



Promoting anti-racism in children and family services

About this briefing

This briefing has been written to support the development of anti-racist practice in children and family services. It explains why taking action to acknowledge and address the impact of racism within the context of children and family services is both important and timely.

The content is relevant for anyone working within children and family services regardless of role or level or seniority.

The briefing comprises the following sections:

- > Introduction and terminology
- > Thinking about the causes and effects of racism
- > The impact of racism in children and family services
- > Embedding anti-racism in children and family services

Links to further reading and resources are included throughout which can be used to support individual continual profession development (CPD) and to prompt discussion and reflection with others.

This briefing has been commissioned alongside a series of short films where you can hear directly from professionals engaged in anti-racist practice development in children and family services. The films provide an opportunity to see some of the ideas included in this briefing in action. Each film is accompanied by a brief prompt sheet to support you in thinking about the ideas outlined in the film further.

Introduction

The impact of the public murder of George Floyd in the United States (US) in 2020 can't be overstated, nor the Black Lives Matter protests that followed globally. While racism has always plagued our communities, this very public murder, caught on camera at a time when racial tensions were already high, highlighted with brutal clarity to onlookers just how far away we still are from living in post-racial times.

These events have re-ignited debate about the role of social work values, social justice and anti-racism within social care organisations. Many social care organisations have spoken out publicly against the murder of George Floyd, using this as an opportunity to advocate for changes to practice and to improve the experience of colleagues from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups working within children and family services. However, responses have been varied and whilst some social care organisations have focused extensively on addressing the impact of racism, others are only now beginning to focus on this.

A note on terminology

In this briefing the term 'people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups' is used throughout because it recognises that individuals have been minoritised through social processes of power and domination rather than just existing in distinct statistical minorities. It also reflects the fact that ethnic groups that are minorities in the UK are majorities in the global population.

You can find out more information about terminology from the webpages below:

- > www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/a-guide-to-race-and-ethnicity-terminology-and-language
- > www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity
- > <https://equalities.blog.gov.uk/2022/04/07/why-we-no-longer-use-the-term-bame-in-government>

Thinking about the causes and effects of racism

Racism can be considered to be the attitude of hostility, contempt or aggression towards a person or group of people on the grounds of nationality, language or colour. Historically, racism was borne out of the belief that there was a hierarchy of races with the white race at the top and black, Asian and minoritised people at the bottom. This resulted in people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups being enslaved until the 'formal' end to slavery in Britain in 1833. It is widely acknowledged that racism exists today as a legacy of the slave trade and colonialism where people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups were viewed as inferior, barbaric and backward (Buchanan et al, 2008).

Racism occurs when a dominant group has the power to carry out systematic discrimination through individual behaviour or institutional policies and practices. It can be both deliberate and intentional as well as implicit and covert. Racism, therefore, encompasses a wide range of beliefs, behaviours and acts which discriminate against people because of the colour of their skin, religion, nationality, language or ethnicity (Lane, 2008).

Racism is a global phenomenon. It is interwoven throughout the fabric of society and present in all social interactions, systems and structures:

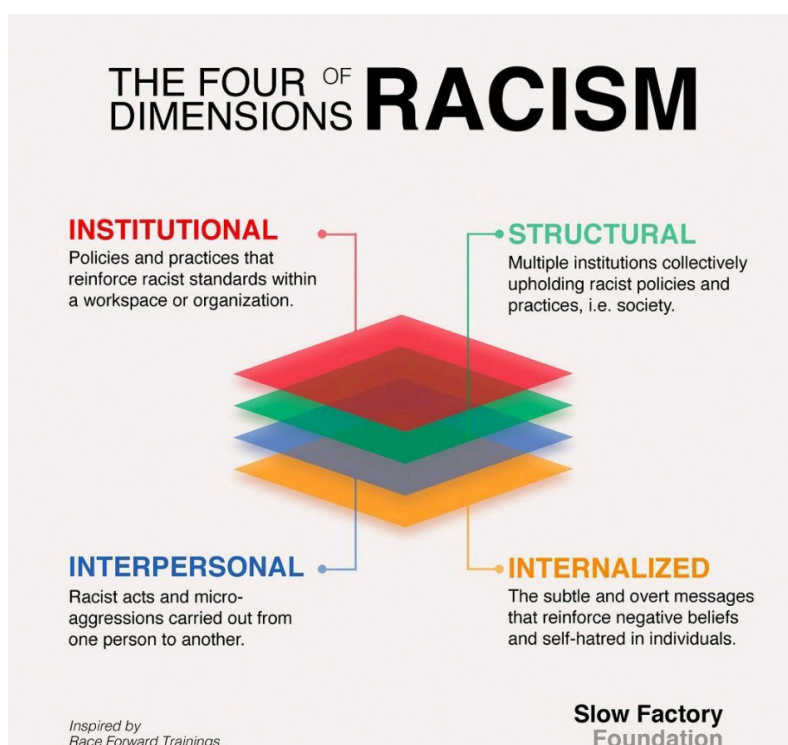
In a society that privileges white people and whiteness, racist ideas are considered normal throughout our media, culture, social systems, and institutions.

