


TACKLING RACISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Resource pack
for HR leaders



The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The registered charity champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 150,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Resource pack

Tackling racism in the workplace

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1 Foreword

This year, the death of George Floyd and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has challenged and reminded all of us how deep-rooted racism is in society in all its different forms. Racial bias or prejudice is still a lived experience for all ethnic minorities, particularly for black people. We all need to do more to understand this and to take action, to help address the division, injustices and inequalities in our societies and workplaces. Ethnicity and difference are part of what makes us human, and organisations that are truly inclusive benefit greatly from their ability to attract and retain the diverse talent and experience they need to thrive, and to represent and serve the communities they are part of.

The last few months have also made very clear how slow real and sustained progress has been in addressing racism in society, but also within our workplaces. Many organisations have been focusing on inclusion and diversity for some time now, but it is not hard to find evidence that shines a light on how far we still need to go to achieve racial fairness and equality.

According to [2019 data from Business in the Community](#), for example, only 1.5% of leadership positions in the UK public and private sector are held by black people. And beyond progression, bullying and harassment remains endemic. [Data from the TUC](#) has found 31% of BME workers have experienced bullying and harassment at work, while one in five BME workers say they have received unfair treatment at work because of their ethnicity.

As a profession, we have a responsibility to create positive change in our workplaces, and to make work good for all. People professionals have a fundamental and primary role in leading the awareness and understanding of racism at work, and the changes in culture, behaviours, policies, practices and learning that will make the difference. But we must also be honest with ourselves and acknowledge that many inclusion and diversity efforts in our organisations to date, especially those around race, have not gone far enough. We have to get to the heart of the changes we need in our workplace cultures, ensuring progression opportunities, and giving voice to all, and the sense of safety and trust that underpins inclusion.

As your professional body, the same is true of the CIPD. We recognise our responsibilities and the need for leadership. Over the past six months, we have put significant resource and effort into helping the people profession tackle racism and racial discrimination in the workplace. We have worked with a range of expert partners to produce a suite of practical content resources and tools, including guides, webinars and factsheets, all of which aim to help people professionals take action in their organisations.

We recognise that, as HR leaders, you are busier than ever before and that your teams are also overstretched in addressing the myriad HR issues thrown up by the COVID-19 pandemic. To help make your lives easier, we have produced this resource pack for you to share with your teams. Curated from the content available on the [CIPD anti-racism hub](#), it offers practical advice and guidance for people teams looking to tackle racism in the workplace.



Racism has no place in our society and no place in our workplaces. We hope that you find this pack a useful and inspirational resource in helping you and your teams to step up and stamp out prejudice within your organisations, and to build diverse and supportive cultures of respect and fairness for all.

Thank you,

Peter Cheese, CEO, CIPD

2 Introduction

Racism has no place in our society. Businesses must be part of the change we all need, to step up and stamp out prejudice, and to build diverse and supportive cultures of respect and fairness for all. This resource pack, created using content from the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#), offers practical guidance and advice for HR and business leaders looking to tackle racism in the workplace.



Visit the [anti-racism hub](#) to watch John Amaechi OBE, organisational psychologist and director of Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, give a keynote speech at the CIPD's [Festival of Work](#), where he spoke about racism, the difficulties of working through a pandemic, and how a learning culture is key to finding solutions.

3 Developing an anti-racism strategy

Racial injustices and ingrained inequalities are apparent in society and evident in UK workplaces. To address the root causes of racial inequality (racism), employers need to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to workplace discrimination and commit to planned action. Here we outline six principles to help organisations develop an action strategy to help end systemic racism and address racial inequalities at work.

[Race discrimination](#) is illegal in the UK as per the [Equality Act 2010](#). As such, employers must enact their policies if allegations of racial discrimination occur, while individuals are within their rights to raise a grievance should they experience race-related discrimination.

However, although everyone should have equal access to work and opportunity to reach their potential (regardless of any aspect of their identity, background or circumstance), barriers to access and in-work progression continue to exist in many organisations. People from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK are less likely to get in – and get on – in the workplace [compared with their white counterparts](#), while the [significant lack of racial diversity](#) at the top of UK organisations remains unacceptable: the number of non-white CEOs stands at 4%, while just 2% of FTSE 100 CFOs are non-white.

To root out racism, employers need to critically appraise their organisational culture from top to bottom and [address racism at a systemic level](#) by looking at where it is embedded in their own organisations. Race inequality cannot be tackled half-heartedly or by sporadic, one-off, disconnected initiatives; employers' actions need to be well planned, strategic, sustainable and taken seriously. Employers must stand against the cause (racism) and the effect (inequality). In the words of Baroness McGregor-Smith in her [2017 independent review for government](#), *'The time for talking is over. Now is the time to act.'*

Six principles to inform your anti-racism strategy

The following principles to help develop a robust anti-racism strategy stem from discussions with internal stakeholders and external groups. While applicable to all organisations, they're not intended to be prescriptive, and each organisation should shape these principles to suit their own unique contexts.

- 1 Clarify the organisation's stance and values: set clear expectations of what the organisation stands for and maintain zero tolerance of racism.
- 2 Co-create a systemic approach for practical action by working across the organisation: scrutinise all operational processes, ways of working and people management policies.
- 3 Commit to sustained action through visible leadership and a willingness to change: sustained action needs a long-term plan, led with firm commitment from the top.
- 4 Critically appraise your people management approach from end to end.
- 5 Connect your people by creating safe spaces, systems and times to talk, share experiences and learn from each other: ensure your plan is informed by employee voice, and bring in experts where necessary.
- 6 Communicate your messages consistently and ensure the conversation is two-way: leave the workforce and wider stakeholders in no doubt about your key messages. Ensure they are reflected in people's behaviour, in the organisation's operations, and in the organisation's interactions with stakeholders.

1 Clarify the organisation's stance and values

Employers need to maintain a zero-tolerance stance on racial discrimination in the workplace as per the Equality Act 2010, and the organisation's employees, partners, suppliers and the broader public need to be aware of this stance.

It's therefore essential to clarify the organisation's position on anti-racism and discrimination. This will form the cornerstone of your plan to tackle the barriers people from ethnic minority backgrounds face in entry and progression in work, ensuring the organisation better represents the diversity of today's societies.

Recommendations

- Start by establishing achievable goals.
- Recognise the importance and sensitivity of the subject.
- Your stance should be developed and tested with input and feedback from people with a diverse range of backgrounds. Invite input from internal staff and consider external experts who can provide different perspectives based on their lived experience and expertise.
- Publicly stipulate the organisation's position of anti-racism to all stakeholders, including employees, investors, suppliers, partners, and customers.
- Ensure that external messages genuinely match the organisation's commitment to change – all stakeholders will expect their lived experience of working at your organisation to espouse your stance and values or see visible progress towards them.
- To prevent confusion over what constitutes racism, provide practical examples of overt racism and everyday racism (including micro inequities/aggressions and incivilities) in supporting communications as well as what anti-racism is and involves.
- Sign up to the [Business in the Community Race at Work Charter](#) and the [BS 6005 British Standard for Diversity](#).



Visit the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#) to watch videos of Aggie Mutuma and Yetunde Hofmann sharing their lived experience of racism.

2 Co-create a systemic approach for practical action

Lasting change will not come from ad hoc and narrow steps, which can set expectations for change but fail to deliver, sending the message that the organisation isn't serious about taking action.

Instead, a systemic approach must be adopted to identify and tackle the causes of race inequalities and discrimination at work. Look across the entire organisation, scrutinising all operational processes, ways of working and people management policies.

