BRITISH COUNCIL

Race equality guide

"A real barrier and challenge to race equality is the fact that race and racism remain great taboos and are underestimated.

The fact is that the dominant race in a society rarely admits to its own racism, with denial being near universal.

The reasons are manifold. It has a huge vested interest in its own privilege and will often be oblivious to its own prejudices.

This is fundamental to understanding the way in which racism is underplayed as a national and global issue.

Without an experience of racism except as perpetrators, racism is constantly underplayed by western institutions – governments, the media and corporations who have a vested interest in denying the extent and baneful effects of racism."

Jacques 2003

An inclusive British Council

Contents

Foreword

The UK and many other countries in which we operate are multi-ethnic and multicultural, or moving in that direction. Within them the roots of racial discrimination, racial disadvantage, xenophobia and intolerance can run deep. There have been gains and improvements over the years but social, economic and other indicators consistently report that inequalities and reduced access to opportunities determined by racial and ethnic background persist. These play out in society, the workplace and beyond and affect our external and internal work. This is the backdrop to, and reason for, our Race Equality Guide. It is one of a series of British Council Guides to support the inclusion we aspire for in our areas of focus.

The richness that racial and ethnic diversity brings cannot be overstated but to benefit from this we need to engage with and understand it, including the subtleties and nuances, and apply this to our cultural relations work.

As Race Champion for our organisation I commend to you a positive stand on racial and ethnic diversity. I ask that you make your own contribution to helping ensure the behaviours and values it encourages and requires are applied in all aspects of our work.

Rebecca Walton
Race Equality Champion and Regional Director European Union

Introduction

In an increasingly complex world, attempts to cope with ethnic tensions and overcome race-related inequalities (where race is broadly defined and includes racial, ethnic and national origins, nationality, skin colour, tribe and caste) are assuming greater, not - as we perhaps might imagine - less, significance. Worldwide, countries are increasingly recognising and implementing anti-discrimination measures in response to this and in an attempt to fully benefit from and include their diverse populations. This is shown in legislative and policy changes being introduced; in practices being encouraged, including by the European Union and other bodies; in the support for pluralism; and by cities marketing and positioning themselves as diverse and welcoming to all people.

The aim of this Race Equality Guide is to add our own contribution by encouraging an ongoing dialogue about issues of race/ethnicity, racism and racial equality and nurturing good practices. Ultimately we want to do better, be fully inclusive and achieve improved outcomes for all racial groups. Our particular focus is on minority ethnic groups, who largely but not exclusively lack power and status.

Issues of race are generally given limited attention and there is no desire to reinforce this. At the same time the Guide can only ever be a partial picture of a complex, deep and wide area, so some of what is set out is done so more bluntly and with less nuance than we would like. We rely on colleagues to engage with it constructively and accept the limitations of any Guide dealing with multifaceted social relations, within complex historical, socio-political and geographical contexts and with diverse linguistic elements. And of course there is the issue of the time to read and engage with a more lengthy Guide.

There are four parts to the Guide. Part 1 identifies racism as a global phenomenon and explores some of the ways in which it manifests. Part 2 addresses how race/ethnicity sit within our own approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), specifically focusing on the business, moral and legal strands. Part 3 is about action. It sets out examples and makes suggestions, moving us away from information to the concrete and specific. Part 4 is the summary and conclusion.

We suggest flexible engagement although we would like to encourage reading it in full. For those less interested in Part 1 skip it and move, perhaps to Part 3 which more directly addresses our work. Alternatively begin with Part 2, followed by Part 3 to get a sense of how race equality is relevant to our overall approach to EDI.

The Guide is a dynamic document. It will be kept under review and will be informed by feedback and examples for potential inclusion which we very much welcome. As one of a series being developed for each of our EDI areas of focus, the Guide is aligned to and supports our Equality Policy and Diversity Strategy which are referred to on a number of occasions.

Part 1 – Understanding racism/s

The origins of racism are based on the discredited belief that human beings can be divided into distinct groups labelled 'races' as a result of inherited physiological characteristics such as skin colour, facial features, hair texture etc. This view reduces human attributes and indeed behaviour to the sphere of biology – sometimes referred to as biological essentialism. It separates people into oppositional categories ('other-ing') and ascribes generic traits to them including behaviour patterns, personality and intellectual ability which are viewed as natural, fixed and generally applicable to the group in question. It gives rise to the belief in a ranking of human 'races' and promotes the idea that some are superior, and others inferior. This is used to explain and justify the advantages of some so called races over others.

> The fact is 'race' as a biological reality has long been challenged and disproved by scientists and anthropologists. The overwhelming body of scientific opinion, including that of the Human Genome Project, maintains that 'race' is meaningless as a biological category, that there are no such sharp distinctions between populations and that all human beings are genetically virtually identical.

> *"All human beings belong to a single species and share a common origin. They are born equal in dignity and rights and all form an integral part of humanity. All peoples of the world possess equal faculties for attaining the highest level of intellectual, technical, social, economic, cultural and political development. The differences between achievements of the different people are entirely attributable to geographical, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors. Such differences can in no case serve as the pretext for any rank ordered classification of nations or people"*.
>
> (Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: Article 1, 1978.)

