



NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) HOUSING STRATEGY 2007-2011**



**This Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy sets out how the Council is addressing the housing needs of Northampton's Black and Minority Ethnic Communities.**

**It will mainstream race equality and diversity issues in delivering the Council's housing services.**



If you would like to express a view or have a question about the Strategy or Action Plan please contact the Housing Strategy & Enabling Team on 01604 83 8773/ 8802 or email [hset@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:hset@northampton.gov.uk)

দ্য ব্লাক এন্ড মাইনরিটি এথনিক হাউজিং স্ট্রাটেজীতে বর্ণনা করা হয়েছে কিভাবে কাউন্সিল নর্থহ্যাম্পটনের কাগো এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট সম্প্রদায়গুলোর গৃহায়নের চাহিদা পূরণ করছে। এতে কাউন্সিলের বিভিন্ন হাউজিং সার্ভিসগুলো সরবরাহে জাতিগত সমতা এবং বহুমুখিতাকে প্রধান প্রদান করবে। যদি আপনি এই দলিলটি অথবা এর কোন অংশের অনুবাদ চান অথবা এটি বুঝতে সহায়তা চান তবে অনুগ্রহ করে 01604 837837 এই নম্বরে ফোন করুন। করুন।

নীর্যম্পন্নতা গণ্য এবং অল্যসংখ্যক লুপ্তমনি সমুদায়ী-নী রোটসিং-নী গৃহস্থিখানী টেবী বীনি উদ্যেবামা আবে টি নে আ ল্বিক এবং মার্চনৌবিত্তী অস্থনিক রোটসিং হুটুগ্ৰমাং লখনামা আখ্যু টি. আমা গাটসিং-নী রোটসিং-নী সিবায়ী আখ্যেবামা পনীধ সমাননানা অনে বিবিধনানা বিক মুদায়ীনে উদ্যেবামা আবেয়ি.. নমনে আ হেনাবিগ টে নেনা অট্টেধ বিল্যায়নু পায়ানর কসাববু লৌধ, অথবা সমল্যবামা মর্দে-নী গৃহর লৌধ, নৌ কৃপা করী 01604 837837 পর হুিন করী.

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Te zalozenia polityki mieszkaniowej, dotyczy sposobu rozwiazywania, przez Rade Miejska, problemu zapotrzebowania mieszkaniowego we wszystkich srodowiskach mniejszosci narodowych na terenie miasta Northampton.

Oferujac uslugi mieszkaniowe Rada Miejska przestrzega zasad rownoupewnienia rasowego i roznorodnosci narodowej. Jezeli potrzebujesz pomocy w przetlumaczeniu tego dokumentu w calosci, jego czesci lub pomocy w jego zrozumieniu zadzwon pod numer telefonu 01604 837837 .

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The BME Housing Strategy Action Plan 2007-2011 is available as a separate document. To obtain a copy please contact The Housing Strategy Team on 01604 83 8773/8802 or [hset@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:hset@northampton.gov.uk)

## **Purpose and Scope of the Strategy**

The Council recognises that people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups can experience disadvantages in relation to housing and that there can be particular needs and aspirations to be addressed.

The production of this Strategy is an action identified in the Council's overarching fit for purpose Housing Strategy 2006-2011, and therefore fits within and complements the Housing Strategy and its vision that:

*We will support the provision of well-maintained, affordable and environmentally sustainable homes of all tenures where people choose to live. We will provide excellent customer services and additional support to those customers who need it.*

It was felt that a BME Housing Strategy should be in place in order to provide a focus on ensuring that Northampton's Black and Minority Ethnic residents are receiving appropriate housing and related services.

The Strategy pulls together race equality and diversity issues in delivering housing services and ensures through delivery of the Action Plan that the Council is meeting its legal and statutory obligations with regards to equality and diversity in housing.

The priority areas that we have chosen to focus on are:

- Access and Customer Care
- Partnership Working and Service User Involvement
- Information Management
- Investigate and Address Housing Need
- Communication and Consultation/Engagement
- Racial Harassment and Anti-Social Behaviour

Please see page 9 for a discussion of these issues which are taken forward as objectives and actions in the Action Plan.