Identifying the structural, cultural and policy barriers right across the organisation (which are maintaining workplace inequalities) is a crucial step. Action should be steered by data and insight. An evidence-based approach will get to the root of issues and identify where action needs to be focused. The issues and appropriate solutions will differ between organisations, so having a deep understanding of your own business and its context is critical.

Recommendations

- The organisation's stance and values should guide the creation of a systemic action plan that is principles-based and outcomes-driven.
- Ensure your anti-racism strategy and action plan are resourced appropriately, including time, expertise and budget.
- Action should be evidence-based, steered by data and insight. All business functions, especially people professionals, are likely holding a wealth of unmined data about your workforce makeup, customer base and people's views of your organisation, which can yield valuable intelligence about the changes needed.
- It's likely that useful data sits across many parts of your organisation, and will need to be brought together to create a holistic picture of people's true work experiences, the experiences of those who interact with your organisation, and those who don't.
- If your knowledge of the makeup of your workforce is limited, consider the most appropriate way to gather this data. Ensure your outward engagement is racially inclusive. For example, in marketing and consumer research, make sure people from ethnic minority backgrounds are genuinely consulted.
- Think about the extent to which other employers in your supply chain understand and echo your stance/values on inclusion and diversity and request that recruiters, partners and consultants demonstrate diversity within their own organisations.
- When examining how people's different experiences at work and their views of your organisation differ, avoid making generalisations.
- Be aware of the complex and interconnected nature of issues that affect people's work experiences. 'Intersectionality' refers to the fact we all have multiple identities which shape our life experiences. We therefore can't look at inclusion and diversity through entirely separate lenses; we need to be mindful of the potential interplay of overlapping identities.

3 Commit to sustained action through visible leadership and a willingness to change

Leaders play an immense role in fostering – or damaging – racial inclusion efforts by virtue of their positional power and influence on the organisation's culture, values and ethics. To ensure that change is long term and sustainable, organisations and leaders need to uncover and address racial equality barriers. Traction requires leadership and sustained action, so you're one step closer to ensuring a more inclusive workplace if board members, governing bodies and senior leaders express a genuine appetite for change by visibly role-modelling behaviours and attitudes from the top.

Recommendations

- Appoint a race champion within your leadership team to take responsibility for progress and to focus attention on delivering change.
- Ensure that inclusion and diversity is a permanent item on the board's meeting agenda.
- Regularly review progress on your strategy, evaluate the effectiveness of activity, and make changes where needed.
- Encourage leaders to educate themselves about race, to talk openly about race, and to encourage discussions internally and externally to support change.
- Encourage senior leaders and managers to be visible at inclusion and diversity events (such as those organised by the employee resource group) and to listen to external speakers (whether through videos, webinars or podcasts).
- Communicate the message that to champion race inclusion or to take a stand against racism and discrimination you don't have to be from an ethnic minority background – but that you do need to listen to the experiences of employees and do not assume you know what is needed to address the problem.
- It follows that a leader should not feel compelled to lead the change just because they have a particular personal characteristic.
- Urge leaders and senior managers to develop their knowledge and confidence to talk about inclusion and diversity in their internal and external engagements – for example, in conference addresses, all-staff briefings and interviews.
- Introduce a diversity-related reverse or mutual mentoring programme so that leaders have a better understanding of lived experiences in relation to race.
- Assess whether you have enough race inclusion expertise in the organisation to inform action and challenge thinking at the top. Consider bringing in additional expertise in the interim via consultants.

4 Critically appraise your people management approach from end to end

Critically assess your people management approach to create a fair and inclusive workplace culture where being different is an asset, not a problem. As a function, HR must review the organisation's people management approach from end to end through multiple inclusion lenses, including race, to address blockers and biases in hiring, performance management, career progression, and reward. HR also needs to work closely with line managers to ensure that espoused policies and organisational rhetoric are played out in reality.

Recommendations

Take a zero-tolerance approach to racism

- Build cultures of trust, where employees experiencing racism feel confident to come forward and know that they'll be listened to.
- Treat allegations of racism seriously and always take action.

Review your processes

- Review your policies and processes end to end, including hiring, recruitment, appraisals, promotion, pay, progression, retention and exit. Although they should at the very least comply with race discrimination law, they must be underpinned by principles that actively value and encourage respectful and positive attitudes to differences.
- Take an evidence-based approach when reviewing policies and processes, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data and feedback.
- Ensure that any changes and decisions made are visibly fair and transparent, communicating the reasons for the change.
- Invite the ERG (employee resource group) to review policies and processes and give feedback, but don't expect them to be policy-writing specialists.

Examine your data

- Examine the makeup of your workforce through your data, the ethnic diversity at all levels and in all areas, and by occupation and seniority.
- Look at the ethnicity categories you use to collect data. If you are a larger organisation, ensure they can be benchmarked against reliable external sources to determine what counts as under-representation or concerning issues.
- Interrogate your data to uncover the structural and cultural barriers that are maintaining workplace inequalities.
- Analysing and probing your workforce data will help to uncover any sticking points. For example, review whether you regularly collect information on employee sentiment via surveys. Consider analysing these findings by ethnicity, if you can still preserve employee anonymity.

Recruitment

- What channels are you using to recruit talent? Are you varying how and where you're doing your outreach? Are the images and language used inclusive? Are you confident your line managers are recruiting and promoting fairly?
- Are recruiters acting on your behalf aware of your values and commitment? If they fail to provide a diverse shortlist, challenge them. If your organisation is under-represented in relation to ethnic diversity, look into using recruiters with a track record of appointing people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Consider using blind recruiting at first-stage shortlisting and analyse the conversion to interview and offer stages.
- Make sure your interview panels are as diverse as possible for shortlisting and interview stages.



Visit the [anti-racism hub](#) to hear black HR professionals share their advice on creating diverse talent pools.

Progression

- Critically examine progress of different groups in the organisation and where there may be glass ceilings. Share that insight across the business.
- Ensure clearly applied criteria is used for performance evaluations, bonuses or other benefits like secondments, deployment, stretch projects and career breaks.
- Offer ethnic minority staff in the organisation access to mentoring/shadowing to support them with their career progression. This could be with internal or external people/organisations.
- Introduce reverse or mutual-mentoring schemes, where diverse groups mentor senior leaders and managers, promoting a culture of inclusion in the organisation.



Visit the [anti-racism hub](#) to hear advice from black HR professionals on the opportunities offered by mentoring.

Pay

- Introduce ethnicity pay reporting to uncover inequalities and where action should be directed. Publishing your figures and accompanying action plan for change can communicate the message that you're serious about creating an inclusive workplace.

Evaluate

- Review the outcomes of process and policy changes, evaluate, and don't be afraid to try something different if a course of action isn't working.

5 Connect your people by creating safe spaces, systems and times to talk, share experiences and learn from each other

Whether overt or through unconscious bias, we know that racism still occurs in the workplace. Organisations need to provide employees with safe channels to express their voice and share their experiences. An employee resource group (ERG) can help enable this. The benefits of ERGs are numerous, from galvanising action and challenging poor practice to fostering a broader climate of inclusion within the organisation and bridging the gap between co-workers and senior leaders. For employees, ERGs can provide a sense of belonging and community and an opportunity to work with the organisation to bring about change. For an organisation, ERGs can be a valuable resource to advise on the work experience of people with that particular characteristic, identity or background, and act as a sounding board for ideas – including your products and services.



Watch a [video of black HR professionals](#) share their advice on creating space for open and honest conversations.