Racism/s

New and more subtle forms of racisms (such as imposing greater financial checks on people of a certain ethnicity, restricting their movement, or clearly linking concepts of ideal beauty with one ethnicity rather than another) continue to emerge derived from the false doctrine of racial differentiation. These new forms of racisms are found in different regions, at different times. The various forms of racism are not mutually exclusive. Ideas and actions related to the perceived ranking and superiority/inferiority of individuals and groups can, and does, move fluidly between these different expressions of racism.

Increasingly, particularly within a European context, the phrase racism/s incorporates xenophobia[1] and anti-semitism[2]. What is useful about this is that it reflects that skin colour and physical appearance are not the only markers of difference generating hostility. Hostility arises from markers connected to culture, language and religion, reflected by the plural term 'racisms'.

The term *racisms*, is we believe of particular value and relevance to us. It acknowledges the above and anti-black racism, anti-indigenous people racism, anti-Asian racism sometimes referred to as orientalism, anti-Irish and anti-Gypsy/Traveller racism and caste and tribal based racism, for example. And of course racism manifests itself in different ways in the different contexts in which we operate, including by criminalising certain groups, negatively portraying them or making them invisible as well as through how attribution bias is displayed. It plays out within and can be perpetuated by people of the same and different skin colour; racism is not simply perpetrated by white people towards those who are not white. Indeed notions of 'whiteness' change over time and place so that groups that appear white in one context and at one point in time may be racialised as the 'other' at some point, for example Irish, Jewish, Eastern European and Chinese people. This links to the concepts of colourism and shadeism, a form of discrimination based on skin colour. It demonstrates that within ethnic groups there is a subtle ranking, where those with darker skin are held to be of less value than those with lighter skin. It is prevalent in all parts of the world where we have a presence and plays out within a given ethnic group.

Whiteness is increasingly being given attention including through an examination of white privilege[3] and white fragility[4]. These concepts help highlight power and status, bringing attention to that which can be taken for granted and is often unspoken about.

Racism is undeniably linked with other areas of unjustified discrimination. People are not simply identified by their race/ethnicity. Self-identification and the way others see us is complex and we

---

[1] Xenophobia is a fear of people from other countries.
[2] Anti-semitism is hostility or prejudice towards Jewish people.
[3] For more on white privilege see Peggy McIntosh, Unpacking the invisible knapsack, 1988
[4] White fragility is where talking about racism triggers emotions or behaviours that close the conversation down. The phrase was coined by Robin diAngelo in 2011.

all have multiple identities, with different aspects that come to the fore at different times, depending on where we are and who we are with and the resulting power dynamics. These dynamics are potent in nurturing and sustaining racism and the consequent oppression.

Institutionalised racisms

Racism operates at a range of levels including at the structural and institutional levels. This means racism is woven into the fabric of a society, like in apartheid South Africa, and some would say in Israel and other parts of the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia. Racism overtly permeates institutions, laws, policies, procedures and practices in these countries. It is embodied in, for example, the judiciary, police and civil services, often through deeply entrenched stereotypes that lead to harsher judgments and treatment or a denial of the impact of circumstances and distinct needs. It consequently ensures the systematic discrimination or disadvantage of people from different cultural and ethnic groups even without anyone necessarily making a deliberate decision to do so. This routine and 'natural' subjugation often has the net effect of significant disadvantage for particular ethnic and national groups whilst maintaining the status-quo and advantages enjoyed by the dominant group. This group needn't be in the numerical majority (as in the case of South Africa where dominance was held by a minority ethnic group).

In reading this guide we ask that you hold in mind, the *diversity* of racism, encapsulated in the term *racisms.* The guide will move between the terms racism and racisms for stylistic and other reasons.

The relevance of anti-racism

Anti-racism is a specific approach that deliberately tries to dismantle racism at individual, institutional and structural levels. It aims to support inclusion and human rights and promote race equality. It is therefore a proactive, action-oriented approach that acknowledges intersectionality (the interconnected nature of different aspects of a person's identity and how together they can impact and determine and compound their experience of discrimination) and is also deeply analytical.

The consequences of racism

The belief in inherent biological differences between groups of people amongst other things, has, over the centuries, given justification to racist, inhumane actions including slavery, segregation, apartheid, the holocaust, genocides and ethnic-cleansing. The result has sometimes been the significant displacement of ethnic groups and numerous refugee and asylum seekers in quest of a safe haven and security. New hostilities and intra-ethnic conflicts continue to emerge fuelled by political and economic divisions.

Ethnic conflicts, civil disturbances and genocides have been witnessed in all continents. By some estimates, one or more of these are currently prevalent in three or four dozen countries worldwide. They include but are not restricted to Afghanistan, Australia, Bosnia, Colombia,

Darfur, France, Germany, Libya, Russia, South Sudan, Syria and Spain. They have claimed millions of victims.

Alongside these extreme and violent instances are numerous individual acts of prejudice and unlawful, unjustified discrimination against people because of their ethnicity. With this come negative economic, social, cultural and personal consequences, including racial trauma as a result of exposure to racism, racial discrimination and harassment, racial hostility and intolerance and xenophobia.

Power, which we have already commented on, is of course central to the ideas and manifestations of racism. It is not simply prejudice on grounds of race. It is the power to act on those prejudices and subjugate others that makes racism such a threat, including to the cohesion necessary for a stable, secure world.

The United Nations, the European Commission, and several other international governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations consistently report that the life chances of a considerable proportion of the world's population remain limited and constrained, and that perceptions of race, colour, ethnic and national origins are major factors in determining this. This is apparent in the criminal justice system where sentencing patterns and use of the death penalty frequently differ significantly from majority groups. Also there is lower levels of access to education and educational attainment; higher unemployment and under employment, greater ill health, reduced life span and lower quality housing and overcrowding.

