

Engaging Muslim women from BAME backgrounds:

An evaluation of focus group feedback to understand barriers to
complaining about Police discrimination among this cohort

MWN-UK Report
January 2015
Author: Faeza Vaid

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

Contents

1	Background and Rationale.....	3
2	Method	4
3	Key findings.....	5
	4. Experiences of dealing with police where it was felt discrimination was a factor	5
	5. Experiences of complaining; particularly looking at barriers faced	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	6. Mechanisms suggested for encouraging complaining	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7	Summary and next steps	26
8	Appendix.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	8.1 Experiences of complaining	Error! Bookmark not defined.-29
	5.2 Barriers to complaining.....	30
	5.3 Encouraging complaining.....	31

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

1 Background and Rationale

1.1.1 In 2014, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) contacted the Muslim Women's Network-UK (MWN-UK) as part of a project to revise the IPCC's guidelines for the police on handling allegations of discrimination. The IPCC approached MWN-UK to help the IPCC to gain an insight into the experiences of BME women who feel that they have been discriminated against by police and views about how complaints about discrimination should be dealt with.

1.1.2 MWNUK thereafter helped design a qualitative research focus group to explore the barriers faced by Muslim women from minority ethnic groups (in particular those from South Asian communities) when looking to complain about police discrimination and views on how complaints about discrimination should be handled. The group discussions focussed on:

- Experiences of dealing with police where it was felt that you/someone you know were treated discriminately.
- Experiences of women who have complained about discrimination experienced.
- The barriers to complaining – do women even know how to complain?
- Suggestions on what can be done to get more women to complain.
- Suggestions on what women expect if/when they do complain.

1.1.3 The findings of the research will be used by the IPCC to revise its guidance for the police on how allegations of discrimination should be handled.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

2 Method

- 2.1.1 Muslim Women's Network was formally established in 2003 with the support of the Women's National Commission (WNC), to give independent advice to government on issues relating to Muslim women and public policy. In 2007, Muslim Women's Network decided to establish itself as an independent organisation to ensure its autonomy from Government. The group was renamed 'Muslim Women's Network UK' (MWNUK) and became a Community Interest Company in 2008. In December 2013 it formally became a registered charity.
- 2.1.2 MWNUK were contacted to deliver the research because it is a UK network of women and men with over 600 members. Our activities include sharing knowledge of key issues affecting Muslim women, influencing policies by responding to government consultations and engaging at ministerial levels, and raising the profile of Muslim women's voices by regularly contributing to mainstream print and broadcast media on a range of issues including; forced marriage (FM), honour based violence (HBV), female genital mutilation (FGM), and child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- 2.1.3 MWNUK recruited a total of 13 participants and held the focus group in Birmingham in December 2014. MWNUK facilitated the discussion, conducted follow up interviews, and drafted this report. 2 staff from the IPCC were present at the focus group.
- 2.1.4 While Muslim women are diverse, this focus group mainly attracted participants from the South Asian demographic, with diverse ages (16-56), and included one male participant.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

3 Key findings

The focus group discussion focussed on three key areas. These are:

- Experiences of dealing with police where it was felt discrimination was a factor
- Experiences of complaining; particularly looking at barriers faced.
- Mechanisms suggested for encouraging complaining.

4 Experiences of dealing with police where it was felt discrimination was a factor

Summary

- Awareness of the IPCC among group participants was low: 4 of the 13 participants had heard of the IPCC before receiving invitation to attend focus group discussion. Of those 4, 3 said they had a 'relatively good' understanding of what the IPCC did.
- All participants described negative experiences of dealing with the Police.
- Most women indicated that it was very difficult to decide if their experience with the police was 'discrimination', as they were unclear of how this is defined.
- Most women indicated that they felt they were treated differently because they were South Asian, women and Muslim. Their appearance and accents were said to contribute to their treatment.
- All participants agreed that Muslim women were more likely to write off a 'bad experience' than they were to complain.
- Most participants described experiences of discrimination when reporting other 'serious crimes'; hijacking, domestic violence, race-hate, etc. Their negative experiences were largely centred on the attitudes and actions of individual Police

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

officers, who provided little or no information about procedures or support, and did not deal with cases in a timely and professional manner.

- This left all feeling unhappy with the service they had received, but powerless in doing anything about it. At times, victims of crimes felt they were treated as perpetrators.
- It was widely felt that there existed in the Police service a general lack of interpersonal skills and sensitivity to victims; particularly when female, of a BME background, and Muslim
- A few participants felt that the mistrust and marginalisation created by negative experiences, could be manipulated by extremist/right wing groups who adopt a vigilante approach to achieving justice.
- Participants indicated that they were fearful of complaining because they perceived it would impact how their case was handled.

