



Centre for Urban and Regional Studies

**WORKING PAPER**

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**Report on**

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY  
WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY  
SHARED EVIDENCE BASE**

**Black and Minority Ethnic Communities Synthesis**

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March 2005

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# **1. Context for Regional Housing Strategy and Black and Minority Ethnic Communities**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to synthesise research on black and minority ethnic communities (BME) that helps us to understand housing needs and aspirations of these groups as part of the wider regional housing strategy.
- 1.2. The Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) was commissioned by the Regional Housing Board (RHB) to provide a shared evidence base to support the development of a new Regional Housing Strategy. The evidence will enable the RHB to project housing needs, key issues and potential problems across the Region to 2021 and beyond.
- 1.3. In developing a long-term approach to housing needs a number of key drivers should be taken into consideration. At a national level we have seen policy interventions following concerns over disturbances and minority disenfranchisement in some parts of the UK (Home Office, 2001) that there has been interest in a more concerted attempt to de-concentrate poverty, address ethnic segregation and build sustainable communities (ODPM, 2003). Race, housing and community have become intertwined and gained a high political profile following recent events including the publication of the Macpherson Report (1999) into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the Cantle Report (see Home Office, 2001) that investigated the disturbances in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham.
- 1.4. The disturbances in northern cities led to a wide-ranging debate on the role of housing improvement in relation to ethnically segregated neighbourhoods in urban areas. The Cantle Report set out the depths of polarisation in these areas in terms of education, housing, social and cultural networks. The Report painted a bleak picture of divided communities that had become ethnically segregated in different areas and in different forms of housing tenure. In effect, the separation of communities in the same towns and cities was akin to people living 'a series of parallel lives' with real differences in education, employment and housing. Links between place, identity and community cohesion were made. A key recommendation of the report was to urge housing agencies to review their policies and strategies to provide more mixed housing areas, together with supportive mechanisms for residents who faced intimidation and harassment. It was also noted that funding for housing improvement could distort regeneration programmes as it is capital intensive, and suggested that some change of emphasis may be

needed to develop a people focused, rather than what they termed a property needs approach to areas.

- 1.5. In many respects, race equality issues have never had a higher public profile in the UK or indeed so much support for improvements to be made. The Macpherson Report re-defined the terms in which race equality was discussed in the UK and put forward a new definition of institutional racism. The Race Relations Act Amendment (2000) now places a positive duty on public funded authorities to promote race equality and increases the investigation powers of the Commission for Racial Equality. The Housing Corporation Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Policy (1998-2003) set out the importance of all social landlords meeting the needs of black and minority communities as consumers. And the Race and Housing Inquiry (2001) has created a further stimulus for reform in the housing association sector by generating a debate on whether the sector has progressed on a range of fronts including the employment of black and minority ethnic staff and increased diversity on housing association boards.
- 1.6. Regionally it has been noted that 'there is an important need to ensure Regional Strategies are better informed with accurate information analysis about the current and future trends in the various Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in the Region. The housing needs of the BME communities, the dynamics of these housing markets and their spatial trends need to be properly understood in the Regional Housing Strategy and the development of spatial planning strategies to enable appropriate responses' (Regional Housing Strategy Brief, 2004)
- 1.7. Meeting the needs of BME communities goes beyond a housing agenda. Race, immigration and community cohesion have become key political themes that intersect different policy as well as geographical boundaries. Housing agencies across the region need to consider these wider issues in devising policies and projects to address very real needs and aspirations amongst BME communities. In doing so they should avoid the attraction of coming to simplistic or 'default' position on BME groups.

## 2. Methodology

2.1. The methodology used in the synthesis report consisted of reviewing and pulling together existing and emerging research. In addition a consultation seminar was convened with local stakeholders to discuss findings. The following provides a summary of the methods:

- *Change in BME Population 1991-2001* - a report on the geographical distribution of key BME groups in the West Midlands using data drawn from the Census and Land Registry. The report helped to define the key features of Housing Market Areas (HMAs) as well as an analysis of changing patterns within the BME communities between 1991 and 2001.
- *Black and Minority Ethnic Housing in the West Midlands* - a report by Ecotec to the West Midlands BME Housing Network and the West Midlands Regional Assembly which focused on racial polarisation, identify examples of good practice in meeting the housing needs of BME communities and opportunities to promote engagement of BME organisations in the regional policy development.
- *Regional Household Survey* - this was a survey managed by CURS to identify household characteristics across the region. Of the 5,651 households contacted 509 or 9 percent of the sample were identified as BME households. Reviewing data generated important concerns on housing, neighbourhood and public policy issues.
- *Black and minority ethnic regional stakeholder event* - this brought together over 30 housing providers, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to discuss emerging findings from research commissioned by the RHB and refine recommendations. The event was held at the University of Birmingham in February 2005.