Part 2 – Our approach: business, moral, legal strands

Our organisational framework for EDI has three strands and six areas of main but not exclusive focus, one of which is race/ethnicity. In this part of the guide we summarise these strands with specific reference to race.

The business strand

Our business case for race equality is consistent with our general business case for diversity.

We believe that:

- Race equality helps us foster mutually beneficial and respectful long term relationships worldwide with various individuals, groups and organisations. It sensitises us to the needs of all ethnic groups and the barriers they face, positioning us to respond appropriately, with insight and awareness and with a level of confidence and competence because of this. This helps position us as a partner of choice and aides our reputation and standing as leaders in cultural relations. It extends our reach and helps us to serve our audiences better, including by reflecting the ethnic diversity of the UK and elsewhere.

- The best creative talent can come from untapped employment pools; likewise future leaders and influencers, programme participants, partners and customers. Given demographic trends these will increasingly be drawn from minority ethnic populations. Race equality can help us access and use diverse talent pools.

- Racism and cultural relations are incompatible. With a desire to create friendly knowledge and understanding as a bridge between the UK and other countries of the world, our work would be undermined if racism was suggested, or prevalent, or if we failed to take action in response to it.

- Supporting and adopting an anti-racism approach helps us to combat racial prejudice, stereotyping, harassment, unjustified discrimination, undignified and culturally insensitive and offensive behaviour in our interactions with one another and in the delivery of our various activities. It means that British Council employees, in the context of their work are less likely to be perpetrators or victims of racism and are more likely to be able to effectively challenge racisms. It also means we are more likely to reduce UK/locally contracted divisions and manage prejudices related to whether our teachers have English as their first language.

- By nurturing race equality we can minimise distress and the damage to our reputation, purpose and organisational values, and the costs and time involved in dealing with complaints, employment tribunals and negative publicity.

The moral/ethical strand

Anti-racism and race equality are about social justice. It is simply the right thing to do to treat others with dignity and respect, to empathise, to create and nurture spaces that are not infected by preconceptions and stereotypes, by hate and violence, fear or ignorance and the abuse of power.

It is also right to acknowledge that people have experiences and perceptions different from our own and not dismiss these.

The moral strand is especially aligned to our organisational values which should underpin everything we say, do and stand for and are in turn aligned to our commitment to inclusion and human rights. The principles of human rights help nurture our shared humanity and a world where we can all be supported to be fully human; a world of hope rather than fear with the benefits that come from feeling fully included. Human rights in practice support global security and stability as well as daily life and life stages that help citizens thrive and give of their best.

Racism is harmful and dehumanising. Racists are motivated by, amongst other things, an irrational fear or anxiety – the fear that immigrants will swamp the population, say. They have been unable to counter and unlearn the racism reinforced through socialisation. They inevitably have 'blind spots' and defences. An anti-racist organisational culture and supporting practices can provide a moderating influence and minimise the negative impact of their ideas and beliefs.

The legal strand

Wherever we work there is legislation in place supporting the inclusion of various disadvantaged groups, including those disadvantaged on grounds of race. In addition, there are overarching legal instruments that many countries are signatories to, one of which is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). We encourage understanding of these and the practices which bring them alive and make them meaningful.

Legislation has been an important and in instances a powerful engine for change and worldwide has unquestionably led to a reduction in inequalities and unjustified discrimination. Legal requirements are a non-negotiable that frequently silence sceptics and dissenters. We do however acknowledge that it is the enforcement of the legislation that makes the critical difference.

Of particular note because we have a UK headquarters, are definitions set out in the GB Equality Act (2000). These hold that racial discrimination can be:

Direct - Treating a person less favourably than another person would, or has been treated, on racial grounds. It is not possible to justify direct discrimination and state, for example, that there is a business need to discriminate on racial grounds because customers would complain about receiving a service from someone from a particular ethnic group. Also motive is irrelevant. So whether you meant to unjustifiably discriminate or not, or had a benign motive, is of no relevance whatsoever.

Indirect - This occurs when the application of a provision, criterion or practice is applied equally to members of all races, but it

- puts or would put members of one race at a particular disadvantage compared to those of other races;
- disadvantages the person it is applied to;
- cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Racial harassment, which can constitute direct or indirect racism, includes:

- Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendos or taunting about someone's racial or ethnic background or origins, nationality or skin colour.
- Displaying racist, derogatory or offensive pictures or material.
- Insulting gestures or practical jokes based on racial or ethnic grounds which cause embarrassment or awkwardness.

Similar definitions are contained in the legislation of several of the countries in which we work. Examples, including of the distinctions, can be provided from a range of internal and external sources.

Race equality targets

Our UK equality targets make a contribution to promoting equality and achieving inclusion, as well as eliminating discrimination. The data that informs them helps identify barriers to progress.

In contrast to our gender targets, we have made limited progress towards our target to increase the proportion of UK-contracted minority ethnic senior managers and have been vulnerable to progress towards them being unravelled quite quickly given the small percentages. Progress towards our disability targets has also been limited. Wider ownership and engagement and commitment to gender equality, in comparison to race and disability equality, in part accounts for this situation.

Quotas

Targets and quotas are not the same. In some of the countries in which we work we are required to fulfil quotas; for example, to employ a certain percentage of nationals of the country or a certain percentage of disabled people and we should make strenuous efforts to do so.

