

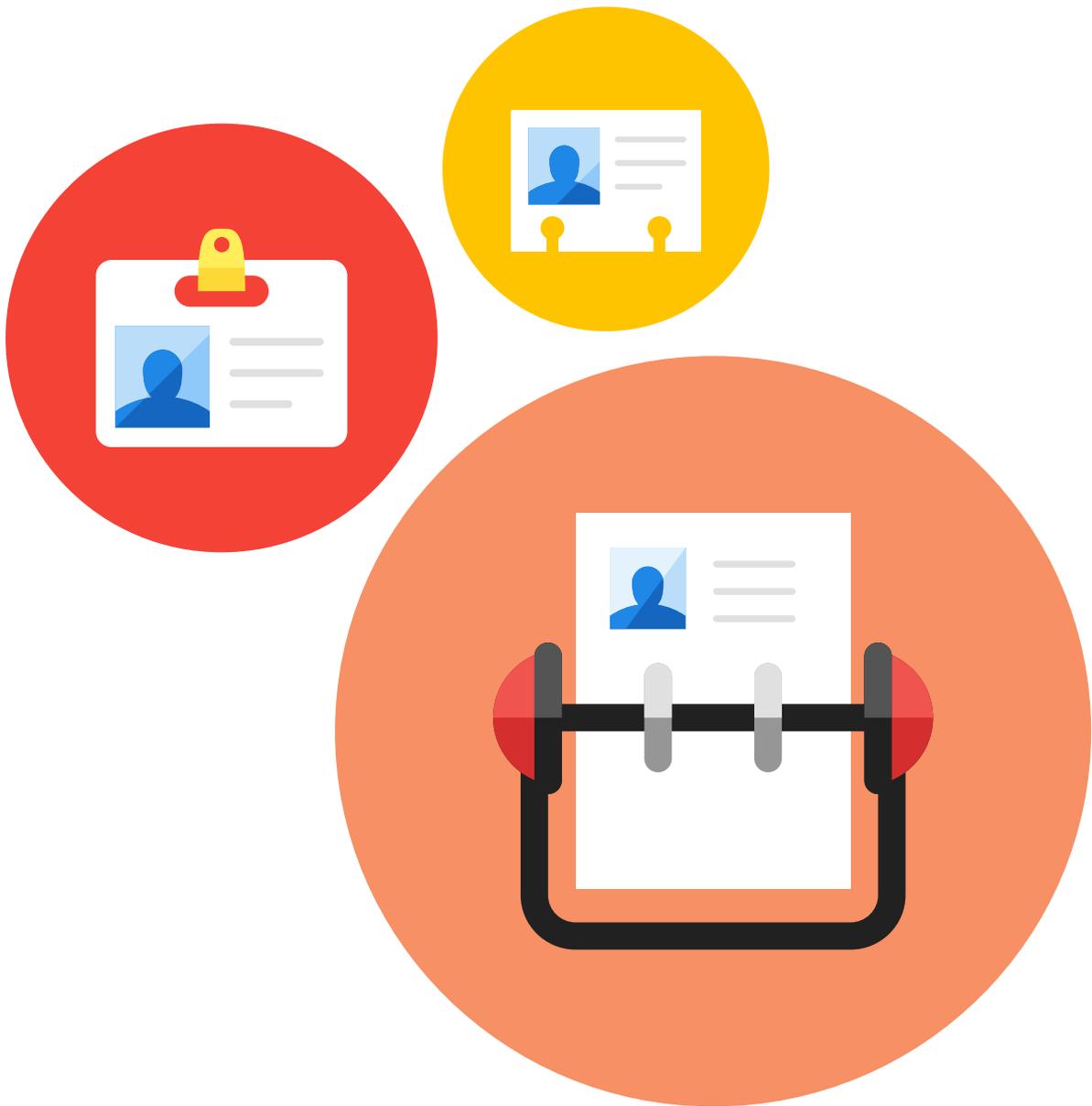


Changing the Race Equality Paradigm

Key concepts for public,
social and organisational policy

**Without a clear understanding
of race and racism, even the most
well-meaning efforts are likely to fail.**

**This frustrating situation can only
be reversed if institutions are willing
to change their paradigm on
race equality.**



Who we are

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is a Scottish anti-racism organisation which focuses on helping to eliminate racial discrimination and harassment and promote racial justice.

CRER's key mission is to:

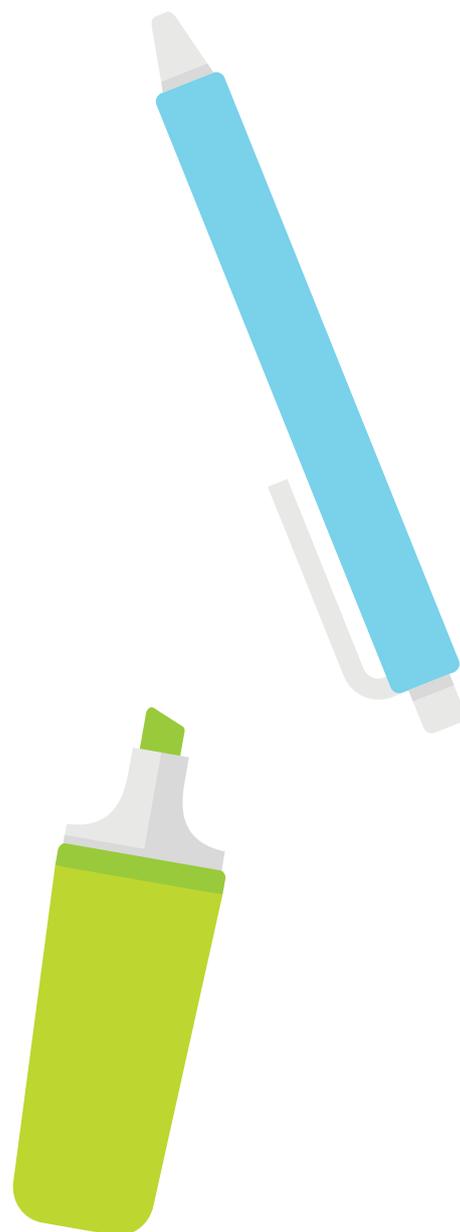
- Protect, enhance, and promote the rights of minority ethnic communities across all areas of life in Scotland; and to,
- Empower minority ethnic communities to strengthen their social, economic, and political capital.

CRER takes a rights-based approach, promoting relevant international, regional, and national human rights and equality conventions and legislation.

For more information on this report or the wider work of CRER, or to request this report in an alternative format, please contact:

Carol Young
Senior Policy Officer
carol@crer.org.uk
0141 418 6530

CRER is a charity registered in Scotland (SC029007)



Contents

Introduction	06
Why do we need to change the race equality paradigm?	07
1. Change what we mean by ‘racism’	09
2. Create a better evidence base	17
3. Understand the impact of ‘difference’	21
4. Change organisational culture	26
5. Learn from the past, work for the future	30
Conclusion	32
Copyright Information	33
Endnotes	34



Introduction

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is a Scottish anti-racist organisation which works to tackle racial inequality alongside many partners from all areas of public life. Institutions including public sector organisations, political parties, Government, educational bodies, trade unions, voluntary and private sector organisations all bear the responsibility of creating equality for all.