4.1.1 The session facilitated by Faeza Vaid (Executive Director of MWN-UK) began with an introduction by IPCC staff about the purpose of the research and how findings will be used. Faeza then reiterated that MWN-UK and the IPCC will be using cases confidentially and for the sole purpose of this research to better inform Police policy in dealing with discrimination cases.

- There was a concern by many participants that by sharing their experiences it could have repercussions for them, highlighting a general sense of mistrust of the Police, and a lack of awareness of the IPCC and its independence from the Police. Awareness of the IPCC among group participants was low: 4 of the 13 participants had heard of the IPCC before receiving invitation to attend focus group discussion. Of those 4, 3 said they had a 'relatively good' understanding of what the IPCC did.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

4.1.2 Participants were then asked to share their experiences of dealing with the police where discrimination was a factor. And were asked key questions to guide the conversation:

- What happened?
- To who?
- Why do you think it was discriminatory?
- What did you do?
- Did you complain?
- Were you satisfied with the outcome?
- Particular barriers faced.

Responses were recorded on a table on the wall (see appendix), and by a note-taker.

Case 1

The participant's car was hijacked by 2 Asian males just before midday in a residential area in Birmingham. She was assaulted before being thrown out the car.

2 Officers attended the scene; 1 of whom was a trainee. The WPC who took the statement had a cold attitude, offered no words of comfort, was pedantic on details to the amusement of other Officer, provided no information of what process would be followed by the Police, and offered no information of support available to victims of crimes.

"When asked again...I told the officer it happened at 11.55am, and the other officer said "but you said it happened at 11.56am?" The Officer found this amusing, and told me that the other lady was in training. I told him she needed to be more compassionate with victims. He replied strongly "it's not your place to say anything about her training". ... He later told me "you are lucky you weren't sexually assaulted because women who wear a headscarf and drive BMWs are more at risk of being sexually assaulted."

An update to the incident was provided 2 days after and officer simply said 'your car has not been found'. 3 days after incident, the details of victim support were provided, however when the victim contacted Victim support, the Police had provided them with incorrect information.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

4 weeks later the car was found and the case was closed. The victim received a call surveying how she felt the case had been dealt with. When the victim tried to provide detail about how she felt and complain, she was discouraged and '(I was)told to stick to the survey questions.'

Case 2

The participant had been a victim of domestic violence. She was encouraged by her GP to phone the police and report the crimes committed. On arriving at the police station with her 4 children, she was taken to interview room and a statement was taken by a male officer.

"The Officer was asking very specific details. I felt like he was putting words in my mouth... When I said 'he locked the bedroom door' the Officer replied 'then he pushed you on the bed?' He was implying sexual assault or rape, but this wasn't the case for me. ... I did get very confused with all the questions, and the emotions that go with actually reporting your husband, and my kids outside, I was overwhelmed. I felt I was being judged and compared to other (Asian) cases."

No support information was provided, and victim support called 2 days later and offered no further intervention.

When asked if the participant was satisfied with the service she had received, she responded:

"It's 50/50 really. My main aim was to be safe from my husband- and he was arrested. So the police did do their job in that sense. But I did feel like I was being judged and that words were put into my mouth. It takes a lot for any woman to come forward and report – I think more so when you're Asian. I would have preferred to have spoken to a female officer. It was very uncomfortable sharing 18 years worth of abuse in 20 minutes."

Case 3

The participant began by sharing that she had worn the full face veil for 20 years and had experienced a number of anti-Muslim hate crimes. She had come to almost accept this as 'normal' and was unlikely to report to the police. However, the incidents she shared involved her daughter and sister.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

"My daughter and I were at a public event... A man approached my daughter and pulled off her headscarf. I ran after the man and said "what are you doing?" ... There were plenty police around, and I approached some police officers saying that my daughter is under 16 years old and has had her headscarf pulled off by a man. They told me to go to my local police station to report it there because they couldn't do anything. They didn't even try to look concerned."

The local police station that had been suggested was not open to the public, and the participant reported the incident via the intercom. When 2 police officers attended her home to take a statement, the participant felt she was asked leading questions and words were put into her mouth.

"I was shown mug shots of individuals.. and the police then said "It's not a race hate crime, it's more of a drunk and disorderly, we are going for an affray"".

In this case, the police did little to follow up the incident, did not update the participant, and by the time officers went to look at the many CCTV footages from the public event, the footage had expired.

In this particular case, the participant said she had only reported the incident because it happened to her daughter.

"I wanted to show my daughter that she didn't have to put up with that kind of abuse, and that the Police will protect her. At the end of it, it was more traumatic and made us less likely to report in the future. After this, it definitely felt like the Police weren't going to take these sorts of crimes seriously. And yet I was trying to convince my family they would."

