

Business Case Briefing

People from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds – how do they feature in your workplace?

What is the business case?

Minority ethnic groups are projected to account for more than half of the growth in the working age population over the next ten years. This rapid growth is a consequence of the young structure of most minority groups. Globalisation, regional integration, shortening of distances and widespread information are major drivers for change in the patterns of migration. There is little doubt that this will lead to greater diversity in terms of origin, skills, motivation, culture, etc.

[http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf/em_labour_market.pdf]

Defining ethnic minorities

The term 'ethnic minorities' has often tended to be applied to members of 'black and minority ethnic communities'. However the term 'black' is felt to marginalise certain groups and is increasingly being referred to by expressions such as diverse ethnic communities to include members of communities whose 'colour' may be less visible, including migrants from Eastern Europe.

How does race equality legislation impact on your company?

The Race Relations Regulations 2003 updated previous legislation including the Race Relations Act 1976. Race legislation makes it illegal to treat a person less favourably than others on racial grounds and covers all aspects of employment - from recruitment, pay and training, to the termination of a contract. It protects against direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

In certain circumstances, employers may be able to restrict a job to people of a particular race or ethnic or national origin, if one of these characteristics is a genuine occupational requirement. To avoid complaints of discrimination further legal advice should always be sought before applying exemptions.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000¹ extended and strengthened the provisions of the Race Relations Act by placing an enforceable duty on all public authorities. The public sector must now work towards the elimination of race discrimination and promote equal opportunities and good race relations. For this reason, many public authorities require private businesses to have equal opportunities policies before they will award contracts.

¹ For Northern Ireland, the relevant legislation is the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2003. <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Sr/sr2003/20030341.htm> or contact the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland website: <http://www.equalityni.org>

What can employers do?

Employers are required to **ensure that all their employees understand** their responsibilities in respect of race equality and establish policy and procedures for ensuring compliance and best practice.

Link with specialist organisations that work with ethnic minorities can enable employers to identify elements of best practice. The following are some examples of such organisations by employment sectors:

- The environment – BEN [<http://www.ben-network.org.uk/doing/intro.html>]
- Housing – Positive Action in Housing [<http://www.paih.org/>]
- Health – NRCEMH [<http://www.nrcemh.nhsscotland.com/>]
- Social Care – PRIAE [<http://www.priae.org/>]
- Sports – SEMSA [<http://www.semsa.co.uk/>]

Promote jobs on shared websites that are accessed by ethnic minorities and other equality groups. <http://www.equalitybritain.co.uk/>

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