Many of these institutions already invest significant time and effort in equality activities, but often with questionable impact. Race equality work is sometimes hampered by misconceptions about the causes of inequality, and by limited approaches to dealing with its consequences.

Without a clear understanding of race and racism, even the most well-meaning efforts are likely to fail. This frustrating situation can only be reversed if institutions are willing to change their paradigm on race equality.

This publication aims to inspire a new direction on race equality within public, social and organisational policy by promoting key concepts which can help institutions to better respond to the challenges of tackling inequality. These are gathered into five sections setting out the change we need to see.

- Change what we mean by 'racism'
- Create a better evidence base
- Understand the impact of 'difference'
- Change organisational culture
- Learn from the past, work for the future

Some of the concepts explored here are well known, whilst others reflect less familiar theories around the causes and consequences of racial inequality. All should be invaluable to institutions looking to improve their approach to race equality work.

Why do we need to change the race equality paradigm?

Fifty years after the introduction of Britain's first legislation aimed at tackling racial inequality (the Race Relations Act 1965), Black and minority ethnic¹ people still face serious disadvantages including higher rates of poverty, lower rates of employment and a range of health inequalities in comparison to the ethnic majority population.²

Despite this, race has largely fallen off the agenda.³ Many people believe that issues of race and racism are no longer of importance in Britain, an attitude that could be described as post-racial.⁴ There are also attempts to frame racial inequality as just another form of social class penalty,⁵ whilst largely ignoring how race and class interact – for example, the different levels of advantage social class confers across ethnicities.⁶

Post-Racial⁷

Describes an environment (e.g. a society or an era) where race, racism and racial equality are no longer significant issues.

Outrage at racial discrimination in Britain is primarily now restricted to celebrity racism scandals and commentary on social media.⁸ As unpleasant as it may be to witness the insensitive or abusive comments periodically made by people in the public eye, this is not the number one problem affecting minority ethnic people in Britain. If anything, the popular fixation with these incidents detracts from the real structuring power of racism. The finger pointing opportunity they provide allows people to feel as though they oppose racism without actually having to do anything to address it in their own lives.

There's a perception that Scotland has less of a problem with racism than other areas of the UK, perhaps best summed up by the phrase 'we're all Jock Tamson's bairns.'⁹ But regardless of popular opinion, the statistics speak for themselves. Between 2000 and 2013, the per capita rate of murders with a known or suspected racist element in Scotland was higher than in the rest of the UK - 1.8 murders per million people in the population compared to 1.3.¹⁰ In 2013-2014, 4,807 racist incidents were recorded by Police in Scotland.¹¹ That's the equivalent of 92 incidents every week, without accounting for the many cases that go unreported.

The Scottish Government has recently launched its Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030,¹² which is a positive move. This Framework marks a shift towards a more progressive approach to race equality in Scotland. However, this will be the first such document published since the Race Equality Statement 2008-2011.¹³ It's also important to note that this renewed focus on race equality is not guaranteed to reach beyond the Scottish Government. For example, public bodies are obliged to take action on race equality through the Scottish specific equality duties, yet the equality outcomes set in April 2013 often failed to address key inequalities for minority ethnic people.¹⁴

Further equality outcomes are due to be developed for publication by April 2017, and unless these are a marked improvement on the previous sets of outcomes, another opportunity to create real change will be missed. To avoid this, and to encourage work across the broader range of institutions which are not required to publish equality outcomes, current practices need to be challenged.

The lens through which race equality is viewed today is fundamentally flawed, and progress is stalling as a result. It's time to develop a new approach. The first of our key concepts to change the paradigm on race equality focuses on better understanding what racism is and how it operates.

1: Change what we mean by 'racism'

How can we better understand racism?

Racism is a high profile issue, but there's very little public understanding of how it works in practice.¹⁵ Political and media commentary unhelpfully treats the term 'racism' as an insult to be aimed at individuals; a personality flaw or a social faux pas.

No wonder, then, that public services and corporations are reluctant to consider the issue of institutional racism.¹⁶ A better understanding of racism in all its forms is needed.

The basic terminology around race makes a good starting point for this journey. Terms like ethnic, cultural and racial are often used interchangeably, which causes confusion. This can change the context or meaning of organisational messages, making them appear tokenistic and losing any positive intention behind them.

Ethnic¹⁷

An ethnic group is a group of people who are bound together by certain characteristics they share, which might include language, culture, history, folklore, ideology, national origin, nationality or ancestry.

Cultural¹⁸

A cultural group is a group of people who feel bound together by social customs, activities, beliefs, behavioural norms and values.

Racial¹⁹

The concept of a 'racial group' is derived from outdated anthropological approaches claiming that humans could be divided into racial groups based on shared language, nationality and physical and behavioural traits. The current use of the term 'racial' has developed because disproved notions of racial difference have become embedded in the beliefs and behaviours of society. This social construct of race has continuing impacts today on institutional, personal and social behaviours, underpinning all forms of racism.

In legal terms, the Equality Act 2010 contains its own definition of race.²⁰ This focuses on colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins, and a racial group is a group of people defined by reference to these. A range of different types of racial discrimination are prohibited under equality law, broadly around less favourable treatment related to that particular definition of race. However, there is more to racism than this, so the tendency of institutions to focus purely on legal compliance can be unhelpful.

To understand racism, we also need to acknowledge that it exists in all institutions and right across society.²¹ The word “racist” is not a slur or an accusation. It’s an adjective to describe something which places the importance and value of one ethnic group’s identity, appearance, culture or way of life above others.²² It begins with ethnocentrism – where people judge other cultures by the standards of their own – combined with racial stereotyping and a sense of superiority about the traditions, culture and practices of the dominant ethnic group. It’s the assumption that the majority cultural viewpoint is the right way, the best way. Everything else is an anomaly.

Ethnocentrism²³

A tendency to believe that your own ethnic group and its cultural beliefs, traditions and practices are of central importance, and to make judgemental assumptions about other ethnic groups based on that belief.

Ethnocentrism combines with power structures which work in favour of the dominant ethnic group to create and maintain personal, social and institutional racism.

This can certainly result in overt racism, the kind most often reported by media which for example might take the form of hate crime, hate speech, demeaning comments or overt discrimination. However, even these seemingly obvious cases of racism can be contentious for some onlookers. It’s common to see the intentions of the people responsible questioned as a defence – perhaps they weren’t being racist, but had some other problem with the person being targeted.