Recommendations

- Set up an ERG to provide a safe, supportive space for people to meet – a place that allows them to have a consistent, clear voice. Encourage non-ethnic-minority active allies to join.
- Resource the ERG and ensure that it's supported by senior executives.
- Actively consult with the ERG, inviting them to contribute their views from their lived experience in both society and as an employee of the organisation. An ERG can be an invaluable resource to advise and inform organisational decisions while helping HR ensure that the people management approach is as inclusive as possible.
- However, there must not be the expectation that the ERG will solve the organisation's problems or 'teach' the rest of the organisation.
- Employees should also be aware of formal whistleblowing processes so they know they have a voice mechanism, no matter what.
- Facilitate training to ensure that employees better understand issues of institutional racism. Encourage employees to learn how to talk about and address racism in the workplace – however uncomfortable it may make them feel.
- Consider ways to raise visibility and awareness of diverse cultures, background and circumstance. Give people time and space to share their stories if they want to, and learn about other cultures and other people's experiences. For example, encourage staff to attend events organised by the ERG or 'lunch and learn' sessions run by HR.
- Make educational materials available and encourage personal responsibility for developing knowledge and racial literacy.
- Consider your support mechanisms, such as employee assistance programmes and mental health training (through initiatives like [mental health first aiders](#)). This might be appropriate given the emotional impact of the topic and the potential for conflict.

6 Communicate your messages consistently and ensure that communication is two-way

Senior leaders and people managers need to engage in ongoing, responsive, two-way dialogue with staff to ensure that employees feel listened to and valued. Genuine communication between employers and employees provides a voice for people, and an opportunity for the organisation to listen, identify and act on concerns raised. This helps to ensure standards of behaviour are clear to everyone and promotes a culture of personal responsibility for treating people with respect and dignity. This is especially relevant for conversations around race, which require a high degree of sensitivity. We need to create

open, safe environments for people from ethnic minority communities to express their views and experiences to help raise awareness amongst the many who do not have the lived experience of racism in its many different forms. This lays a vital foundation (of shared understanding) from which we can then move forward.

Starting the conversation about ethnicity at work isn't always easy, and some organisations simply don't know where to begin. We know that many people are reluctant to talk about race for various reasons, whether it's for fear of saying the wrong thing, failing to recognise inequalities of opportunity at work exist, feeling people aren't interested, or feeling like one won't be listened to.

Recommendations

- Communicate clearly, carefully, sensitively. Consistency is essential for culture change. Highlight your willingness to engage and learn, to be challenged and to have emotionally charged conversations. Acknowledge that these conversations might be uncomfortable at first.
- Regularly invite communication, ensuring all employee groups feel comfortable and able to have a voice, and change your approach if communication is not forthcoming.
- Ensure mechanisms are in place for employees to feel confident and safe in highlighting issues about inequality and sharing their views on matters affecting them at work. Ensure all employees know about these mechanisms, how to access them, and that they feel comfortable doing so.
- Ensure that disadvantaged and disconnected groups have access to mechanisms through which they can express their voice. For example, make issues of racism and exclusion a part of engagement surveys, with action plans set against them.
- Think about who's communicating the message and their credibility based on prior actions.
- Acknowledge previous failings within the context of the current situation to demonstrate understanding.
- In designing your communications, identify internal and external stakeholders – both supporters and detractors – and design your messaging accordingly. Think about the words, tone and images you use, and avoid tokenism and stereotyping.
- Live your values through your external communications and engagement:
 - Reach outside of normal channels and connect with community groups to show support and learn.
 - Question external conferences that don't have diverse ethnic representation in their presenters/speakers before deciding whether to send staff there.
 - Question events in which there are no ethnic minority people in the line-up of speakers or nominees for awards before deciding on sponsorship.

Addressing racism and racial inequality in the UK is a societal issue, a moral issue, and a business issue – and a business priority. White advantage and white fragility can blind senior leaders to issues relating to race or can silence people from raising concerns. Shying away from this issue isn't an option. The first step to introducing change and ensuring action has real traction is to have conversations about race – no matter how uncomfortable they may make people feel. Employers need to be able to surface, understand and address issues within the organisation. An honest conversation is the necessary first step to do this.

The next section of this resource pack offers advice on how to have difficult conversations about race at work.



A full version of this guide (and a downloadable PDF version) can be found on the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#).

4 Having difficult conversations about race at work

Our relationship with race is teemed with pain, inequity, injustice and discomfort, and so conversations about race and racial inequality can evoke strong emotions. But, while they have the potential to become divisive, if handled sensitively, they can prove to be liberating, and help to connect people as they explore lived experiences, understand the historic and current context of race, while committing to work towards a fair and equal society together.

Things to do/consider before holding conversations about race

It's vital that conversations about race are managed effectively, allowing for respectful expression, compassionate listening and shared learning. The time dedicated to preparing for your conversations about race will be a key determinant of how effective your conversations will be.

To achieve a positive outcome, organisations must take a considered, structured and compassionate approach, that lays out the key considerations and options to explore when approaching how to have conversations about race in the workplace.

Reflect on the culture of the organisation

Tough conversations require openness, bravery, the ability to work through discomfort, express views in a non-combative manner, and to listen and reflect without judgement. Consider the organisational culture, values and whether it has experience of having candid conversations and receiving feedback.

Where open and constructive conversation is the norm, there's a strong likelihood that the organisation is ready to have conversations about race. Reminding your employees about your values, principles and organisational approach of honesty and openness would be a great idea.

Example: Our organisational values of compassionate honesty, looking after each other and listening to understand will support us all as we share and learn about each other's experience of race.

Where open conversations are not yet part of the organisation culture, consider some preparatory work to increase your people's readiness for these conversations. This might mean engaging in concepts such as growth mindset (specifically being open to learning, seeking knowledge and seeing mistakes as opportunities to learn), coaching principles, suspending judgement and active listening. Although training courses and development around these concepts would be ideal, organisations can also share articles, deliver webinars and use existing communication channels to communicate and plant seeds around these concepts, as well as adapting the approaches followed by other organisations to suit their own unique context.

Make the connection to your organisation

Any initiative stands a greater chance of adoption if it's aligned to – and supportive of – the organisation's objectives and aims. Consider – and then clearly communicate – how the race conversations align with and support the organisation's espoused culture, purpose, mission, values and behaviours.

Example communications message: Our organisation's mission is to do no harm, yet it's come to our attention that a large proportion of our people may have been suffering

harm in their everyday lives. We want to understand what their experience is in our organisation and then work together to address this to ensure that ALL our people feel valued.

In addition, links should be made to the organisation's [people strategy](#) and [inclusion strategy](#). What are the stated goals and ambitions, and how does the race conversation align with them? If these organisational strategies do not yet include race, now's the time to rectify this and use the learnings from recent global events and the internal race conversations to address any internal disparities that exist in your organisation.

Set the intention

It's vital that the intended outcomes of the race conversations are clear, as this will shape key decisions – such as how the conversations are to be conducted and who will participate. This will also shape the messages that the organisation communicates to its employees and will allow the organisation to assess the effectiveness of its approach to the conversations.

Consider:

- what the organisation hopes to learn
- whether the leadership team is ready to listen to and engage with feedback
- whether the leadership team is prepared to change its approach in response to feedback
- what the organisation will do with the information learned
- how this will feed into the employee experience
- who will be involved in the conversations
- who will facilitate the conversations (this would ideally be a skilled individual with lived experience of race; consider using an external facilitator to maintain confidentiality, credibility and increase psychological safety)
- what follow-up there will be
- what further action will be taken.