## **National Drivers**

There has been a range of guidance and legislation covering diversity and equality issues. The core influences for producing this Strategy and Action Plan include:

- **CRE Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing**  
The Commission for Racial Equality issued new and revised guidance in 2006, replacing the 1991 and 1992 Statutory Code of Practice in rented and non-rented housing. The Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing sets out recommendations and guidance on how to avoid unlawful racial discrimination and harassment, ensure equality and foster good relations between communities in housing.

- **The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**  
This places the legal obligation on local authorities to eliminate unlawful racial harassment, promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.
- **Equality Standard for Local Government (2002)**  
This standard was launched in 2001 as a tool to enable local authorities to mainstream age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation into council policy and practice at all levels. The standard has 5 levels and NBC are currently working towards level 2. The BME Housing Strategy will ensure the mainstreaming of race equality into parts of the Council delivering a housing service.

Further guidance includes:

- **Reports and Legislation concerning Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs**  
Government has recognised that there is a shortage of authorised gypsy and traveller sites and that assessment, strategy and delivery planning should occur as part of housing and planning functions in local authorities.
- **Home Office report Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society**  
This Strategy aimed at increasing race equality and community cohesion recognises that 'overcrowding and the number living in poor quality accommodation is greater, and resident satisfaction lower, among nearly all Black and minority ethnic communities'
- **Causes of Homelessness amongst Ethnic Minority Populations 2005**  
Research was carried out to look at the reasons as to why BME households are three times more likely to become statutorily homeless than non-BME households as this was not well understood. It led to the publication of 'Tackling homelessness amongst ethnic minority households – a development guide'.

## **Local Drivers**

- **Northamptonshire Study of Black and Minority Ethnic Housing and Support Needs (2006)**  
The study was commissioned by Northamptonshire County Council and district and borough authorities in Northamptonshire. Contributions were also sought from RSL's and community groups. The study was carried out in order to better understand the housing needs of BME residents and inform policy making. Recommendations made in the study carried out by Opinion Research Services have been considered in the production of this Strategy and Action Plan.

The study looked at the profile of the existing population, housing aspirations, consideration of wider issues impacting upon housing choice

and quality of life, and an analysis of the need for specific support and housing services.

The study stressed that the BME population cannot be treated as a homogenous group and the different groups are very diverse but concluded that much of the BME population had integrated with the majority population, although Bangladeshi, Black African and Gypsy and Traveller groups remain less integrated.

Few culturally specific housing and support needs of BME households were found but the need to make further efforts to ensure BME groups access housing services such as better dissemination and translation of information was highlighted.

- **Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice for Housing Project**  
Northampton Borough Council commissioned Housing and Diversity Services Ltd. to undertake an assessment of compliance against the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice on Housing in Spring 2007. The draft report acknowledged that NBC have achieved the basic requirements set out by the Code and made recommendations that would enable NBC to fully comply with the Code. The recommendations from this key piece of work have been incorporated into the Strategy and Action Plan.
- **Equalities Officer Group**  
This virtual group advises and supports capacity to deliver equalities work throughout the organisation and this has included support in developing this Strategy and Action Plan. A framework to enable the Council to move through the levels set out in the Equalities Standard is currently being developed.
- Comments and information gleaned from local community organisation representation will feed into the Action Plan.

### **Links with Strategies and Policies**

This Strategy via the actions set out in the Action Plan will be delivering in line with other corporate documents:

- **The Draft Corporate Plan 2007-2011**  
Key Action 3a is to 'Achieve the Equality Standard for Local Government, Level 2.' The BME Housing Strategy along with the Housing Services Improvement Plan can act a vehicle to deliver on these corporate issues in housing service departments.

A Key Action under Council Priority 8a is 'to improve our understanding of customers needs in order to ensure we are providing relevant good quality services', and the relevant target to measure this is: 'Customers from ethnic minority groups will have improved access to services, which will meet their highest priority needs by 2009'.