(National Museum of African American History and Culture para.1).

Figure 1 helps us to think further about the different dimensions of racism – institutional, structural, interpersonal and internalised – and the ways in which they interact.

Figure 1

The four dimensions of racism



(theslowfactory www.instagram.com/p/CA-WejdJ5qk/?hl=en)

Institutional racism

Institutional racism occurs when the:

policies and practices of an organisation unfairly discriminate against people from black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups. This can occur without conscious intention and even well-intentioned acts could be considered racist if they have racist consequences.

(Gillborn, 2008, p.4).

The term 'institutional racism' became widely known in England as a result of the McPherson Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1999 and subsequent police investigation. The impact of institutional racism can lead to 'racial stratification and disparities' (Solid Ground para.2) in public service provision. For example, access to employment and barriers to progression, access to housing, and quality of education.

Institutional racism in child welfare services in America

In the US, the Child Welfare Information Gateway (2021) provides an overview on the issue of racial disparity and disproportionality within the child welfare system:

- > Families from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds are reported to experience disparate treatment once they are involved with child welfare professionals and services.
- > African-American children are less likely to receive services compared with white children.
- > African-American families are overrepresented in reports of suspected child maltreatment nationally.
- > African-American families are subjected to child protective services (CPS) investigations at higher rates than other families nationally.
- > Compared to other children, African-American children are reported to spend more time in foster care while being less likely to be reunited with their families.
- > At every major decision-making point in the child welfare process, racial disparities occur.

Institutional racism in children and family services in England

In England we see similar disproportionality in relation to children looked after as highlighted by research exploring inequalities in **child welfare intervention rates**. For example:

- > Black Caribbean children at all levels of neighbourhood deprivation are more likely than white British children to be in care.
- > Amongst 16 and 17-year-olds, one Black Caribbean child in 30 was in care, compared to one in 100 'White British' children (Bywaters, 2020, p.35).

It is important to understand the context of broader institutional and structural processes which creates this disproportionality in access to services and outcomes for people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups.

- > Watch this short film **clip** from the Child Welfare Inequalities Project and Nuffield Foundation to learn more about why we see a disproportionate number of children from ethnic minority groups in care in England.

Structural racism

Systemic racism is so embedded in systems that it often is assumed to reflect the natural, inevitable order of things.

(Braverman et al., 2022, p.172).

The concept of structural racism focuses attention on the cumulative impact of all four dimensions of racism on the lives of people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups and the inequalities that result from this.

The impact of structural racism is far reaching and occurs when: ‘multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present [are] continually producing new, and re-producing old forms of racism within society’ (Bedford, 2020, para.9).

Structural racism in child welfare services in Canada

Antwi-Boasiako et al. (2022) undertook research in Canada in an attempt to understand the over-representation of children from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in Ontario’s child welfare system. They identified a number of factors which contributed to this disproportionality:

- > lack of workforce diversity
- > lack of workforce training
- > lack of culturally appropriate resources and assessment tools
- > racism and bias from the sources of referral
- > racism and bias from child welfare workers
- > poverty and fear of liability.

These factors were compounded by:

- > A lack of child welfare workers from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in role. Where they were in role, they experienced discrimination in the workplace and did not progress into leadership roles.
- > This lack of child welfare workers from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in leadership roles meant, in turn, a lack of advocacy for children from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in the development of policy or service delivery.

