

Exploring the experiences of minority ethnic women in resettlement: What role, if any, does ethnic culture play in the resettlement of Black (African-Caribbean) women offenders in the UK?

Elizabeth Owens

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Abstract

The aim was to explore the experiences of black and minority ethnic women in resettlement in order to form a picture of resettlement from their perspective and to determine what, if any, role ethnic culture played in resettlement. Four questions were formed as guidance:

1. What are the resettlement needs of minority ethnic women?
2. What role does ethnic culture play in the resettlement of minority ethnic women in the UK?
3. How do minority ethnic women access and understand resettlement services? Is this influenced by their ethnic culture? If yes, to what degree, and how?
4. How are some providers successfully engaging these women? What are the 'challenging' areas to work on in making services accessible and meaningful to these women?

Findings

- The experience of resettlement for minority ethnic women is not significantly influenced by their ethnic culture in a way that participants could identify. Although 'extra' support (family networks, children) was requested by participants for black minority ethnic women, the type of support identified was not directly related to ethnic or cultural needs.
- Minority ethnic women's experiences of resettlement focus largely on their immediate needs in terms of housing, food, income, and the women interviewed did not report the necessity of black and minority ethnic specialised services to meet those needs.
- The service providers had no strategic plan for engaging and including minority ethnic women and could benefit from conducting a needs assessment. They felt their services were meaningful by providing support plans and a non-discriminatory approach.
- The research explored the experiences of minority ethnic women in resettlement in London and, although the sample size was small, qualitative experiences explored gave insight into the resettlement process. Additional research will be required to build on this project, as set out in the recommendations below. It is important to hear women's experiences, to collect statistics and stories to ensure equal treatment and in order to provide appropriate support services that actually meet the needs of the women.

Recommendations

- Follow up interviews would be useful as it was clear that most participants had not thought about the subject matter before (although this in itself is revealing).
- It is crucial to speak to women preparing for release, to get their views on resettlement preparation and expectations in order to match this up with the experience of having been in resettlement for a while. It is also crucial to speak with probation officers with experience of working with women to determine whether or not they find a difference in successfully ensuring resettlement among different minority ethnicities. [It is an essential duty that state bodies ensure they are providing equal opportunities to those within their remit under the Equality Act 2010, which incorporates race and gender with other protected characteristics into one piece of legislation.]
- Further research comparing the experiences of minority ethnic women and their white counterparts in resettlement in order to determine appropriate services to meet their needs would be illuminating. This could be in terms of highlighting need for specialised services or need for a concerted focus on black and minority ethnic integration into generic support services.
- It would be interesting to explore any differences/similarities between minority ethnic support (BME organisations) and gender specific support (women's organisations), and where black minority ethnic women find most meaningful provision (if either).
- A separate study on the vulnerable group of foreign nationals who have an insecure immigration status but remain in the UK, on appeal, and are resettling is necessary in relation to meeting the needs of those resettling in the UK and crucial in terms of reducing re-offending.