### **3. Spatial Patterns of Residence Across the West Midlands for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups 1991-2001**

- 3.1. Black and minority ethnic communities have grown in the region. The increase has been more dramatic in some groups than for others. For example, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities have shown fastest growth during 1991-2001 whilst slower rates are experienced, in relative terms, for the Indian and Caribbean communities.
- 3.2. Annex A draws on census material to show percentage and absolute increase in BME population between 1991-2001. A complex picture emerges of deepening concentration in traditional areas of settlement together with dispersal of communities to smaller towns and cities across the region. This means that housing organisations may need to intervene in different ways in the housing market to support needs and aspirations.
- 3.3. Concentration is disproportionately in the Central housing market area, which accounts for 16.1% of all BME communities. This is not surprising given that the major cities of Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry are located in the HMA. In contrast, the black and minority ethnic communities in the remaining Housing Market Areas are 3.7 per cent in the North, 3 per cent in South and only 1.1 per cent in the West (Bibby, 2005).
- 3.4. The spatial distribution of black and minority ethnic communities does not altogether reflect possible new patterns. Areas seeing the most dramatic growth between 1991-2001 are smaller towns and settlements away from the conurbation. For example, Malvern Hills and North Shropshire are two local authorities that have seen the largest increase in black and minority ethnic communities albeit from a low base (Ferrari, 2004).
- 3.5. Population dispersal of some minority ethnic communities is proceeding faster than others from inner city housing markets to outer city markets and to the semi-rural fringe. Indian communities are dispersing fastest. They are found in all housing markets including very high value housing in the South HMA. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are not dispersing to same extent. Concentration and growth is restricted to inner urban housing markets. Black Caribbean communities have also dispersed but do not have the same 'reach' as Indian communities.

- 3.6. Black and minority ethnic population remains concentrated in the Major Urban Areas of the region. The situation is complex and dynamic. Between 1991-2001 we have seen a growth of black and minority ethnic communities in the region as a whole, which has been fastest for Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. However, Indian communities, which have also grown, are now to be found in all HMAs and sometimes in very high value housing. So there has been both dispersal and also market concentration of black and minority ethnic communities.
- 3.7. The regional housing focus remains on the Major Urban Areas in meeting the needs of black and minority ethnic communities. These are the traditional areas of primary migration. However the process of dispersal means that housing intervention may also be required in areas of secondary migration for emerging 'pioneer' communities.
- 3.8. The secondary 'pioneer' communities may have altogether different aspirations from their parents who migrated to the region in the 1950s and 1960s. Better informed and supported by higher incomes than their parents, these pioneer communities may stress the importance of access to decent public services, cultural networks and preference for private tenure.

## **4. Black and Minority Ethnic Concerns, Issues and Housing Aspirations**

### **Housing pathways, inward investment**

- 4.1. The housing challenge is to build new housing for black and minority communities in neighbourhoods of choice. This is not necessarily about area but also housing product. Again the need is to develop diverse policies for diverse communities taking into account generational, economic and cultural preferences.
- 4.2. Research that reviews black and minority ethnic housing preferences and aspirations has mixed messages. For example, in the Eastern Corridor of Birmingham, h households do want to move out from inner housing markets along a pathway to moderate and high price housing. This correlates with housing moves from Saltley - Hodge Hill - Solihull and is driven by the search for improved local environment, schooling and public services. Households also record that social networks, being close to places of worship and local shopping remains important and they would like to see housing agencies invest in areas of perceived and actual decline (Beider & Goodson, forthcoming).
- 4.3. Housing pathways need to be created to meet aspirations. Investment in public services is also required to improve conditions in inner urban housing markets. This may suggest that pathways need to be created to respond to growing dispersal within some minority communities moving away from Major Urban Areas. However, housing pathways should also be considered in existing neighbourhoods especially when they are earmarked for investment.

### **Housing product and the housing offer**

- 4.4. Minority communities demonstrate strong preference for home ownership. According to the CURS household survey carried out in 2004, Indian communities are almost wholly rejecting social housing as a form of tenure. Only 7.5 per cent of Indian respondents preferred this form of tenure as opposed to 80 per cent for owner occupation (CURS, 2005).