Case 4

While shopping in a supermarket, the participant's sister who was a visibly Muslim woman was approached by a man who pushed over her trolley and said loudly "You people are taking over our country". Onlookers did nothing and the individual was persuaded by her sister to report the incident. They checked whether CCTV footage had captured the incident and was told it had, and would be passed to the Police when they request it. Again, the length in time taken to deal with the case meant that the CCTV footage had expired and nothing could be done.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

"These two incidents have made us feel marginalised and insecure. I don't feel victims are heard."

This participant said that she felt the mistrust and marginalisation created by such negative experiences, could easily be manipulated by extremist/right wing groups who adopt a vigilante approach to achieving justice. She said she is very grounded and strong in her knowledge of Islam, and also fully supports British institutions in serving and protecting the public, but could see how it could be a problem for more vulnerable minds.

Case 5

The participant had been a victim of ongoing domestic violence. In February 2014 her husband returned home drunk and was particularly abusive towards the participant and her children. They managed to lock themselves in a room, which further infuriated her husband more, and he threatened to kill them as he tried to break down the door. The participant called the Police:

"...we were really scared... and the operator simply asked me standard questions. He didn't reassure me and didn't even tell me the police were on their way. I didn't know if they would come or get to us in time."

In August 2014 the participant was severely attacked again. She had extensive bruising, including a visible black eye and bruising to her body. She took photographs of the bruising on her body, but the attending police officers simply checked her eye, did not ask for the photographs, or to check her bruising. An ambulance was not called.

"... they weren't really interested in whether I was okay. But they did arrest him. However, even in custody he was still texting me abusive messages. And he's been harassing the kids, turning up at the mosque to speak to them, getting other people in the family to pressure me... It's now December and the court appearance was on Wednesday. They (police) only took a statement on Monday and didn't even include the photographs as evidence. It was just a quick discussion to check the facts, and nothing else."

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

The participant, still raw from the experience, was upset and had to leave the discussion. A member of staff from MWNUK attended to her, and discovered that she had been given no information of further support, or of the process following the arrest, or protections available. For example, she had not been advised of non-molestation orders. Following the focus group, she contacted the officer dealing with her case and requested a non-molestation order. The officer responded, *"he hasn't broken any orders"*. The victim said she would not complain as 'what's the point? I have so much else going on right now. I just want this sorted.'

Case 6

The participant's friend was travelling abroad. She is visibly Muslim; and was wearing a headscarf and a plain long garment. At the airport, she was stopped by anti-terrorism police and held for almost 8 hours. Questioning included:

"...why are you travelling? Where did you get the money to travel? Do you pray 5 times a day?"

The last question was particularly concerning to the participant:

"Why did the police need to ask her how often she prayed. What's that got to do with security? Is the profiling of terrorists now those who pray? Her case is now common. Muslims expect to be stopped at the airport. It causes so much friction between Muslims and the police."

When asked whether a complaint had been made, she replied that her friend felt powerless. *'What would she be complaining about? Unjust racial/religious profiling?'*

Case 7

The participant had been expecting a visit from the Police regarding her brother's abuse/neglect of their elderly mother. 2 plain clothed officers attended her home and asked detailed questions about the brother; his behaviour, routine, friends, work etc. Wanting to

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

resolve the issue for her mother's sake, the participant divulged personal and difficult examples of her brother's behaviour and tried to be as helpful to the Police as she could be.

The next day one of the officers returned with another colleague, and both were in Police uniform. They said they were from the anti-terror department, and continued to probe information about her brother.

"I felt like I was being interrogated, and I was so betrayed. Just the day before I thought I was giving them information to help my mother, but instead they were investigating my brother as a terrorist. I completely lost my trust and confidence with the police. ... the police should not be able to come into your house and lie to you about why they're there-it's false representation. I felt they had tricked me."

The participant did not consider complaining an option as she felt it would further implicate her brother.

Case 8

The participant described how her elderly father had been crossing a busy main road near his residence in a predominantly Asian area of Birmingham.

"An off duty police officer who knows our family told me how he saw the incident... He was waiting in his car at the side of the road... A white European lady driving a heavy goods lorry was on her mobile phone and didn't see my father crossing the road. She knocked him over and still didn't realise she had hit him, so continued to drag him as she drove on. The officer then drove and had to overtake the lorry in order for her to stop....

When my sister arrived at the scene, she approached the police officer and asked 'where's my father?' The officer replied, 'he's under the lorry' and pointed to the lorry, then carried on writing. The other officer at the scene was consoling the white lorry driver. ... It was our family friend that consoled my sister who thought my dad was about to die."

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

The participant's father was taken to hospital with severe injuries. The morning after the accident he had a heart attack. The family were visited by a Police Officer who informed them that the charge against the driver would change if their father died. However, no further information was provided about process, their rights, or support available.