These include Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as part of their nationalisation programmes and Germany, Thailand and others to support the inclusion of disabled people.

As an organisation we do not support so called 'informal quotas', or any practice that tries to fill jobs with a certain number of minority ethnic or disabled people, or women. We believe this to be unnecessary. The talent is out there and can be accessed with effort and intention. No majority ethnic group member should be denied a job because of their ethnicity.

It is worth emphasising here that wherever we have a presence, encouraged by our key mainstreaming tool the Diversity Assessment Framework (DAF), we should identify any concerning trends through equality monitoring. This should be informed by benchmarking with relevant local data. Doing so will help us in the process of complying with any quotas, supporting any targets, raising awareness and understanding, identifying bias and planning.

Positive action

Positive action in the area of equality and diversity is permitted under various pieces of legislation globally. It aims to help address evidence based under-representation and achieve inclusion. It allows for actions related to training and encouragement to apply for jobs but not selection or promotion decisions based on race.

The British Council has used the following positive actions:

- use of media specifically targeted at minority ethnic groups;
- targeted training for under-represented groups;
- interview practice;
- mentoring schemes; and
- welcome statements like these:

    o *The British Council is committed to equality and keen to reflect the diversity of UK society at every level within the organisation. We welcome applications from all sections of the community.*

    o *The British Council is committed to equality and keen to reflect the diversity of UK society at every level within the organisation. Minority ethnic staff are under-represented in positions at this level in the organisation, therefore applications from minority ethnic people are particularly welcome. All applications will be assessed on merit.*

Part 3 – Action and examples

Acknowledging and examining our defence mechanisms can be an important part of taking action to improve our practice as they undermine progress and help maintain the status quo. Some defence mechanisms include the following:

- **Denial** - refusal to accept racism exists, especially its cultural and institutional forms and viewing it primarily as the personal prejudice of a few extreme, irrational people.
- **Omission** - ignoring the racial dimension of social interactions; not seeing the relevance of ethnic difference in most situations and relating to others as if racism doesn't exist.
- **Decontextualisation** - accepting racism exists in general terms but 'out there' in, for example, apartheid South Africa; refusing to believe it permeates everyday activities undertaken.
- **Taking a colour blind-approach** - treating minority ethnic people as if they were the same as the majority group and holding this position to negate people's specific experiences of racism.
- **Dumping** - placing the responsibility for creating racism and getting rid of it with minority ethnic groups - 'blame the victim' approach.
- **Patronising** - deeming the majority ethnic group ways superior whilst 'tolerating' the way minority ethnic people do things – 'they are entitled to their quaint ways'.
- **Avoidance** – there is an awareness of race as a factor in social interaction but opportunities for confronting it are avoided; this usually means flinching at racist behaviour but keeping quiet about it.
- **Retention of power** – a reluctance to act or speak in a way that might support a transfer of power to minority ethnic people.

In addition to defence mechanisms, are the following comments, which will of course be manifested in behaviours, set out below, all of which have been expressed during the course of our work:

- 'We don't see colour, or racial/ethnic differences, we just see people.'
- 'Talking about these differences is unnecessary and creates unnecessary tensions.'
- 'Ethnic differences and tensions have devastated our country; we are trying to rebuild ourselves and we don't want to risk opening old wounds.'
- 'The indigenous people are the ones that talk so much about differences and try to gain special privileges. Things will change with time. It doesn't help to agitate and create upset.'

To help address defence mechanisms:

➢ discuss them and any reasons for them in a constructive way. This can usefully be supported by a video, or example, or trigger tape, or a facilitator sharing the defence mechanisms they recognise in themselves.
➢ Draw on or supplement with relevant data – see appendix 2.
➢ Develop empathy through learning about and understanding the experiences of those who occupy a minority ethnic position within a given context which may be helped by borrowing someone from our Living Library.
➢ Learn effective ways of highlighting things that are inappropriate and of challenging to support change and improvement.

Review the examples that follow, discuss them and potentially use them as learning aids. Do send further examples that might be helpful to learn from to the Diversity Unit.

Making and challenging assumptions

"A local TV Station came to the UK Education Exhibition in China and asked whether I could help them to identify a few universities to do an interview. I readily agreed. When I approached one of the universities to tell them about this, I saw two people standing at the booth, a Chinese-looking man and a white British person. Without thinking I asked the British person whether he would like to be interviewed and talk about his university. He said he would love to. A few minutes later, the Chinese-looking man complained to my colleague saying that he felt insulted because actually he was the official representative of the University, and he had employed the other person who had been teaching English locally to help him out at the booth. I was very, very upset with myself when I learned about this. How could I make such a mistake especially with what I thought was my awareness of equal opportunities and diversity? I went back to apologise to the University representative and fortunately the other person was not around at that time. In the end I arranged for him to be interviewed by the TV station and not the person I had originally asked."

"I was organising a project visit for a small group of young Arab women who were visiting London. The aim was to portray young British Muslim women in their London environment; at some point they specifically mentioned women wearing hijab. I identified areas of London known for their Muslim population, mosques and traditions, falling back on common knowledge. My first surprise was when I met the Arab women: make-up, trainers, jeans and tee shirts. I realised then that subconsciously I expected them to arrive in hijab and conservative clothing. My second realisation was that they were not interested at all in the Pakistani or Bangladeshi communities I had identified. It was the London Arab community that they were interested in. The common denominator of religion proved presumptuous on my part and non-existent for them. I shared my assumptions with some colleagues and was commended for my honesty."