- 4.5. Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi communities showed a more positive preference to social housing tenure but there was still a preference for homeownership. Across all communities, research shows that the preference is determined by a number of factors. Listed high is the importance of securing economic capital that a rising housing market provides. Indeed, home ownership is at the top of the tenure hierarchy followed by local authority housing and then housing associations for this reason.
- 4.6. There appears to be very little understanding of their role and importance of housing associations in the supply and management of housing. This is even more the case when discussing intermediate housing market options such as shared ownership. It could be argued that the housing choice on offer to minority ethnic communities is limited because of this basic lack of understanding.
- 4.7. Minority communities are not immune to affordability problems in some areas across the region. Their choice is limited because of a lack of awareness and understanding of social housing products such as shared ownership. This in turn may skew preference for homeownership. Much more should be done by housing associations to market their range of products to these communities.

### **Neighbourhood choices**

- 4.8. Minority communities demonstrated a much higher concern than the average about public policy issues. Pakistanis were twice as likely as the average to be concerned about the supply and quality of housing in their neighbourhood. Indians and Pakistanis were also twice as likely to be concerned about the quality of health services and Bangladeshis were more than three times more likely than the average to feel that schools should be improved in the area (CURS, 2005).
- 4.9. Neighbourhood concerns and issues were more important to minority than white communities. Safety, close proximity to places of worship and social networks continue to be an important driver in determining the neighbourhood of choice.
- 4.10. Research shows that housing pathways will miss out some areas because of the perception or experience of harassment and violence. Peripheral

local authority estates remain especially unpopular for some minority communities because of this perception together with the lack of choice of schools, poor social infrastructure and transport.

- 4.11. Minority communities have very clear ideas about the neighbourhood drivers and pull factors. These tend to cluster around education, access to shops and places of worship with the importance of safety. For this reason local authority housing despite right to buy remains unpopular with many groups. Much has to be done to improve the brand image of local authority and social housing in general. Wider housing market remodelling including demolition, mixed tenure and better design may lead to greater take up in new neighbourhoods in the medium to long term.

### **Generational preferences**

- 4.12. Research shows that there are important generational differences in housing tenure and neighbourhood choice. Second and third generation minority ethnic communities are more likely to consider moving away from overcrowded, low value housing markets in the Major Urban Areas. They are driven by public policy concerns highlighted above and may consider homes in contiguous neighbourhoods. Access to social networks was still important (Beider & Goodson, forthcoming).
- 4.13. First generation migrants are less willing to move to areas outside inner city housing markets. Being close to social network, places of worship and shops remains an overriding factor. They are less critical of the conditions in these traditional areas of settlement and more likely to be sceptical of quality of life in contiguous areas.

## 5. Key Challenges for Regional Housing Partnership

- 5.1. *Meeting the needs of diverse and fragmented communities* – The RHS started the process of building or ‘mapping’ communities across the region. This process has to be viewed as a continuous process rather than a ‘one off’. Recently commissioned research has noted that BME communities are becoming increasingly diverse and fragmented. The change between 1991-2001 is likely to continue up to 2021 and beyond. Conflicting patterns of dispersal, concentration and ‘back filling’ result in a range of housing challenges for local authorities and housing associations. Mapping communities should not be simply seen as an esoteric exercise. Rather the process of community profiling provides a sound basis for policy and practice as well as breaking down barriers and mistrust between housing organisations and BME communities. The challenge is for organisations to use existing frameworks such as BME housing strategies and tenant compacts as a starting point to build effective consultation with communities that often feel disenfranchised from meaningful debate on housing and neighbourhood change. By *committing* resources, careful planning and preparation the process of mapping can lead to a number of practical benefits.
- 5.2. Racial harassment and safety - the importance of developing flourishing and safe neighbourhoods is an important concern for BME communities. Concerns about crime and harassment restrict housing choice. Emerging research on the Eastern Corridor of Birmingham shows the systematic racial harassment experienced by some Asian households in social housing estates and contiguous neighbourhoods. Interviewees’ commonly recounted verbal and physical harassment by members of white households, which ranged from racist abuse, attacks on housing property and vandalising cars. Victims claim that the response from agencies including housing organisations has been piecemeal. Perpetrators are not dealt with and the fear and intimidation continues. The result is that the victimised households feel trapped. They cannot afford to move to high value areas. Many would like to stay in the neighbourhood if harassment could be stopped and prevented (Beider & Goodson, forthcoming). The challenge across the region is to ensure that BME communities have access to the full housing offer. Neighbourhoods should not be viewed as ‘no go areas’. The research in Birmingham appears to show that the housing offer is partial for BME communities. It could be argued that racism disfigures the housing market across all forms of tenure and goes beyond simple

neighbourhood management concerns. Housing organisations should consider specific responses to address the problem that persists despite both neighbourhood management and equalities policies. Annex B discusses the need for specific BME Housing Policies.