This example illustrates the many different ways in which structural racism affects practice responses, service delivery and organisational development in children and family services.

Structural racism affecting children and families in England

This **blog** by Barnardo’s highlights the cumulative impact of multiple institutions discriminating against children and young people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in the UK.

Inter-personal racism

At a micro level, individual or inter-personal racism occurs when a person believes themselves to be superior to others because of their ethnic background or colour of their skin. This is then manifested in attitudes and actions towards, and communication with, people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups (Sue et al., 2007).

Inter-personal racism occurs regardless of whether the intent was deliberate and purposeful (conscious level) or not (unconscious level) (Gillborn, 2008). This form of racism may be either active or passive and is experienced by people from black, Asian and minoritised communities as microaggressions.

Microaggressions occur at the individual level and are brief daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups (Sue et al., 2007).

Microaggressions

- > This **film** explains what microaggressions are and how they may impact on a person experiencing them day after day.
- > You can also hear three social care professionals talking about their experience of microaggressions in a short film.
 - Scroll down this **webpage** to access the film 'Let's talk about racism and microaggressions'.

Internalised racism

The experience of internalised racism is summarised by Bivens (2005, p. 44) in the quotation below:

As people of colour are victimised by racism, we internalise it. That is, we develop ideas, beliefs, actions and behaviours that support or collude with racism.

This internalised racism has its own systemic reality and its own negative consequences in the lives and communities of people of colour.

In other words, just as there is a system in place that reinforces the power and expands the privilege of white people, there is a system in place that actively discourages and undermines the power of people and communities of colour and mires us in our own oppression.

The impact of racism is now increasingly being recognised and understood as a form of trauma resulting from the combined experience of institutional, structural, inter-personal and internalised racism (Facemire, 2018).

Racial trauma, or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), refers to the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes.

(Mental Health America, para.1)

The Black Lives Matter movement

Black Lives Matter developed as an explicitly anti-racist movement aimed at exposing the disproportionality in relation to the use of force by police against people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in the UK and to highlight the ways in which colour-blindness is used to downplay racism (West et al., 2021).

It has been argued that the term 'Black Lives Matter' is divisive, proposing instead that we use the term 'All lives Matter'. It is important that we critically reflect on the meaning of the latter. This derails and undermines conversations about racism against people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups and endorses a colour-blind approach.

The question to ask is if 'all lives mattered', then are people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups accorded the same protection, safeguards and respect as others?

White privilege and white fragility

Despite its insidious presence in all societies, however, the practice of ignoring and diminishing race remains an irritant to the many people affected by it. Race blindness denies contemporary forms of racism and racial discrimination. It is an invitation to turn a blind eye to history rather than face up to its legacies.

(January-Bardill, 2003, p.20)

The term 'white privilege' is used to describe the 'inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterised by racial inequality and injustice' (Oxford Dictionary).

White privilege does not mean that white people have never struggled or do not experience difficulties, it means that the colour of their skin is an asset and does not add to the difficulties they may experience. The idea of white privilege does not devalue or detract from other forms of discrimination or difficulties experienced by white people. It is about effortless or unearned benefits that person receives because they are white.

DiAngelo (2011) uses the term 'white fragility' to describe what happens when a person reacts defensively to hearing about or discussing racism. She argues that this reaction: 'in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable' (p. 57) occurs because white people 'live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress' (p. 54). Thus, the experience of white privilege results in a person finding it stressful to hear about or acknowledge the endemic nature of racism. This can trigger emotions such as fear, guilt, anger or silence. It can also result in a person removing themselves from the space where these discussions are taking place. Typical responses might be:

- > changing the subject
- > closing down the conversation
- > minimising what is said
- > reacting angrily or dismissively.

Professionals working in children and family services who are aware of white privilege and white fragility are able to listen to the experiences of children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups with openness rather than defensiveness. They are aware of the privilege they hold in a professional relationship (McCoy, 2020).

White privilege and white fragility

You may find the resources below helpful to think about the concepts of white privilege and white fragility in more depth:

- > McIntosh's **Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack**, on white privilege was published originally in 1989 and is still very relevant.
- > You can access a paper by DiAngelo exploring white fragility [here](#).

