

# Race Equality in the Workplace: A Review of Theory and Practice Commissioned by the Mary Seacole Trust

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**Commissioned by the Mary Seacole Trust**

Written by Dr Habib Naqvi in an independent and voluntary capacity

## Foreword

A statue of Mary Seacole, the Jamaican pioneering nurse and heroine of the Crimean War, was unveiled at St Thomas' Hospital in London on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2016. The statue ensured that Mary received her rightful recognition for the courage and compassion she demonstrated through her life, and particularly for her contribution as a nurse during the Crimean War. Given issues relating to race remain extant, it is fitting that Mary's statue was the first of a named black female anywhere in the UK. At the Mary Seacole Trust, we believe that Mary's values are as relevant today as they have ever been.

Our focus now is to harness the alliances established as part of the statue appeal in order to achieve a legacy beyond the statue itself by addressing social challenges. Our objectives are clear: we seek to redress the social imbalance which exists in society today, through education and inspiration. We acknowledge that much has been done to redress some of the imbalance in terms of equality of opportunity; however there is clear evidence of a significant ongoing imbalance in terms of equality of outcome, particularly in the workplace. It is our belief that a failure to address issues of lack of diversity in leadership negatively impacts on the ability to motivate and inspire young people.

We are mindful that there has been much research culminating in numerous high profile reports published in relation to race and diversity in the workplace, providing evidence of social inequality. Accordingly, as a core part of our diversity in leadership programme, we commissioned this literature review to provide analysis of key findings contained within the various publications. This review formed the basis of a round-table discussion comprising public and private sector organisations which examined the common elements to enable us to develop recommendations which we will publish later this year.

I am privileged to be Chair of the Mary Seacole Trust. It is an honour to work with such dedicated trustees who are focused on redressing the issues in relation to the lack of diversity in leadership. I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of our diversity in leadership committee chair, Karen Bonner, and fellow committee member Lisa Rodrigues CBE. Above all, on behalf of the Mary Seacole Trust, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Dr Habib Naqvi for undertaking the literature review. His

dedication and determination to lead the way in finding a sustainable solution to race inequality is self-evident from his excellent review. We hope, like us, you find it informative, educational and transformational.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Sterling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Trevor Sterling  
Chair Mary Seacole Trust

## Executive summary

Recent years have seen many of the most successful organisations celebrate the positive impact of diversity on their business. The message is clear and simple: greater diversity in your organisation leads to greater diversity of thought which, in turn, generates innovative approaches to achieving organisational success.

Yet despite this, racial inequality remains a historically resilient feature of the British labour market. As such, the recent period has seen the publication of numerous high-profile reports commissioned to look at the area of race equality and inclusion in the workplace – across both the public and private sectors.

This review outlines the key findings from a number of these reports, including: Race at Work (Business in the Community); Equality, Diversity and Racism in the Workplace: A Qualitative Analysis of the Race at Work Survey; Race in the Workplace (The McGregor-Smith Review); A Report into the Ethnic Diversity of UK Boards (The Parker Review); Insecure Work and Ethnicity (TUC Report). The review also critically examines workplace race equality interventions from across the public and private sector.

The reports reviewed present a plethora of recommendations and practical interventions for improving workforce race equality. When brought together, these can be assigned to four core overarching strategic themes: (i) leadership and cultural transformations; (ii) positive action and practical support; (iii) monitoring progress and benchmarking, and (iv) accountability. Collectively, these themes present a useful model for tackling inequality in the workplace.

Workforce race inequality is a multi-factorial challenge that requires a multi-factorial response. The current patchwork of initiatives and interventions that operate in silos will not provide the impact that is needed and will only have limited effect. It is clear that a more holistic and coordinated approach is needed, one that will have greater and more sustainable impact.

The use of a mandated diversity policy, demonstrable leadership with data-driven accountability, and a focus on evidence based good practice initiatives is not only a way forward on this agenda – but is also a clear recognition that the previous voluntary

approaches in this area have failed. Yet, a mandate or a contractual obligation will not be sufficient on its own to ensure staff feel respected, valued, engaged, and supported. A parallel and simultaneous focus also needs to be given towards establishing compassionate and learning cultures within organisations.

## **Purpose of the review**

The Mary Seacole Trust exists to promote Mary Seacole's legacy and to tackle ingrained social challenges and inequalities which exist. The Trust believes that promoting equality of both opportunity and outcome within organisations can help overcome exclusion, increasing participation and diversity in leadership. To support the diversity in Leadership initiative the Mary Seacole Trust has commissioned this important review of workforce race equality.