Get the organisation ready

As the current deep exploration of race is new to us as a society, most organisations will have little to no race fluency right now. In order to reduce the likelihood of taking missteps, it's advisable to ensure that there's a basic level of race fluency in your organisation. There are many great resources available which can support your organisation in understanding key terms and updating your people on current language and meanings. The CIPD's continually updated anti-racism hub is a good place to start.

Equip managers and leaders

Once conversations about race in the workplace begin, it's likely that the issue, emotions and conversations themselves will spill out into other interactions between your people. As such, it's vital to equip leaders, managers and individuals with tools to deal with this, such as:

- suggested ways to pause/reframe conversations if the context is inappropriate
- support from the organisation's employee assistance programme to manage feelings for all employees
- coaching for individuals who require further support – those affected by race discrimination and for those who feel challenged by their new learnings
- reminders and cues from safe space conversations, rules and agreements (detailed below).

Communicate

The success of the conversations will depend on when and how they're communicated. Employees should understand why the conversations are taking place, and how they fit into the organisational context and the intended outcomes. Keep communications simple, honest and direct. Communication should, as a minimum, include information on:

- the societal context of the race conversations
- the importance of these conversations for your organisation – make links to your inclusion strategy, values and current performance; be transparent about where you should be doing better
- how the conversations will take place: information on how you will maintain confidentiality, who will facilitate them, where and when
- who will be involved in the conversation – and the rationale behind this
- what you will do with the feedback from the conversations – are you committing to changing strategies and processes based on the feedback, or are you just gaining understanding at this stage?
- why you believe your employees should engage in these conversations
- the fact that the conversation is uncomfortable for all parties – black employees and non-black employees of colour who often fear reprisals for speaking out, and white employees who often feel fearful of making mistakes or feel attacked
- what help and support is available for anyone who is challenged by the topic of racism.

Effective communication will set the right tone for the conversations and help everyone know what to expect.



Watch a [video of black HR professionals](#) share their experiences of the mistakes organisations make when addressing racism.

Things to do/consider *when holding conversations about race*

When holding conversations about race in the workplace, a skilled facilitator will increase the likelihood of open conversations and experience-sharing. Poorly handled conversations can lead to misunderstandings and negative impacts on relationships and engagement in the organisation. Organisations can secure the support of an external facilitator with lived experience of race to support these conversations with credibility, sensitivity and confidentiality.

Safe space conversations

Conversations about emotional, sensitive or contentious issues must be held in a way that allows for open sharing, open receiving, mutual understanding, acknowledgement and then, if appropriate, shared problem-solving.

Conversations about race should be conducted in a safe space environment, to allow all employees to be heard, validated and to feel safe to respectfully express their experiences. Black, Asian and ethnic minority employees should feel able to safely share lived experiences and world views, while white employees should seek understanding and share their perspectives too (this doesn't all need to necessarily take place in the same meeting).

Key attributes of safe space conversations include the feeling of being free of:

- judgement
- minimisation of experiences
- consequences from expressing views.

Safe space conversations are also known as brave conversations or psychologically safe spaces – they refer to the same thing.

Creating a safe space conversation

Safe spaces are achieved by setting certain rules or agreements at the outset that govern how the meeting is conducted and how all participants act. They are designed to set the scene for discussing sensitive issues, allowing for compassionate sharing, the exploration of ideas and, ultimately, learning for all parties involved.

Key principles for safe space conversations

- Always maintain confidentiality. While the content and themes can be shared outside of the meeting, agree that the discussions remain confidential and the comments and experiences will not be attributed to individuals.
- Acknowledge different perspectives. Recognise that individual worldviews are shaped by the experiences of the individual, many of which are determined by their culture, race, gender, sexuality, country of birth, media they consume, among other things.
- Acknowledge fear. It's likely that some people in the conversation will worry about reactions, responses or reprisals, so it's important that the communication and expression of views is done with compassion.
- Acknowledge the feelings of others. Participants in the conversation will have different perspectives, but these should not be dismissed, diminished or explained away.
- Acknowledge that our interpretation of the actions or words of others may not be correct. It's important to clarify meaning with compassionate curiosity.
- Acknowledge the likely discomfort felt by those involved, but communicate the importance of pushing through this discomfort, taking time to reflect on your discomfort and the learning that's on the other side.
- Suspend judgement. Don't rush to give meaning to what is expressed and shared; rather seek clarification with curious compassion.
- Exercise humility. Admit mistakes and accept that intent doesn't always deliver the desired outcome. Reflect on the feedback and seek to understand how to align your outcome with your intent more closely next time.
- Use 'I' statements to describe your experience. Speak from your perspective, own your thoughts and interpretations. Acknowledge that there will be different perspectives, and that these are also valid.
- Accept that you have learning to do. There is always learning from listening to new perspectives; acknowledge that this is a journey for you.
- Know when to pause to reflect and learn. There are times when it's good to pause for reflection and then come back to the conversation with a fresh and open perspective.
- Seek shared meaning. Look for the areas where you agree and start the conversation there. This is especially powerful when seeking to agree solutions and jointly solve the problem.

Potential questions and discussion starters for conversations on race in the workplace

While many of the conversations will encompass sharing of lived experience and reactions to recent racialised events (like the death of George Floyd), below are some suggested questions which can help to shape and continue the race conversations in your organisation:

- When did you first become aware of your race?
- How has your racial identity affected your life experience so far?
- How has your racial identity affected your worldview?
- How has your racial identity affected your experience, as an employee, of your organisation?
- How has your racial identity affected your experience, as a customer, of your organisation (if relevant)?
- How have recent events in the news affected you personally?
- How has the global reaction to these events impacted you?

- How have you felt about the increased focus and conversation about race in society and in the workplace?
- How do you feel we as an organisation have responded to the increased awareness of the issues of racial discrimination?
- Are you aware of any experiences of racial discrimination in our organisation, either your own experiences or those of others?
- Do you feel we do enough as an organisation to ensure equal opportunities for everyone?
- Do you feel we do enough as an organisation to build a culture where everyone can come to work and be themselves?
- What would you like to see us do more of to further black inclusion in our organisation?
- What would you like to see us do more of to further inclusion in our organisation?
- What else would you like us to be aware of?



Watch a [video of black HR professionals](#) discuss how events related to George Floyd and Black Lives Matter have made them feel to understand the emotions which may arise in your conversations about race in the workplace.

Post-conversation communication and next steps

It's of course vital that changes are made as a result of the conversations, developing the next stage in learning, growth and change to progress towards developing an open and inclusive culture, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

The organisation will learn things that they were not aware of, and it's quite likely that the espoused values and good intentions have not been felt by all employees in the organisation. By listening to and reflecting on feedback, real change can be instigated.

Your post-conversation communication should include the following:

- gratitude for those who took part and recognition of the emotional energy spent by everyone
- key themes of the learnings gained from the conversations
- links to your espoused values and mission as an organisation – does the feedback tell you that you fall short of these?
- commitments to action as a result of your learnings
- an indication of timelines of when employees will start to see the changes
- an indication of the part your employees are likely to play in the plans for change
- how you intend to keep the conversation going to continue to learn and hear the voices of under-represented employees – periodic safe space conversations and expansion of the employee engagement survey to specifically ask questions about the impact of race in the workplace.

Conversations about race in the workplace demand investment in time and resources from the organisation and time and emotional energy from your employees – it's important to demonstrate that this investment is respected, appreciated and will lead to tangible change, and that the organisation actively demonstrates its commitment to equality and providing good work and opportunity for all.

The next section of this resource pack will look at setting up and working with employee resource groups (ERGs) to support these conversations.



