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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?

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

The aim of this research project 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 to achieve this aim:

1. What are the resettlement needs of minority ethnic women?
2. What role does ethnic culture play in the resettlement of African, Caribbean, Black and mixed (within these groups) 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?

Current literature on the topic is focused on the experiences of minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system and resettlement is largely neglected. There is a lack of data on minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system in general, but particularly in regard to resettlement. Official reports and consultations stress the need for identification and evidence of minority ethnic women's experiences.

Through semi-structured interviews with minority ethnic women in resettlement and service providers providing resettlement support to minority ethnic women, participants were asked to share their experiences. Ethnic culture was not identified by the sample as a primary concern in resettlement. Rather, both women in resettlement and service providers were more concerned with meeting 'general primary needs' that are broadly shared by individuals in resettlement, such as housing, income and child issues. In spite of this, all the participants felt that minority ethnic women had unique and different needs in resettlement than those of their white counterparts.

1: Introduction

As members of several groups vulnerable to discrimination (with regard to ethnicity, gender, offender/ex-offender status), minority ethnic women offenders/ex-offenders may encounter a range of experiences of resettlement different to those of women offenders/ex-offenders in general and to those of male offenders/ex-offenders who are members of their minority ethnic group. This reflection is based on the findings of several policies, programmes and projects within the resettlement sector that specialise in the resettlement of black and minority ethnic women and is discussed further in the literature review.

The role of discrimination in the experiences of minority ethnic women has been under-explored. There is limited information on the characteristics and needs of minority ethnic women in resettlement, as a general group or as distinct ethnic groups. There may be unidentified barriers and/or advantages experienced by minority ethnic women during resettlement. Furthermore, factors such as economic, social, immigration and discrimination affect women's offending/re-offending patterns, yet there is little information on how these factors may interplay, with ethnicity and gender, to create challenges or advantages to successful resettlement (Fawcett Society 2009).

As an employee of Women in Prison, a national charity based in London, my role is to manage projects that offer support and aid to women in resettlement through signposting and assessment. One of these projects is currently a specialised project for black and minority ethnic women. During the course of this research, I also completed an internship for The Fawcett Society's 'Seeing Double' campaign, making the issues of ethnic minority women in the UK visible. These two undertakings enhanced my sensitivity to issues particular to black and minority ethnic women.

The purpose of this research is to explore the resettlement experiences of black and minority ethnic women in order to discover what role, if any, ethnic culture plays in resettlement. It is not the intent of this work to attribute whether or not experiences of resettlement shared by black and minority ethnic women is definitively due to the impact of their ethnicity. This limited scope is largely due to the small scale of this project and other resource constraints.

There were several issues regarding definition of terms that needed to be clarified before any fieldwork took place in order to ensure that the participants and the researcher shared similar understandings of the concepts under discussion.

1.1 Ethnicity

Eisner and Parmar (2008: 171-172) compare the Oxford English Dictionary (2008: 173) definition of ethnicity as a social group that 'shares a distinctive cultural and historical tradition' to that of Max Weber who defined ethnicity as constituted by the subjective belief in a shared ancestry that facilitates a group formation based on shared economic position, migration experiences, or exposure to discrimination (Eisner and Parmar (2008: 171-173). This broadly forms the understanding of ethnicity used for this research.

Throughout this research project characteristics attributed to 'ethnicity' may in fact be attributed to socio-economic or migrant status. It is important not to 'initially assume that ethnicity is automatically relevant to the research question' without implying that it is irrelevant (Eisner and Parmar 2008: 175).

1.2 Gender

The concept of gender can be widely interpreted. However the majority of people understand gender as a binary concept based on the biological differences between male and female. Nevertheless, this was not an issue for this research project as it was aimed toward those that identified as being a woman and advertised in women's spaces, such as service projects targeting women, women's centre's and/or organisations and so on.

1.3 Intersectionality

People are made up of many identities that overlap and intersect in unique and diverse ways. Race, ethnicity, gender, class, social relations, history, structures of power, caste, culture, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, language, age, indigenous status, health status, disabilities, refugee/displaced person and migrant status are all examples of unique layers or dimensions that contribute to an individual's identity. The creation and evolution of the theory of intersectionality

has been led by racial/ethnic minority feminists. 'Intersectional discrimination' is the point where two or more dimensions of an individual's identity intersect to create a specific type of discrimination based on the convergence. 'Intersectionality' is originally a feminist theory as well as a developing method or approach to the analysis of discrimination (Crenshaw 2000). The implications of the effects of where and how these dimensions intersect remain under-studied. Intersectional discrimination can take many forms. Any type of discrimination that occurs at (and because of) the crossroads or intersection of where two different dimensions overlap can be vulnerable to this type of discrimination. However, the intersection of race and gender has received a lot of scholarly attention, most notably, by Black feminists in the United States.

Although people may have one or several dimensions in common, they may experience discrimination for the same dimension differently. This may have to do with the ways in which the dimension that they have in common interact or intersect with dimensions that they do not have in common, as well as individual life factors and experiences. The points where different dimensions intersect or cross one another create complicated dynamics and raise unique questions for equality (AWID 2004).

Understanding the concept of intersectionality is important for understanding why individuals are marginalized and why their marginalization continues despite policies and programs aimed to help them. The negative implications and consequences for non-recognition of intersectionality in anti-discrimination discourse disproportionately affect women of colour and threaten to invalidate any policy or strategic anti-discrimination endeavour (Crenshaw 2000; AWID 2004).

The concept of intersectionality is relevant to this research in that an understanding of an intersectional approach is necessary to make any goal toward equality possible. Equality cannot be complete if it ignores members of the group. Paying attention to all members of the group will necessarily have to take an account of the differences between group members and the different challenges and obstacles that keep some members of the group from enjoying the same group-related rights and privileges as the others.

1.4 Resettlement

For the purposes of this research, resettlement is defined by the researcher as the time period or process for an offender after having left custody and resettling within the community. The length of this time-frame is self-defined individually by participants based on their personal conceptualisation as to whether or not they are (still) in resettlement. Nevertheless, since this term is used quite widely in policy, statutory and community sectors, I asked each participant what their understanding of resettlement was and their responses were analysed and will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

1.5 Right to Remain

An important criterion for this research was targeting women with the legal right to remain in the UK. Whether that right is indefinite or time-limited, this constraint was set in order to differentiate between the experiences of foreign national black and minority ethnic women without leave to remain and facing deportation, and those with right to remain.

1.6 Summary

This report will explore the experience of resettlement for black and minority ethnic women, specifically, African and/or Caribbean ethnic women through the intersectional lens of gender (women) and its dynamics with the dimension of ethnicity (with consideration for social class, nationality). More specifically, resettlement will be analyzed from the location of black and minority ethnic women in London. This narrow focus is in large part due to the scope of this work.