The father had to have his leg amputated and suffered a further heart attack 6 months later. The family were consumed with their father's recovery and change to their lives. When asked whether they followed up the case with the police, the participant said:

"Initially we did try and chase up what was happening. We even spoke to local shop keepers who had given witness statements of the incident, and had offered their shop front CCTV to the Police. But it seemed that nothing had been followed up.... Whenever we called we would get an excuse, 'the person dealing with the case is unavailable, he'll call you back', 'he's on holiday, if there's any progress he'll get in touch'...

But for 2 years there was no real police contact, until we received some letter. It basically said, the CCTV was not available, and that they had a witness statement which said it wasn't the driver's fault and she wouldn't have seen my father. From his name, he was white European. I remember being angry...and thought what about the other witness statements? I did wonder whether it was because they were Asian..."

The participant's father passed away 4 years after the accident, having never fully recovered from it. When asked whether the participant considered complaining, she said:

"The question you face is whether you deal with your injured parent or with the police process. I think I would've (complained) if I'd had the energy. But our lives were so busy between hospitals.... I just felt that if even the reporting wasn't correct, what chance would we even have. ...I wasn't sure if we'd even have a fair

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

outcome. As a family... we're just numb to the police. Even an apology now is too late."

Case 9

The participant described how she was trying to obtain information held about herself under the Freedom of Information Act. She was undergoing a civil divorce following domestic violence, and needed to prove that she had in fact lived in refuges as part of her case some 6 years earlier.

- *"Firstly, getting any information from the Fol unit is a long winded process... and I waited weeks for somebody to call me back. I had to verify information, and was able to provide everything except for 1 address. ... she kept saying '1 address is not matching, so I can't release anything.' She kept probing and I was made to feel like the perpetrator because it was as though she thought I was lying... who would make up all that? ... The way that call was handled was not sensitive, or human...I didn't even want sympathy...I just wanted good manners.... At one point I remember telling her 'you're making me relive it.'"*

The participant felt there was a real lack of transparency about the process and a severe lack of professionalism. However, complaining 'just wasn't an option... I thought if I complained, I wouldn't ever get the information released'.

Case 10

The participant described the case of her nephew. He was aged between 14-15 years old when the incident occurred:

"We live in a predominantly Asian area, with lots of mosques and Muslims. It was Ramadan (month of fasting for Muslims) and my nephew was walking home from the pre-sunrise prayer. It was about 4am... A police van pulled up on the side of the road and 4 police officers got out. They started asking him questions; his name, age, where he lived, where he was going etc. He answered everything and told them he had been to

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

the mosque, and that they could come home with him, his family were also awake because of the fasting.

But the officers didn't, they carried on questioning him and then said they had to search him. 3 white officers took him into the back of the van, and they started patting him down. 1 told him he had to take his trousers off. His trousers were down to his knees, and that's when the fourth officer standing outside the van said 'I think that's enough now'....

He was given a yellow slip which said he had been given the all clear, but it didn't say anything about the search. He was scared, he didn't want to tell his parents, but he told me because he knows I know more about how things work.... I'm the one who always encourages the kids to respect the police, to get involved in things etc, but we felt really helpless in this situation. But the police had used their power and authority to intimidate a young boy. Besides the whole racial profiling and stop and search argument...where was the child safeguarding? Why didn't they go to his home and speak to his parents first?"

This particular account raised further discussions in the group of stop and search generally, and how young Muslims/Asian boys have come to expect to be stopped and searched by the Police. There was a real sense of Muslims being targeted by the Police and automatically treated as suspects.

This participant concluded by saying:

"I've always encouraged my son to go into a public service role. In the past I think I've also suggested the police because I think you have to be in the system to make a difference. But now, I'd probably really hesitate and worry. I probably wouldn't stop him, but we're living in a worrying time."

Case 11

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

The participant relayed the incident of her friend who had been at a public park with her children. Another White English family were also at the park. When the Asian child was on the swing, the White child came over pulled her hair and tried to get her off the swing. On seeing this and noting that the parents of the White child had chosen to not say anything, the friend went over and took her child and spoke politely to the other child saying 'that's not how we share'. The father of the White child came over and intimidatingly started a confrontation. Realising that the conversation was escalating, the Asian mother got her children together and started walking away. The other family followed. When the Asian mother turned around, the White father squared up to her and forcefully pushed her to ground, swearing and verbally abusing her.

On seeing this, another Asian family nearby called the police and tried to diffuse the situation.

Before the Police arrived, the father ran away. The participant relayed the friend's account of the police's behaviour:

"Whilst giving her statement, my friend started to feel very light headed and was in bad pain from the fall. She asked if the Officer could call an ambulance. His response was 'you'll be okay in a few minutes... it couldn't have been that hard of a push.' She said again, 'I don't feel well, please', to which the officer replied, 'look it's just over kids, let's just get done.'"

Another woman got her friend water and helped her to sit down on the bench.