I took a group of representatives from 13 universities to visit a local university in South China. The President of the university suggested that we should take a group photo. Here is an extract of the conversation that followed:

President: Are there representatives from the British Council?
Me: Yes, I am from the British Council (somewhat surprised because he knew me and I had also introduced myself again a short time before).
President: Well, I mean, their official staff.
Me: I am their official staff. I am the Deputy Director.
President: Well, I mean British people.
Me: Chinese colleagues can equally represent the British Council.
The President looked disappointed.

British Council Teaching Centre staff share their experience of how assumptions and stereotypical views are made and expressed in the classroom:

Student: Teacher, the UK is a dangerous place for Muslim people isn't it?
Teacher: Why do you say that?
Student: They don't like Muslim people.
Teacher: I have lived in the UK all my life and I have never personally had any problems or felt that
Student: So it is safe to visit?
Teacher: Yes, overall it is safe to visit and the people there generally welcome all nationalities.

(Teacher comment: I try my best to highlight to students and reassure them that they should not feel threatened or intimidated by what they read about or see.)

Student: Where are you from?
Teacher: I come from the UK, so I am British.
Student: Where are your parents from?
Teacher: They are from Egypt.
Student: So you are Egyptian?
Teacher: No, I'm British
Student: You don't look British.
Teacher: In the UK we have many people whose parents or grandparents came/come from different countries like India, Pakistan, Africa and the Caribbean.
Student: But they are not really British
Teacher: How about Will Smith and Beyonce, what nationality are they?
Student: American.
Teacher: Thierry Henry?
Student: French.
Teacher: So, it is the same in the UK. People of different colours, religions, races etc can also be British.

Our credibility

In the context of the induction phase of one of our programmes, questions were raised about the British Council's own Equality Policy and Diversity Strategy by a mixed ethnic group including African, African-Caribbean and South Asian people because of the issues of equality, diversity and difference under discussion. They were preparing for the role of facilitators and felt concerned that this wasn't communicated to them and as a result questioned the appropriateness of the British Council delivering a leadership programme with issues of diversity and inclusion at its heart. This questioning took up considerable time and created tensions.

In response a policy and strategy briefing was organised and the related opportunity for debate and discussion created. Feedback was positive and highlighted that this should have taken place at the outset and would have saved time and minimised tensions. In particular participants felt reassured, by knowing about our EDI work and approach, that it was appropriate for us to be running a leadership programme with a commitment to inclusion and empowerment.

An exams inquiry

A British Council examinations' candidate walks into the office and has a quick look around and decides who she thinks is the person she needs to talk to about sitting for the examinations. The office manager walks towards her and asks whether she can be of assistance. Without acknowledging the presence of the office manager, who happens to be a black South African, the customer walks towards a staff member, who happens to be white, and proceeds with her enquiry. After a brief exchange she is directed towards the office manager, who deals with the request in a professional way without acknowledging the 'little exchange' that has just taken place.

Once the customer leaves there is a discussion about what should be done if there is a repeat of this as no action was taken involving the customer.

Demonstrating awareness and sensitivity

In developing the emergency procedures for the office, the white British Country Director, in consultation with the Diversity Unit, constructed a checklist that included reference to any disturbances or threats that would place particular ethnic groups at especial risk. Recognising and anticipating that civil and other disturbances may be rooted in ethnic differences within the African country demonstrated cultural relations awareness and support for EDI. It raised questions about other ways in which awareness could similarly be displayed.

Challenging stereotypes

The line manager of a member of staff newly promoted to a senior position was concerned at an emerging view of the South Asian staff member as unassertive by the team he was managing. This new manager was from a minority ethnic group in the country. The perception was in part attributed to the dominant Western cultural view of what assertive behaviour is and that people of the ethnic background of the new manager were unassertive.

On the basis of a commitment to providing effective support, the line manager sought advice and guidance and as a result felt better equipped to intervene. He was open with his direct report. In addition he constructively and overtly challenged stereotypical innuendoes about the passivity of people from a particular ethnic group and comments about not being seen as a dynamic team, as well as speaking over the individual.

The outcomes included improved team working, a stop to the subtle displays of disrespect and a more empowered and effective direct report.

A group of colleagues expressed that it was impossible for a Roma person to secure a job in the respective British Council office. The reason given was that Roma people lacked the educational background necessary for the kind of employment available. There was also some inference that their temperament was unsuited to the work of the office.

A heated discussion ensued in which the general point of reduced educational opportunities for Roma people was acknowledged, whilst the assertion of 'impossibility' was challenged and the unsuited temperament inference was surfaced. The conclusion was an acceptance that country wide, negative stereotypes about Roma people were all pervasive and needed to be challenged and monitored. In addition, it was decided to consider developing links with organisations working with Roma people to explore relevant opportunities for relationship building for mutual benefit.

Challenging racism

A meeting took place in the UK in which a racial slur was uttered by a UK national which was deemed offensive in the UK and many countries. One of the senior managers present, immediately responded by saying we "don't use phrases like that, they are unacceptable and offensive". It should be noted that the response was timely, clear, assertive and constructive – it was short but to the point with no ambiguity. It was also followed up later.