The impact of racism in children and family services

Children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in the child welfare system

Research messages about the experience of children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in the UK have largely been consistent over the last 30 years (Lavalette & Pinketh, 2014):

- > As highlighted earlier children from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in the UK are over-represented in the child welfare system (Bernard & Harris, 2016; Laird & Tadam, 2019).
- > Boys and girls from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups are regularly perceived as being adult-like (adultification) and in the process their needs and vulnerability are often overlooked. A focus on intersectionality helps to mitigate against adultification of children from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups (Davies & Marsh, 2020).

Intersectionality

At the heart of the concept of intersectionality is the experience of discrimination that is unique to bearing specific multiple identities.

(Sewell, 2021, para.1).

Coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, 'intersectionality' describes the ways in which class, race, gender, and other aspects of our identity overlap and interact with one another. Aspects of our identity do not work in isolation and a combination of our identities give unique experiences.

- > To find out more watch this [film clip](#) in which Crenshaw explains why taking an intersectional approach is important.
- > You can also read more about intersectionality and race related inequalities in this [blog](#) by Sewell (2021).

Adultification

- > You can listen to Davies and Marsh briefly explaining how intersectionality and adultification inform their work [here](#).
- > In this [research paper](#) Davies and Marsh provide a detailed explanation of adultification.

- > Factors such as racism, gender and poverty create social contexts which place girls and women from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups living in gang-affected neighbourhoods in England at greater risk of violence (Bernard & Carlile, 2021). The authors conclude that children's social care professionals:

'must find ways to listen to the voices of marginalised young black women to appreciate the intricacies of their lives in order to know how they can effectively be supported' (p. 880).

- > Social care professionals have been criticised for, what appears to be, a lack of professional curiosity in relation to the circumstances of children from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in need of support and protection (Bernard, 2020).
- > Parents from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups may be labelled as 'uncooperative or antagonistic' (Okpokiri, 2020, p.440). They may also be positioned in relation to citizenship rights if they are involved in the immigration system or their immigration status is unclear (Gupta & Featherstone, 2015). The authors suggest that parents would benefit from professionals:
 - Taking the time to develop relationships with them.
 - Moving beyond 'othering' stereotypes and prejudice to hear their stories in the round.
 - Acknowledging their strengths within systems that are not always supportive, fair or understanding.

In order to tackle these issues, it is important that children and family services ensure that there is a sustained focus on:

- > understanding and responding to patterns of disproportionality
- > understanding what children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups think about their experience of working with the organisation and adjusting service delivery and practice in response to this.

It is possible for practitioners in children's social care to make decisions that are based on assumptions, stereotypes, bias and from a Eurocentric perspective. Referrals which may contain elements of bias should be analysed and assessed using a broad range of knowledge, skills and expertise and acknowledge strengths alongside weaknesses.

It is also important to consider the impact of labelling children and families. Language is important given that these labels usually originate from stereotypes and bias.

Looking at these issues in more depth

- > For a more comprehensive overview of research findings about the experiences of children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups involved in the child welfare system please read this [knowledge briefing](#) written by Professor Claudia Bernard (2020).

Professionals from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups working in the child welfare system

Professionals from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups report frequently experiencing racism from their point of entry on to social work programmes and through their careers as social care professionals. Consequently, few will have the energy to fight and challenge racism as practitioners and managers.

During social work training – Students from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups:

- > Fare less well and experience delays and terminations from social work programmes than peers (Bartoli et al., 2008; Bernard et al., 2014).
- > Find placements and practice learning spaces difficult to navigate (Sangha, 2021; Tadam, 2021).
- > Graduate with lower social work degree classifications than other groups (Bernard et al., 2014; Hussein et al., 2009).

After qualification working in children and family services, Professionals from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups:

- > Experience racism at work from children and families, colleagues and managers (Mbarushimana & Robbins, 2015; Tadam, 2021).
- > Are more likely to fail the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) than their peers (Carter, 2021; Preston, 2021). In 2018-19, black, Asian and minoritised children's social care professionals accounted for 53% of ASYE fails, despite making up only 26% of those registered under the programme (Preston, 2021).
- > Are disproportionately referred to Fitness to Practice processes than other social care professionals (Samuel, 2020).
- > Are less likely to progress into managerial positions and senior leadership roles within social care (Bernard, 2021; What Works Childrens Social Care (WWCSC), 2022).