- **Equality and Diversity Policy (2006)**  
The Council has set out its commitment to equality of opportunity and promoting social inclusion in its Equality and Diversity Policy. The policy states the intention to mainstream equalities in the day-to-day delivery of services, sets out commitments in providing services and to job applicants and employees. This Strategy will directly address these intentions and commitments.
- **Race Equality Scheme (May 2006-May 2009)**  
The scheme contains information on how the Council plans to implement commitments to ensuring race equality and in particular how the Council is meeting the duty under the RRA (Amendment) Act 2000. This Strategy will direct housing functions in the authority in carrying out some of the targets in the scheme.
- **Community Strategy 2002-2012/ Draft Sustainable Community Strategy for Northampton 2007-11**  
A Sustainable Community Strategy is currently being developed to replace the Community Strategy. It is likely to include the following priorities to be worked on through the Local Strategic Partnership:
  - Improve quality of and access to housing
  - Promote equality of opportunity and improve participation in the community in decision making
  - Improve partnerships to deliver joined up services
- **Customer Services Strategy 2007-2010**  
The Strategy focuses on three key priority areas: Improving customer access; developing customer care; acting on customer feedback. The Action Plan contains actions to ensure that all customers have access to services, and monitoring of customer feedback, which will enable us to identify dissatisfaction with services and discriminatory practices.
- **Tenant Participation Strategy 2006-2009**  
The Council works to ensure that that tenants and leaseholders have the opportunity to influence decisions and are consulted in an appropriate manner. This includes providing support and training for traditionally under represented groups. This will be done via actions in the Tenant Participation Agreement.

## **Development of the Strategy**

### **BME Housing Strategy Steering Group**

A group formed to develop the Strategy and Action Plan. The Action Plan will continue to be developed and monitored at quarterly meetings. The group in developing the Strategy and Action Plan comprised of representatives from:

- Housing Services
- Housing Strategy
- Private Sector Housing
- Policy
- Customer Services

- Council for Ethnic Minority Communities- Northamptonshire, countywide organisation providing infrastructure support for BME groups
- Gharana Housing Association, a specialist BME Housing Association
- Local BME representation

### Community Involvement

The Northamptonshire Study of Black and Minority Ethnic Housing and Support Needs has provided an evidence base for this Strategy and Action Plan. This involved forty-one individual interviews with members of BME communities across the County as well as further involvement through workshops attended by a range of community groups. This figure seems rather low however, and it is difficult to know whether views given by a few can be representative of the wider communities.

During the development of the Strategy from January to March existing local groups were asked for their views and comments so as to capture input at an early stage in the process. Visiting local groups also aids in raising awareness of the Strategy, and developing good communication channels. Better feedback and communication was a key point raised by local groups. A Draft Consultation version of the Strategy and Action Plan was then distributed for comments during mid April to the beginning of June.

Comments and views have been sought from:

- Race Action Northampton
- Race Equality Forum
- BME Sub-regional partnership
- Local BME community organisations

Some useful comments were captured during the development of the Strategy and Action Plan however the response rate was very low for the Consultation Draft version. Whilst we can't be sure of the reasons for this, it may indicate that this was not an effective method of consulting or the way in which the Strategy and Action Plan were distributed was not suitable.

Corporately the Council is reviewing how we engage with the community and will be producing an Engagement Strategy in due course.

Please see appendix II for further details of consultation comments gathered.

### **Picture of BME population in Northampton**

The BME Housing and Support Needs Study began by profiling the BME population using census data, as the most reliable data set available.