A staff member based in MENA but not a national of the country shares an experience encountered by her husband, demonstrating the different ways in which racism can be experienced:

"There was an incident where my husband (from the Philippines) went to the aid of someone who had a heart attack in the street, supporting the man as he collapsed to the pavement and putting his rucksack containing his gym kit under the man's head to cushion him from the pavement. Another passer-by assumed my husband was robbing the ill man and shouted abuse. Fortunately this was noticed by two police officers who had been attending another incident nearby and they gave the abusive person a warning, but it just goes to show what assumptions some people make because of racism and how far from the truth they can be".

A Regional Director acknowledged the existence of racism by sharing a recent experience of race discrimination in Austria in the context of opening remarks at an internal EDI workshop. In addition to this, he managed an allegation of unlawful race discrimination effectively and was active in the resolution of the surrounding conflict. He played a particularly useful analytic and mediating role, providing candid, insightful informed feedback, drawing on his knowledge of different cultures. He also engaged relevant parties to ensure resolution. What he did not do was dismiss the allegation, fail to constructively manage it or leave things unresolved.

Examples from colleagues of racist comments made by contacts that were deemed to be accepted as they were not challenged:

- "As Europeans we have to recognise the challenge of dealing with them. They have yet to acquire our experience and so it is much more frustrating working with them."
- "The continent (Africa) is backward and its problems are of its own making."
- "You must be finding it difficult. Things just don't work as they should, I realise this. It is partly to do with our people's attitudes to work but also the fact we (in the Middle East) are so dependent on these workers from elsewhere."
- "It is frustrating for me and my family especially living and working here and it must be for you too."
- "I want to speak with one of the UK staff. My problems are not going to be effectively dealt with by your local staff."

Addressing under-representation

Racisms and the economic disadvantage that is so frequently a part of this were said to be the key reason behind the absence of staff from a significant Diaspora population in Brazil, a country where we have a number of offices and several divisions, including economic, along racial lines. It would perhaps be easy to adopt the position that this absence of reflective diversity is beyond the control of all the offices as the suitably experienced and qualified

candidates from the Diaspora group in question just aren't there due to the way racisms are institutionalised within wider society (an issue frequently aired in relation to disabled people). However this position was not adopted.

Recognising the workplace as a microcosm of society with responsibilities to contribute to change, one office, led by the Country and Deputy Director and supported by all staff, adopted a modest initiative of work experience for members of the underrepresented group. It provided relevant learning opportunities that ultimately it was hoped would be translated into securing a job, possibly but not necessarily in the British Council. In the process staff had the opportunity to work alongside members of wider society and there was support for ongoing attention to the marginalisation, unemployment and under representation of a large section of society. This will require concerted effort and a strengthening of relationships with institutions that can help.

Tips for leaders and managers

As a result of their positional power and influence, leaders and managers have a particularly valuable role to play in promoting and encouraging anti-racist practice and the achievement of race equality. To this end all British Council leaders could:

- Reflect on their attitudes, assumptions and general leadership style, and consider how consistent these are with *promoting* race equality and anti-racism within their areas of responsibility. Encourage peers to do likewise.
- Encourage open and constructive discussions on race, related power dynamics and the relationship to work areas.
- Be proactive in discussing race equality and anti-racism and any impact on the work.
- Show people are valued for their contribution and achievements irrespective of race, avoid micro-behaviours[5] that undermine this and make judgements based upon evidence rather than stereotypical assumptions, including race based ones.
- Use the available equality monitoring data to explore how to address any under-representation of particular ethnic groups. Consider exploring positive action. In the absence of data commit to collecting it.
- Ensure that the HR guidelines for competency based recruitment and selection are properly followed. Strive for ethnically diverse recruitment panels and a merit based approach to appointments and indeed training opportunities. Identify strategies to reduce unconscious bias.

---

[5] Micro-behaviours are small, subtle differences in treatment that communicate over time that someone has less value, including mispronouncing their name, confusing them with someone of a similar ethnicity, passing over their ideas in a meeting, interrupting them mid-sentence, not making eye contact, etc.
For more on micro-inequities see Mary Rowe's work, Barriers to Equality, 1990.

- Attend general and race specific EDI themed training to keep informed of related issues and wider debates.
- Consider the relevance of appropriate ethnic monitoring systems to evaluate the take up, involvement and respective outcomes for different ethnic groups across services and/or facilities provided by the British Council and within your locus of control.
- Engage with and promote the British Council's One Voice Network, or any other groups promoting race equality.
- Deal with allegations of racism in a timely, fair, transparent, non-defensive way.
- Equality screen and impact assess all policies with high relevance to equality, giving due regard to opportunities to promote race equality and good relations between different racial groups and mitigate unjustified race discrimination. This includes equity between locally and UK contracted staff.
- Avoid reinforcing divisions between UK and locally contracted staff and comparing different national groups and staff groups in different regions.
- Avoid positioning locally-contracted Country Directors, who may be nationals of the country, as having less value and status than UK-contracted ones.

Tips for all staff

Although many of us, including leaders and managers like to think of ourselves as fair, tests of unconscious bias show different results. We may not be aware of our own unconscious biases which drive our behaviour, affect our decisions and impact on our interactions with other people. We therefore need to recognise and accept that we are all indeed biased, remain alert to our individual biases and create climates that enable constructive discussion and challenge.