This shows a fundamental misunderstanding of how racism operates. Knowing the weight that an accusation of racism carries, most people will think carefully before alleging it. They are also aware that, should they choose to do so, they may be quickly undermined.²⁴ This means that both covert racism (subtle or less obvious forms) and even some incidents of overt racism (more observable or apparent forms) can be difficult to challenge, even for those experiencing it.²⁵

Racism and visibility

Overt racism occurs not because of the ethnicity of the person being targeted, but because of the perceptions of the person doing the targeting. Your likelihood of being targeted can vary according to how visible your ethnicity is; how 'different' you appear in their eyes.²⁶

For people living in a majority white society, any skin colour other than white is a dead giveaway. It doesn't matter if someone was born into that society, grew up in it and have never known any other; the potential to be seen as 'different' stays with them for life.

However, visibility is complex. Your skin colour can't be seen over the telephone, but your accent can lead to assumptions about your ethnicity. Your name on an application form may or may not make your ethnicity visible, depending on how it's perceived by the reader.²⁷

You could be white skinned, and still visibly minority ethnic in many circumstances. Skin tone has not protected Jewish people, Irish people, people from Gypsy/Traveller communities or new European migrants from discrimination.²⁸ Whiteness is about much more than skin colour, as we will explore in the following section.

The key point for institutions is to ensure that experiences of racism are recognised appropriately. When someone believes that their ethnicity is the reason they're being treated badly, it's not acceptable for anyone else to judge otherwise. This is reflected in the definition of a racist incident as "any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person."²⁹

Bias and privilege

Racism is not always easy to pinpoint, even for those on the receiving end.³⁰ It runs on a spectrum, from hidden bias through to hatred, with tolerance somewhere in between. Tolerance may be preferable to intolerance, but it still implies that ethnic groups can choose to ‘tolerate’ each other rather than being able to live together as equals, ignoring the power imbalances that give the dominant ethnic group control over who is (or is not) ‘tolerated.’

Of course, living together as equals is a challenging goal. To work towards it, we require an understanding of what makes society unequal. Hidden bias is one factor at play in this. Without a single hostile thought about someone from another ethnic background, people can still harbour racist attitudes and carry out racist actions as a result of hidden bias.

Hidden bias³¹

Prejudice that is not outwardly deliberate but nonetheless affects attitudes and behaviour; occurs because the person responsible has not consciously understood or acknowledged how stereotypes affect their own perceptions and actions

This form of prejudice is sometimes described as ‘unconscious’ bias. That description could arguably imply that it’s something buried so deeply, people cannot be aware of it – which is inaccurate. In fact, developing an awareness of our underlying attitudes is vital to a genuinely anti-racist approach.³² A term which acknowledges this more is ‘implicit’ bias. This term is used, for example, in implicit association testing which uses negative and positive associations to show racial bias.³³

Hidden bias isn’t something that people are born with. It develops as children grow up in a society which promotes the viewpoint of the dominant ethnic group over all others. This shapes their attitudes, behaviours and ways of relating to each other.³⁴ It’s not only children who develop learned attitudes and behaviours around race, however, and these can be quite explicit as well as hidden.

For people in the ethnic majority, learned behaviour is one of many factors underpinning white privilege.³⁵ White privilege is maintained by structures and attitudes which replicate the existing power held by the white majority ethnic group. This is an advantage they didn't ask for, but will carry throughout their lives at the direct expense of their peers from minority ethnic backgrounds.

White privilege³⁶

Advantages which automatically apply to a person because they are white, in a society which is designed around the world view of a white majority ethnic group. Whiteness is one of a number of factors which can confer advantage or disadvantage, such as class, gender, ability, language, citizenship and education. At its most basic, the advantage arises from white people being well represented in all areas of life and, particularly for those in the majority ethnic group, the protection which whiteness provides them against the experience and threat of racism.

White privilege is the inevitable outcome of historical white supremacy. Whilst the term is now understood to relate mainly to the beliefs of far right neo-Nazi groups, in fact white supremacy became entrenched in British cultural, social and political life as a key part of the ideological structures underpinning slavery, colonialism and imperialism. This still impacts life in Britain today, with racism and racial inequality as the current outcomes of Britain's past deliberate adoption of white supremacy.³⁷

This situation is not inevitable. White privilege, racism and hidden bias are socially constructed, and will reduce the more we actively challenge them.³⁸

Institutional racism

Hidden bias is a major factor in institutional racism. Contrary to the furore around Sir William Macpherson's use of the term in his report on the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence,³⁹ 'institutional racism' doesn't mean that a great number of individuals within an institution are racist (although that might also be true, in some instances). It's a far more subtle concept, which nonetheless has a deep and lasting impact on outcomes for minority ethnic people.

Institutional racism⁴⁰

Racism created within an organisation by rules, customs, processes and practices which have been planned without regard to the potential impacts on people from minority ethnic groups. This may, or may not, coincide with directly racist actions on the part of an institution or its employees. The impacts of the institution's work and the way it operates are racist, regardless of whether the people within the institution have racist attitudes themselves.

Put simply, the decisions made within institutions reflect the preferences, priorities, social norms, perspectives and needs that the decision makers share. If a majority of those decision makers are from the white majority population (not to mention also usually male, able-bodied etc.), then the institution will evolve to suit that type of person, creating gaps and barriers for everyone else.⁴¹ This is how institutional racism puts minority ethnic people at a disadvantage.

Social norms and values⁴²

Social norms are rules that determine what behaviours are normally expected of people within society. These can be expressed in many ways, for example verbally (e.g. how to greet someone respectfully) or body language (e.g. acceptable levels of eye contact). Social values are the moral and ethical viewpoints held by society, for example concepts of 'right' and 'wrong'.

Institutional racism can be difficult to legally challenge. In cases where institutional racism has a proven impact on someone accessing services or in an employment situation, it may be possible for them to make a claim under the 'indirect discrimination' provisions of the Equality Act 2010.⁴³ However, institutional racism has broader implications for society as a whole which can't be rectified through individual legal cases.

Of all British institutions, London's Metropolitan Police are probably the most associated with institutional racism in the public imagination following inquiries showing serious failings in their investigation of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993.⁴⁴ Numerous other concerns have cemented this picture, including criticisms from the Met's own Black Police Association around workforce representation and racial inequalities in stop and search practice.⁴⁵

Media coverage of these issues can be helpful in increasing transparency and accountability, however it can create an impression that institutional racism is something primarily associated with corruption or bad community relations. Institutional racism doesn't only happen in the Met Police; it is bound to be present wherever institutions fail to understand and account for racist impacts. Individuals within them must be prepared to challenge decisions and practices that have a racist impact, regardless of public relations concerns or whether the racism at play is intentional.

Racism and the cycle of exclusion

Most people understand one or more aspects of racism, whether direct, institutional or hidden, but the way they link together to create a cycle of exclusion is less widely acknowledged.⁴⁶

Recruitment policies provide a clear example of how this cycle works, and how different aspects of racism can be seen within it.