Achieving racial equity in the workforce begins with an awareness that a problem of racial inequity exists and that the impact of racism is detrimental to the wellbeing of social care practitioners and the sector more broadly.

Understanding the scale and nature of historical and current racism in the social care workforce must, therefore, be a priority. The development of the *Workforce Race Equality Standard* (WRES) in social care will play a vital role in developing a robust evidence base in this area.

Looking at these issues in more depth

- > In this **knowledge briefing** Professor Claudia Bernard explores how organisations can remove organisational barriers and proactively support the progression of social care practitioners from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups into management positions and senior leadership roles.
- > This **report** published by WWCSO explores the evidence base in relation to the representation, welfare, progression and retention of social workers from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in children's social care in England. It concludes that: 'racism in the social work profession is widespread' (WWCSO, 2022, p. 24).
- > You can hear three social care professionals talking about barriers to progression in a short film 'Let's talk about racism and barriers to career progression'.
 - Scroll down this **webpage** to access the film.

Embedding anti-racism in children and family services

What is anti-racism?

The goal of anti-racism is to actively change policies, behaviours, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.

(BU Community Service Center, para.1)

Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and challenging racism, by changing systems, organisational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes to redistribute power in an equitable manner.

Anti-racism is not passive, it is an active, deliberate and ongoing process of reflection and action as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Becoming anti-racist



Becoming anti-racist

Becoming anti-racist

If you're not racist, you're kind of just standing still on the moving walkway, but you're still complicit in societal racism because you're part of society. The only way to be anti-racist is to walk in the other direction.

(North, 2020, para.17)

Please pause at Figure 2 and spend a few minutes thinking about your response to this infographic. Then consider the following questions:

- When you look at the infographic, can you identify any areas where you are already acting and thinking in an anti-racist way?
- Are there any areas of anti-racism in the infographic which are more challenging for you? Why do you think that is?
- What would you like to start to do tomorrow to become more anti-racist?
- Can you identify a longer-term goal(s) that you would like to work towards?

You can find out more information about anti-racism in this [online guide](#).

Anti-racist allyship

Allyship has become an important concept in anti-racism dialogue and work. In this context it refers to situations when a person with racial privilege works in solidarity with a disadvantaged or marginalised person or group to disrupt racism and improve access to opportunity and resources. It is important to note that people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups have historically resisted racism and, in many circumstances, have been supported by white allies.

The term 'white ally' is used to describe a white 'anti-racist activist' who actively joins people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in their struggle against racism and white supremacy (Brown, 2002). In the context of children's social care, a white ally would be one who acts out of responsibility, not guilt and is able to challenge racist actions and behaviours in the absence of practitioners and colleagues from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups.

Figure 3 breaks down the concept of allyship into seven key areas.

Figure 3

The 7 A's of Authentic Allyship



(<https://nhsenglandldn.medium.com/time-to-take-action-making-race-equality-a-reality-for-the-nhs-in-london-3ce20e599217>)

What can you do to support anti-racism?

- > Develop an anti-racism mind set and outlook by engaging with literature, research and social media posts that develop your understanding of the importance of anti-racist practice.
- > Pledge to become an anti-racist ally and, if this applies to you, recognise your 'white privilege' using this as a strategy to work more effectively as an anti-racist professional in children and family services.
- > Don't take things personally. This acts as a barrier to being anti-racist because it stops us from reflecting on and confronting issues of racism directly.
- > Consider discussions about racism as learning opportunities.
- > Remember that recounting a personal experience of racism can be triggering for the victim and at best requires empathy and understanding, not defensiveness or dismissiveness
- > Recommend training packages and resources you are aware of to your workforce development/ training department.
- > Acknowledge and celebrate significant dates such as the **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** on 21 March and **Black History Month** in October each year.

Becoming an anti-racist organisation

The social work profession has always identified anti-oppression as a core value. However, recent discourse about structural and institutional racism has led to voices within the sector demanding action to address racism experienced by the workforce and to create a truly anti-racist profession.