- Try the Implicit Association Test. The test explores unconscious bias including race bias. In a constructive environment discuss your results.
- Understand why and how race equality is an issue locally and in the UK.
- Consider race and other areas of equality at the planning stage of a variety of work and use the appropriate tools to monitor this.
- Try to address any under-representation of minority ethnic groups using positive action measures, if helpful, to ensure reflective diversity in all areas of our work. This could include measures to help ensure often marginalised and overlooked minority ethnic groups are empowered to network with business leaders and decision makers from their own regional or national governments, in order that the groups themselves may have the opportunity to influence and be a catalyst for change in their own societies. This can be achieved by inviting them to participate in local programmes and initiatives, and to attend relevant events and receptions we hold. It may help develop leadership skills within the respective communities, modestly contribute to reversing the effects of past racial discrimination or disadvantage and open up the local political process.
- Make an effort to pronounce unfamiliar names properly and do not resort to shortening or changing them.
- Avoid the insulting phrase 'playing the race card' as a means of denying the perception or experience of racism.

- Contribute to a working culture where issues of race/ethnicity/culture and the often sensitive topic of immigration are constructively discussed and debated.
- When procuring goods and services, tender in a way that reaches diverse ethnic groups, particularly those under-represented as contractors or consultants.
- Review the contact database and key relationships to ensure racial/ethnic/cultural diversity is represented, with action if not (which in the first instance can be a discussion of the facts and factors behind these).
- Develop skilled conflict management involving race/ethnic/cultural difference and allegations of racism. This will recognise a reported racist incident as valid if perceived as such by the reporting party. It will involve attention to evidence as well as feelings and perceptions going forward.
- Attend to the customer journey of different ethnic groups including the evacuation procedures for different ethnic groups in areas of civil disturbances and conflict.
- Read the Equality Policy, noting what it says with specific reference to race, considering the implications at a personal and professional level and making active use of it. This includes bringing it to the attention of people newly recruited as temporary or permanent staff, consultants and examiners in the context of an induction to our work, integrating/drawing on it in the context of English language teaching and including in whole or part in relevant documents and shared electronic spaces.
- Use sources of support as necessary including the Diversity Unit, members of the British Council Living Library, our Race Champion, our Regional Diversity Leads and Accredited EDI Facilitators.

About our communications

The broad area of communication plays an important role in all aspects of the work that we do and also in transmitting or challenging cultural norms and stereotypes.

- Present the British Council, and in particular the UK - as a diverse and welcoming place to everyone, irrespective of race, whilst acknowledging as necessary the reality of racism within UK society.
- Ensure that the respective promotional materials reflect the multi-cultural make-up of the UK, and that marketing efforts are welcoming and encouraging to all ethnic groups in the countries where we operate.
- Ensure that diversity and race equality as subject matters are properly reflected in teaching materials, and are discussed openly and sensitively in the classrooms and teaching centres.
- Contribute locally sourced, ethnically diverse images to the corporate image bank.
- Use appropriate language. We do not offer a glossary but instead provide links[6] to some here. They are not exhaustive or definitive but may be useful.

---

[6] The linked language guides might be useful: Diversity in diction; The Language of equality; Race equality toolkit; A NATFHE guide to equality language; Reporting diversity.

- We highlight that:
  - Language is complex and fluid. It has a history that may mean some terms are more problematic or sensitive than others.
  - Terms inevitably change from time to time, and what was acceptable at one point can become less so.
  - Some terms can have a slightly, or completely, different interpretation in different countries or cultural contexts, while others can be well understood in one environment but not transfer at all to another.
  - All of these factors pose challenges for us and means we should check local or regional differences in the understanding and meaning of terms.
- Perhaps a key point to always bear in mind, beyond the specific terms themselves, is that of **conveying respect for others**. People will not usually take offence if they realise you are attempting to be respectful. It is both the intention and the tone behind what is said, or written, or body language that is observed that can cause as much offence as the actual words or terms used.

It is perhaps inevitable that some of the terms in this Guide and the definitions provided will have a certain Anglo/Eurocentric bias. Similar to the caveats and limitations mentioned earlier, we hope this will be generally understood given that the British Council is UK headquartered with many policies that emanate from the UK.

> **Words are beautiful. Actions are supreme.**

Good practice communication:

- Uses clear, accessible, inclusive, anti-racist language and avoids inappropriate pairing of text and images which can reinforce stereotypes.
- Responds to the fact that minority ethnic groups can benefit from communication approaches and content relevant to them.
- Curtails any tendency to be over reliant on images of perceived 'ideal looks' held within the majority population which will generally only represent the ethnic majority.
- Translates documents into other languages to increase access based on a sound business case and commitment to inclusion.
- Incorporates relevant race equality and anti-racism issues into the body of reports to help demonstrate awareness and convey due regard.
- Acknowledges the potential of digital communication and social media to spread racist and stereotypical information and puts plans in place plans to mitigate this.
- Recognises that humour does not always transfer effectively across cultures and humour which tackles taboos, ridicules and disparages, frequently on grounds of race, ethnicity, culture can offend.
- Does not ridicule accents or different, culturally rooted communication approaches.

Part 4 – Summary and conclusions

Race equality is part of and important to effective cultural relations and the inclusion and positive social change and friendly knowledge and understanding that we try to achieve through it. At the British Council we, like others, hold that the real significance of 'race' is as a social construct; a way in which societies choose to categorise people on the basis of *assumed* biological differences and evident within racial and ethnic groups as well as between ones.