The goal of this review is to describe and critically assess key themes and recommendations from recent UK publications and reports examining the level of discrimination amongst ethnic occupational groups. The review will also outline common strategic approaches and operational initiatives in the area of workforce race equality across the public and private sectors. The goal here is to realise a coordinated and impactful approach to tackling workforce race inequality.

## **Race inequalities: a historical and global issue**

Many of the ideas that we associate with the concept of 'race', originated during the European era of exploration. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European explorers encountered and conquered people in Africa, Asia and the Americas who looked and acted differently from themselves. Naturalists and scientists of the time classified these differences into systems that became the foundation for the notion of 'race' as we know it today.

Up until then, status in society was defined by wealth and religion, not by physical characteristics such as skin colour. But this would change. The rise of 'race science' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries supported the common belief that those who did not have white skin were biologically inferior.

Today, science tells us that all humans share a common ancestry; and while there are some differences among us, we are all very much alike. Yet, despite such advances, the legacy of 'race' continues to affect us in a variety of ways. Deeply-held assumptions about 'race', and often enduring stereotypes, make us think that racial gaps in wealth, health, housing, education and employment are in fact natural.

Very often, we fail to see the privileges that some have been granted, and others denied, because of the colour of their skin. The social construct of 'race' has fostered inequality and discrimination for centuries and has influenced how we relate to each other as human beings in all spheres of life – including within the workplace.

## **The importance of race equality**

Since the mid-1960s, successive UK governments have introduced legislation to outlaw racial discrimination in employment. Yet, racism and racial inequality have proven themselves to be historically resilient features of the British labour market.

In recent years, we have seen many of the most successful organisations celebrating the positive impact of diversity on their business. Historically, social justice has typically been the initial impetus behind these efforts. More recently, organisations have increasingly begun to regard diversity and inclusion in the workplace as a source of competitive advantage, and specifically as a key enabler of efficiency and growth. Research highlights the correlation between ethnic and cultural diversity at executive levels and profitability: companies with the most ethnically diverse executive teams are 33 percent more likely to outperform their peers on profitability.<sup>1</sup>

Organisations that have embraced the diversity agenda have demonstrated that diverse team composition will boost innovation, whilst homogeneity in teams is more likely to cause organisations to fall behind competitors. In the private sector, companies that out-innovate their competition gain a competitive edge, increase their market share and attract future investment. Whilst in the public sector the focus may be less upon profitability and competition, and perhaps more upon the ability of responding to increasingly diverse client groups and populations.

The relationship between a supported workforce and better client outcomes is well-established. This is clearly seen within the healthcare system where research suggests that the less favourable treatment of BME staff in the NHS, through poor treatment and

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt, V et al. Delivering through diversity. McKinsey & Company, 2018; <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>



opportunities, has detrimental impact upon the quality of patient care, patient safety and subsequent outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the case for organisations tackling workplace discrimination is not just about the outcomes for the people we serve; it is also about the impact upon staff themselves. More recently, there has been a growing amount of research highlighting the effects of racial discrimination on both the mental and physical health of the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

The quantity of evidence supporting the relationship between discrimination and physical / mental health is overwhelming. Perceptions of discrimination appear to induce physiological and psychological arousal, and, as is the case with other psychosocial stressors, systematic and persistent exposure to experiences of discrimination can have long-term consequences for health and well-being.

The bottom line is that people want to work for an organisation that values diversity. Fostering diversity in the workplace enhances an organisation's ability to attract and retain top talent. Not only does it widen the pool of quality job applicants, it also demonstrates a workplace culture that values all staff and demonstrates strong corporate and social responsibility. Discrimination in the workplace has adverse impact upon organisational, staff and client outcomes.

In the recent period of time, we have seen somewhat of a (re)awakening of the conscious effort to close the race inequality gaps that exist in workplace experiences and opportunities. Government departments, politicians and senior leaders within organisations are beginning to raise their voices and their expectations on this agenda. In addition, numerous high-profile reports and reviews have been commissioned to look at the area of race and diversity in the workplace. The following section provides a summary of key reports.

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<sup>2</sup> Dixon-Woods, M et al. Culture and behaviour in the English National Health Service: overview of lessons from a large multimethod study. *BMJ Quality & Safety*, 2013; doi: 10.1136/bmjqs-2013-001947

<sup>3</sup> Stevenson, J. & Rao, M. Explaining levels of wellbeing in BME populations in England. *University of East London*, 2014; <http://hdl.handle.net/10552/3867>

## **An overview of key reports on race equality in the workplace**

### **1. Race at Work 2015 – Business in the Community**

This 2015 Business in the Community report,<sup>4</sup> developed in collaboration with YouGov, presented the experiences of nearly 25,000 black and minority ethnic (BME) and white employees aged 16 and over in the UK. The participants took the race at work survey and an open public survey.