(WWCSC, 2022, p.2)

It is common practice for social care organisations to have policies that refer to equality, diversity and inclusion and hate crime. However, there are now growing calls within the sector for action against racism and a specific focus on anti-racism.

Racism cannot be eradicated through being passive or being well intentioned. Social care professionals at all levels within organisations need to take an active stance on racism and racial injustice. We cannot leave it to a few 'well-intentioned' social care professionals to confront and disrupt racism. We must all be invested in anti-racism work.

Gair's (2017) research exploring the response of Australian social work students to learning about injustices against Aboriginal people may be helpful to consider in the context of developing a greater focus on anti-racism within children and family services. The top five most common responses from students in her research are listed below:

- 1) Not sure what to do.
- 2) Could not see the issues.
- 3) Lack of information.
- 4) Lack of confidence.
- 5) Lack of time.

Gair concluded that a focus on cultivating empathy plays a key role in enabling students to confidently work with issues of racism and social injustice. However, the level of uncertainty about how to respond to racism evident from the student responses also highlights the importance of embedding an organisational culture in children and family services which encourages staff at all levels to:

- > Become more confident to talk about racism.
- > Develop a clear understanding about what excellent anti-racist practice with children and families looks like.
- > Ensure they recruit and retain a diverse workforce who are supported to progress into leadership roles.

Talking about racism can be challenging and there can be a tendency to shy away from discussions. However, developing confidence in this area is an essential first step in becoming actively anti-racist.

Anti-racist supervision

Developing a focus on anti-racist supervision is a central element in becoming an anti-racist organisation.

It is important that social care professionals remain aware of the need to be sensitive, respectful and culturally aware at all stages of their involvement with children and families. However, in the busy contexts of practice this focus may easily fade into the background given the volume of other pressing demands:

Many organisations have workforces that are very skilled in working with issues of diversity and equality. However, research studies highlight concerns that decisions in practice are often influenced by: 'time and workload pressures; risk averse practice cultures; formulaic assessment processes; the reduction in family support services; and traditional expectations of "family", particularly those related to cultural and gendered norms.

(Mason & Walsh, 2018 quoted in McGeown, 2020, p.6)

Supervision, therefore, plays a key role in promoting curiosity and reflection about the lived experiences of children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups. By working skilfully and supportively in supervision practice, supervisors can challenge practitioners to think deeply about any biases, assumptions or organisational constraints that may be influencing their work with children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups and reflect on what it means to practice in an anti-racist way.

Practice supervisors also play a key role in supporting the wellbeing of practitioners from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups by actively acknowledging the potential impact of racism and providing opportunities for practitioners to talk about this, should they wish to, in supervision. Practice supervisors are uniquely placed to be effective allies by making sure they also actively support the development of practitioners from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups and work with them to identify ways in which they can overcome any barriers to career progression.

Using supervision to promote curiosity about the lived experiences of children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups:

- > **‘Exploring diversity in supervision’** supports practice supervisors to explore the significance of race, culture, ethnicity, asylum seeking status and faith when talking about children and families in supervision.
- > **‘Hearing the voices of children and families in supervision’** prompts practice supervisors to use different kinds of reflections in supervision to explore the lived experiences of children and families.
- > This short **briefing** outlines how senior managers and strategic leads can support practice supervisors to ensure that understanding the lived experience of children and families is a central element of social work practice.

Using supervision to support the wellbeing and progression of professionals from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups:

- > **Developing cultural competence** supports practice supervisors to reflect on the barriers that prevent a culturally-diverse staff group from being represented at all tiers within an organisation. It can be used to think about individual behaviours and attitudes, and to reflect on wider team and organisational dynamics, policies and structures.
- > **Critical conversations in social work supervision** provides guidance about how practice supervisors can engage in conversations with supervisees about the impact of racism and other forms of structural inequality in order to develop culturally sensitive and inclusive supervision spaces.

Developing an organisational anti-racist strategy

In order to combat racism social work organisations need to adopt a range of different anti-racist approaches designed to work in combination as part of an anti-racist action plan or framework (Reid, 2020). In this section we explore actions that senior and middle leaders can take in order to embed anti-racism in children's social care organisations.