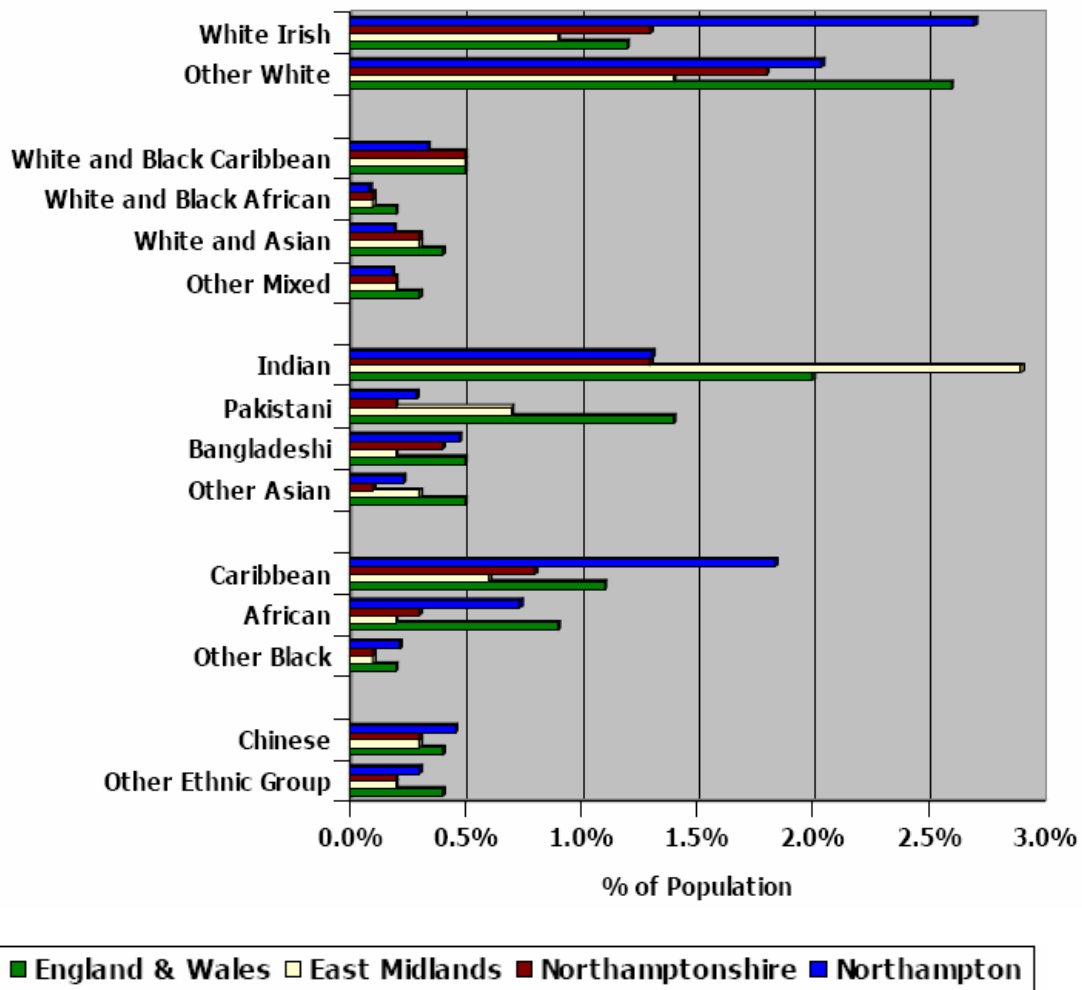
The BME population of Northampton Borough (those not identifying themselves as White British) at the last census was 12.3% which represents 23,959 people, the largest percentage of people from BME groups in the County. The largest ethnic group other than White British is White Irish (2.0%). The population of Northampton that were born outside of the UK was 8.6% with the largest numbers from Republic of Ireland (2,884), Germany



(1,083), India (1,270). The study refers to January 2005 as the most recent Gypsy and Traveller count, when 78 Gypsy and Traveller caravans were recorded.

The total BME population of Northamptonshire is around 8%, which is lower than the total for Northampton Borough- 12.3% (as stated earlier).

The table on the next page shows a breakdown of the BME population of Northampton compared to Northamptonshire and the regional and national context. The main differences between Northampton, sub-regionally, regionally and nationally is the higher numbers of White Irish, lower numbers of Indian than in the East Midlands and higher numbers of Caribbean.



Source: Opinion Research Services (2006), *Northamptonshire: Study of Black and Minority Ethnic Housing and Support Needs*

In recent years since the Census was carried out we recognise due to the expansion of the EU it is likely therefore that there is now a higher percentage of European's currently residing in Northampton than the figures in the 2001 census. What is uncertain however is whether some migrants will be residing on a temporary or more permanent basis, which can make it difficult to know how to plan for housing need for these communities.

## Priority Areas

Through review of guidance, legislation and best practice, the BME Housing Strategy Steering Group, comments from community groups and individuals and the Countywide BME Study, the following areas have been selected as priorities to be working towards. The priority areas form the basis for objectives and actions contained in the Action Plan, which is available in a separate document.