- 5.3. Remodelling social housing – it is clear from research and also the survey undertaken by CURS that BME communities remain to be convinced about social housing as tenure of aspiration. There are a number of challenges which need to be overcome. Research shows that BME communities regard housing associations and local authorities as providing poor quality properties located in the areas that are not attractive. This is a devastating combination. Housing is associated with poor people, problem families and too small to meet the needs of BME communities.
- 5.4. Intermediate housing – Many BME communities remain unconvinced or have not heard about intermediate housing products. Improved communication may lead to a take up of some of these products by BME communities. Those who were aware of shared ownership complained that they would not be able to buy housing outright and when they came to sell some of the equity would return to the housing association. Black and minority ethnic communities considered owner occupation as the tenure of aspiration, followed by council housing because of the right to buy and then housing associations.
- 5.5. Neighbourhoods of opportunity across region – Black and minority ethnic communities need to be connected to neighbourhoods of growth and opportunity across the region. Connections need to be made with wider economic and public policy themes operating at regional and sub-regional levels. Research demonstrates that Indian communities have already started to disperse from major cities to smaller towns in the region. Greater effort is needed to connect people to jobs and prevent the development of ‘two speed’ BME communities. That is an educated, skilled group who grasp new opportunities and integrate within housing and neighbourhoods and those who remain locked in poor housing markets and low skilled jobs away from growth markets.

## **6. Recommendations for the Regional Housing Strategy**

- 6.1 The black and minority ethnic population across the region shows signs of growth, dispersal and concentration. There is a strong correlation with housing stress and housing choice is limited in terms of product and neighbourhood.
- 6.2 Housing pathways need to be eased for those communities that are dispersing and want to relocate away from crowded housing markets in the Major Urban Areas. The implication of dispersal, especially of the Indian communities, means that secondary ‘pioneer’ communities are being established in towns across all HMAs that have no history of minority migration. This will pose challenges for policy and practice in these local authority districts and for the region as a whole.
- 6.3 Minority communities also demand greater investment in traditional areas of settlement. Concerns focus on poor educational achievement, quality of the local environment and crime. Those interviewed would consider these areas if the problems are fixed. In this context, housing pathways may also be created in these neighbourhoods where there is a locus of places of worship, shops and social networks.
- 6.4 Housing associations need to market and widen the choice of products available to black and minority ethnic communities. This is especially the case for low cost home ownership, shared ownership and other intermediate housing options. In addition, housing associations have a limited profile compared to other forms of tenure and even local authority housing.
- 6.5 The Region faces a challenge to facilitate and support the complex emerging picture by opening up markets and encouraging providers to increase the range of products. Housing providers need to base policies on evidence and data rather than coming to default conclusions about communities.
- 6.6 The prospect is of increased dispersal of minority communities from traditional areas of settlement to private sector housing outside the Major Urban Areas. At the same time poor minority communities that do not have housing reach will remain locked in overcrowded conditions. Housing organisations need to provide options and choices for both groups.