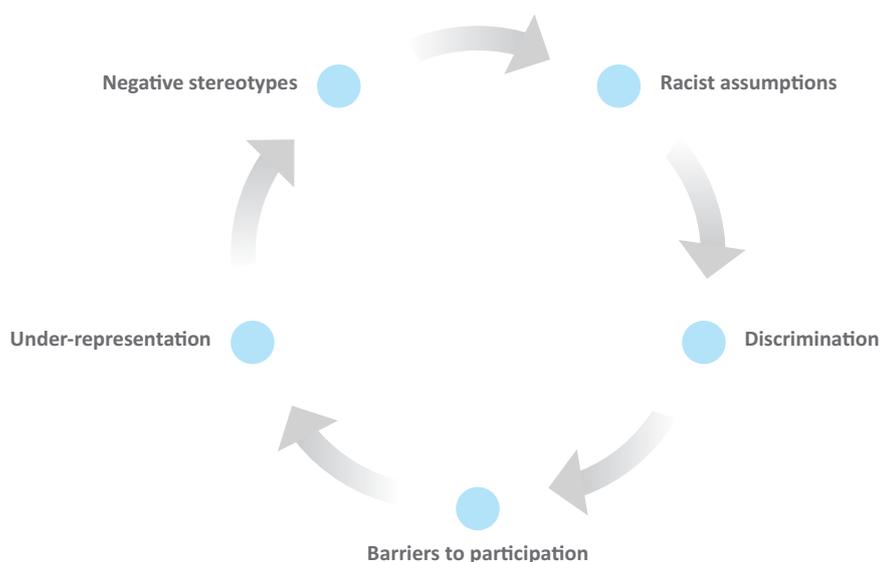
Our experience in working with public sector employers suggests that policies to improve race equality in employment tend to hinge on encouraging applications from minority ethnic people. These policies are generally ineffective, because even where the level of applications from minority ethnic people is relatively high, these candidates are much less likely to be appointed at interview stage.⁴⁷ The policy of encouraging applications is based on the assumptions of the majority ethnic managers instead of evidence about the experiences of minority ethnic applicants. This policy is intended to reduce racial inequality, but instead reflects institutional racism.

If a candidate has reached interview stage, this should mean that they meet the criteria for the job. So what is it that stops them from being appointed? In some cases direct racism may be responsible.⁴⁸

Hidden bias, however, is potentially also a common factor.⁴⁹ Interviewers score candidates according to how much they agree with their answers and feel that they 'fit' with the organisational culture. Essentially, interviewers tend to appoint someone they believe is 'like them'.⁵⁰ This perception can easily be skewed by ethnocentrism, hidden bias and prejudice.

The result is often indirect discrimination in the scoring process, preventing the candidate from being appointed. Depending on the context, such assumptions can also lead to illegal direct racial discrimination.

Both hidden bias and overt racism within interview processes ensure that under-representation in the workforce continues, which contributes to negative stereotypes about minority ethnic people in the workforce. These stereotypes then come full circle to feed into hidden or overt racist assumptions about who 'fits in'.



Recruitment processes are only one example of this cycle of exclusion. It can be seen in most areas where minority ethnic people experience worse outcomes – access to services, political and civic life, for instance.⁵¹ However, exclusion is not inevitable. Institutions can acknowledge, challenge and ultimately overcome it.

Policies and practices need to be developed with an understanding of racism in all of its forms, and without the blinkers of hidden bias. To achieve this, we must recognise that every person and institution can be part of the problem or part of the solution.

2: Create a better evidence base

Evidence based policy has slowly gained traction across the UK, with substantial investment being made to encourage it.⁵² In Scotland it has been a particular focus following the Christie Commission report on the future delivery of public services, published in 2011.⁵³

In theory, evidence based policy should benefit everyone by ensuring that needs and circumstances of all are properly understood by policy makers. However, this depends on the breadth and quality of that evidence, how it's interpreted and whether it's acted upon.

The principles of evidence based policy are arguably not being applied where minority ethnic communities are concerned. For example, in the equality outcomes set by public bodies in Scotland in 2013 there was often no obvious evidence for outcomes relating to race equality. Where evidence was given, there were often concerns about its quality or whether it had genuinely influenced outcome setting.⁵⁴

If this can happen in a process directly relating to improving outcomes for minority ethnic communities, serious doubts have to be raised about how well such evidence is used in everyday policy making. Without a better evidence base, flawed assumptions about the capacity, experience and needs of communities and individuals will continue to be made on a daily basis.

Selective use of evidence is a major part of the problem. Where evidence on race equality is mentioned in a policy context, it's often to applaud the progress made. For example, minority ethnic communities have particularly good outcomes in education⁵⁵ and this fact is widely acknowledged (although it should be noted that there are gender differences within outcomes for minority ethnic groups in many cases). The problem is that this isn't leading to better representation in the workplace. Only 55.2% of the non-white population aged 25-49 is in employment, compared to 72% of the white population.⁵⁶ Black and minority ethnic people are also more likely to be in low paid jobs, or clustered into particular occupations. It's clear that the progress in education is only half of a fairly bleak picture.

Sometimes, received wisdom is presented as evidence when research shows something to the contrary. For example, the common argument that language barriers and lack of qualifications are to blame for labour market disadvantages doesn't add up.⁵⁷ Almost 85% of Scotland's working age minority ethnic people in Scotland have no problem with English language proficiency,⁵⁸ for example. So whilst language issues affect some individuals (many of whom are recent migrants who will rapidly develop English skills), the extent of employment inequalities such as higher rates of graduate unemployment⁵⁹ show there must be other factors at play.

Explanations relating to personal capacity are still at the forefront of much public policy on tackling race equality. Our experience in working with public sector organisations has often shown that, where there is evidence of inequality, policy makers tend to assume that their own policies and practices are working to challenge inequality and so attribute continuing inequality to external problems, possibly within minority ethnic communities. This is part of a wider mind-set that might be described as a 'deficit model' of racial inequality. This approach problematizes people, and at its worst essentially blames individuals for the disadvantages they face.

Deficit model⁶⁰

An approach which focusses on problems, needs and risks within communities or for individuals. Although deficit models can be evidence based, they tend to neglect the impact of external barriers and structures of inequality and to downplay the strengths or assets communities and individuals possess.

To avoid ineffective practice, it's necessary to move away from the deficit model and seek more robust evidence on racial inequality. However, gathering evidence is only the first step; using it effectively is another challenge altogether.

Lies, damned lies and statistics⁶¹

Effective analysis of statistical evidence can be particularly difficult. Statistics are often not disaggregated by ethnicity, meaning that differences in outcome can't be accurately measured or addressed.⁶² Where they are disaggregated, BME communities are often treated as a homogenous group or grouped together in inconsistent ways.⁶³ This can disguise the real issues for specific communities and prevent practical action.