The order in which the areas are discussed are in no way an indication of priority. Timescales in the Action Plan show when individual objectives and actions will be delivered.

### Access and Customer Care

The Council recognise that people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds can find it much harder to access housing services. This can be through the lack of information in an appropriate format or language, the location of this information, fear of discrimination and lack of confidence, or a perception that services may not meet their needs.

We need to ensure that BME customers are in no way disadvantaged in accessing our housing services and where we provide housing in partnership. Currently we know that our BME customers are less satisfied than our non-BME customers. Information on our BME customers needs to be further analysed to inform how to improve access to our housing services.

We also know through our Countywide study into BME Housing and Support Needs, there is a perceived lack of translation of housing and support literature and that thought needed to be given to the dissemination of information. The Council are currently entered into a Service Level Agreement with Community Access Language Services (CALs) and we also make use of Language Line. The Language Line service can be used to translate directly for customers while on the phone.

The way we deliver our housing services must also be appropriate for our BME customer's needs. Staff training has been highlighted through consultation with local groups as a key way to ensure that the diverse needs of our customers are understood.

The implementation of a Choice Based Lettings scheme by April 2008, gives us an opportunity to involve hard-to-reach groups, and promote awareness of, and access to our council housing. Our Repairs services- one of the most highly visible services to our existing tenants is due to review is procurement and customer care processes.

### Partnership Working and Service User Involvement

Many of our services can only be delivered effectively in partnership with other organisations. We work with a number of partner Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) including specialist BME providers who can respond to particular BME needs such as culturally appropriate design and sensitive management.

Furthermore our RSL partners aim for their lettings to reflect the community make-up to ensure all backgrounds are benefiting from housing that becomes available. Through our nomination arrangements, we will be working with our partners to help them achieve this.

The County Council have produced a BME and New Arrivals Integration Strategy, currently awaiting endorsement, which sets out proposals for multi-agency working arrangements that will aim to support the integration of asylum seekers and existing BME communities into Northamptonshire. We involve our service users and give them an opportunity to influence service delivery through Tenant Participation. The Tenant Participation Agreement contains proposals to focus on under represented groups of tenants.

### Information Management

We need to improve the data we capture on our BME residents. This is important to ensure:

- Sound policy decisions;
- We are not directly or indirectly discriminating against those with an ethnic minority background;
- We are able to understand our customer's needs.

The new integrated IT system for housing is currently being implemented and will be a useful tool in collating data on our potential and existing customers requiring affordable housing. It is also important that we gather data on those living in the private rented sector as this is a popular tenure with harder to reach groups such as newly arriving immigrants.

The section in the Action Plan on Information Management contains actions and objectives around the collection of information, which will act a pre-requisite to other actions and objectives.

### Investigate and Address Housing Need

The Council recognise that those from BME households can have different housing needs and aspirations from the general population. The BME study however found that the BME population, especially the younger generations were increasingly integrated with the non- BME population and were less likely to have differing needs. The study recommended where there is a need for culturally specific housing this is likely to be among the BME elderly residents. The CRE Code of Practice for Housing Project draft report that became available more recently, recommended further investigation in certain areas were needed. A specific focus on the needs of BME households covering issues of overcrowding, youth, elders, private sector housing and the impact of newly arriving communities should be considered further.

Overcrowding is recognised as a particular problem faced by BME communities nationally with Bangladeshi and Pakistani households the most likely to experience overcrowding. The issue has also been highlighted locally and we are aware through our Housing Needs Study (2006) that there is a lack of family accommodation for rent in Northampton. This is being addressed through the enabling of additional 3, 4 and 5 bed accommodation, with recommendations in the Housing Needs Study of the percentage of each type required on new developments.

Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs have in the past not been identified and planned for along with more mainstream bricks and mortar housing. Government requirements on this are changing and Northamptonshire are currently involved in a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment that will identify whether there is a need for additional accommodation and if a need is identified make proposals for design and layout.

#### Communication and Consultation/Engagement

The Council strives for effective communication and consultation in all aspects of its work. This is an area however that local groups and organisations felt the Strategy needed to pay particular attention to.