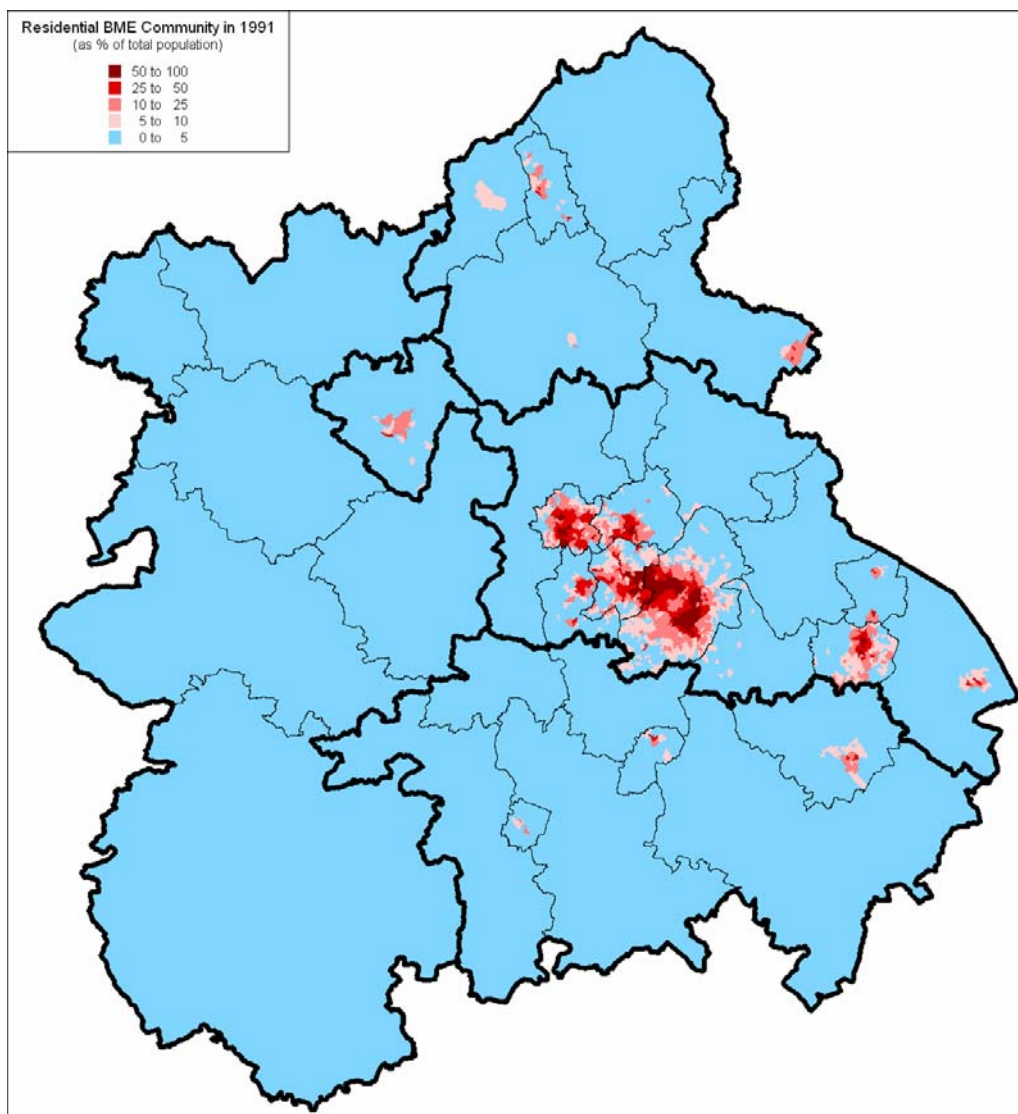
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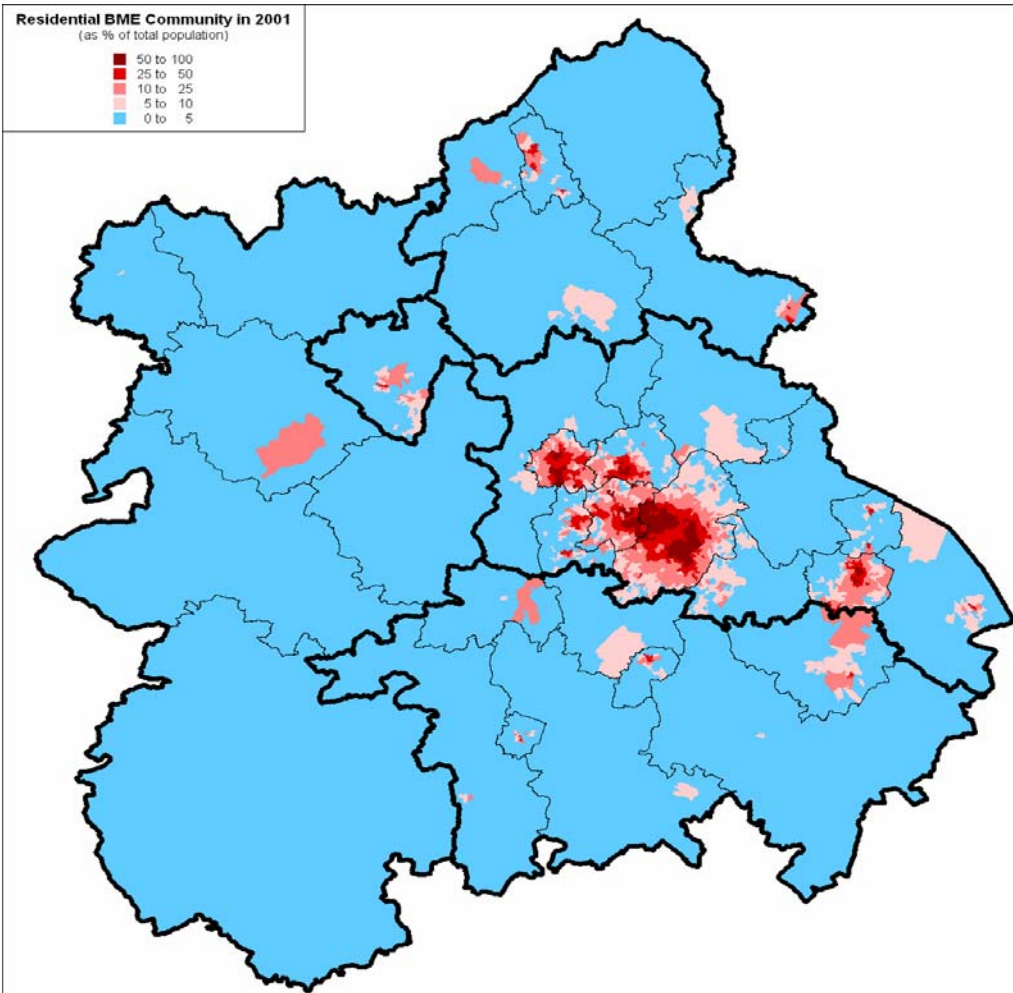
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# ANNEXES