This paper seeks to understand how resettlement is experienced in the lives of black and minority ethnic women. First, relevant literature will be reviewed followed by an in-depth look at the methodology employed. Next, the following research questions will be explored:

- What are the resettlement needs of minority ethnic women?
- What role, if any, does 'ethnic culture' play in the resettlement of African, Caribbean, Black and mixed (within these groups) women in the UK?
- How do minority ethnic women access and understand resettlement services? Is this influenced by their ethnic culture?

- 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?

Finally, conclusions and recommendations for further research will be considered.

2: A review of the current literature

'Black women represent the greatest ratio of their population incarcerated according to ethnicity and gender comparably to any other group. Ethnic minority women are the most disproportionate represented group found among prison in England and Wales' (Walker 2008: 4).

As of June 2007 Black and minority ethnic women accounted for 29% of the female prison population, whereas Black and minority ethnic men make up 26% of the male prison population. These figures include foreign nationals. Figures from the same study state that 25% of the women's prison population are foreign nationals, 33% of who are from Nigeria and Jamaica. Recent statistics show that minority ethnic individuals make up 27% of the British national population, a 25% increase from 2005 (MOJ 2010: 25). 'Blacks are five times more likely to be in prison than their white counterparts' (MOJ 2008: 102).

'Between 1994 and 2003 the rise in black female prisoners was higher, at 197% than the rise for women of all ethnicities (141%). The growth in the black female prison population was significantly inflated by a rise of 233.5% in the numbers of foreign national black female prisoners. However, the rise in the number of black British female national prisoners was still higher, at 153.9% than that of their white counterparts' (House of Commons–Home Affairs Committee, 2007:27 as cited in Walker 2008: 9).

The Commission on Women in the Criminal Justice System (2009) notes in their final report that women are not a homogenous group. Women, like men, have various identities; cultural, religious, racial, sexual orientation. These identities may intersect, with a compounding effect, with gender to create unique conditions that are vulnerable to

discrimination and increased marginalisation. On this basis, literature on women in the criminal justice system often imply that minority ethnic women *may* experience the criminal justice system in ways that are different to those of their ethnic male or white female counterparts (Agozino 1997; Chigwada-Bailey, 1989, 2003; Bosworth, 1999; Carlen 2002, 2004).

2.1   The experiences of minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system

Biko Agozino (1997) examines whether the problems faced by black women in the criminal justice system are 'significantly' different from those that black men encounter and/or 'significantly' different than those that white women encounter.

Agozino (1997) asserts that attempts to look at black people in the criminal justice system inherently exclude black women. Furthermore, research on women in the criminal justice system is implicitly focused on white women. Not only is the information produced by these studies misleading about the circumstances black women face, but also about the circumstances of black men and white women in the criminal justice system. Research solely focusing on white women, without placing their experience within the overall experiences of all women in the criminal justice system, might provide misleading conclusions in the context of a fuller picture.

Ruth Chigwada-Bailey (1989, 2003) has contributed substantially to the literature on minority ethnic women within the criminal justice system. In her most recent book, Chigwada-Bailey describes three forces of race, gender and class that combine to create 'greater potential for unequal treatment.' She argues research on women in the criminal justice system commonly focuses on one 'force in isolation as if each force applies regardless of the others.' For example, the force of 'race' applies to issues that affect one's race regardless of gender. The force of 'gender' applies to issues that affect women, regardless of race. And the force of 'class' applies to issues that affect individuals of a certain socioeconomic status regardless of race or gender. Chigwada-Bailey (2003:11)

disagrees with this approach to research and asserts that the, 'whole is greater than the sum of the parts.'

Chigwada-Bailey (2003) describes research on minority ethnic women as mainly focused on family life, employment and education. Through interviews, observations and data Chigwada-Bailey explores the ways in which disadvantage may be aggravated in the case of African-Caribbean women who find themselves involved in the Criminal Justice System as suspects and offenders. For example, for many black women, the family may be a violent and dangerous place, but that she will utilise it as a form of support against harassment and racism, and as a 'cultural and political retreat from white supremacy' (25). Many black women consider their race a primary factor, above gender, when dealing with criminal justice agencies, such as, when police come to their home to arrest their children.

2.2   Culturally sensitive service provision

Research in 2002 found little separate or specialist group-work provision for black and Asian offenders in probation services. Where such programmes did exist, staff interviewed felt there was a need for separate, specialist provision and claimed that such programmes were effective in reducing re-offending amongst this offender group (Powis, B and Walmsley, R.K. 2002).

The Fawcett Society (2004) includes culturally sensitive provision, such as employing staff from similar backgrounds (though this does this does not necessarily equate to culturally sensitive provision) as the client group or providing training around race and culture issues as an effective strategy for retaining minority ethnic female service users.

2.3   Women or ethnic minorities

Academic literature on women in the criminal justice system tends to focus on women generally. Although literature often focuses on a particular characteristic of women, for

example mental health issues, it consistently neglects a culturally focused perspective. The literature reviewed has a tendency to note a compounding effect of multiple identities vulnerable to disadvantage and gender and race are often given as examples of this, however the research lacks any focused attempt to explore this particular aspect.

For example, Bosworth (1999) recommends that the identities that make up an individual be taken into consideration when analysing the impact and understanding of imprisonment. Without understanding the role of identity in the criminal justice system, particularly with regard to prisoners, appropriate and meaningful research and work cannot be accomplished, as it will always exclude individuals, which it assumes to include. Bosworth's own research is focused on women generally, excluding any central focus on minority ethnic women, although she does address ethnicity much more than a lot of other research.

Carlen (1998) argues that the informal social controls which women experience (though differently according to class and ethnicity) outside prison, with the formal penal regulations enforced within prisons create gender-specific and disproportionate pain to women in custody. Such pain is discriminatory and destructive as well as anti-social. Although Carlen recognises the importance of identities in relation to discrimination and positive social behaviour, Carlen's research is also focused on women generally; potentially excluding marginalised groups of women.

Research on minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system implicitly includes minority ethnic women. For example, a Race for Justice Report (2008) highlights the inequalities faced by minority ethnic communities within the criminal justice system. Its most pointed reference to minority ethnic women is Recommendation 8 of 11, 'The high levels of BME women prisoners has been noted with concern by Race for Justice which calls on criminal justice agencies to review alternatives to custody and ensure that resettlement strategies take into account this group' (14).

Additionally, Sharp et al (2006) investigated the resettlement needs of black and minority ex-offenders in the West Midlands. They interviewed 72 participants, 7 of whom were female. Sharp et al recognise the small female sample and note the gender differences particularly in mental health and drug issues as well as housing especially in regards to children, though it is unclear if these differences are in any way characterised by ethnicity. The research concluded that minority ethnic male and female offenders in the West Midlands do not have significantly different resettlement needs to their white counterparts.