We recognise that racism is expressed in different ways including at the individual, personal level but at the structural and institutional too. We like other organisations are vulnerable to these, particularly because of our global footprint and because we have contracts and roles, the eligibility of which, is in part or wholly, determined by nationality, and ethnic and national origins. This is a complex and sensitive area but one, especially given our commitment to integrity that we should acknowledge.

It is not surprising that we have all been infected by racist beliefs and practices given how socialisation works. Even with good intentions, unless we actively try to eliminate racist thoughts and actions they filter through. An anti-racist approach helps us to do so.

Racism is life threatening and life limiting. It can involve various cruel, unkind, violent and unlawful acts that impact many areas of life. It runs counter to human rights principles and practices.

Race which includes ethnicity, ethnic and national origins, nationality and skin colour is one of our main areas of equality focus and we proactively work to support and achieve race equality. This is consistent with our Equality Policy, Diversity Strategy and cultural relations work.

We have a strong business case for supporting race equality. The moral/ethical strand acts as an important imperative to challenge and eradicate racisms whether overt or covert, recognising the harm that can be caused and the benefits of doing so. The legal strand acts as a useful leverage for improvement and the often 'necessary stick' with the potential to temper the worst excesses of organisations and individuals. To be really effective it requires strong enforcement mechanisms that are often not in place which in itself can be evidence of institutionalised racism.

Racism can manifest itself at every job level and occupation and is not the standard of behaviour that is acceptable in the British Council. Regardless of role or location we all share responsibility for taking action. Fulfilling these responsibilities helps achieve a consistently felt sense and experience that our organisation truly engages with, values and promotes diversity, including racial diversity and race equality.

Issues of race impact on our organisational life in many different ways and we can and do frequently respond effectively but there is room for improvement.

For many populations the media is a key source of information about events and topics and social norms and offers powerful interpretations. All too often it represents minority ethnic groups in a consistently negative light and as a persistent threat. Our media and social media footprint is growing. This area generally has the ability to negatively or positively impact minority ethnic populations as does our own footprint, so we need to carefully consider what is conveyed about different parts of the world and different populations and ethnic groups.

We have provided a number of examples which demonstrate some of the race issues we confront and in instances, how we have responded. They are intended to encourage discussion and learning. We have not provided stock responses as there are significant constraints to this but we have set out things we could all be doing to support race equality. We have provided insights and information and asserted the relevance of race equality to cultural relations. The aim is to encourage and steer our organisation towards the ideal of a more just and inclusive, meritocratic one where human rights can flourish for all ethnic groups and our cultural relations contribution and delivery is appropriate and meaningful.

Finally, we will be exploring the addition of FAQs. Contributions to this will be welcome as will contributions of examples deemed to be especially helpful in terms of learning and unlearning. Please send any you have to liliana.corrieri@britishcouncil.org in the Diversity Unit.

Appendix 1 – Useful links and resources

For further information and advice on the British Council's policy and work on race equality and diversity contact:

The Diversity Unit
British Council
10 Spring Gardens
London SW1A 2BN
Tel: +44 (0)207 389 4187

The Diversity Unit website can be accessed at: www.britishcouncil.org.diversity

The Diversity Unit intranet site (which includes a section focused on race) can be accessed at: http://intranet.britishcouncil.org/Site/Diversity/Pages/Race.aspx

UK Links

Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland – Race Equality Division: www.equalityni.org

Institute of Race Relations: www.irr.org.uk

Runnymede Trust: www.runnymedetrust.org

International Links

European Network Against Racism: www.enar-eu.org

Minority Rights Group International: www.minorityrights.org

SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre: www.salto-youth.net/diversity

Solidar: www.solidar.org

United Against Racism: www.unitedagainstracism.org

UN Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities: www.osce.org/hcnm

Appendix 2

See below for sources[7].

BRITISH COUNCIL

DISCRIMINATION AND INEQUALITY IN THE UK

HATE CRIME
#BREXIT
There was an unprecedented rise (57%) in hate crimes in June 2016 after EU referendum.

Race remains the most commonly recorded motivation for hate crime in England and Wales, at 82%. **82%**

POWER
14% OF THE POPULATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES ARE MINORITY ETHNIC yet only 6% are MPs, 5.9% judges and 5.5% police officers.

POLICE
BLACK MALES ARE FIVE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE STOPPED BY POLICE and searched than a white man in England and Wales.

EMPLOYMENT
2011 2016

Over the last five years, the number of young minority ethnic people in the UK who are long-term unemployed has almost doubled, whereas for young white people it fell slightly.

PRISON
13.4% OF THE PRISON POPULATION ARE MUSLIMS but are 4.2% of the general population.

PAY
BLACK WORKERS WITH UNIVERSITY DEGREES EARN 23.1% LESS ON AVERAGE than white workers with university degrees.

www.britishcouncil.org

---

[7] A) Hate Crime Ref: *The Independent newspaper, 27 June 2016; Home Office, Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2015/16, Table 2, page 4.*
B) Power Refs: *Nomis, Official labour market statistics, file DC2101EW (Census 2011); House of Commons Library, Ethnic Minorities in Politics and Public life (2016), pp. 6, 10 and 11*
C) Police Ref: *The Independent newspaper, Thursday 27 October 2016*
D) Employment Ref: EHRC 2016, p.9. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/race-report-healing-divided-britain
E) Prison ref: *House of Commons Library, UK Prison Population Statistics (2017), p.14*
F) Pay Ref: TUC (2016) https://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/black-workers/labour-market/black-workers-degrees-earn-quarter-less-white