# ANNEX A

## BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC RESIDENTIAL CHANGE 1991-2001





*Percentage and absolute changes at the Sub Regional Level*

	<b>Central</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
White	<b>-4.18</b>	<b>-2.09</b>	4.45	4.36
Black	41.78	81.27	86.23	118.20
Indian	11.95	32.12	21.16	31.77
Pakistani	55.80	58.29	57.60	231.48
Bangladeshi	60.41	91.41	85.92	27.94
Chinese	75.02	39.66	89.58	97.34
Other	75.80	115.11	116.73	130.98

	<b>Central</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
White	-122478	-14013	32194	18947
Black	39978	2417	2323	669
Indian	17949	682	1245	142
Pakistani	50298	3938	1160	125
Bangladeshi	11069	383	476	38
Chinese	5147	345	868	475
Other	22968	2316	2888	1057

*Percentage and absolute changes for Central Region*

	Birmingham	Cannock Chase	Coventry	Dudley	Lichfield	North Warwickshire	Nuneaton and Bedworth	Rugby	Sandwell	Solihull	South Staffordshire
White	-10.66	-0.51	-2.71	-1.65	-1.59	2.13	-0.49	2.34	-9.68	-2.60	-0.18
Black	26.54	64.17	41.11	32.72	58.48	56.09	35.15	20.16	34.88	38.83	59.55
Indian	8.38	12.50	10.75	14.10	44.06	28.07	13.39	6.59	11.56	48.59	32.78
Pakistani	36.06	50.88	37.80	32.08	63.16	25.00	26.84	3.80	34.08	51.29	79.03
Bangladeshi	38.65	58.95	31.45	18.98	2.78	33.33	11.11	-100.00	35.08	40.51	40.00
Chinese	37.66	1.99	68.70	30.41	30.25	16.00	22.73	30.34	33.81	43.39	5.83
Other	36.11	42.02	55.40	49.38	45.71	58.16	41.94	51.62	54.08	53.13	49.44

	Tamworth	Telford and Wrekin UA	Walsall	Wolverhampton
White	4.66	9.25	-7.17	-7.09
Black	49.39	50.92	40.80	18.93
Indian	26.55	31.65	11.82	4.95
Pakistani	37.93	44.69	34.60	31.85
Bangladeshi	33.33	30.30	42.02	16.59
Chinese	29.25	47.50	28.50	54.61
Other	50.00	41.62	48.57	44.28

	<b>Birmingham</b>	<b>Cannock Chase</b>	<b>Coventry</b>	<b>Dudley</b>	<b>Lichfield</b>	<b>North Warwickshire</b>	<b>Nuneaton and Bedworth</b>	<b>Rugby</b>	<b>Sandwell</b>	<b>Solihull</b>	<b>South Staffordshire</b>
White	-73257	-459	-6849	-4728	-1451	1299	-560	1924	-21836	-4904	-186
Black	20399	274	3342	1590	262	152	226	295	5152	1333	396
Indian	4672	40	2597	669	230	64	533	152	2988	1763	257
Pakistani	37522	29	2333	1996	60	7	73	12	2836	498	49
Bangladeshi	8057	56	550	52	2	1	1	-11	1199	32	6
Chinese	1928	3	1497	198	49	8	40	71	167	289	6
Other	9751	108	3208	1265	192	139	294	527	2438	1034	219

	<b>Tamworth</b>	<b>Telford and Wrekin UA</b>	<b>Walsall</b>	<b>Wolverhampton</b>
White	3406	13880	-15705	-13052
Black	324	998	2330	2905
Indian	90	825	1627	1442
Pakistani	11	711	3231	930
Bangladeshi	3	30	1056	35
Chinese	31	247	163	450
Other	146	621	1220	1806