2.4 Policy on women in the criminal justice system

Perhaps the most influential policy making in relation to women in the criminal justice system has been *The Corston Review* (2007). In 2007, Baroness Corston reviewed the female prison estate and authored a report that contained 46 recommendations to the government. The government (2007) subsequently accepted 44 of these recommendations. The report references specific provision for minority ethnic women in Recommendation 30, '[…] services should be provided [….] to meet the profiled needs of local women, including minorities such as BME women' (24). In their response (MOJ 2007: 24), the government accepted this recommendation.

Both the Corston Review and the Government's Response, generally focus on women as a group, however, Corston does specifically highlight that minority ethnic women face additional barriers in resettlement, such as, 'racial discrimination, stigma, isolation, cultural differences, language barriers and lack of employment skills' (27). She argues that additional support and interventions based on the needs of minority ethnic women is needed in order to achieve equality of outcomes.

The report, *Race Relations in Prisons: Responding to Adult Women from Black and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds* (HMPS March 2009) served chiefly to highlight the lack of information about minority ethnic women rather than provide any new and significant information. The report strongly advocates the necessity for further research of minority ethnic women in the

prison system whilst pointing out the specific areas where there is a lack of information. The report acknowledges that there is no diversity strategy and no guidance on the commissioning of services for minority groups, 'such as women and minority ethnic offenders.' And, 'there is no reference at all to the specific needs of women in the NOMS Race Review' (2008: 5).

The Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management (2008) strategic plan for reducing re-offending 2008-2011 states that prisons are directly involved in the local delivery of the strategic plans through their work on resettlement, particularly as reducing re-offending is a core function of prisons. Further, although resettlement needs for prisoners are important, there may need to be differences in the way the strategic plan is carried out; this includes those who 'invariably have significant and multiple resettlement needs' (MOJ and NOMS 2008: 10). There is a separate youth re-offending plan, but no separate female one.

The Fawcett Society (2007) stresses that recent revelations and reports in relation to the treatment of women justifies the urgency to address the distinct needs of women offenders. Minority ethnic groups in the female prison estate represent 29% of the prison population (compared with 22% of men). '20% of women's prison population are foreign nationals, many of whom are deported upon completion of their sentence and not released into the community in England and/or Wales, yet a significant number of minority ethnic women will be released into the community' (2007:2).

Lastly, the Government's Strategy for Diverting Women Away from Crime (MOJ, 2009) makes no mention of marginalised groups of women with the exception of young women.

In sum, many of the official reports reviewed gathered their information through literature review. Many of the sources, like Chigwada-Bailey (2003), appeared to be cited by almost

every report and many (Corston 2007; The Fawcett Society 2009; MOJ and NOMS 2008; Home Office 2002) did not attempt to question minority ethnic women directly about their perception of their experiences and needs. Although, the NOMS research for the Race Review did include speaking to women prisoners.

2.5   Exploring the resettlement needs of ethnic-minority women - a gap in the research

Research on the resettlement needs of women has generally been narrowly focused. For example, The Revolving Doors Agency conducted a needs assessment of the issues faced by women in HMP Styal with mental health problems and who were returning to Greater Manchester. The research explored the challenges of delivering services to women with multiple needs, and the need to outline more effective interventions to support these women in the community and reduce rates of re-offending.

Additionally, Joanna Keil and Chiara Samele (2008) of the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health conducted a similar study focused on the resettlement needs of women, with a particular focus on mental health needs, in one anonymous women's prison.

These studies offer important evidence, not previously collected, of the different resettlement needs of a particular group of women (those struggling with mental health issues). Moreover, these studies substantiate the need for further research on resettlement needs and services designed specifically for vulnerable groups of women who may engage with or approach resettlement services in ways that are characterised by their vulnerabilities.

Chigwada-Bailey (2003) includes a largely observational analysis on the needs of minority ethnic women in resettlement as part of the last chapter of her book. According to Chigwada-Bailey, the ethnic, gender and class discrimination minority ethnic women encounter is compounded by the stigma of having a criminal record. Chigwada-Bailey

claims that this stigma is stronger for black women than it is for other groups. The effect is compounded, for example, in situations where a minority ethnic woman might encounter ethnic and/or gender and/or class discrimination. Situations such as housing, education and employment, where her 'potential for unequal treatment' increases and she is likely to face discrimination because of her criminal history added to the discrimination she faces due to other factors-putting her further at a disadvantage.

It also appears, states Chigwada-Bailey, that less black people access support services for help. Chigwada-Bailey conjectures that this might be because black people find services generally discriminatory towards them and not exactly relevant for them. She gives an example of a woman who refused to go to a group after release because the discussion did not relate to black people and she could not relate to the group (2003: 121).

In sum, the literature reviewed demonstrates that there is a lack of data on minority ethnic women in the criminal justice system, particularly in regards to resettlement. In fact, there were no studies found that looked directly at this issue in relation to minority ethnic women. However, official reports and consultations stress the need for identification and evidence of minority ethnic women's experiences.

Common to the women-focused literature was the tendency to include minority ethnic women as an afterthought, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the situation could be very different. Likewise, common to the ethnic-specific literature, minority ethnic women are either assumed to be automatically represented by virtue of their ethnicity or are also included as an afterthought or an area for suggested research. Lastly, common to the research focused on minority ethnic women, including reports from official sources, minority ethnic women 'in general' are consistently grouped with foreign national women. Perhaps there are many logical arguments for this; however this practice may misrepresent the experiences and resettlement needs of minority ethnic women who are British citizens and residents.

3: Methodology

3.1   Initial development

I chose to utilize a qualitative approach because I was most interested in exploring the participant's experiences from their point of view and 'qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values- things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire' (Bogdan and Taylor 1998: 91-92). Quantitative methods, such as surveys, would not have allowed for the flexibility necessary for in-depth discussion or further questioning or to allow participants the ability to identify and express specific concepts and individual concerns. Another advantage to a qualitative approach is the ability to address potentially sensitive issues such as racism or other forms of prejudice with compassion and understanding in order to provide a comfortable space for the participants to elaborate on their experiences. In this way qualitative interviewing has the potential to explore deeper into an individual's experience than a survey method (Byrne 2004).

Bogdan and Taylor (1998) highlight the potential disadvantages to a qualitative approach: First, that the researcher must not assume that what person says during an interview is necessarily what the person believes or what the person would say or do in other situations. On the other hand, the reasons why someone would say something one day and then change their mind another day may also yield important data. Second, without observation of participants in their everyday lives and therefore the context of the participant's perspectives, the researcher is likely to misunderstand participant's language. However, my role as a BME project manager means that I have detailed understanding of the key issues and the situations people face that I have used to guide my interpretation of what participants told me.

