

## Recent developments

### ***The report of the inquiry into the death of Zahid Mubarek***

The Report on this death at Feltham was presented to Parliament on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2006. It identified numerous problems and failings which contributed to the circumstances leading up to the death of Zahid Mubarek and made 88 recommendations for improvement. The report was critical of individual managers and officers, but also highlighted the failure to take racism in the prison seriously. Because the prison was overcrowded and under-resourced, when the perpetrator, Stewart, arrived at the prison, the only bed available was in Mubarek's cell. Information on Stewart's severe personality problems and behaviour and previous acts of violence was not shared between prisons so Stewart was not identified as a risk on arrival. Signs of his problems were also not picked up when he was at Feltham.

Recommendations of the Inquiry include an end to enforced cell-sharing, new measures to ensure that security information is shared, health assessments to assess the risk which inmates may pose to others. The Inquiry also concluded that the Prison Service should consider whether to recognise a concept of institutional religious intolerance.

See: [www.zahidmubarekinquiry.org.uk](http://www.zahidmubarekinquiry.org.uk)

### ***Racism and prisons***

The Zahid Mubarek Inquiry has completed the second phase of the inquiry, examining measures which need to be taken to minimise the chance of a similar tragedy being repeated. Mr Justice Keith is now writing the Final Report which is expected to be published in the Spring of 2006.

In its submission to the second phase of the inquiry the Commission for Racial Equality reviewed the progress of the Prison Service in achieving the goals in the Action Plan. A Race and Equalities Action Group in the Prison Service has been set up to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure proactive promotion of race equality, and to take account of any possibility of discrimination in those policies. Areas for immediate

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attention have been identified and incorporated in the Prison Service race equality scheme for 2005-08. The Prison Service has developed procedures for carrying out race equality impact assessments and new performance targets for race equality have been introduced, including staff recruitment. These have been supported by training schemes for staff carrying out impact assessments. There is also a new system of consultation with prisoners, staff and the local community on race equality issues. The CRE acknowledged the efforts which have been made to address the problems highlighted by the Mubarek case, but the CRE found that there was still evidence of poor practice. It expressed particular concern about the complaints procedures and racist incident reporting procedures. For example, prisoners had reported that complaints were read by other officers so that they felt inhibited in making complaints. Although the formal policies to address issues of racism and to promote equality existed, the issue was that they were not always being implemented and this needed to be addressed. Managers needed to be aware of what was actually happening on the ground and not just at a formal level.

See CRE Submission to the Zahid Mubarek Inquiry, 13 July 2005

[www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk)

### ***Race: monitoring under section 95***

See: <http://www.crimlinks.com/Feb242005.htm> for a summary of *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System* issued by the Home Office in February 2005. For the full report see <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/section951.html> Black and ethnic minority groups accounted for about 24% of the male prison population and about 31% of the female prison population in February 2003.

### ***Support for black prisoners***

A National Body of Black Prisoner Support Groups has been set up to collect information and to act on behalf of support agencies working with black prisoners.

See [www.nbbpsg.co.uk](http://www.nbbpsg.co.uk)

### ***Women prisoners***

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Smart Justice for Women - a campaign to end imprisonment for women convicted of non-violent offences - has brought together a range of groups. Its aim is to promote community based solution to crime, to promote measures which reduce women's re-offending, include improved mental health care for women, and training and education opportunities. See: [www.smartjustice.org/women](http://www.smartjustice.org/women)

### ***The Women's Offending Reduction Programme***

The main focus of the programme is on community-based provision for women offenders and the use of custody as a last result. The annual review, published in September 2005, indicates that the priority areas continue to be drug misuse and mental health problems of women offenders. Additional funding has been allocated to set up initiatives which deal with women's offending behaviour in the community. Some progress is being made in improving the provision of women only hostels, improving community based mental health services for women, as well as improving mental health facilities for women in prison. New offending behaviour programmes for women are being developed, for example, on Acquisitive Crime. The current strategy is to allocate women prisoners as close to home as possible where provision appropriate to their needs can be provided. 5 prisons have been designated for foreign national women prisoners. Young women aged 15-16 have now been removed from prison accommodation.

*Women's Offending Reduction Programme*, Annual Review 2004-2005, London, NOMS, 2005.

### ***The Corston Report***

The Corston Report on women in the criminal justice system was published on 13th March 2007. This review was initiated following the deaths of six women at Styal prison in 2002-03. It proposes a 10-year programme of reform and makes 43 recommendations, including closing down existing women's prisons and replacing them with small secure units to enable women to be located nearer their homes. It also advocates an end to routine strip searching in women's prisons and argues for improved sanitation. The Report has been welcomed by prison reform campaigners.

***The composition of prison staff:***

The proportion of minority ethnic staff in the Prison Service in 2006-07 was 5.9% with the target being 6%.

HM Prison Service (2007) *Annual Report and Accounts April 2006 – March 2007*, London HMSO

***The composition of the prison population:***

The latest statistics on *Race and the Criminal Justice System* were published in October 2007 by the Ministry of Justice. They show that members of ethnic minorities were 6 times more likely to be in prison. In June 2006 members of minority ethnic groups, including foreign nationals, were 26% of the male prison population, and 28% of the female prison population. Foreign nationals comprised 40% of the black and minority ethnic prison population. [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

***Latest available figures:***

In public sector prisons there were 19,119 prisoners from minority ethnic groups at the end of March 2007. The composition was as follows: 73% white, 16% black or black British, 7% Asian or Asian British, 3% mixed ethnicity, 1% from Chinese and other ethnic groups.

HM Prison Service (2007) *Annual Report and Accounts April 2006 – March 2007*, London HMSO