



## Preston Academic Spearheads National Health Initiative

The Centre for Ethnicity and Health at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is playing a central role in improving mental health services for the UK's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

Professor Kamlesh Patel OBE has taken up a secondment with the National Institute for Mental Health England (NIMHE) to develop and drive through a programme of far reaching changes. The proposals will ensure services are accessible, adequate and appropriate to the needs of all users and reflect their diverse needs.

Since his appointment, Kamlesh has been touring the UK, talking to service users, their carers and families and discussing NIMHE's plans with those responsible for designing, developing and delivering mental health services. The new strategy includes:

- An ambitious series of community based projects to identify the recruitment pool for 500 new Community Development Workers by 2006.
- Major national project to improve the quality of data on ethnicity, in partnership with the inspectorates.
- Creation of nine new senior regional posts within NIMHE to lead on Race Equality.

Commenting on the ground breaking plans, and his role in their implementation, Kamlesh said: "This is a long term, whole system approach designed to gain commitment and ownership from stakeholders, instil knowledge and confidence in the workforce and build mutual trust between services and the communities they serve."

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Mental health inequalities have existed amongst BME communities for over 30 years. What has now changed is the legal context: the amended Race Relations Act and the introduction of the Human Rights Act. Both impose a legal duty on services to address these inequalities.

Currently:

- Black people constitute 30% of the patient group in medium secure services and 16% of high secure services.
- Black people are over six times more likely than the majority population to be detained under the Mental Health Act.
- Women born in India and East Africa have a 40% higher suicide rate than those born in England and Wales.

Kamlesh is pleased that the Department for Health had finally acknowledged the need for improved mental health services. "Research has highlighted that Black and minority ethnic people suffer an adverse and unjustifiable impact in terms of service, access experience and outcome. We are now working with service providers, to help them comply with the newly implemented legal requirements, and liaising closely with the inspectorates to ensure that key performance indicators are established and implemented within the programme."

**For further details on this project please contact Moira Winters, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Ethnicity and Health at the University of Central Lancashire on 07974 183487.**

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