When her friend tried to explain her account of events the Officer was very cold and appeared uninterested in what she had to say. When she suggested he speak with her old children the officer replied 'your family can say anything- we won't be taking a statement from any of them'. When she explained there was another family who had seen the incident, he dismissively said 'we'll decide who we take statements from...once we're done I suggest you move on'.

"The following day, my friend received a visit from a Community Police Officer at her home. She assumed he had come to hear her side of the story. Instead, he relayed that

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

the White child had accused her of pulling her hair and of touching her shoulder, and therefore he was duty bound to investigate an allegation of child abuse. He also relayed that the family had stated they would pursue a child abuse case if she pursued any action against them."

The CPO advised it was in her best interest to not pursue any action. The family had been known to the Police, and had several previous ASBOs. While he was more sympathetic towards her, he outlined that if found guilty, she would be placed on the Child Protection register and it would be permanently on her record. She was instructed to write a general letter of apology to the child.

"In the end, she had to weigh up whether the fight was worth it. She didn't feel she could have complained because she had become the perpetrator, and she didn't think the police would be fair.... She was left with a feeling of hopelessness, and since that incident doesn't go out with her children alone. She is scared and her expectations of the police being fair has changed."

4.2 Additional Notes

Underlying the negative experiences highlighted in the aforementioned cases was the general lack of interpersonal skills and sensitivity demonstrated by the Police. For example, the victims of domestic violence felt strongly that whilst reporting they were made to feel like perpetrators rather than victims. The questioning style of the Police was particularly 'harsh' to such vulnerable individuals, who would not be reporting 'lightly'. In some cases the women were made to feel that they had lied or made stories up.

Also, a consistent trend in the cases was that the Police officers' recordings of the crimes were not always found accurate, sufficiently thorough or actioned in a timely fashion. This meant that some victims had to repeat/deal with several police officers/departments on their single issue. This could lead to re-victimisation and ongoing trauma, and to the individual feeling deflated and more likely to withdraw their report, and less likely to make a complaint due to 'the long winded process and being send back to forth to officer/department'.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

✓

5 Experiences of complaining; particularly looking at barriers faced.

Summary

- None of the participants had complained about the poor Police service they had received.
- A number of the barriers mentioned by the Muslim women included:
 - A perception that nothing can be done;
 - A lack of information; and
 - A lack of trust
- These barriers were often compounded by the specific difficulties faced by women from BAME groups such as language barriers and a greater acceptance of poor service;
- The lack of awareness of what 'discrimination' was, the complaints process and the a fear of repercussions if they do complain, meant that Muslim women are often reluctant to raise concerns in the first instance;
- This can be compounded by a submissive attitude towards those in authority (such as police), which participants felt was often common among BAME women.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

5.1.1 Discussions on women's previous experiences of discriminatory service by Police led to conversations about the barriers faced by South Asian women when looking to complain. Participants were split into groups and asked to discuss and record the barriers faced when looking to complain. These suggestions were then fed-back and participants were asked to indicate the top three biggest barriers specific to them. These were:

- The government agendas on terrorism and the damage this has had on police/Muslim community relationships, e.g. the Prevent Agenda; anti-terror officers at mosques
- Police perceptions of the Muslim community
- Attitudes towards the police
- Police centred approach rather than a victim centred approach.
- Language/cultural barriers
- Perception of police as untouchable 'authority' and powerful
- Re-victimisation of victims with language, and attitudes used by officers
- Lack of awareness and information of rights and process of complaints
- Abuse of police power
- 'Pick and choose' practices by police officers.

Photographs of all the responses provided are appended to the report.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

None of the participants had complained about the poor police services they had received. It was clear from listening to the experiences of the participants that there was an overwhelming sense that Muslim women were highly unlikely to complain, and the perception of the Police as an 'untouchable authority' was a huge barrier. Their negative experiences of dealing with the Police fed into the stereotype of the police abusing power and institutional racism/Islamophobia. This combined with broader societal Islamophobia, and the implementation of government policies which appear to 'target Muslims' left their Muslim families feeling insecure and isolated. Some commented on the serious impact this could have on community cohesion and linked it to increasing the risk of vulnerable Muslims being open to more ideologically extremist views.

Their discriminatory experiences whether with the police or with members of the public, left participants believing that Muslims are now generally viewed suspiciously, even by the Police. The confusion and lack of awareness about what 'discrimination' included, and how to go about complaining acted as a deterrent to complaining.

Participants also felt that the police centred approach (as opposed to victim centred) meant that reporting a crime was very difficult with victims being re-victimised in the process, due to the language and attitudes of the Police. There was a general feeling that Police officers 'picked and chose' what rules they followed, and that experience was largely dependent on the individual Officer's character rather than a cohesive professional police training and standard of practice.