Even where there is a degree of disaggregation by ethnicity, these inequalities can be missed. For example, looking at educational attainment, on the average tariff score measure (highest qualifications), learners included in statistics for the Caribbean and Black: Other communities have been found to fare much worse than those in the African category, meaning that the usual practice of amalgamating these communities into one 'Black / African / Caribbean' category hides the degree of inequality.⁶⁴

Similar issues can be seen in the use of stop and search statistics in Scotland. A 2014 CRER report on this highlighted the importance of using qualitative information to supplement statistics where their meaning is unclear. Police Scotland statistics used in this publication showed that Black communities are over-represented in stop and search in many areas, whilst Chinese communities consistently have very low rates in comparison. However, because of the complexities of stop and search practice in Scotland, it's impossible to draw any conclusions from the published data alone. A more detailed approach is needed to assess whether any disproportionality is due to evidence based policing or racial profiling.⁶⁵

Evidence and engagement

To tackle the effects of institutional discrimination, racism and hidden bias, gathering evidence from community involvement for use in policy making, planning and strategy is often essential. This isn't just a matter of good practice. Some public sector bodies in Scotland and Wales are subject to Specific Equality Duties which require them to involve communities in specific parts of their equalities work, and in England case law has similar implications.⁶⁶

Engagement should be undertaken as part of a wider process which also takes into account research and statistical evidence. Although communities can offer much expertise, they cannot be expected to know everything there is to know about racial inequality. What they can offer - their own knowledge and experience - should nevertheless be seen as an essential part of the evidence base for policy development and review.

Currently however, practice in engagement is at something of a crossroads. On one hand, there are examples of positive involvement between communities and public institutions, from participatory budgeting to co-production.⁶⁷ Advocates for these and other innovative approaches are promoting them widely. Hopefully this means that good practice will spread.

Outside of these great examples, however, community organisations are often deeply dissatisfied with the engagement they have with policy makers. Poorly handled or ineffective processes can actively damage community relations.

Even in Scotland, where a set of National Standards for Community Engagement and associated resources are available for all institutions to use,⁶⁸ tick box consultation exercises are all too common. In some cases, repeated community engagement exercises may even be used (whether consciously or not) as a stalling tactic to avoid taking action on the evidence already available. Whatever the engagement method, if the outcome turns out to be a foregone conclusion then communities have not been truly involved.

Effective engagement also requires community empowerment. Communities need to have enough information to work with, a safe and welcoming space and confidence that their input will make a difference.⁶⁹

Importantly, evidence from engagement needs to be interpreted with an understanding of racism and racial inequality. The deficit model sometimes operates within communities as well as institutions – community members may internalise negative messages and present them in community involvement processes, even when these messages don't match their own experience.⁷⁰ The tendency for policy makers to listen to the loudest voices or rely on the 'usual suspects' becomes even more of a problem when internalized racism is at play (we explore this concept in more depth in the following section).

Engagement processes also need to recognise that minority ethnic communities are not homogenous groups; there are imbalances of power both within and between communities. Choosing not to explore differences and conflicts within the engagement setting is both patronising and counter-productive.

In cases where there might be clashes of opinion or experience between or within communities, the concept of 'intercultural dialogue' can be useful. This approach accepts difference of opinion and concentrates on the areas where people can agree, respecting and valuing each contribution even during disagreements.⁷¹

Even with effective facilitation and open dialogue, institutions may find it hard to tell whether their efforts to engaging communities are effective. They may even believe it to be effective when it's not. Have specific changes been made in response to engagement from Black and minority ethnic people? Have these changes improved the situation for their communities? Are the people who took part aware of the difference their efforts have made? If the answer to these three questions isn't a clear 'yes', more work is needed.

Engagement with minority ethnic communities must have visible results, be inclusive of all communities and be undertaken from a position of mutual trust and respect. True involvement, however, also requires a degree of power sharing. To achieve this, it may be necessary to address issues around direct racism, hidden bias and institutional discrimination. Many institutions will have to address issues with their own policy making hierarchy and power dynamics. This requires a degree of honesty and humility which policy makers may find challenging, but ultimately rewarding.

3: Understand the impact of 'difference'

The way that we view similarity and difference has a big part to play in tackling racism. Communities are brought together based on similarities, and can be divided by difference. Individuals, meanwhile, are each vastly different. An important part of a more progressive approach to race equality lies in recognising intersectionality.

Intersectionality⁷²

Intersectionality theory explains how the full range of characteristics someone possesses impacts their experience of inequality. Much of the early prominent academic work on this is by Kimberlé Crenshaw, focussing on how anti-discrimination law and theory often fails to protect Black women whose experience of inequality and discrimination is distinct from the experiences of both white women and Black men.

There are strong parallels between the failures in policy making which Kimberlé Crenshaw identified and current trends around equality in Scotland, where policy and practice often hinges on a broad concept of 'fairness' or 'equity' at the expense of a more nuanced view.

By talking about difference in basic terms, without reflecting the complex identities individuals have and how these impact their experiences, needs and their treatment by others, institutions can also unwittingly contribute to stereotyping.⁷³ Stereotypes are one of the most enduring and pernicious barriers faced by minority ethnic people. Not only do they fuel racist attitudes in the majority ethnic population, limiting opportunities, but they can also contribute to the internalized racism that makes it hard for people facing discrimination to effectively recognise and challenge it.⁷⁴

Internalized racism⁷⁵

The impact of racist social structures on an individual's perception of their own power, potential, entitlements and behavioural roles. This reduces the ability of individuals and communities to assert their rights and challenge those structures.

Internalized racism is experienced not just on an individual level, but often collectively. One example of this can be seen in the reluctance of communities to use particular services.⁷⁶ When communities express a feeling that a certain service is not seen as being 'for them', they are being manipulated into feeling that way by the environment that racist social structures have created.

Contrary to how it might seem, this isn't about communities not wanting to use mainstream services or preferring to stay in their own spaces. It's about their perception of whether that environment is safe, based on generations of experience in similar environments where subtle (and less subtle) forms of racism were at play. In an ideal world, people would simply assert their right to use that service, with confidence. Internalized racism makes it psychologically difficult to do so.⁷⁷

When institutions and the individuals within them fail to respond properly to concerns about race equality issues, internalized racism is reinforced. Those who raised the concerns are made to feel that their views and experiences are irrelevant. Denying or downplaying inequalities is a form of racial microaggression, which again is closely linked to stereotypes.

Although the term 'microaggression' has developed a higher profile in recent years thanks to prominent social media campaigns,⁷⁸ it was first put forward in 1970 by the Harvard academic and psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce. Pierce sought to explain the impact that experiences of a particular kind of racism had on the lives of African American people.⁷⁹

Racial microaggressions⁸⁰

Racial microaggressions are subtle, regular interactions that reflect bias or stereotypes (similar to what is sometimes called 'everyday racism'). They often take the form of demeaning, disrespectful or insulting comments, which are often unintentional and therefore harder to challenge. The impact of racial microaggressions builds over time to create a constant hostile environment for those experiencing them.

Racial microaggressions begin with stereotypical assumptions made about individuals and communities. They can often be seen in the small talk people make, which might focus heavily on difference - where someone from a minority ethnic background is 'from', aspects of their appearance, religion or other cultural factors. They can be seen in the way people try to justify stereotypical attitudes to their minority ethnic friends by rejecting their difference - "you're not like that, though", or worse still, "I don't think of you as Black."⁸¹

A specific type of racial microaggression underpins all of this. Microinvalidation is the technical name for downplaying or dismissing concerns about racism. When people are told that their objection to a racist joke is 'over-sensitive', that their feelings of being ignored by others might be 'a bit paranoid' or that their complaint about being overlooked for promotion is 'playing the race card', this has a massive impact on their willingness to speak out.⁸²

This is true not just for the individual experiencing it, but for all others who witness it and the community at large. To ensure that complaints processes and workplace relations can work in everyone's interest, institutions must send a strong message that concerns will be taken seriously and addressed supportively.