The growth agenda in Northampton was particularly highlighted as something that BME groups would like more involvement in. There appears to be a lack of awareness of how new housing growth is planned and delivered, with many residents fearing that new housing will not be delivered with the associated necessary infrastructure. BME groups have asked that their needs be considered in planning for new growth.

#### Racial Harassment and Anti-Social Behaviour

The Council has an existing racial harassment policy and procedure and also an Anti-Social Behaviour policy and procedure.

NBC are an active member of the multi-agency arrangement to tackle incidents of racial harassment – MAGRAH. The draft report on the CRE Code of Practice for Housing Project considered this to be a very good example of best practice as well as the clear message in the Tenants' handbook and tenancy agreement that racial harassment will not be tolerated.

The draft report recommends that further monitoring on racial harassment incidents and tackling incidents in the private sector be considered.

## **Appendix I**

### **Definition of BME**

Black and minority ethnic refers to people who share a culture or colour. The following groupings are the 2001 census categories and for the purposes of this Strategy, all those who do not identify themselves as 'White British' are classed as a 'black and minority ethnic' resident. Gypsies and Travellers are also included in the definition of an ethnic group although did not appear in the 2001 census.

- White: British
- White: Irish
- White: Other
- Mixed: White & Black Caribbean
- Mixed: White and Asian
- Mixed: Other Mixed
- Asian or Asian British: Indian
- Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British: Other Asian
- Black or Black British: Black Caribbean
- Black or Black British: Black African
- Black or Black British: Other Black
- Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese
- Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other Ethnic Group

## Appendix II

### Consultation Comments

The comments below are from groups and individuals that were visited in early 2007, external partners attending the BME Housing Strategy Steering Group and responses on the Consultation Draft. The comments recorded are not quotes but reflect what was expressed as closely as possible. We recognise that the views expressed are from individuals, (albeit some collected in a group setting) and may not necessarily be representative of a wider group or community.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Action/Response</b>
Dostiyo	20% of the work we do relates to housing and benefits. There are no formal recognised working arrangements with our organisation.	To be considered via objective 2.3 in Action Plan.
Race Action Northampton	Some private landlords are benefiting from BME families enhancing properties to make them more liveable and homely and then asking the tenants to leave (deliberately in order to benefit).	No evidence on this but quality of private sector accommodation to be investigated via objective 3.3.
Race Action Northampton	Staff training on equality issues is essential and can help for example in getting people to fill in the ethnic monitoring information.	This is addressed via 1.2 and 1.3 in the Action Plan.
Race Action Northampton	Payment could be offered to individuals from the voluntary sector to help in the process of carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.	To be feedback corporately. NBC do not have extra funding for this at present.
Race Action Northampton	The Council doesn't have a Corporate Equalities Officer to progress with the Equalities Standard.	The approach to working on the Equalities Standard was explained in response to this comment. Engagement on this is continuing.
CEMC	The Council should make more funds available for consultation and consider help with childcare and travel costs for those involved in consultation exercises.	To be feedback corporately. NBC do not have extra funding for this at present.



BME representation on Steering Group	The needs of BME elders need to be considered, there is a lack of suitable accommodation.	Northamptonshire Study of BME housing and support needs considered this and also included in objective 4.2.
Race Equality Forum	There is no Gypsy and Traveller policy on homelessness.	Response was given explaining that homelessness applications are looked at on a case by case basis and that the next Homelessness Strategy, due to be produced in the next year should look at the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and take into account the numbers of Gypsies and Travellers passing through Northampton.
Race Equality Forum	The Council does not collect data on Gypsies and Travellers in Council properties.	Ethnic monitoring categories on Irish Travellers and Romany Gypsies are now being incorporated into IBS OPEN Housing (new IT system).
Race Equality Forum	Engaging with communities is important.	Actions on this under Priority Area 5 in the Action Plan.
Race Equality Forum	Please come and feedback to groups once views have been taken.	Included in objective 5.3.
Race Equality Forum	The plans for housing growth in Northampton needs the related infrastructure and ethnic minorities want to be involved in plans for growth.	Included in objective 5.4.