Any strategy for developing and embedding anti-racism in children and family services must first acknowledge that there is a problem. That problem is not race, it is racism. It is also important to make clear that challenging racism is not the sole responsibility of individuals from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups. An anti-racist strategy should focus on addressing issues of racism from the time new social care professionals join an organisation. Such a strategy recognises that practitioners from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups may be joining the profession after navigating many barriers and experiences of racism.

When developing an anti-racist strategy senior leaders should:

- > Involve stakeholders when formulating the strategy. This should include social care practitioners from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups throughout the organisation, external partners and children and families.
- > Align their strategy to social work values: the **Professional Capabilities Framework, social work post-qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statements, Social work England Professional standards**. Include relevant legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, colour, ethnic or national origins, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership.
- > Prioritise the wellbeing of staff working in the organisation who experience racism from colleagues or children and families. Ensure they have a safe space to report and discuss concerns.
- > Communicate the organisation's anti-racism strategy or statement. Define key terms, such as what constitutes racism.
- > Demonstrate commitment to the strategy by explaining what it is and why it is important and by holding consultations briefings and roadshows and advertising this.
- > Offer mandatory training about racism followed by ongoing and regular refresher events where up-to-date content is delivered and new knowledge shared. Be open about sanctions and possible outcomes for perpetrators.
- > Be clear about the process for making a grievance or resolving any issues of racial injustice.
- > Ensure that there is a robust process in place to deal with children and families and employee complaints/grievances swiftly and transparently. Check that complaints do not suddenly 'disappear' or progress through the process and that people making complaints are not labelled as 'difficult', 'using the race card', 'hard to reach' or 'aggressive'.

- > Ask about the policies and process of dealing with racism perpetuated or experienced by children and their families. Request updates on the status of this. Review these policies regularly in line with organisational learning about anti-racism. There should be a named person(s) dealing with these, not a 'team' or an unattended email address.
- > Offer safe spaces for staff to discuss their concerns and experiences.
- > Update and review the organisation's anti-racism strategy regularly, consulting with everyone who works in the organisation and children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups. Remember to do this too after significant national or international events (e.g. the murder of George Floyd).
- > Examine local and team data to understand whether children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups are overrepresented in specific areas of practice and outline strategies to address this.
- > Consider how assessment forms, tools and processes used when working with children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups contribute to their experience of racism and redesign them if necessary.
- > Encourage staff to share ideas and develop proposals for small-scale anti-racism projects. Ring fence funding/budgets to test out these proposals within the organisation and share learning.
- > Set an expectation that anti-racism is discussed during supervision and staff appraisals and ensure that learning from this is disseminated within the organisation.
- > Ensure that there are opportunities for everyone in the organisation to share learning arising from a focus on anti-racism and for this knowledge to be harnessed and built on.

Conclusion

Racism is real and present in the daily lives of people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups. We see and hear about racism and racist experiences on a daily basis. The urgency of the situation cannot be underestimated. The profession must redeem itself from any association with racism in all its forms (institutional, interpersonal, internalised and structural).

Harries, (2014, p.117) reminds us of the fact that:

It is not easy to name racism in a context in which race is almost entirely denied.

This is an important point to finish on. Where there is denial or minimisation of racism, we silence narratives about racism, making it difficult to both name and to address. We must, therefore, continue to strengthen and maintain a focus on anti-racism with children and families and social care professionals from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups.

In order to do so, we need to actively engage in identifying and challenging racism and commit to this over the long term. Being anti-racist, therefore, requires us to talk about the impact of racism and jointly engage in dialogue about how this can be addressed.

We hope that this briefing, and resources contained within it, help you to have conversations about anti-racism within your organisation and support you in continuing to develop this further.



Questions for reflection

- > What is hard about talking about race and racism?
- > What are the benefits of talking about race and racism?
- > To what extent is anti-racist practice embedded in your organisation?
- > Do staff from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups in children's social care feel safe to share their concerns about any racism they or colleagues may have experienced?
- > Do children and families from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups and their families feel safe to share their concerns about racism they might have experienced from social care professionals?
- > What has been done and what remains to be done (reflect on the short and long term)?
- > What needs to be done most urgently?
- > What one thing could you do or say to get this started or encourage others to do so?
- > What are you going to stop, start and continue doing to support anti-racism in your role? What support do you need to do this? Which people within your organisational network might help you to do this?

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