These barriers were often compounded by the specific difficulties faced by women from BAME groups such as language barriers and a greater acceptance of poor service. One participant said:

"We're all sitting here, English speaking, educated, with a general good knowledge of how things work. I think we're also fairly confident- I mean we're here speaking out. And yet none of us complained. I do just wonder about those women who struggle with the language, are dressed more culturally, and wouldn't know where to look for help. What hope is there for them?"

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

MWNUK staff also highlighted cases they had received from Muslim women seeking information, advice and support of discrimination issues, and how often the Police are not the first port of call. This highlighted that advocacy groups were important in channelling information to minority ethnic groups about rights and the process of complaints.

A number of participants talked about their experiences of complaining instead to their families, friends, or women's support groups.

"As women, I think we rely on each other as support networks when these things happen. Where else can we go?"

"I know a local women's group... they are the ones I go to for advise- but in my case, I didn't even ask for help (with complaining) because I did just feel it was pointless. So I just got support with getting over the incident."

6 Mechanisms suggested for encouraging complaining

Summary

- Many of the suggestions made by participants about how to go about encouraging complaints centred on **raising awareness** of discrimination, the process and rights of complaining, and the IPCC, further **police training**, and **key messaging**;
- The opportunity to talk to advocacy groups and provide direct training and advice on complaining was also seen as a worthwhile strategy for encouraging complaints;
- A number of specific messages and strategies were felt to be important when looking to **raise awareness** among BAME women, this included:
 - Changing the terminology of ‘complaints’ in order to change the attitudes of Police towards the collection and utilisation of complaints information, and for complainants to overcome the fears associated with complaining
 - Highlight the benefits associated with complaining;
 - Raising expectations about what happens when people complain about the police;
 - Reassuring individuals concerned about repercussions of complaining;
 - Highlighting examples of outcomes following complaints
 - Police to mandatorily inform victims of support services available.
 - Police to mandatorily inform reporters of crimes of the complaints processes, the rights they have, and the IPCC prior to filing a report
 - Police to overcome negative stereotypes held towards Muslims
 - Access to female Police officers, particularly when reporting abuse

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

The final part of the focus groups asked participants to suggest things that would encourage Muslim women to complain about discriminatory services. Similar to the activity to identify the major barriers faced by Muslim women, participants were separated into groups and asked to suggest ways in which complaints could be encouraged. These suggestions were then collated and each participant was asked to indicate which suggestions they felt would be most effective. The following list summarises the main suggestions. They are grouped into; Awareness Raising and Police Training. A Photograph of all the responses provided are appended to the report:

Awareness Raising

- Better awareness raising of discrimination, the complaints process and the IPCC
- Better awareness of positive examples of complaints handled
- Changing the negative terminology associated with 'complain'

Given the uncertainty demonstrated by women at the start of the focus groups about what constitutes discrimination and how to complain, it was unsurprising that many of the suggestions involved awareness raising activities.

"I wish I had known about the IPCC. When I researched you (IPCC) before coming here today, I was so surprised with the website, and the information. I just didn't know'.

"If I think about myself, the main place I get information from is the news, and through other women. But why don't the Police tell us when we go in to the station? It's like they just want to be able to say 'we don't get many complaints.'"

Participants felt that positive examples of how complaints were handled, would encourage others to report poor service. These could be on posters at police stations, or even TV adverts.

It was also felt that the word 'complaint' was viewed largely negatively, both by the Police service, and by those complaining. From both perspectives what needed to happen was for 'feedback' to be provided in order for the situation to be improved. It was felt that using the word 'feedback' would make the police more open to receiving the criticism, and for complainants to be less fearful about the repercussions.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

Police Training

- A revision of all policies and procedures adopted by the Police in line with the Equality Act 2010, and adopted by Officers on the ground.
- Further development of stop and search procedures to ensure those stopped are not done so due to racial or religious profiling.
- Police to be better trained and tested on meeting basic interpersonal skills; such as communication skills, providing thorough information in a timely fashion, and being better aware of cultural sensitivities when dealing with diverse groups.
- Police to be better trained to be more compassionate towards victims, e.g. women who've experienced violence.
- Police to mandatorily inform victims of support services available.
- Police to mandatorily inform reporters of crimes of the complaints processes, the rights they have, and the IPCC prior to filing a report.
- Police guidelines around the timeliness when dealing with cases to be better enforced, and such guidelines to be made public for better awareness of what to expect when reporting a crime.

It is important to note that there exist broader societal issues which impact the experiences of Muslim women and their engagement with Police services. Any awareness raising or policy guidelines must endeavour to work with other public service providers to channel information about police procedures and complaint channels, as well as being aware of the additional barriers that women from minority ethnic groups may face when looking to complain.