Racism, integration and community cohesion

Part of the problem with creating more effective approaches to racial inequality is that tensions inevitably arise, including fear of creating a 'blame culture'. The tendency, then, is to try to avoid controversial topics. Sometimes the very concepts of racism or inequality are avoided in favour of more positive messages about the importance of living and working together – about 'integrating'.⁸³

Broadly speaking, integration aims to create belonging and equality; to make minority ethnic communities more confident and resilient, and less isolated from the majority ethnic population. The problem is that this model of integration can't be sustainable where racism and exclusion exist.⁸⁴ These factors actively create a lack of confidence, resilience and community cohesion. The fact that the onus always seems to be on minority ethnic communities to be the ones to 'integrate' makes this situation worse.⁸⁵ Some of the current debate around this, particularly in regard to the nebulous concept of 'British values' and who is required to adhere to these,⁸⁶ arguably veers far past integration and towards assimilation.⁸⁷

This rhetoric neatly avoids the need to tackle racism and exclusion in order to achieve cohesion. Community cohesion does not come about through cultural awareness training, or one-off opportunities to meet and mingle. It requires an environment where people from all communities can come together and positively interact on an equal basis in neighbourhoods, workplaces, public services and spaces.⁸⁸ This means improving representation, tackling stereotypes and breaking down barriers in all areas of life.⁸⁹

‘Celebrating’ diversity?

For many institutions, ‘diversity’ themed activities are seen as a core part of work to promote equality. The relationship between current concepts of diversity and stereotyping make this approach problematic at best, and damaging at worst.

The need to avoid negative stereotyping is understood in most policy environments, however what is less widely accepted is the need to actively challenge all stereotypes – positive ones included.

Like negative stereotypes, positive stereotypes create an expectation of who people are and what they can be.⁹⁰ They reinforce feelings of difference and ‘otherness’ between communities. Fostering good relations between different ethnic groups does require people to become comfortable with cultural difference, and learning about cultural traditions and practices can be part of that process. However, efforts to accomplish this often cause more harm than good.

The ‘diversity days’ commonly held in educational institutions provide a clear example of how this works in practice. The activities are usually enjoyable for participants and enable the institution to claim that they’ve fostered good relations and promoted equality. But to what extent is that true?

To be successful, diversity activities need to create a genuine, ongoing connection between people and enable them to see similarities as well as differences.⁹¹ Most importantly, they have to demonstrate to people that the range of potential and personality for individuals from ‘other’ ethnic backgrounds is as wide and varied as their own.

So many 'diversity day' activities allow participants to sample traditional foods, watch traditional dances or view traditional artefacts without connecting with the people behind them. This reduces communities to traditional stereotypes. It may increase understanding on a theoretical level, but not a personal level where it's most needed.

In the worst case scenarios, these activities can actively promote stereotypes by presenting minority ethnic cultures from the majority ethnic perspective. For example, some Scottish public bodies have previously held 'diversity day' events featuring white British people wearing the traditional dress of other nations and approximating traditional dances, exoticizing the cultures they're supposed to be 'celebrating.' Nothing about this approach can be helpful to good relations between ethnic groups.

Exoticize⁹²

To reduce something or someone perceived to be different to a glamorous or romantic stereotype; presenting a simplistic view of the 'exotic' aspects of their appearance or culture.

The whole concept of 'celebrating diversity' is contestable, from a race equality point of view. It can be seen as simply replacing negative stereotypes with positive ones, effectively sweeping negativity under the carpet. Celebrating diversity, even if done with sensitivity, can often ring hollow because it doesn't offer any answers to the range of structural inequalities people face (which are indeed diverse, but not to be celebrated).

4: Change organisational culture

Minority ethnic groups face substantial disadvantages which can't be fully addressed by simply not discriminating. Social mobility doesn't seem to be the answer either; the barriers to social mobility remain even where communities have high educational attainment.⁹³ The expectation that social mobility could resolve racial inequality is essentially part of the deficit model that needs to be rejected; rather than asking what more BME communities can do to achieve representation and progression within the workforce, senior managers should be asking what their organisation needs to do to make that happen.

Inequalities may be deeply ingrained, but that doesn't mean they can't be tackled. The best opportunity to reduce inequality is through changing the structures which maintain it. Institutions have the power to make this happen through changing organisational cultures.

Positive action

Where gaps exist and current practices are not closing them, positive action is needed to ensure equality. This is true across the whole range of areas where people experience worse outcomes – in services such as housing and healthcare, in employment and in civic, cultural and political participation.⁹⁴

Positive Action⁹⁵

Specific steps taken by an employer or a service provider to improve the representativeness of their workforce or service users, or to address disadvantage faced by specific groups of people in employment and career progression, in accessing services or in civic participation.

Limited forms of positive action are permitted by the Equality Act 2010.⁹⁶ It can take many forms, but must be proportionate and only undertaken in order to address disadvantage or under-representation. It could be argued that the law doesn't go far enough; positive action generally can't result in more favourable treatment of any group (except in relation to disability), no matter how severe their disadvantage.

These limitations have perhaps discouraged positive action in the past. Perceptions of what might be 'more favourable' vary, which can discourage organisations from taking positive action. Positive action should mitigate disadvantage; this necessarily means that the advantages the current system confers to the white majority group will be lessened, which some incorrectly perceive as treating minority ethnic people 'more favourably' rather than simply creating a more level playing field.

However, there are some examples of good practice. Recently, BskyB have taken the lead in addressing lack of representation in broadcast media through ambitious targets and direct access to senior jobs – an innovative move that rejects the concept that minority ethnic people need training and entry level support.⁹⁷ The organisation has given staff and management both freedom to innovate and leadership to promote positive action.

BskyB's commitment came about partly because of feedback from minority ethnic staff who found existing approaches to capacity building through skills development patronising and unnecessary. Capacity building should only be undertaken where there is evidence of need, and where the approaches proposed are likely to work.

They also need to be evaluated properly; acknowledging what doesn't work is important for ensuring future success. Projects aimed at addressing inequalities need to be held to the same quality standards as any other initiative if tokenism is to be avoided.

Positive action should never suggest that minority ethnic people are inevitably less skilled or qualified and therefore need 'help' to progress. That approach is a common part of the deficit model which needs to be dismantled. Instead, it should be about redressing the discrimination and inequalities that affect people's life chances and opportunities.