The surveys found:

- BME people are more likely to enjoy their work and have far greater ambition than their white colleagues.
- Racial harassment and bullying from managers, colleagues or customers is prevalent.
- BME employees are less satisfied with their experiences of management and progression in the work place than white employees.
- UK employers are not comfortable talking about race (this is not be the case with regards to characteristics such as age or gender).
- Leadership pipeline is not sufficiently populated with BME talent, despite greater interest in fast track opportunities amongst BME employees as compared to white employees.

The report concluded that despite some good efforts and intentions, BME experiences of the workplace are less positive than those of their white counterparts. It presented two sets of recommendations: for the government, and for employees.

Recommendations for the government included:

1. Ensure businesses that tender for public contracts demonstrate a commitment to race diversity; evidence of action in the recruitment, retention and progression of BME staff; prevention of racial bullying and harassment in the workplace.
2. Develop policy to help close the BME unemployment gap.
3. Ensure governments various BME 2020 targets are stretching and deliver progress.
4. Consider commissioning of a wide-ranging review of race equality in the workplace.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://race.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/research-articles/race-work-report>

Recommendations for employees included:

1. Increase access to work experience opportunities for BME communities.
2. Mandate racial (unconscious) bias training during employee induction for new managers.
3. Communicate the business case for race diversity.
4. Set objectives on diversity and inclusion for managers in the workplace.
5. Senior leaders to take action on erasing racial bullying and harassment from the workplace.
6. Succession planning for diverse talent – setting targets to increase the diversity of the pipeline.
7. Encourage mentoring within the workplace.

Following from the above report, Ashe and Nazroo further explored the voices of 24,457 BME and white British employees aged over 16 years old, currently living in the UK. 6,076 people took part in the research via the YouGov panel survey, while some 18,381 respondents participated via the public open survey.<sup>5</sup>

## **2. Equality, Diversity and Racism in the Workplace: A Qualitative Analysis of the 2015 Race at Work Survey**

Following up on the *Race at Work* report, Ashe and Nazroo offered a qualitative analysis of responses given to open-ended survey questions designed to explore the following:

- a) employee accounts of experiencing and/ or witnessing racist harassment or bullying at work, and
- b) how, if at all, employers promote equality, diversity and fairness in the workplace.

In doing so, the report provided further insights into the nature, scale and human impact of racial bullying and harassment in the workplace. In addition to this, they focused further attention to some of the specific barriers that prevent the realisation of equality, diversity and fairness at work.

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<sup>5</sup> Ashe S, Nazroo J. Equality, *Diversity and Racism in the Workplace: A Qualitative Analysis of the 2015 Race at Work Survey*. University of Manchester & Business in the Community, 2016.

Key findings from Ashe and Nazroo's qualitative research were:

1. BME workers are frequently subjected to racism by colleagues, managers, customers, clients and service users. Racism is experienced in a wide variety of ways, ranging from 'everyday banter' to violence and intimidation.
2. Experiencing and/or witnessing racism impacts on ethnic minority employees in a number of ways. This includes having a direct impact on the mental health and emotional and psychological well-being of ethnic minority workers.
3. The promotion of equality, diversity and fairness is inconsistent across workplaces.
4. Some managers were said to have taken a zero-tolerance approach to racism in the workplace, offering support to those on the receiving end of racism. However, it was more common for ethnic minority employees to state that managers were also one of the main culprits when it came to racism at work.
5. Trade union representatives were identified as being an important source of support in helping ethnic minority workers to 'speak out' and challenge racism at work.
6. Alongside racism, white resentment was a significant problem. In some cases, White British employees suggested that activities and training promoting equality and diversity were no longer necessary.

Ashe and Nazroo concluded that there was a great deal of work still to be done in terms of developing the structures, practices and resources required to oppose racism and to achieve both equality and diversity in workplaces throughout Britain.