*Percentage and absolute changes for North Region*

	East Staffordshire	Newcastle-under-Lyme	Stafford	Staffordshire Moorlands	Stoke-on-Trent UA
White	-0.15	-3.00	0.15	-0.99	-4.18
Black	36.57	56.26	40.19	66.41	45.76
Indian	29.06	34.39	18.82	12.09	22.87
Pakistani	34.66	66.36	72.40	40.00	35.88
Bangladeshi	45.35	67.89	-2.70	-333.33	49.56
Chinese	36.61	47.71	23.67	21.67	12.11
Other	52.09	59.58	44.19	57.64	54.82

	East Staffordshire	Newcastle-under-Lyme	Stafford	Staffordshire Moorlands	Stoke-on-Trent UA
White	-147	-3580	173	-931	-9528
Black	429	346	434	172	1036
Indian	120	162	137	11	252
Pakistani	1337	144	160	12	2285
Bangladeshi	39	74	-1	-10	281
Chinese	82	146	58	13	46
Other	299	485	365	166	1001

*Percentage and absolute changes for South Region*

	<b>Bromsgrove</b>	<b>Malvern Hills</b>	<b>Redditch</b>	<b>Stratford on Avon</b>	<b>Warwick</b>	<b>Worcester</b>	<b>Wychavon</b>	<b>Wyre Forest</b>
White	1.18	4.01	-1.09	2.01	5.21	10.99	8.40	1.63
Black	52.53	63.93	26.79	51.18	42.75	56.34	66.75	59.28
Indian	55.53	19.79	17.54	54.09	7.77	53.06	61.80	31.56
Pakistani	51.35	70.59	29.04	45.10	46.93	39.45	91.67	68.09
Bangladeshi	88.89	0.00	47.18	76.32	51.52	20.88	57.33	55.80
Chinese	39.66	68.30	29.03	28.72	55.41	41.49	39.58	49.28
Other	35.42	71.16	29.08	57.34	57.72	55.47	63.42	56.22

	<b>Bromsgrove</b>	<b>Malvern Hills</b>	<b>Redditch</b>	<b>Stratford on Avon</b>	<b>Warwick</b>	<b>Worcester</b>	<b>Wychavon</b>	<b>Wyre Forest</b>
White	1011	2849	-813	2214	6097	9903	9381	1552
Black	332	140	340	174	498	320	273	246
Indian	271	19	60	152	406	156	110	71
Pakistani	38	12	442	23	107	473	33	32
Bangladeshi	8	0	67	29	17	57	43	255
Chinese	71	181	45	54	292	100	57	68
Other	181	338	162	340	953	350	293	271

Percentage and absolute changes for West Region

	<b>Bridgnorth</b>	<b>County of Herefordshire</b>	<b>North Shropshire</b>	<b>Oswestry</b>	<b>Shrewsbury and Atcham</b>	<b>South Shropshire</b>
White	4.84	7.91	3.00	-6.75	4.05	-0.75
Black	47.52	47.80	70.51	44.57	60.54	40.79
Indian	8.97	18.90	26.67	8.33	38.99	0.00
Pakistani	0.00	70.59	74.19	100.00	78.00	71.43
Bangladeshi	10.53	59.52	66.67	4.35	10.91	-100.00
Chinese	21.25	16.19	51.96	86.87	61.96	52.00
Other	51.92	55.15	67.45	53.73	56.60	56.67

	<b>Bridgnorth</b>	<b>County of Herefordshire</b>	<b>North Shropshire</b>	<b>Oswestry</b>	<b>Shrewsbury and Atcham</b>	<b>South Shropshire</b>
White	2519	13706	1694	-2491	3820	-301
Black	67	196	153	41	181	31
Indian	7	31	16	3	85	0
Pakistani	0	24	23	9	39	30
Bangladeshi	2	25	6	2	6	-3
Chinese	17	34	53	86	246	39
Other	81	380	143	72	313	68

## **ANNEX B**

# **A SEPARATE REGIONAL BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC HOUSING STRATEGY?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is a long history of race equality initiatives within the housing sector. The Housing Corporation has completed three five-year strategies and is currently consulting on its fourth (Beider, 2004; The Housing Corporation, 2005). Meeting the needs of black and minority ethnic communities has been set in the context of housing organisations designing separate BME strategies. Discussion has taken place on whether there continues to be a pressing need for these types of policies given the growing diversity of communities, growth and achievement of BME housing associations and also progress by BME housing staff (CIH, 2004). Regional research also demonstrates that some BME communities are accessing decent quality housing (CURS, 2005). A new strategy may be politically expedient but also irrational. Against this assertion, evidence demonstrates that black and minority ethnic communities are concentrated in the poorest housing across the region. Moreover, a considerable number of black and minority ethnic communities have difficulty in exercising housing choice into dwellings and neighbourhoods because of a lack of awareness of housing schemes and also racism and perceived racism in neighbourhoods. This, together with the statutory responsibilities by regulators of local authorities and housing associations to scrutinise performance on equality indicators, means that there may continue to be need for a Regional Housing Strategy to meet the needs of black and minority ethnic communities.