A full version of this guide, written by Aggie Mutuma (FCIPD), and a downloadable PDF version, can be found on the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#).

5 How to set up an ERG for black and ethnic minority employees

Employee resource groups (ERGs) exist to provide support to their members, to create a sense of belonging that may not exist elsewhere in the organisation, to share their experiences with the organisation if they choose and deem it appropriate, and to provide feedback, recommendations and support on how to dismantle systemic and structural barriers that have hindered their development, progression and retention in the organisation.

This guide aims to help employers set up an ERG specifically for black and ethnic minority groups, to:

- provide psychological safety to the group's members in the wake of very uncomfortable experiences
- ensure their voices are heard – and listened to
- provide support as an entity that adds value to the organisation
- contribute to the implementation of the broader inclusion and diversity (I&D) strategy.

At this point, it's important to note that *all* employees, regardless of race or ethnicity, should be encouraged to participate in and support the ERG, with the understanding that they would work together towards the common goal(s) specific to that ERG.

The business case for setting up an ERG

Employee networks, or ERGs, representing different and specific groups from diverse communities, can help offer an inclusive environment in which everyone in an organisation feels like they belong.

ERGs can also provide a safe channel through which black and ethnic minority employees are able to express their voice and share their experiences with a sense that these experiences will be understood, heard, listened to and responded to without judgement or condescension, and with genuine concern and care by those who are more likely to have experienced similar issues and challenges themselves (both in and outside the workplace).

Setting up and establishing the framework to enable ethnic minority employees to connect through an ERG demonstrates that the employer recognises the need for under-represented groups to have access to social support. In the absence of trusted mechanisms to share their views in a physically and psychologically safe environment, ERGs are vital to the health and wellbeing of black and ethnic minority employees at work. Research linking the impact of mental health on performance and productivity has also been well documented (see the CIPD's *Health and Wellbeing at Work* survey for more information).



Visit the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#) to watch a video of members of the CIPD's race and ethnicity action group EmBRACE explain why it is important to have groups like it within organisations.

Eight steps to set up an ERG for black and ethnic minority employees

1 Leaders, HR and internal I&D professionals from the majority group should articulate and write down the value, role and importance of black and ethnic minority networks, not just as a support group, but also to the business.

Leaders should be able to link the role of the ERG to your existing I&D strategy and plan by:

- reviewing the organisation's I&D strategy
- seeing where and how the black and ethnic minority ERG can (and does) support the delivery of your strategy.

To develop the strategy, leaders should:

- highlight the gaps that exist without this employee voice
- recognise the opportunity to engage and, more directly, support under-represented groups within the organisation.

Make sure you identify the potential role and contribution of the ERG in highlighting practices, processes, behaviours and actions where systemic and structural barriers and racism exist within the organisation.

Draft the strategic input that ERGs can provide and the role they play, being specific in the examples and areas identified, and share with potential and actual network group members to find out what else they believe needs to be included and addressed to dismantle these barriers. Acknowledge that it's a start, and ask for their input to shape the content, delivery process and mechanism for achieving these goals.



[Watch a video on the role networks can play in an organisation.](#)

2 Identify executive sponsors to formally support the ERG, to help demonstrate its importance and business value.

Sponsors, or senior allies, should preferably be selected from the business or organisation, and ideally be influential, credible leaders who are committed to I&D and willing to learn and support the ERG and the organisation along its journey.

One sponsor is sufficient; the individual doesn't have to be from an ethnic minority. Someone from the majority group may act as an ally (see the [InterLaw Diversity Forum's guide to being an effective BAME ally](#) for more information). The key considerations are that the person:

- is willing to learn along the way
- is committed to actively and visibly support the network (both internally and externally)
- recognises the ERG's value to the organisation – this may mean speaking at some events and attending some meetings, for example.

3 Consider the budget and allocate financial resources to the ERG

The ERG should be funded on an annual basis by the organisation in the same way that resources are allocated to strategic investments and day-to-day business operations and deliverables.

Consider using a proxy amount to represent the average cost of recruiting a key role in the organisation. The principle here is that, although there is a cost to recruitment, there's also a clear benefit: a key role will be delivered, with the contribution and performance of the new recruit adding value to the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. This analogy applies to the ERG. There is a cost to helping ensure the group functions effectively, but there's a clear benefit to the contribution it provides to the organisation.

Factor into budget allocation the costs of external speakers, development programmes and modules, and learning sessions, for example. Research suggests that black and ethnic minority colleagues value – and would like – further opportunities for learning and development (see *Inclusive Succession Planning: A toolkit for employers*).

Plan the organisation's resources to support the ERG, individuals and members. Imagine the ERG was a valuable customer or client:

- How would you treat the ERG if it was a customer or client?
- What would you do to put in place the support to enable the ERG to deliver the value, loyalty and return you may seek from respected, external clients and stakeholders?

4 Allocate time for ERG leaders and members to participate in company-supported activities as part of their role – within normal working hours

It should not be expected or assumed that leaders and members of the ERG carry out their role and contribution to the ERG on top of their normal day jobs. It's important to position the ERG as a tangible, core, value-add activity to the business that's afforded time in its own right – in the same way that other business roles and projects are. It should not be treated as a voluntary contribution carried out in the member's 'spare time'.

In determining time allocation for ERG members, practically consider what the business can accommodate. For example, this could be from around two hours to half a day per month. Bear in mind this may be higher – for example, around one day a month in the early phases of setup. Make sure you agree this as a formal part of the individual member's tasks, targets or performance objectives and gain agreement from the department they're in.

The ERG leaders or members shouldn't be required to justify their participation in agreed ERG activities with their line managers when these meetings, activities and events should already have been agreed. Discuss and communicate this formally with line managers to ensure they're fully aware of the member's contribution to organisational goals in this way.

Ensure that members receive active support in the day-to-day so that they:

- can participate fully in network activities as part of their wider organisational role
- can do so in normal working hours
- are not pressured or expected to carry these out in their own time.

5 If you set up one 'multicultural' network, make sure you recognise any different cultural sub-groups within

While many organisations set up multicultural networks to value and celebrate the diversity of backgrounds and the richness that various cultures bring, it's also important to recognise the uniqueness of each culture in its own right. For example, in a 'BAME' network, there are common features but the experience of being 'black' is different from that of being 'Asian' or any other ethnic minority, so it may be important to separate out some groups.

In addition, intersectionality within these large groups exists, so homogeneity shouldn't be assumed – nor that a single ERG will automatically address the needs of any specific sub-groups within it. For example, in discussing black lives in the workplace, it's important for any focus group or listening session specifically wishing to engage with the ERG to distinguish black employees from other ethnic minorities, as some of the historical roots of racism and the experience of black people is different compared with other ethnic groups (while recognising that there are also individual experiences within these groups as well). Be prepared to split out certain groups where appropriate and avoid lumping all non-majority groups together.

6 Look into allying with other groups

As the ERG becomes more formally established, it's likely to expand to promote further connections – with other members and other seniors, allies and other networks.

Consider allying with other cultural groups or diversity ERGs once the needs and contributions of black and ethnic minority colleagues have been agreed (as long as the link between both ERGs is strong and there's genuine interest in allyship).



Visit the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#) to hear advice on how people professionals can be good allies to their black and ethnic minority colleagues.

7 Create a clear, psychologically safe channel for black colleagues to be able to share their lived experiences

The willingness to hear and act on feedback of lived experiences demonstrates that the organisation embraces the value and credibility of the ERG and its members. ERG members can guide people professionals, leaders and line managers on how best to support them.