A number of the challenges involve overcoming attitudinal barriers among the Police. Muslim women discussed feeling stereotyped and targeted by the police on the basis of their appearance, accent and with assumptions about their levels of understanding. This could leave women feeling reluctant to ask for information relating to complaints:

'I'm proudly British and support the government and its institutions. I believe in the rule of law and respect that the Police are necessary to maintaining a fair and just society. But when I hear stories like I did today, you can't help but feel 'what's the

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

point?’ We’re doing our best to ‘integrate’ and so on... have the Police really integrated into a changing society which is fair and just for everyone- people like me.”

Key Messaging

The specific barriers faced by many Muslim women from minority ethnic groups, such as language barriers, mean that awareness raising activities need to focus on channels that women will come into contact with. Third sector organisations, GPs and through schools seemed popular choices.

“The police already use schools as a means of communicating to us. Letters are sent, school assemblies, PTAs etc. So they should use this means to provide us with more information, or come into school and run workshops.”

Advertisements within police stations was also felt to be important:

“I think the police need to also be reminded and if they saw posters up in their station, it’d help. Also people would be able to say ‘can you tell me more about that poster?’”

Participants also highlighted a number of specific attitudes and perceptions that act as barriers to prevent Muslim women from complaining. Using promotional activity to counteract any negative perception whilst reinforcing positive messages would be beneficial:

Key messages which needed to be promoted included:

- Reassuring the public that there are means in which to hold even the Police to account;
- Reassuring Muslim communities that they will be treated fairly;
- Reassuring individuals concerned about potential repercussions of complaining;
- Demonstrating the benefits of complaining not just for the individual concerned but also for other people in a similar position;
- Raising expectations about positive changes that complaining can bring to public services, and highlighting evidence from cases where this has occurred;

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

- Raising peoples understanding about the obligations of the Police who receive a complaint;
- Highlighting examples of outcomes following complaints

7 Summary and next steps

One of the most significant barriers preventing Muslim women from minority ethnic groups from complaining is a lack of knowledge. Most participants felt there would be value in raising awareness of the IPCC as well as the importance and impact of complaining via adverts, leaflets and posters. Positioning promotional material in locations where BAME women – who are often less likely to leave their homes or local communities – are likely to frequent, such as schools, would be useful. Census information could be used to select locations with a high BAME population. Information should focus on;

- *What is discrimination;*
- *What good service looks like;*
- *How to complain;*
- *What to expect when complaining;*
- *The importance of complaining and the positive change that can be achieved;*
- *‘Normalising’ the image of BAME women complaining.*

There appears to be a greater reliance on advocacy and support groups among women from minority ethnic groups. The IPCC should consider offering greater support and resources to these groups, who could channel this information across hard to reach communities. For example, by producing easy to read leaflets and booklets containing advice on how to complain, together with case studies of complainants who have achieved positive outcomes by complaining. And to make these available in a variety of languages.

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

Many of the attitudinal barriers and perceptions that work to prevent BAME women from complaining are complex and would not be easily remedied by the type of information that can be shown in a short campaign. A longer term strategy should include providing specific workshops on the rights of users of the police service. Schools and community and advocacy groups in areas with high BAME populations should be utilised to deliver these. More positive community engagement by the Police would also help restore relationships of trust between Muslim communities and the Police.

Simplifying the complaints process, and maintaining a variety of mechanisms for individuals to raise a complaint;

- Dissociating complaint channels from the individuals being complained about;
- Access to female complaint handlers;
- Changing the attitudes of public service providers towards the collection and utilisation of complaints information;
- Overcoming stereotypes held by public service providers towards BAME women.
- Many of the suggestions made by participants about how to go about encouraging complaints centred on raising awareness of discrimination, the process and rights of complaining, and the IPCC, further police training and key messaging;
- The opportunity to talk to advocacy groups and provide direct training and advice on complaining was also seen as a worthwhile strategy for encouraging complaints;
- A number of key recommendations were felt to be important when looking to raise awareness among BAME women, this included:
 - Police to mandatorily inform victims of support services available.
 - Police to mandatorily inform reporters of crimes of the complaints processes, the rights they have, and the IPCC prior to filing a report
 - Police to overcome negative stereotypes held towards Muslims
 - Access to female Police officers, particularly when reporting abuse