Recognizing and taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research in terms of my research questions and aims as well as the scope and the timeframe of the research project, I decided the qualitative approach best suited my overall goals.

3.2   Research Methods

3.2.1   Semi-structured interviews

I had only one opportunity to interview participants so conducting semi-structured interviews appeared to be the best method for potentially extracting the most information (Arber 1993; Bernard 2000). Semi-structured interviews are a useful method of uncovering complex issues and participants are, to a degree, able to express themselves in their own language in a way that is familiar to them (Byrne 2004). Feminists have used this method to 'give voice' to women's experiences as well as other researchers who have used semi-structured interviews to explore 'voices and experiences, which they believe have been ignored, misrepresented or suppressed in the past' (Byrne 2004: 182).

I interviewed 10 minority ethnic women who had been released from custody as well as three service providers who offer resettlement support to minority ethnic women. These face-to-face interviews took place at a pre-arranged location.

I piloted the interview schedule for both women in resettlement and service providers with a professional colleague. My academic supervisor then reviewed it. The semi-structured interview schedule was adapted to incorporate feedback and allow for a better flow of questions.

I encouraged participants to communicate their attitudes and beliefs and I made every attempt to ensure the questioning was as open-ended as possible in order to gain spontaneous information about attitudes and actions.

My original strategy was to conduct two focus groups in prison for which I would use semi-structured focus group schedules. However, unfortunately, after I received permission to conduct my research in my chosen prison, that prison enacted a new vetting and barring scheme that required several documents that due to the short time I have lived in England, I was unable to provide. This new vetting and barring process increased the difficulty and timeframe with which I could access the prison and so I chose to eliminate this option so that I could continue forward with my research.

Lastly, my supervisor and I created a research information sheet and informed consent form. These were given to each participant to read before beginning the interview. I then verbally reviewed the information sheet, and asked the participant if they understood, then answered any questions.

3.2.2   Participants

My initial interview participants were chosen through non-random convenience sampling. I chose to use the convenience sampling method because it was the most useful for exploratory research and to get an idea of the general situation (Bernard 2000). My position with my current employer meant I was already in contact with several minority ethnic women who have been released from custody and have experienced resettlement. Three women who I do not personally work with, and who agreed to participate in my research were identified. From these women, I was able to identify the remaining interview participants through a method of snowball sampling.

After identifying and interviewing my initial participants, I asked them to contact and to provide my information to others who they thought might be appropriate candidates and interested in contributing to the research. I continued this process with each participant until I had completed 10 interviews. Due to the small size of my sample, the snowball method was ideal as many of women in resettlement know other women resettling, either

because they met while in custody or through common resettlement projects and programs (Bernard 2000).

I began my interviews with service providers in a similar fashion, choosing first to begin with a convenience sample and interview two service providers that I know professionally. I then asked those two to contact other service providers who might be appropriate candidates for my research. Although I received quite a few contacts, I found it very difficult to engage service providers to participate. I had several providers assure me that they were happy to contribute but when it came to pinning down a date and time for the interview they were either unable to fit in an adequate time or once a date and time was confirmed it would later be cancelled, rescheduled and/or forgotten in the face of more pressing case-work matters.

My research was solely focused on those who could communicate verbally and written in English.

3.3.3   Demographic Information

Semi-structured interviews with women in resettlement

Of the 10 resettling participants, one was 18-25 years of age; three were 26-35 and six were 36-49 years old. Two women classified themselves as black Caribbean, two as dual heritage; white and black Caribbean and Asian and black, and six as black Caribbean. Three identified themselves as Foreign Nationals. All three stated their country of origin was Jamaica. Five identified themselves as British nationals and two as British Residents (having indefinite leave to remain).

All the women had been convicted and sentenced and had served time in custody and been subsequently released into the community to resettle.

The time passed since release varied from under 1 year to 12 years. Their custodial sentences also varied from under 1 year to 10+ years. Time served varied from 5 months to 7 years.

Semi-structured interviews with service providers

The three service providers I interviewed were women. Their ages ranged from 27-54 years. Their experience working with this subject group ranged from 1-5 years. One participant identified as Caribbean, one as dual heritage (white and black Caribbean) and one as white British. All three were British nationals. Two of the service providers work in resettlement for women offenders, one as a housing officer in a prison and one as an employment officer in a community organisation. The final service provider participant works as a resettlement advisor in an ethnic minority specific resettlement project in the community. Most of her work is with men.

3.3.4   Materials

I developed an interview pack for each participant that contained a research information sheet, informed consent form and a covering sheet to record basic information about the participant.

My own interviewer pack contained cash to reimburse travel expenses, gift vouchers for participation, an I Pod with recording attachment and a notebook and pens. I made brief notes during the interview. Tea and coffee were also provided where possible.

3.3.5   Procedure

The interviews took place over several weeks from March 2010- June 2010. With the support of my employer I was able to reserve meeting rooms to conduct my interviews in the building my organisation shares with another women's organisation. On several occasions I met participants in other voluntary community organisation's offices, which they

were acquainted with, and held the interview there. I recognise that the meeting place may influence the tone of the resulting interview in certain ways (Byrne 2004), and I made every effort to hold the interview somewhere the participant felt comfortable and that also provided adequate privacy.

All interviews took place in a private room. Participants gave permission for the interview to be recorded. I explained the purpose and process of the interviews before the interview began and the participant and I signed the informed consent. At the end of each interview, I reimbursed participants travel expenses. At the end of each completed interview I gave each participant a gift voucher. This voucher was not an incentive, as participants had no prior knowledge that they would receive anything for their participation (also stated and verbalized during the consent form review).

3.3.6   Ethics

Ethical reviews and approval

The National Offender Management Service approved my research application and granted me access to conduct focus groups within HMP Send. In addition, the London School of Economics and Political Science ethics committee also reviewed and approved my research proposal.

The participants were fully informed about the purpose of the interview and were not deceived in any way. Programme participants gave informed consent to take part in the interview. Participants read the consent form and were also verbally informed of what it said; they signed to state that they understood the purpose of the interview and that they agreed to take part. They were given as much time as they wanted to ask questions concerning the research.

Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. I explained that I simply wanted to know what they thought and what their observations were. I explained how each participant was chosen and why their participation was important. I emphasised that I was trying to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences in resettlement and I would protect their anonymity at all times unless there was a disclosure of harm or danger to themselves or others. Permission was sought before any recording and note taking took place (Bryman: 133).

Power Dynamics

Black and minority ethnic women offenders may feel somewhat powerless in their relationship with me as I represent a worker in the criminal justice sector and I inevitably hold a position of power over them, regardless of how hard I try to minimise this (Eisner and Parmar: 177).