Sometimes, black and ethnic minority colleagues do not feel heard or safe when they approach HR to raise an issue of potential discrimination, for example, by a manager or colleague, or repeated micro-inequities (the subtle, often unconscious, messages that devalue, discourage and impair workplace performance, conveyed through facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, choice of words, nuance and syntax). They often report feeling that HR supports the line manager or organisation, rather than fully considering the issue from the perspective of the employee with a view to addressing and taking real action to follow up.

By engaging with ERG members, HR can reflect on how their black and ethnic minority colleagues appraise the HR role, function and position in responding to – and taking effective action on – such issues when they're raised. This may highlight potential unconscious bias on the part of HR and/or weaknesses in HR policies/processes, as well as how they're implemented in practice to resolve such issues. ERG members can also advise HR on ways to make the process of reporting incidents more accessible, safe, equitable and fair – both improving the interaction and relationship between HR and black and ethnic minority colleagues, as well as a physically and psychologically safer environment. In this way, HR should consider how they play their part as active anti-racist allies while formalising this role within the organisation.

8 Consider providing ERG members with guidance on governance and implementation

Provide ERG members with general and more detailed, specific guidance to help them with the practical governance and implementation of the ERG. This guidance could cover/outline:

- a mission statement
- purpose
- objectives
- governance and sponsorship
- what the network does
- how the network will communicate
- how the network will operate
- who can join the network
- budget
- what success looks like (see the [CIPD's 2017 research](#) for case studies of organisations that removed barriers to career progression faced by many BAME employees).

As the ERG becomes established, with some form of governance structure it can further contribute to the wider organisational I&D strategy/plan as a resource, recognising the benefit that diverse collective input and perspective can bring.

Next steps

An ERG can add value by providing support in the workplace, empowering members to share their lived experiences and their experience of the organisation's culture. The real benefit comes where the network is engaged:

- at a strategic and business level in providing feedback on different aspects of the organisation's systemic and structural barriers that have resulted in the exclusion of black and ethnic minority colleagues from senior roles
- in using their different perspective to review and interrogate existing HR, business and other processes through the employee life cycle, including attraction, recruitment and selection.

In partnering with a supportive, senior ally in the role of an executive sponsor, listening to anecdotes and experiences and formally taking action to address and resolve each issue, there's a tremendous opportunity to transform the organisation into one where all colours and cultures can feel safe, that they can belong, and are positively contributing to truly making and maintaining your organisation as a great place to be, and work, for all people.

The next section of this resource pack looks at how organisations can source a more diverse range of suppliers.



A full version of this guide, written by Petunia Thomas, MBA CPCC, and a downloadable PDF version, can be found on the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#).

6 How to source diverse suppliers

Below we have outlined some practical steps for how you can seek to work with a more diverse supply chain.

You don't have to be working in a procurement function to impact supplier diversity. If you spend your company's money on lunch for a meeting or securing the guest speaker for your company awards ceremony, you affect the supplier diversity. The intention to work with a more diverse range of suppliers in line with your organisation's diversity and inclusion strategy applies no matter the size of your organisation, or the service you are procuring.

Seven steps to increase the diversity of your supply chain

The steps below will enable you to diversify your suppliers in a meaningful and sustainable way, to benefit your company and wider society.

Step 1 - Examine the data

It's important to understand your current level of supplier diversity. Do you know who you buy from? If you don't already have the data, undertake a research exercise and send all current suppliers a questionnaire about the diversity of their ownership and make clear your commitment to diversify your supply chain. You can also encourage them to complete the same process with their suppliers. If you are a large company with a team of procurement specialists, you might also look at that team's level of diversity, and how that might be impacting your diverse supplier search.

Step 2 - Craft the business case

Once you know the diversity of your supply chain, you can consider where to focus effort. You may have a good percentage of business suppliers who are women-led but not many who are ethnic minority-led or vice versa. The aim is not to simply 'tick a box', but to create a strong articulated business case for supplier diversity, aligned with your inclusion and diversity strategy, and to gain senior-level commitment and full support for the programme.

Step 3 - Set targets

The articulated business case must have targets; after all, 'what gets measured gets done'. And by measuring your progress, you can understand what's working and what's not. Remember that you are aiming to create a long-term and sustainable programme of supplier diversity. Do not expect instant results and then be able to move on to the next initiative; your targets should be short, medium and long term.

Step 4 - Find diverse suppliers

Diverse suppliers do exist, but you may need to look beyond your usual 'go to' suppliers to find them. Advocacy organisations like [MSDUK](#) for ethnic-minority-owned businesses and [We Connect International](#) for women-owned businesses are a great start, but of course not all diverse businesses are registered or certified by them. You could search your network; every person in your network has an extended network that could include the diverse supplier that you are looking for. As with any business undertaking, you will always need to do your own checks and due diligence to make sure that the diverse supplier is right for you.

Step 5 - Engage with diverse suppliers

To begin to develop relationships with potential future diverse suppliers, you could provide information events on your business, how you work and how you procure contracts. This would help the diverse supplier be better equipped to submit proposals when the

opportunities arise. If you are a smaller business, one-to-one meetings are a good way of getting to know potential diverse suppliers, perhaps a quarterly virtual coffee.

Step 6 – Monitor performance and remove obstacles

Depending on the size of your company, the number of diverse suppliers that you have, and the number of contracts running, you might review your success against your targets, monthly, half yearly or annually. When you do review progress, you should be looking to understand what's working and what obstacles are getting in the way. Obstacles could include onerous paperwork, time-consuming online portals or not enough turnaround time for the diverse supplier to respond. Once you know what's working, you can do more of it, and when you know what the obstacles are, you can take steps to remove or help the supplier overcome them.

Step 7 – Celebrate and share success

Once you are making some progress on your target, however small, do let others in your company know. You can share case studies on an internal intranet or newsletter, include it in your annual report, or share it publicly on your website or in a newspaper article. This reinforces your commitment and galvanises energy to make continued progress.



A full version of this guide, written by Jenny Garrett, and a downloadable PDF version, can be found on the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#).

7 FAQs about race in the workplace

Q: What do we need to consider when planning to improve monitoring and gathering data to inform or measure process in addressing race equality?

Monitoring is the cornerstone in any strategy to enable an organisation to identify progress and where further action may be needed. There is no legal obligation to monitor but there is a duty on large employers to report their gender pay gap. In the future this is likely to be extended to require reporting on ethnicity pay as well. Improving or addressing monitoring is essential to ensure an employer has a clear picture of the current ethnicity makeup of their workforce. It is also important in order to address under-representation, set targets and establish if positive action could be taken.

In addition to ensuring GDPR obligations are met, employers should follow the [ACAS Guidance on Monitoring](#) and take steps to explain to candidates and employees why monitoring is undertaken and give assurances about confidentiality and the security of their data and declarations.

Improving self-reporting by employees takes considerable time and investment on the part of an employer, who must work to address:

- the reason for collecting such data
- providing reassurances around confidentiality and anonymity
- details about how the data will be used
- building confidence to encourage responses
- systems, data analysis and process requirements.

Many organisations monitor race and ethnicity and a significant number of classifications can be used through their HR software systems. Self-reporting by ethnicity is complex; there are 15 or 18 [ONS standard ethnicity categories](#) which are used to identify race and five headline categories. The need for a range of categories and a 'prefer not to say' option is important. Sensitivity is needed in deciding which classifications to use for monitoring purposes, which may be heightened where declaration rates are low. In the UK, increasing numbers of individuals are also of mixed race, which means there is a complex makeup of those in the employed population influenced subjectively by how individuals identify themselves. Employers should consider the options carefully, perhaps factoring in their locality/geography and locations, in order to ensure the categories they adopt are sufficiently representative, communicating and consulting with employees where possible. Although more complex to analyse, a longer list is often preferable, and it is possible to use broad groups, with subcategories to allow more granular reporting.