Having reviewed the comments and statements captured by the *Race at Work survey* of 2015, they provided a further set of policy recommendations. For government, these included:

1. Commission research that explores the ways in which, if at all, employers are fulfilling their equality duties and how employers respond to instances of racism in the workplace.
2. Institute new legislation regarding the procurement of government and public sector contracts to ensure that all tenders are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

3. Proposal for an annual government review into the nature and scale of racism in the workplace and racial inequality in labour market participation.
4. Eliminate the costs of employment tribunals as a means of empowering employees to challenge racism at work.
5. Address the issue of 'language proficiency' in ways that protect the rights of ethnic minority workers.

For employers, they identified a range of measures focusing on employer leadership, responsibility and accountability:

1. Devise equality targets (including a timeframe and action plan for achieving these targets).
2. Revise equality and diversity audits, processes and procedures to include reports of racism at work, paying attention to the voices of employees who have experienced and/ or witnessed racism in the workplace.

### **3. Race in the Workplace – The McGregor-Smith Review**

Published in 2017, the McGregor-Smith review provided a practical and hard-hitting report that not only highlighted, what is perhaps, the strongest case for action on this agenda, but also presented a series (twenty-six in total) of recommendations to support it.<sup>6</sup> The review underlined the facts that individuals from BME backgrounds are less likely to be in work, and when in work, are less likely to fulfil their potential. Indeed these were the presumed notions upon which the Government asked for this review to be undertaken, and it is in line with the findings of the review that the Prime Minister took the decision to launch the Race Disparity Audit in the same year.

The prevalence of explicit discrimination and implicit or 'unconscious' bias were noted in particular. In response, the review identified areas where changes can be made by employers across the public, private and third sectors to help improve diversity and inclusion within organisations, including:

- Measuring success – a focus on key performance indicators and aspirational targets
- Changing the culture of organisations – a key enabler in securing long-term results and sustainability

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf)

- Improving processes – recruitment and progression opportunities need to be open and transparent; associated processes should not hinder progress
- Inclusive workplaces – ensuring diversity is embedded and is ‘business as usual’

The review’s catalogue of recommendations endorses and supports the above areas of focus. The message is clear – focussing upon diversity and inclusion will not only raise the aspirations of talented BME individuals, but also deliver an enhancement to the economic position of the country. The recommendations from this review are presented below and will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

1. Published, aspirational targets
2. Publicly available data
3. Encourage employees to disclose
4. Government legislation
5. Free unconscious bias resource online
6. Mandatory unconscious bias training
7. Unconscious bias workshops for executives
8. Executive sponsorship
9. Diversity as a Key Performance Indicator
10. Reverse mentoring
11. Reject non-diverse lists
12. Challenge school and university selection bias
13. Use relevant and appropriate language in job specifications
14. Diverse interview panels
15. Transparent and fair reward and recognition
16. Diversity in supply chains
17. Diversity from work experience level
18. Transparency on career pathways
19. Explain how success has been achieved
20. Establish inclusive networks
21. Provide mentoring and sponsorship
22. A guide to talking about race
23. An online portal of best practice
24. A list of the top 100 BME employers in the UK

25. Request for diversity policies

26. One year on review

#### **4. A Report into the Ethnic Diversity of UK Boards – The Parker Review**

This independent review <sup>7</sup> considers how to improve the ethnic and cultural diversity of UK boards across the FTSE 100, to better reflect their employee base and the communities they serve. The report sets out objectives and timescales to encourage greater diversity, and provides practical tools to support Board members of UK companies to address the issue.

The Report makes recommendations in three key areas to help to evolve the face of corporate Britain and better prepare UK companies to continue to be global leaders in business:

##### *1. Increase the ethnic diversity of UK Boards*

- Members of the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 should develop mechanisms to identify, develop and promote diversity within their organisations in order to ensure over time that there is a pipeline of Board capable candidates and their managerial and executive ranks appropriately reflect the importance of diversity to their organisation.
- Nomination committees of all FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 companies should require their human resources teams or search firms to identify and present qualified ethnic diversity to be considered for Board appointment when vacancies occur.

##### *2. Develop candidates for the pipeline and plan for succession*

- Members of the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 should develop mechanisms to identify, develop and promote ethnic diversity within their organisations in order to ensure over time that there is a pipeline of Board capable candidates.
- Led by Board Chairs, existing Board directors of the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 should mentor and/or sponsor people of colour within their own companies to ensure their readiness to assume senior managerial or executive positions internally, or non-executive Board positions externally.

