

2) Victims of torture are still detained

A group that worked specifically with victims of torture told us that these people are still being detained or placed on the Detained Fast Track, despite this being contrary to policy.

3) Charities face ethical issues

When dealing with clients who are currently in detention, some groups said they felt there were ethical issues in engaging with a system that was causing harm to their clients. This was particularly the case with organisations who delivered work inside detention.

4) Experience of detention and the asylum system impacted on mental health

Several groups stated that the status of their clients, and the experience of the migration system were a contributor to mental illness. Specifically, stress and anxiety were common problems affecting those who were waiting decisions. Negative decisions, or feeling disbelieved by the Home Office and other agencies was felt to have a significant impact on mental health. This was in addition to pre-existing mental health conditions.