An added challenge exists for global businesses. There may be existing monitoring requirements in other jurisdictions in which a business operates (through legislative requirements such as those in the USA, Australia and New Zealand) and/or global reporting in the business, which requires different categories to be included (for example Hispanic and indigenous population groups).

Ethnicity pay reporting proposals have been under discussion in the UK for some time. In October 2018, the Government issued a consultation paper on the topic. Although legislation has not been tabled yet, there is pressure for this legislation to be implemented and a [petition to Parliament](#) to introduce this legislation without delay. It is anticipated that such reporting will become a legal requirement for large employers at some point, and some organisations are already reporting on a [voluntary basis](#). Employers should begin preparing for such reporting; this includes communicating and consulting with employees about the need to monitor and encouraging staff to declare their ethnicity.

Ethnicity pay reporting is likely to increase awareness of the issue, encourage dialogue/engagement and gain the attention of (and traction with/sustained focus from) senior stakeholders and leadership teams. It encourages discussion about how to tackle and address under-representation and encourages focus on attracting increased talent from a wider pool. While ethnicity reporting might not be the most accurate way of tackling social mobility, the link between race/ethnicity and socio-economic status is such that mandatory ethnicity pay reporting will be likely to result in social mobility being further scrutinised within organisations.



Watch a [video of black HR professionals](#) sharing their thoughts about the change we need around measurement of evidence of racial equality.

Q: What is the difference between targets and quotas, and can we use either to ensure progress?

There is some confusion around the terminology of 'targets' and 'quotas'. In short, quotas, which involve a requirement to appoint or employ a specific number or percentage without assessment on merit, are unlawful. By contrast, targets are lawful, but they only help to inform an organisation and do not address where discrimination may be having adverse impact.

However, it is not as simple as merely setting targets. Employers can lawfully set targets but only as part of a wider race equality strategy; they cannot favour ethnic minority candidates or employees purely so that they can meet a target. Targets must be used as part of a wider strategy of positive action measures and continually monitored and evaluated, as outlined below.

In 2017 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) [published a report](#) that identified that those from ethnic minorities faced barriers in obtaining work and making progress once employed. The EHRC report called on employers to tackle prejudice and bias in *'recruitment, performance, evaluation and reward decisions, and use fair, transparent processes with positive action and talent pipeline development for appointment to senior and board roles'* and recommended setting targets for the UK Government.

As mentioned above, an employer can, lawfully, set targets as part of its race equality strategy but will need to ensure it does not act unlawfully by favouring an ethnic minority candidate or employee because of their race, and in order to make progress against targets. There are, however, proactive measures that can be taken, as outlined in sections 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010. These are often described as positive action measures.

A general measure under section 158 notes that an employer must first identify the under-representation or the disadvantage (such as few role models, educational disadvantage or lack of access to specific opportunities), and based on this evidence, an employer can take proportionate but targeted measures to address that disadvantage. This requires specific assessment and careful consideration.

Positive actions that may be permitted under section 158 would focus on levelling the playing field and encouraging participation from under-represented groups, using activities such as mentorships, work experience or outreach programmes and focused advertising.

Recruitment and promotion is addressed in section 159, but is seldom used. Where under-representation or disadvantage has been identified, an employer can adopt what is often called a 'tie break' in recruitment and promotion decisions, allowing the employer to prefer and appoint the under-represented candidate where there are two or more equally qualified candidates.

The positive action provisions require evidence of the under-representation/disadvantage, interventions that clearly address this, and the reasons for under-representation. The measures must also be constantly reviewed, such as ensuring that the under-representation still exists while the positive action measures continue. The [EHRC Code](#) explains that an employer should consider carefully if the intervention(s) is reasonably necessary, likely to address the under-representation and whether alternative options are available that will not impact others.

Organisations are likely to remain cautious about using the section 159 tie-break provision; however, with careful consideration and assessment, the more general positive action measures have real merit. Setting targets is a start (and end) point only, and must be part of a wider, evidence-based, inclusion strategy.

Q: Why do we need to focus on race? What about other aspects of diversity?

Inclusion and equity for all in the workplace and wider society is the ultimate goal of the people profession, organisations and the majority of the general public.

Some of the reasons why there is a focus on race now are:

- Significant energy and focus on gender diversity has seen positive movement in gender equality, including the gender pay gap legislation, but data, the news and lived experience stories demonstrate that the same positive movement has not taken place when it comes to addressing racial disparities.
- Reports indicate that where an individual person has two protected characteristics (intersectionality), the individuals feel mostly discriminated against because of their race (that is, black women or black LGBT people), indicating a bigger issue with race. For example, some [reports](#) have demonstrated that while shifts have been made towards gender equity, the benefit of these shifts are felt the most by white women.
- Reports indicate that people teams find the issue of race one of the most difficult to deal with in the workplace. These difficulties stem from their lack of lived experience of a racial group different from theirs, the discomfort they face in having conversations about race and the lack of external support and guidance.
- Recent racially motivated events have brought the prevalence of racial disparities to the forefront of many conversations. Global leaders, religious leaders, community leaders and organisational leaders alike are speaking up about the need to address this issue. The issue of race in society and in organisations has been highlighted as a significant issue.
- In addition to many other organisations, [CIPD research](#) finds time and time again that there are disparities in the experiences of members of ethnic minority groups when compared with that of their white colleagues.

In summary, the global, social and organisation contexts we are currently operating in mean that while inclusion and diversity in its entirety remains a priority, the current focus on race is required to mitigate the disproportionate racial disparities that we continue to see.

Q: How do I facilitate a safe space and environment for black colleagues to be heard?

Recent events mean that race and, more specifically, the black experience are being discussed in an unprecedented way. The conversations have been cathartic and liberating for many black people, and shocking and illuminating for many people who had not previously deeply considered race or the black experience. As organisations have begun these conversations internally, it is vital that the conversations continue in a way that increases understanding and breaks down barriers.

Practical steps

- Communicate the organisations' intentions to create a safe space for black colleagues to speak and to be heard. Communicate the reasons why and what the outcomes will be. Setting intentions is vital as it increases feelings of trust and safety in your black colleagues as they share some personal and potentially painful experiences.
- Be clear that this is optional. It is important to understand that the desire to engage in speaking and sharing will vary between your black colleagues. Some colleagues may not want to engage; others just want to speak to express their feelings but may not want to share these feelings outside of the black community in your organisation yet – or ever. Others will be willing to engage in speaking and sharing experiences with the whole organisation. If they do offer you their perspective, recognise that this is extra emotional work and should not be expected from all.
- Put the structures in place. Set up the structures so that there is a space for the conversations to take place. That could range from physical spaces (as appropriate

post-COVID-19 lockdown) to setting up virtual meeting spaces and virtual teams to allow a free flow of information. Invite your black employees to take part, letting them know it is on their terms. Set the expectation you have – whether that is that there is no expectation of your employees or that you would like to understand the black experience in your organisation.

- Get help. The conversations with your black colleagues and their experiences will be sensitive and uncomfortable at times. They will be uncomfortable for your black colleagues and for the business to hear, understand and then resolve. An external party can help you to decode and digest the feedback.

Another consideration is that confidentiality is important. Given the experience of the black community, it is likely that your colleagues may fear unwanted consequences from directly sharing their thoughts with internal HR or leadership teams (much like the rationale behind confidential employee engagement surveys). Be clear on the steps you will take to protect confidentiality if desired.