Positive action can be taken by all types of institution, from political parties to employers and service providers. The right way forward will depend on the circumstances; activities can be decided through identifying gaps and inequalities, exploring the causes and possible solutions.⁹⁸

Sadly, many attempts at positive action are poorly evidenced and therefore ineffective. Our experience in working with public bodies suggests that the example given previously about encouraging applications from minority ethnic groups even when these are already at a representative level is a common occurrence. If the under-representation in the workforce is due to higher rates of appointment for white candidates at interview stage, encouraging applications won't help.⁹⁹

A smarter way forward might be, for example, to include minority ethnic staff within interview panels. This could help to reassure candidates and remind interviewers that the organisation is diverse, reducing the potential for nerves or bias to affect proceedings.¹⁰⁰

Targets for representation in employment and service use are another example of rare but potentially valuable practice.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, institutions seem reluctant to take meaningful, evidence based forms of positive action. Fear of tokenism may be partly to blame for this.¹⁰² Institutions need to overcome this fear in order to make the most of the positive action powers available to them.

Avoiding tokenism

Many institutions have misplaced anxieties about positive action.¹⁰³ Allegations of tokenism have perhaps given it a negative image, but it should be understood that the popular understanding of 'tokenism' has racist implications.¹⁰⁴

Tokenism as we understand it in the race equality movement occurs where activities are designed to create the appearance of equality without actually tackling barriers or improving practice.¹⁰⁵ For example, if an organisation with low diversity in its senior ranks appoints a new minority ethnic member of the management team, tokenism could be at play if we see that person being valued less than other managers and used as a token representative of diversity. The organisation may decline to promote other minority ethnic staff, and we might suspect they feel they've 'already got one'.

In the popular mindset, however, that appointment would be deemed tokenistic based on the racist assumption that the best person for the task was probably white. If a new worker from the majority ethnic population is ineffective in their role, there will be no suspicion that their ethnicity helped them to get the job. Tokenism is only ever brought into the equation where the candidate is from a group at risk of discrimination (including those who are female, gay or disabled, for instance).

A less obvious form of tokenism (in the true sense) can be seen in how some public bodies identify priorities for action on race equality. For example, in recent years there have been notable strands of public sector activity focussed on Polish, Roma and Gypsy/Traveller communities.¹⁰⁶ Tackling inequalities facing specific communities is laudable; indeed, it's essential to recognise the diversity of experience and need between and within minority ethnic communities. However, efforts can become tokenistic when narrowly focussed activities are being carried out at the expense of wider anti-racist work, especially where the outcomes of the activity are not clear.

There is some concern, in fact, that organisations might deliberately choose a narrow focus in order to avoid looking at the bigger picture. This trend can be seen in the work done to set equality outcomes in 2013 (as required by the Scottish Specific Equality Duties); many public authorities in Scotland mentioned race equality directly only in relation to either Refugees and Asylum Seekers or Gypsy/Travellers.¹⁰⁷

Challenging policy making hierarchies

Our experience in working with public bodies suggests that mismatched relationships between senior and operational staff often hamper equality work. Senior figures may enthusiastically demonstrate leadership on equality, for example, but lack the expertise needed to put their ethos into action. At the same time, there may be people further down the chain of command who specialise in equality but don't have the authority to drive improvement.

Because of this mismatch, equality initiatives driven from below often aren't understood by management, whilst management may propose activities which sound good in theory but are impractical or ineffective in practice. Personnel changes worsen this; if there isn't a shared understanding of what works or is desirable, it's very difficult to pick up the thread once the person driving change is gone. The end result is that organisations often invest significant time and energy planning equality work only to eventually water down or abandon those plans.

These failures are symptomatic of the power hierarchies which underpin racial inequality and block progress. Those with influence and responsibility need to empower equality specialists to fulfil their potential. This is especially important when their work aims to challenge persistent inequalities, which can be a hard sell in environments that favour the status quo. The solution is for staff and management within institutions to take collective responsibility for creating change, and to work towards this through evidence based positive action measures.

5: Learn from the past, work for the future

The fact that racial inequality is entrenched in many areas of life is not fresh news for Scotland's institutions. Nevertheless, it bears repeating because progress until now has been painfully slow.¹⁰⁸

In our view, a lack of persistence has potentially stalled advancements in many areas. The fact that much race equality work is undertaken on a short-term basis with little evaluation makes lasting progress impossible. This is hampered partly by a reliance on voluntary sector inputs which are subject to funding cycles of one to three years, for example through Local Authority funding or the Scottish Government's Equality Fund.

In the public sector, for example, successive equality duties have required specific types of action to address inequality. This has been the case since 2002, and yet there is still not a firm understanding of what works and doesn't work across the board. Actions and outcomes have been set according to the trends of the time and very few institutions have managed to evidence progress as a result.¹⁰⁹

Partly in response to this, the Scottish specific public sector equality duties have an emphasis on equality mainstreaming (embedding equality into the organisation throughout the organisation's strategy and functions) and progress reporting.¹¹⁰ All institutions, whether covered by these duties or not, can learn from this approach.

Another useful element of the public sector equality duties is the focus on outcomes. If properly implemented, this can be a strong driver for advancing equality.¹¹¹ Rather than measuring success by outputs (i.e. what has been done within the organisation), equality outcomes identify the changes institutions want to see in the lives of people facing inequality. This means that the outcomes can only be achieved by demonstrating real progress on race equality.

The key concepts set out here should assist institutions to move forward by changing the paradigm on race equality within their work. But this is only the beginning. To make a sustainable improvement to the lives of minority ethnic people, a long-term strategic approach is needed. This approach requires leadership from those with influence and power. It requires consistent effort over time, even through personnel changes (or indeed changes in the entire power structure, which can and does happen in Government).

The best way to address this is to link all activity on race equality to evaluation and monitoring, and to regularly analyse its impact through longitudinal qualitative and quantitative indicators. In Scotland, resources such as the Scottish Government's Equality Evidence Finder¹¹² are making this approach increasingly achievable.

Whether the statistics used are internal or external, local or national, they will inevitably vary year on year with a small drop or a small rise. Over a five to ten year period, however, it should be possible to detect the impact of policy, practice and positive action with more certainty. The common practice of using statistics simply to demonstrate that there's still a problem is not good enough. Statistics also need to be used in planning continued action and in showing measurable improvements.

It also needs to be recognised that, although there are many gaps in the evidence base on race equality, this should never be an excuse for inaction. Ironically, we find that organisations sometimes cite evidence gaps as a reason for inaction and yet still fail to act on the evidence they do have. Despite decades of research, reviews and recommendations, progress on race equality remains limited. Lack of evidence is arguably less of a problem than the response to existing evidence, which has been inconsistent; lacking in long-term commitment and leadership. Every institution can and should use the evidence available to it today to actively pursue change.

Conclusion

We hope that the key concepts outlined in this briefing will help institutions to change the race equality paradigm; creating an environment where equality work is evidence based, solutions focussed and informed by a sound understanding of how race and racism operate in Scotland today.