In an attempt to avoid the participants feeling as though they were somehow required to take part in my research, I asked for volunteers through flyers and during activities/events. I supplied my contact information for women and asked that they (or anyone they thought was appropriate to) contact me if they were interested. I did not interview women I had ever worked with personally. In cases where necessary, I informed participants that my research was in no way connected to any support services she may or may not receive from the organisation I work for, previously, currently or in the future. I informed participants that my research and this interview were a separate personal and individual endeavour of my own.

Insider Status or ethnic matching

It is also important to note that as a Black and minority ethnic woman, one might assume that I have some degree of 'insider status' (Eisner and Parmar 2008: 190) because I fall under the same broad ethnic categorization and I am female. However as an American with

no offending history or experience of the criminal justice system as an offender/defendant, 'my status was at times that of an outsider' (Eisner and Parmar 2008: 190).

I used my experiences as both having insider status and outsider status 'as informative and illuminating of the process of conducting research in an ethnically diverse community whilst belonging to an ethnic minority group myself' (Eisner and Parmar 2008: 190).

Ethnic matching is the concept of matching interviewers and interviewees based on ethnicity, however, the effectiveness of this procedure are inconclusive. It has been found that ethnic matching can both yield more honest responses as well as hinder them (Eisner and Parmar 2008: 178).

3.3.7   What Worked Well

Convenience and snowballing sampling worked well and I was actually surprised at the enthusiasm to participate I received. The women were also very encouraging of others they thought might be appropriate that they would have contact me for interview.

3.3.8   Challenges

Particular questions

There were a few questions that did not work very well. For example, I wanted to get an understanding of everyone's definition of ethnicity to compare it to that of service providers but also to ensure that we were speaking of the same concept. The question of what 'Ethnicity' means to you seemed to prove difficult and ambiguous for everyone.

Recording

All of the participants agreed to be recorded, however, once we ended the interview and I turned off the recording device, many participants started to share more experiences and feelings that were not particularly focused on in the interview structure. After this

happened several times I asked permission to continue to take notes as I thought everything they said was relevant to my research.

Target sample

I initially wanted to focus on women who had the right to remain in the UK, either through citizenship or residency. However, half of the participants who volunteered were foreign national women who did not, technically, have the right to remain in the UK. These participants clearly identified themselves as resettling in the UK; and they were all appealing deportation orders, had been released from custody more than 6 months prior, and so were technically resettling without the right to remain.
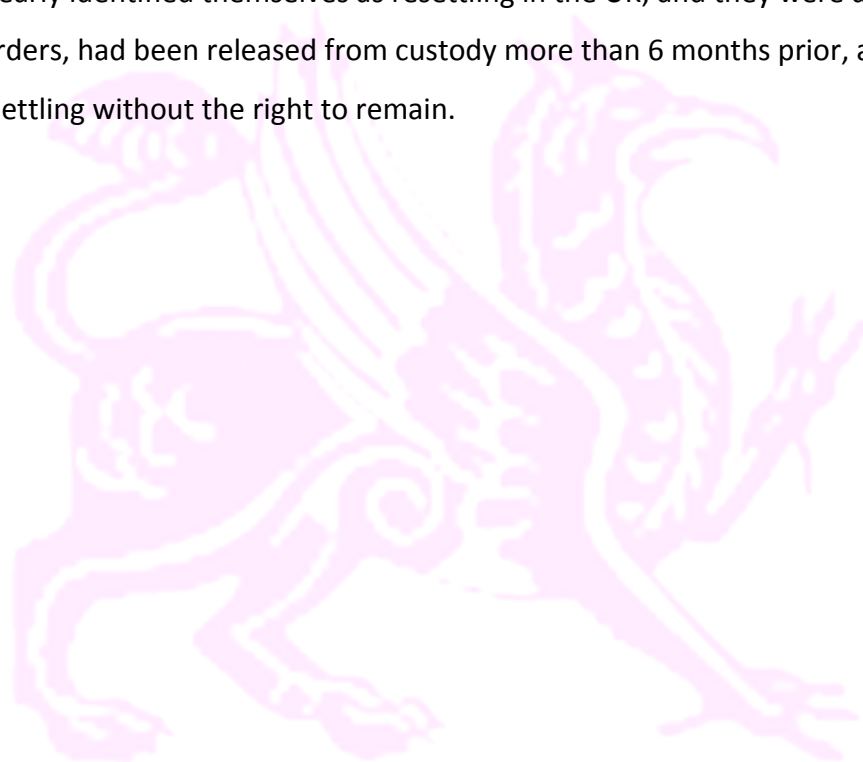
4: Findings

4.1 What are the resettlement needs of minority ethnic women?

Women stated that they thought black and minority ethnic women had different resettlement needs than white women, but when asked, they could not identify any as such. For example, one participant, when asked to expound on the difference in needs that she felt existed, stated, "*I do, I just don't know how to explain it though. I just…honestly, I do*" (Participant 8).

4.1.1 Needs Related to Ethnicity

Ethnicity was widely understood (by 7 out of 10 participants in resettlement), broadly as an individual's ethnic and social culture. Interestingly, one participant was not sure and felt she did not identify with the word ethnic. Two other participants spoke about ethnicity in relation to their own ethnicity (Jamaican and Black women).

The service provider's understanding of ethnicity broadly matched the women in resettlement focusing, generally on a person's culture, however, one service provider responded, "*Do you know, I've never really thought about it. You just throw it in don't you*" (Service Provider 2)?   The implications of unawareness of service provider staff of the concept of ethnicity, theoretically and operationally, are serious. At the very least it begs the question of how a service can purport to provide equal treatment if it's staff lack a practical understanding of a characteristic historically linked to discrimination.

Some of the women stated that having a support worker of the same ethnicity would be beneficial because they felt like they (the support worker) would understand more where the service users are coming from but they did not feel it was necessary- they are willing to get help from anyone who can and/or is willing to help them.

One participant said that there are more single black mothers; she felt this pointed to a difference in needs. However, she did not explain how the difference is specific to single black mothers as opposed to single mothers in general. And if those needs, not necessarily specific to ethnicity, could be met by approaches focusing on single mothers.

Every participant said minority ethnic women's experience of resettlement is more difficult than white women's because of experiences of discrimination throughout the criminal justice process as well as family stigma.

The majority of participants were certain that there were differences in the experience of resettlement for minority ethnic women. Participants used experiences of racial discrimination in the criminal justice system and in their lives as examples of why their experiences were different. The interview sample generally felt that it was more difficult for minority ethnic women and the source of this difficulty could be found in racial discrimination. Yet the experience of racial discrimination also occurs outside of the experience of resettlement. A reoccurring theme appeared in the data that the participants felt that the racial discrimination and fear of racial discrimination occurring in their everyday lives compounded with the stigma and/or fear of stigma of having served time in prison, therefore making their experience of resettlement more difficult than those of the white majority by adding the weight of racial discrimination.