Lastly, it is important to ensure that the onus of sharing is not placed on your black colleagues; this could be adding pressure at an already difficult time. If your black employees are not comfortable sharing their experiences personally, engage an external black party to communicate the feelings, experiences and proposed solutions that your black employees have. Consider hiring a neutral party who is sensitive to black issues and can facilitate the conversations and feedback to the business candidly.

Bear in mind that given the current restrictions resulting from COVID-19, many of these measures will need to be carried out virtually. You should explore options to do so as it's vital that these conversations take place.

Q: Where do I start with building an I&D strategy?

Promoting and supporting diversity in the workplace is an important aspect of good people management – it's about valuing everyone in the organisation as an individual. However, to reap the benefits of a diverse workforce it's vital to have an inclusive environment where everyone feels able to participate and achieve their potential. While UK legislation sets the minimum standards, an effective inclusion and diversity strategy goes beyond legal compliance and seeks to add value to an organisation, contributing to employee wellbeing and engagement.

An I&D strategy should be shaped and delivered in a way that aligns with an organisation's culture, ways of working and business goals – there is no 'one size fits all'.

The starting place when building an I&D strategy includes:

Reflect on where you are now

What has your activity been to date on inclusion and diversity? What positive gains have you made and what have you learned along the way? What do your policies say and what is your track record on achieving this? What data do you have around diversity? What does your data tell you? What is your industry doing? How do you stack up against your industry norms and benchmarks?

Set the inclusion intention for your organisation

In the context of your reflection, set clear intentions for your inclusion journey with your leadership teams. What are your ambitions? What are the outcomes you want to achieve for your people and for your business?

Your inclusion strategy

Your strategy is the journey between where you are now (your reflection) and achieving your inclusion intention. Map out the steps you need to take to make the journey. The steps depend on the organisation, but include:

- Track data across the employee life cycle, recruitment, progression, promotion, pay, retention and exit. Consider what your data is telling you; where do you have disparities? What are the patterns?
- Gain feedback from your employees on their experience of your organisation.
- Review your people processes, looking out for instances that could be discriminatory, directly or indirectly. What is happening and what will you do to address this?

Take action

Start to work on the areas identified. Have clear outcomes in mind and assess how you are delivering against them.

Review

As you progress on your I&D journey, it is important to continually assess and review that you are delivering against your intended outcomes. Review your data and use this to ensure that you are on the right track. Refresh your strategy if you need to.

Get specialist help

Depending on your organisation, you may need to consider getting specialist support to take you through the process.



The answers to other frequently asked questions about race in the workplace are available on the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#).

8 Highlights from the CIPD webinar series

The CIPD webinar series *Racism and the Challenge for HR* (recorded in June 2020) examined the history that's still influencing society's systemic racism, explored how HR leaders can create a more inclusive workplace culture, and discussed where we go next.

The series of webinars, *Anti-racism Stays on the Agenda* (recorded in September 2020), supports the people profession in keeping this critical topic high on the organisational agenda, even as the news cycle moves on.

Below we've listed a selection of key messages from those webinars. Full recordings of the sessions are available on the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#), where you can also sign up for future sessions.

Racism and the challenge for HR**The history behind today's under-represented BAME workforce**

Understanding what has gone before is essential if we are to move beyond systemic racism and build a world that serves all. In the first of a series of three webinars, Frank Douglas, CEO of Caerus Executive and adviser on inclusion, and Sereena Abbassi, independent

equity, inclusion and diversity consultant, Facilitator and Speaker, discuss the need for awareness of the past to understand how actions from years before are still limiting black, Asian and minority ethnic representation in the workplace.



[Watch the webinar recording.](#)

'Diversity is a choice. And if your businesses are not diverse, it is because you have actively chosen to not pursue diversity.'

Sereena Abbassi

Creating a pro-inclusive leadership plan

In the second of a series of three webinars, Frank Douglas, CEO of Caerus Executive, was joined by chartered business psychologist Dev Modi, the head of inclusive leadership for EMEA at YSC Consulting, to talk about addressing racism in the workplace and using positive leadership to create an environment that supports black and ethnic minority employees and challenges systemic racism.



[Watch the webinar recording.](#)

'It [BLM] has become a lens through which I believe we can evolve D&I beyond what we could have done over maybe a decade. It's an important time for us to reinvent who we are as an HR function, as well as design organisations in the right way for the future.'

Dev Modi

Where next

Wrapping up this first series of three webinars, the CIPD's CEO Peter Cheese joins Frank Douglas, CEO of Caerus Executive, to discuss how we can take the next steps to make real change happen and tackle racism in the workplace.



[Watch the webinar recording.](#)

'Every organisation needs to ask itself why, with this wealth of data on race being a value-creation lever, have we not pulled that lever after all these years.'

Frank Douglas

Anti-racism stays on the agenda series

Securing long-term leadership commitment

The first session in this series looked at how the people profession can obtain long-term leadership commitment to anti-racism work and embed genuine cultural change. The panel, including Sharon Amesu, director of SA Consulting, Lorraine Martins, director of diversity and inclusion at Network Rail, and Geoffrey Williams, founder of Geoffrey O. Williams Ltd, discussed creating more inclusive cultures, how the people profession can influence and educate senior leaders around anti-racism, and how to create safe spaces to talk about race at work.

‘For leaders, it’s about opening up that vulnerability about what you don’t know, what your discomfort is, and acknowledging that things need to be better.’

Lorraine Martins

Ethnicity pay reporting

In the second session the panel, including Dr Doyin Atewologun, Chartered business psychologist and director, Delta Alpha Psi and Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith, CBE looked at ethnicity pay reporting, and other government policy interventions. The session included a debate on the need for transparent ethnicity pay gap reporting and offered tips on how organisations can best collect, analyse and use employee data around race.



[Watch the webinar recording.](#)

‘We all know in business that there are a very small number of levers you can pull when you want real change. We also know, therefore, that in order to get real change we have to start with data and understand where we are today.’

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith, CBE

Effective employee networks

In the third session of the ‘*Anti-racism Stays on the Agenda*’ series, the panel (including Frank Munro, campaign manager at the Ministry of Justice, Nichole McGill Higgins, co-chair of the CIPD’s EmBRACE group, and David D’Souza, membership director at the CIPD) discussed how to set up and develop effective employee networks, with a particular focus on race. They also explored the steps HR needs to take to support networks and what great leadership sponsorship looks like.



[Watch the webinar recording.](#)

‘It’s the voice of the organisation... if there is something going slightly awry in terms of the policies, processes and practices, it’s normally the staff network (if there is one) that will pick that up first and bring it to the attention of the organisation. Networks play a crucial role in terms of looking at all of the policies, processes and practices that are about to be introduced to make sure that they don’t have any hidden or unforeseen consequences.’

Frank Munro

9 Further resources and sources of support

If you're looking for further sources of support or information, the CIPD's [anti-racism hub](#) is being continually updated with content, including:

- webinars tackling the [issues, questions and challenges](#) people and organisations face in creating safe, inclusive workspaces
- listening exercises to encourage CIPD members to communicate [how they think](#) the organisation can best support black and ethnic minority people professionals
- guidance designed to help people professionals develop an effective [anti-racism strategy](#)
- practical advice on establishing an [employee resource group](#) (ERG) for black and ethnic minority employees, with references to the CIPD's own ERG, EmBRACE
- CIPD members can visit the [CIPD community](#) to discuss issues with fellow people professionals.



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