2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the Race Relations Act 1965. In this period of austerity, which worsens inequality,¹¹³ there is a real danger of stalling the progress made since then. We believe that public sector organisations have a responsibility to take action to avoid this. This means finding new ways to work which reject the deficit model and tokenistic or stereotypical interpretations of diversity. The key concepts outlined in this paper which we use in supporting public bodies can inform that change, however challenging the status quo takes boldness and hard work; this needs to come from within the organisation itself.

Inevitably, achieving equality requires those who currently hold power to share that power with people who have previously been disadvantaged by it. This is a much harder approach to 'sell' within organisations than softer forms of race equality work which focus on capacity building and simple non-discrimination. However, by setting out the case for change in simple terms that relate directly to organisations and their work, this resistance can be overcome. We believe that institutions across Scotland can make genuine, measurable progress by changing their paradigm on race equality.

To discuss how your organisation can best use this policy briefing, or to share your experience of using the key principles, please contact:

Carol Young, Senior Policy Officer
Email: carol@crer.org.uk
Tel: **0141 418 6530**

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Endnotes

- Note on terminology: CRER's use of the term Black and minority ethnic (BME) encompasses all minority ethnic communities as appropriate to the context and evidence of disadvantage in contrast to the majority ethnic white Scottish population. The word 'Black' is used in solidarity with those individuals who identify strongly with a Black political identity. This does not imply that all those who face racial inequalities identify in that way. CRER also uses the acronym BME and the term minority ethnic interchangeably where these better fit the sentence structure.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016). [Is Scotland Fairer?](#)
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- See, for example, Dr. Salman Sayyid's 2010 working paper for the University of Leeds' Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, '[Do Post-Racials Dream of White Sheep?](#)'
- For example Heath, A and McMahon, D (2000). [Ethnic Differences in the Labour Market: The Role of Education and Social Class Origins](#).
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- See Oxford dictionary definition – [Post-racial](#)
- CRER explored this previously in the 2014 blog article ["Racist is an adjective, not an insult"](#)
- A phrase of [uncertain origin](#), used in Scotland to indicate common humanity between all people.
- CRER (2015). [Ten true things we need to say about racism in Scotland](#).
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- Some exploration of this can be found in a Race Card article by Song, M. (2014), [Challenging a culture of racial equivalence](#).
- Even the Metropolitan Police, found to have been institutionally racist in the 1999 [Macpherson Inquiry](#), are still [evading calls to admit to institutional racism](#).
- Collins dictionary definition - [Ethnic](#)
- See, for example, Live Science article by Zimmerman, K.A. (2015) [What is Culture?](#)
- Coates, T. (2013) [What we mean when we say race is a social construct](#), in The Atlantic, 15th May 2013
- Equality Act 2010 – [definition of race](#)
- For a wide range of explorations of racism, see for example Back, L and Solomos, J. (eds) (2000) [Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader](#). London: Routledge
- Dictionary definitions of racism normally fail to recognise the wider context, concentrating instead on overt forms of racial discrimination; the [definition of racism](#) from Dictionary.com is slightly broader.
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- Experiences of racism and responding to it were brought into the public eye recently due to social media campaigns by minority ethnic university students, usefully explored in Vidal, A. (2014) [40 Predictable Responses I Get Whenever I Call Out Racism](#). Guardian, 26th March 2014.
- See, for example, Change from Within blog post by Utt, (J). (2011) [Post-racial = more covert in our racism?](#)
- For more exploration of markers of difference and how these affect acceptance within majority ethnic communities, see CRER (2012) [Scottish Identity and Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Scotland](#)
- For more information on the racialization of names and how this impacts individuals, see: Wykes, E. (2015), [Invisible names and visible privileges: the racialisation of names](#); Wood et al (2009), [A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities](#)
- There is ample evidence of discrimination against white minorities in Britain based on ethnicity, for example in [hate crime](#) statistics for Polish migrants, [poor service provision for Scottish Gypsy/Travellers](#) and [increasing anti-semitism](#).
- This definition was first proposed in the [Macpherson Report](#) into the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 2009, and has since been adopted by a range of statutory agencies
- When asked by the writer Touré "[What's the most racist thing that has ever happened to you](#)" (The Atlantic, 2011), most respondents felt this was unknowable: "I imagine it'd be a thing I don't even know ever happened... It would be that opportunity that never manifested and I'll never know that it was even possible."
- See, for example, Banaji, M. and Greenwald, A. (2013). [Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People](#). Delacorte Press.
- See, for example, Law, B. M. (2011) [Retraining the Biased Brain](#) in Monitor on Psychology October 2011, Vol 42 No. 9
- See the [Project Implicit](#) website
- As outlined by Shankar Vedantam in his 2010 book, [The Hidden Brain](#); see NPR Books [Interview How the Hidden Brain Does the Thinking For Us](#).
- An overview of whiteness and its place in social constructs of race can be found in Guess, T. J. (2006) [The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence](#) in Critical Sociology, Volume 32, Issue 4
- See, for example, Peggy McIntosh's classic 1988 text [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)
- See, for example, International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (2008) entry on [white supremacy](#)
- It is worth noting, however, that simply acknowledging and discussing white privilege is not necessarily the same thing as challenging it; see for example Conor Friersdorf's article on [US private school approaches](#) to this in The Atlantic, Feb. 27th 2015.
- Macpherson, W. (1999) [Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report](#)
- The Guardian, Wednesday 24th February 1999 – [What is Institutional Racism?](#)
- See, for example, LSE Blog by Flinders, M. Matthews, F. and Eason, C. (2011) [Public Appointments are Still Male, Pale and Stale](#).
- See, for example, OECD definition of Social Capital and the roles of social norms and values in creating this: [OECD Insights: Human Capital](#) (2007)
- ACAS provides a useful explanation of [the difference between direct and indirect discrimination in legal terms](#)
- See the 1999 [Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report](#) and the [Stephen Lawrence Independent Review](#) conducted by Mark Ellison QC in 2014
- Outlined in the following Guardian article, 21st April 2013: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/apr/21/metropolitan-police-institutionally-racist-black>
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- Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016). [Is Scotland Fairer?](#)
- For example, the UK Government has pledged to invest in the [development of a network of evidence centres](#)
- The [Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services](#) in Scotland was chaired by the late Dr. Campbell Christie OBE.
- Examples of public sector outcome sets are available from CRER's [Public Sector Equality Duty portal](#)
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- Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee (2016). [Removing Barriers: race, ethnicity and employment](#).
- Some exploration of language issues, employer's perception of language and other barriers to employment can be found in CRER's [submission to the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee's 2013 Women and Work Inquiry](#)
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Endnotes

59. Tackey et al (2011). [Poverty, Ethnicity and Education](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation programme paper
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61. A popular quote of uncertain origin – “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics.” Most prominent written usage is attributed to Mark Twain, in an article in the *North American Review*, 1096.
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68. [SCDC National Standards for Community Engagement](#) website
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99. Ensuring diversity on interview panels is amongst the recommendations made in the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee’s 2016 report, [Removing Barriers: Race, Ethnicity and Employment](#).
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Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

78 Carlton Place

Glasgow G5 9TH

Tel: **0141 418 6530**

Web: **www.crer.org.uk**

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