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

8 Appendix

8.1 Experiences of complaining

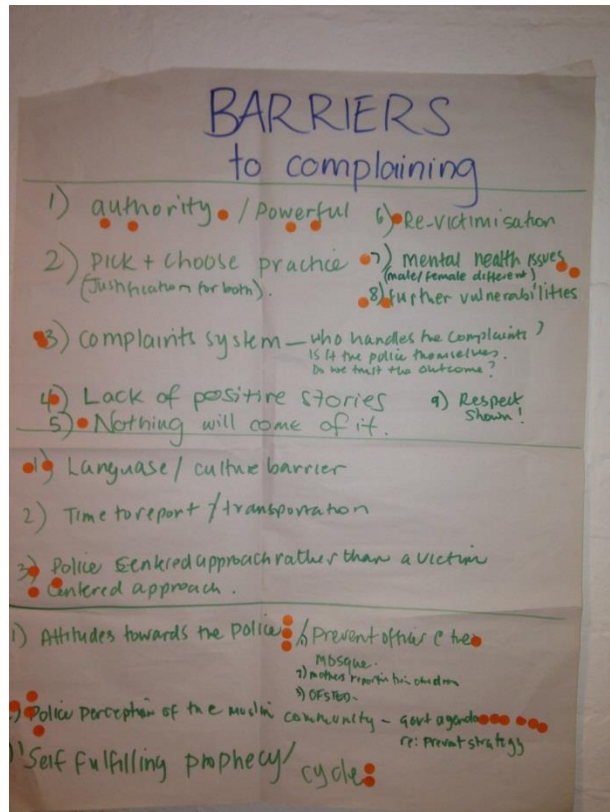
WHAT HAPPENED?	TO WHO?	WHY IT'S DISCRIMINATORY?	WHAT DID YOU DO?	DID YOU COMPLAIN?	SATISFIED?	BARRIER?
Carjacked outside family home; 2 young lads beat her up in car. Don't take off hijab cos Muslim. Spoke phone and car. Phone broken.	Herself	Attitude of female officer very cold - based on phone tracker. Did not reassure her. No m. of Victim Support. Woman who was at headscarf and drive. Remind name of car. Phone 100 called to update on car. No 100 call or name. Long period of time.	Called Victim Support. When went into detail, she was discouraged - told to shed to questionnaire.	No	No	Worried make a difference.
DV - few months back, didn't have courage to approach Police - GP advised to call Police. Set back - 2 tall officers asked what happened, gave statement w/ 4 kids - Police officers - asked what had happened they wanted specific details - demanded a lot of information putting words in my mouth.	Herself	Putting words in my mouth. Felt as though other cases - felt as being categorised preferred a female officer. being judged.	Intervention - resubmitted. Felt pre-conceived idea.	No	So/so.	female officer authority.
2 Male Crimes. Public event - Leicester. A man came and pulled at daughter's hijab - lost all sense of personal safety - Police discrimination. Daughter's shaken. sister, filmed on CCTV footage, shopping knocked out.	Sister / Daughter	Public stigma attached to reporting to the Police. Call centres number. Words into mouth. Footage deleted. driven / disturbed. CCTV footage deleted.	unwanted insecure marginalised.	No	No	not sent out first point. male police officer. knowledge about process. Police coming to the home.
Friend, visiting abroad - stopped by Police under Schedule 7. Why are you travelling where did you get no money from? Statistical 40% stopped @ airport why are arrest being made simply because we are Muslim vulnerable.	Friend	- Do you press 5 times? - why are you travelling? - Muslim women - kept for several hrs. - Hyatt / Jilbaab. - Police targeting with ppl targeting Muslim.				
- Police painted picture - search of hundred of him Asian Police Officers - Pakistani came in as Anti-Terrorism Police. Lots of questioning stopped and searched in any form?	Member of family Brother.	- Long Road. - Long thank. - Tall / Big guy. - Bygone, lost like Osama Bin Laden. - 2% / 26.		Nothing	No	No - Manipulation - So let alone - Police should not be set up - authority - Push ppl

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

WHAT HAPPENED?	TO WHO?	WHY IT'S DISCRIMINATORY?	WHAT DID YOU DO?	DID YOU COMPLAIN?	WAS IT SATISFIED?	BARRIERS?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DV cases - CAB - - Wanted to go back to family - drugs, alcohol, prostitution - broken - Need protection early stages. 	DV cases via CAB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from manipulation - Police delay - heard - muslim stereotypes. - Asian 	<p>Father did not know what to do</p> <p>CAB - informed</p>	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fear - manipulation - did not know rights - not given correct info - 1 PCC - Delayed I - no response - No clarity in info. - black mailing complaint. - no real response (authorities) 		
<p><u>Stop and search</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ramadan, gone for early morning prayers, on way home stopped. by 4 male police officers, explained that he'd gone to the mosque. - Back off the van, strip searched by 3 officers all white male officers. - Yellow slip form was given. - He was given the slip that he was strip searched. 	Nephew (19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young person - Muslim - Coming from the mosque 	Nothing.	NO	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't believe it will make a difference. - No trust 	
<p>DV, called police to the home black eye.</p> <p>withering murder court hearing Wednesday.</p> <p>Multiple harassment</p> <p>Living in fear, threaten/kill by</p>	Herself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No service available. - Police did not turn up @ hearing. 	<p>Kept signposting</p> <p>No service from witness support or victim support or the Police.</p>	NO	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - False info. - going behind closed. - up professional service. - no options 	

Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women

8.2 Barriers to complaining



8.3 Encouraging complaining



Evaluation of focus group with Muslim women