"*Sometimes you could be suitable for the job, the qualifications but because you are probably a black woman or you've been in prison, rather, they don't even look at your application or they look at it but they don't even consider calling you*" (Participant 10).

Any cultural differences noted by the participants were very specific to a particular culture, such as Jamaican, where morals and beliefs and the cultural understanding of issues such as mental health and abuse may be different and may require a different approach. However

service providers did not identify any practical differences between black minority ethnic women and the White majority. Furthermore, differences in cultural beliefs and understandings are not limited to black minority ethnic groups. The small number of service providers interviewed discussed nationality issues when asked about ethnicity.

One service provider felt very strongly that identifying needs were an individual issue. The differences between ethnicities were not unlike differences between genders and could largely be generalised under a broad umbrella but additionally, one must take an individualistic approach to resettlement. She pointed out that people often do not engage with the culture that they were raised in or that they engage and identify with multiple cultures. It depends on each individual person.

4.1.2   Needs Identified

The needs identified by black minority women in resettlement were access to: housing (priority); support network; information regarding benefits, education and employment opportunities, and sources of income; help with emotional stability/instability, mental stability/instability, knowledge of rights, childcare issues and getting children back, staying busy, community support, and advice and guidance.

Foreign nationals felt getting a job was high priority in order to gain financial independence and self-respect.

Most notably access to information and knowledge on rights and how to get their needs met was a prominent theme across the sample. Participants stated that they did not always know where and how to get their needs met, what services were available while in custody or on release.

The needs identified consistently across the service provider sample were: Access to housing, access to information and knowledge, support network, income, emotional support, mental stability, knowledge of rights, childcare, reunification with children, occupying time and accessing community support, advice and guidance.

One service provider outlined what she considered the three priorities: *"There's a roof over their head, a means to a living; earning and food. And once you've got that then you can start looking at other things"* (Service Provider 2).

Access to information and knowledge

It was clear among service providers that access to information is integral to resettlement and that currently it is not appropriate or adequate for meeting women's (in general) wide range of needs. One service provider felt generally that there needed to be specific services for minority ethnic women, particularly black women, as the umbrella of 'minority ethnic' was too broad to be able to capture the needs of any minority group that fell under that umbrella. Although here she is speaking about needs in terms of service delivery of general needs, tailored for different groups. She felt this service would be specific in terms of counselling, mental health and family support, with specialised support for foreign nationals who are not familiar with social services. She recognised that these general needs apply across the population of women in the criminal justice system, but she felt they were more relevant to minority ethnic groups and should be specifically tailored for them, although she could not elaborate on how.

Another service provider felt that women were greatly lacking resources in knowledge essential to resettling, such as, "*knowing what you should tolerate, what you shouldn't tolerate, knowing that you are entitled to housing and, you know, laws around it, is essential*" (Service Provider 3).

The women in resettlement discovered services and opportunities through a variety of ways. One participant said she looked at the posters that were hung up and relied on word of mouth, if there had not been posters she would have gone to her probation officer. Another participant said she did her own research for jobs and found her own voluntary and employment opportunities. She had to take the initiative and have a certain amount of knowledge to go out and investigate how to be able to access work from inside. Another participant felt like an obstacle in her resettlement was ignorance, not knowing her rights, not knowing where to go or who to go to for information. Without this, she felt one would not get far in resettlement.

> "*It would have helped if I would have been able to come somewhere to ask, well, what are my legal, what is the legal thing of this whole…I can volunteer, can't volunteer, can work and can't work here. Because, I know with vulnerable people, with certain convictions, you can't work with them. I don't have a conviction for anything to do with children or anything like that, so I didn't know, so it would have been helpful to have somewhere to go, to say, well, what can I do*" (Participant 3)?

Generally, the participants felt like there was a lack of information and services and access to knowledge. However, the information they felt relevant was not specific to black minority ethnic women in resettlement, rather resettlement generally. The participants wanted information on their rights, where they could volunteer or work with their conviction, and where to go/who to ask for advice and guidance. Some of the participants had the capacity to engage in researching opportunities and information on their own, these women tended to be more settled in terms of employment, volunteering or ongoing training as well as secure accommodation. The participants who did not know how or where to access services were largely dependent on family members, friends and associates.

4.2   What role does ethnic culture play in the resettlement of African, Caribbean, Black and mixed (within these groups) women in the UK?

Ethnic culture was not highlighted by any woman as a concern in resettlement. Women identified some differences between ethnicities in terms of religion, language and, primarily, immigration. However, these were not identified in terms of particular relevance to any specific culture. These were identified as general differences between ethnicities, rather than specific to any particular culture.

It was loosely identified by some participants that some needs were specific to black minority ethnic women, particularly, perceived mental health issues, child rearing issues as there are many single black mothers, the stigma of being a black woman compounded with the stigma of being an ex-offender, "*Yes, I think, probably, my greatest obstacle would be kind of prejudices against black ethnic women, especially, women that have been in prison. That's the greatest obstacle, the fact that they've been in prison*" (Service Provider 1).

Two of the service providers spoke about the role of ethnic culture in resettlement in terms of needs, such as more family support, but one stated, "*It depends. As I say, it depends on the culture, it depends on their engagement of their culture, it depends on how long they've been here, it depends on how well they speak English or not, it depends on how well they've engaged with services on the outside and on and on and on*" (Service Provider 2).

The participants in resettlement were primarily focused on their immediate needs. Issues of ethnicity, race or racial discrimination did not appear to be a primary concern. The participants passionately spoke about their needs in relation to housing, income, children and training.

4.3   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?

Service providers were not clear on how they engaged minority ethnic women. None had any strategy to target or include minority ethnic women; although one stated that a percentage of her case-load was meant to be minority ethnic women, though no strategic plan existed to ensure this.

Both women and service provider participants identified the challenges to engagement as mainly: immigration issues, access to housing, and a lack of resources. Women who faced insecure immigration, had no recourse to public funds, no ability to work and had the responsibility of children.

Housing insecurity was highlighted across the sample, where most women left prison without secure accommodation. Many returned to stay with friends and family, and some found places in hostels. Insecure housing remained a heightened fear for the participants in the sample.

Notably, one participant stated that she faced no obstacles. She continued the job she was working at from Prison through release on temporary license. Upon release she moved in with her parents and she did not have money issues.

The service providers noted the lack of funding and its impact in creating services that are easier for this client group to engage with. "*Lack of resources externally. That's the case for everybody and I think it's going to get worse. Cuts and cuts and cuts. It's going to get hard. What we're doing basically is just it's trying to give each individual the best chance in a market of dwindling resources, that's what we're doing*" (Service Provider 2).

Unrealistic expectations from women made service provision challenging. Women often engage with service providers with the expectation that the providers can solve their problems. Service providers felt that women did not often understand the role of provision and that through engagement they would need to take responsibility of how they have reached this point in their lives.