### **DISADVANTAGED POSITION**

Black and minority ethnic communities continue to suffer disproportionately from adverse housing indicators. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are commonly located in older housing within high-density inner urban markets. The problems of living in these communities are compounded by problems of overcrowding. For example, 9 percent of Pakistanis have at least 7 people living in a property against the average of 0.2 percent; 7 percent of Bangladeshis have at least 8 people living in a property against the average of 0.2 percent. These two examples highlight the specific problems of meeting the needs of larger households across the region by building larger dwellings or de-conversion flats into family accommodation (CURS, 2005). This goes

beyond issues of ethnicity and income. Research demonstrates that 27 percent of low-income BME communities such as Pakistanis and high-income BME communities such as Indians have members of their extended family living in the same property compared to only 4.4 percent of the white communities (CURS, 2005).

## **HOUSING CHOICE AND PATHWAYS**

Research seems to show that BME communities are aspirational households. They want to exercise choice in terms of tenure and type of housing, as well as neighbourhood. There is evidence that between 1991 and 2001 Indian households dispersed from low value to high very high value areas across the Region (CURS, 2005).

If we accept that there is trend towards dispersal and access to housing why should we devise a specific strategy? The fact remains that discrimination, racism and the perception of racism impacts on the housing choice made to BME communities. This is irrespective of the income that households may command. Emerging evidence demonstrates that 'white flight' is triggered when BME households move from low to high value areas (Beider & Goodson, forthcoming). Housing pathways for BME communities may be subverted by racial harassment or the perception of harassment associated with predominantly white neighbourhoods. Again, emerging research shows that harassment is an important problem that housing organisations are not taking seriously. The common complaint is that agencies are not stopping the harassment, supporting the victim or taking action against the perpetrator. In this instance, when the resident complained to the Police the response was that 'she should not have moved to the area' (Beider & Goodson, forthcoming). Housing organisations should not regard racial harassment as an isolated incident. Rather there is a pattern of discrimination; intimidation and violence that has been recorded by a number of studies (for example see Chahal and Julienne, 2000). The challenge for the RHP is to address this problem where it is shown to exist and help to provide a real rather than perceived housing choice and pathway.

Black and minority ethnic communities appear to have very specific demands of aspirational neighbourhoods that are not shared by other groups. Proximity to social networks, shops selling ethnic foodstuffs and most importantly to places of worship remains important factors in considering where to live. This, allied to higher than average concerns about housing,

health and schools, show that cultural issues may be more important than simple economic reasons to select housing (CURS, 2005).

Most of the discussion about housing pathways seems to have been focused on creating more housing choice away from traditional areas of BME settlement. Given the importance of social and cultural infrastructure and concerns about harassment we may need to change some of this conventional thinking. Pathways may need to be created within inner urban communities. Choice may be increased by tenure diversification, variety of housing design and a drive to improved public services. A radical review will help to increase housing choice and act as a catalyst to create ethnically diverse, cross income and cross tenure neighbourhoods.

## **REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**

Housing organisations are expected to demonstrate that they are meeting the housing needs of BME communities through the regulatory work of the Audit Commission and The Housing Corporation, and the statutory framework provided by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Achieving and maintaining high standards on race equality go beyond the statutory duty. Race equality can be good for business. Reviewing problems and issues on diversity help organisations to understand the needs and aspirations of customers, initiate the development of new services and housing products, recruit the most able staff and protect and build a good reputation (Housing Corporation, 2002). Drawing up a new BME Housing Strategy provides a mechanism to clarify objectives, prioritise needs and aspirations and scrutinise performance. However housing organisations need to go beyond a 'tick box' mentality. Meeting the regulatory challenge on race equality helps to improve organisational performance as well as meeting needs and fulfilling a regulatory obligation.

The growth and diversity of BME communities sets a number of challenges for local authorities and housing associations. The economic position of BME communities varies between and within groups and between different HMAs. Despite this, actual and perceptions of racism makes some neighbourhoods unattractive to BME households. Moreover the importance of access to cultural amenities remains an important 'pull factor' to housing markets. In short there are factors impacting on housing decisions for BME communities that are less important for white communities. Housing providers should consider an appropriate level of housing intervention when designing and delivering services for these groups.