4.3.1   Engagement

Service provider participants were not clear on how they kept women engaged in their service. No service provider had strategic plans to keep women engaged, although one provider stated that their (her organisation's) services were available to all and that they motivate women to engage by demonstrating they can help them or refer them to someone who can by keeping in contact and having regular meetings. Another said,

"*Well, to be honest they kind of just stay; they stay, because they have, because of the service, because they are getting… Even though some of them haven't got recourse, and they want to do educational courses, and they're not allowed to get the free government ones, we pay for it. So, we pay for courses, so they know that they can still do the things that other people are allowed to do, and they see good results. Also I still keep in contact with them, I invite them in on a regular basis, and they do turn up. Yes, I don't know why they stay around, but they do*" (Service Provider 1).

4.3.2   Making services accessible

The participants in resettlement stated that they would have liked more job clubs, open days and organisations and people going into the prison to let them know what is available in the community. Low motivation was mentioned by several participants and one participant felt that community agencies coming in with information and resources would help women get and stay motivated. It would also be helpful if prison officers knew more about resettlement and at least had an idea of where women could go to receive

preparation support. "*I think if those things were available, people wouldn't be as ignorant as they are, so therefore the risk of re-offending would be decreased somewhat, because they know that they won't have to go to that shop and say, well, I'm going to have to shop for this and that today, because I need to go and feed my child, because I don't have this money and I can't work because I've got a conviction, and I just don't believe in myself, and so on and so forth*" (Participant 3).

Service providers felt their services were accessible in various ways. One participant felt that since her service was open to all women within the prison it was equally accessible, however she noted that they could do better in providing information in major languages but she felt that this too was difficult regarding the specialist language needed (technically and legally). She felt that there is definitely room for improvement. Another participant said that anyone could access their services if they fit their criteria although they only take referrals from Probation and Jobcentre Plus, so in practice access to her service was limited. She was unsure of how her organisation made their services accessible to minority ethnic women.

Although the small sample of service providers felt their services were accessible to all women, none had strategic plan to ensure accessibility and inclusion or to monitor how women access their services. This is significant because without information on how women access their (and other) services, there is no way to guarantee that their services are accessible to all women, particularly those belonging to marginalised groups.

4.3.3   Meaningful services

One service provider felt like a specialised service was meaningful for minority ethnic women because she believes minority ethnic women focus on their family more than women from other backgrounds. Another felt that a strong action plan outlining the steps necessary to meet the individual woman's needs and goals as well as referral opportunities to other agencies for extra support made her service meaningful. She also worked for an

organisation that has dedicated black and minority ethnic support workers, who specialise in working with women of the same background. The final service provider felt that providing a service free of discrimination and focused on the individual's circumstances and needs made her service meaningful. No service provider had a consistent way of tracking whether or not their service users found their service meaningful or a way of assessing how well they meet their stated goals as a provider.

4.3.4   Prison resettlement support

Most women felt that there was either no resettlement support offered by the prison, that it was difficult to access, that it was inadequate or that it was unhelpful. Only one participant explained how she felt the resettlement support she received while in prison was adequate, appropriate and helpful. She lived on the resettlement wing and was released on temporary license to work. She was able to send money home to her family who were caring for her young son whom she had in prison and who was removed from her when he was 18 months. She found the resettlement structure very supportive.

Some participants felt probation was particularly helpful in their resettlement, while others did not. Most were unaware of the reducing re-offending pathways or found them useless. One participant found them quite damaging,

> "It was crap. And it was actually used against people later on because if you said you wanted to become a journalist in your pathways, if you then got a voluntary position that wasn't tied into journalism you weren't allowed to do it, even though various women hadn't had work experience ever or hadn't had work experience for years, so any kind of job would have suited them to get them back into that kind of, you know, work mode or whatever. They weren't allowed to do it. So, it was actually used against people" (Participant 1).

4.4   How do minority ethnic women access and understand resettlement services? Is this influenced by their ethnic culture? If yes, to what degree, and how?

Across the sample participant's definitions of resettlement were similarly described as, generally, the time from release when an individual begins to rebuild their life in the community.

The participants accessed services in a variety of ways but primarily through word of mouth or by being referred by someone, friends and/or other service providers. Their understanding of resettlement services was broadly similar to each other as was the means by which they accessed resettlement services.

4.5   Additional findings

4.5.1   Fear

Fear was mentioned several times by both service provider and service user. Fear of release, fear of re-offending, fear of facing relationship issues with partners, families and children, fear of not having enough money, not getting a job, ending up back in prison, fear of stigma/prejudice, racial discrimination and so on. "*[…] But, racism is everywhere and I hate racism. I wish it didn't exist, I really do. You get that feeling, you feel that fear and you get that worry of who is racist and who isn't and who's going to cause you problems*" (Participant 8).

4.5.2   Gender needs

Generally, women in resettlement thought men and women had different needs. One participant felt that the needs between genders differed depending on whether a woman had children and if she did not, then they were likely to be the same.

"*…because at the end of the day, if you have children, you have to support the children. Men, they can just live in a one room or whatever, but women have more needs than men. Man can go and catch another woman. Woman can't just go and*

catch, and go and stay with a man with children. So, women have more needs.
When you have children, you have more need" (Participant 4).

By and large it was felt that men were freer to come and go as they were likely not to have caring responsibilities and therefore their resettlement was easier in a way, as they only had to look out for themselves and not for families.

4.5.3   Racial discrimination

"*Discrimination is happening. Whether it is direct racism, I don't know; but there is discrimination. And favouritism, like with workers, you know, probation officers, housing officers, if they like you they will go all out for you; if they don't you're fucked*" (Participant 1).

Although many participants spoke about racial discrimination throughout the criminal justice system and in their everyday lives, none identified how or if racial discrimination is experienced differently in resettlement. There was no evidence in the responses that racial discrimination acts as an additional barrier particular to resettlement as opposed to an additional barrier in life, to getting one's needs met. The foreign national participants felt that racial discrimination was based on their nationality more than the colour of their skin or any other physically determining factor.

4.5.4   Intersectional discrimination

It was loosely identified by some that there were issues specific to being a woman and being a member of a minority ethnic group.

For example, when speaking of minority ethnic women and mental health, one service provider responded, "*[...] I reckon that their diagnoses will be a lot... Because, of the way*

that they might display behaviour, so if they display aggressive behaviour they'd probably get diagnosed with something a lot quicker, or more serious, because it might be seen, as women shouldn't act like that. Whereas men, if they did, you know, if a black male was aggressive that's a natural stereotype, anyway, so they might be diagnosed for mental health, but that just may be the stereotype role, black men are aggressive. But with women it might be classed as mental health, and then they might be diagnosed as something more serious than that" (Service Provider 1). Participants in the sample mentioned several times that black minority ethnic mothers were more likely to be raising their children on their own, and with single parenting came a new set of issues and needs to be addressed.

The participants often articulated feelings of intersectional discrimination, pointing to difficult situations that they believed occurred because they were black women.

"*Well, it is obvious, it is obvious, it is definite that if I was a white woman there is no way I'd be suffering like this. There is no way people in a position of trust and power and bully me and even bully my children just to get at me. There is no way, if I wasn't a black woman, there is no way I would go through this kind of situation. There is no way*" (Participant 5).

4.5.5   Foreign national

Three of the ten participants in resettlement were foreign nationals with an insecure immigration status. All three had been released from custody and living in the community, post-release, for at least a minimum of one year. All had lived in the UK for several years before imprisonment. They were released from prison as they appealed deportation orders. Unlike British nationals, these foreign national women were unable to access employment or benefits upon returning to the community. All of the participants, including the service providers, often referred to foreign national women and their distinct needs when speaking of minority ethnic women.

Foreign national women with an insecure immigration status who are resettling in the community are extremely vulnerable. Without access to benefits or the legal ability to work, they have no way of earning money and are at the mercy of their friends and/or family. One participant reiterated several times that she feels quite easily taken advantage of because there is little she can do and she depends on people/family to take care of her. "*So, when you don't have a job you don't have means of doing things for yourself, you know, then people take advantage all the more, you know*" (Participant 5).

Foreign national women did not identify any specific needs in relation to their ethnic culture and were very focused on immigration.

Foreign national participants stated that British national minority ethnic women had similar resettlement experiences as the white majority. "*Yes, because they [British minority ethnic women] are all British citizens, so it's the same for them as a white person*" (Participant 6).

The service providers were able to identify distinct needs in relation to the experience of foreign nationals. One service provider pointed out that many foreign nationals had been living in the UK for many years (up to 30) and as a result of having been in prison must now face immigration penalties and perhaps deportation, which means they have a whole new set of needs in relation to immigration once and if released on appeal.

Access to information and knowledge was highlighted by a service provider as the primary need for foreign national female prisoners,

"*Right, foreign national women what they want is information, that's the biggest thing, I think, is for foreign national women. They're frightened, they don't know where they are, they don't know why they've been incarcerated and very often they*

don't understand the system. What they need is support and information to explain what is happening to them and why it is happening. And that I find is the biggest problem that women don't understand this and they're very, very frightened and sometimes perhaps because they're very frightened they don't hear what is being told to them. So I think we need to ensure that we've given this information but also that they understand it" (Service Provider 2).

5:   Conclusions

The aim of this research was to explore the experiences of minority ethnic women in resettlement in London and in doing so, identify their resettlement needs and their experiences meeting those needs through support services.

This report does not claim to represent minority ethnic women in resettlement in general. Although the sample size was small, qualitative experiences explored give insight into the resettlement experience for some members of the most disproportionately represented group in prison.

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.

Access and support for resettlement was lacking for the female prison population in general and minority ethnic women did not report feeling that they were being specifically excluded from this information or access. 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 specialized 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. The service providers felt that they retained service users because they offered something the service users needed.

They felt their services were meaningful by providing support plans and a non-discriminatory approach, though not specific to minority ethnic women.

Successful resettlement is key to reduce re-offending. Without successful resettlement preparation and support, an individual may find themselves back in the circumstances that initially resulted in incarceration. Successful resettlement is doubly important when there is single parent with care responsibilities for her children.

Little research remains on the topic of resettlement and minority ethnic women, yet there is substantial literature on the systemic racial discrimination within the criminal justice system, of which resettlement is hopefully the last stage. 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 and are accessible and engaging.

The women who volunteered to participate were all very passionate about relating their experiences and telling their stories. The greatest challenges to conducting this research were methodological in nature. Gathering a sample of women in resettlement who had the right to remain is not an immediately clear criterion for women volunteering to participate. Hence, three foreign national women participated in the sample, as they identified themselves as resettling in the UK despite their insecure immigration status.

6:   Recommendations

- Follow up interviews would be useful as it was clear that most participants had not thought about the subject matter before, though this in itself is revealing, and that they were often considering and constructing how they felt and what they thought during the interview.

- It is crucial to speak to women preparing for release, to get their views on resettlement preparation and expectations in order to match it up with the experience of having been in resettlement for awhile. 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. The previous race and gender duties are both important guiding tools for black and minority ethnic women to guarantee that they are treated equally and receive equal opportunity within a criminal justice system where they are already at a disadvantage. Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Equality Act 2006 placed a general duty on public authorities to promote race and gender equality. These two acts were replaced by the Equality Act 2010, which incorporates race and gender with other protected characteristics into one piece of legislation (Equality Act 2010).

- 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 specialized 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.
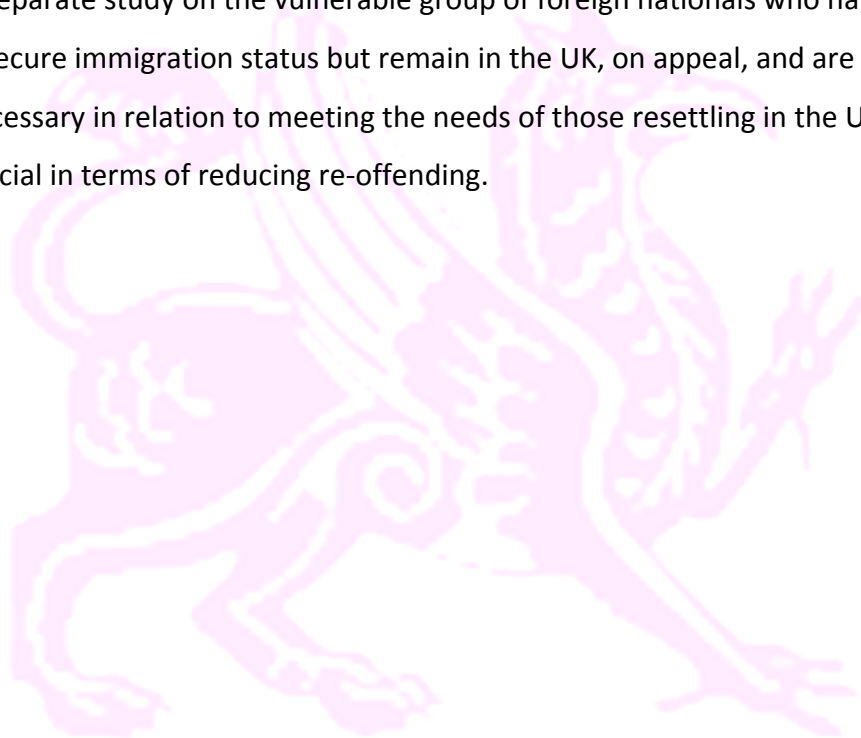
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