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<sup>7</sup>[https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/A\\_Report\\_into\\_the\\_Ethnic\\_Diversity\\_of\\_UK\\_Boards/\\$FILE/Beyond%20One%20by%2021%20PDF%20Report.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/A_Report_into_the_Ethnic_Diversity_of_UK_Boards/$FILE/Beyond%20One%20by%2021%20PDF%20Report.pdf)

- Companies should encourage and support candidates drawn from diverse backgrounds, including people of colour, to take on Board roles internally (e.g., subsidiaries) where appropriate, as well as Board and trustee roles with external organisations (e.g., educational trusts, charities and other not-for-profit roles). These opportunities will give experience and develop oversight, leadership and stewardship skills.

### 3. *Enhance transparency and disclosure*

- A description of the Board's policy on diversity be set out in a company's annual report, and this should include a description of the company's efforts to increase, amongst other things, ethnic diversity within its organisation, including at Board level.
- Companies that do not meet Board composition recommendations by the relevant date should disclose in their annual report why they have not been able to achieve compliance.

The consultation version of the report was launched in November 2016. Since then, the Parker Review Committee has collated feedback from a range of different interested stakeholders, including Board members and other senior executives, executive search companies and representatives from government.

As at the end of July 2017, only 85 of the 1,050 director positions in the FTSE 100 were held by people from ethnic minorities. Only 2% of director positions are held by people from ethnic minorities who are UK citizens, despite this group making up 14% of the total UK population. It was noted that 51 companies of the FTSE 100 do not have any ethnic minorities on their Boards.

## 5. **TUC report: Insecure Work and Ethnicity (2017)**

The 2017 TUC report entitled: *Insecure Work and Ethnicity*,<sup>8</sup> reported BME groups as being persistently disadvantaged in the labour market. Overall employment rates for white people (76.1%) were significantly higher than those for people from a BME background (64.2%). The report noted the TUC's belief that race discrimination plays a

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Insecure%20work%20and%20ethnicity\\_0.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Insecure%20work%20and%20ethnicity_0.pdf)



critical role in explaining such inequalities, as does the lack of access to employment opportunities for BME people.

However the report also shows that not only are BME people disadvantaged with regard to the quantity of work that they have access to, but also to the quality of the work. For example, 1 in 13 BME employees find themselves in insecure work, and the rate is higher for Black employees in particular – who are twice as likely to be in temporary work than the average.

The TUC report highlights the need for concerted and co-ordinated action to address the marginalisation of BME workers in the labour market, including focused action by the government to eliminate racial discrimination in the labour market and to tackle exploitation and exclusion in the workplace. The majority of its recommendations focus purely upon changing processes that disproportionately disadvantage BME staff – including banning zero hours contracts, and better access to union representation and collective bargaining.

## 6. Other key reports and programmes

### *EHRC report: Healing a Divided Britain (2017)*

The TUC report (above) clearly highlighted the point that access to, and progress within, employment is central to the participation of BME communities to society. It is acknowledged that without secure and meaningful employment, people from BME communities suffer from social exclusion, poverty and an insurmountable barrier to social mobility. These critical points are reinforced in the 2017 Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report entitled: ‘Healing a Divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy’.<sup>9</sup>

Based on the EHRC’s five-yearly statutory report on equality and human rights in Great Britain called ‘Is Britain Fairer?’, ‘Healing a Divided Britain’ is a review in race equality underpinned by comprehensive evidence and analyses across: education; work and income; health and care; justice and security, and the individual and society.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/healing-divided-britain-need-comprehensive-race-equality-strategy>

With regard to work, income and the economy, the report notes that inequalities in employment and income persist – and that for many BME people this impacts upon the standard of living and the experience of poverty. The report notes higher unemployment rates amongst BME communities, gaps in BME and white people starting apprenticeships, much lower proportions of BME staff in senior positions within the workplace.

The report calls for a comprehensive approach to race inequality which recognises the interrelationship between different elements of people's lives, for example, it is emphasised that we not be able to make long-term progress on reducing the ethnic minority employment gap without addressing the educational attainment gap. Such a comprehensive and holistic approach would involve tackling entrenched racial inequalities across the public sector; the report's recommendations for the UK government are reflective of this aspiration.

*NHS Equality and Diversity Council (2017) – NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard: 2017 Data Analysis Report for NHS Trusts*

The National Health Service (NHS) in England is a good example of an area of public service that has taken concerted action to reduce workplace race inequality. For decades, research and evidence have indicated that BME staff are less favourable treated within the NHS compared to their white colleagues, through poorer experiences and opportunities.<sup>10</sup> These 'snowy white peaks'<sup>11</sup> have adverse impacts upon the physical and mental health of BME staff in the NHS. Such research has also noted that such inequality has significant impact upon the efficient and effective running of the NHS, and crucially upon the quality of care received by all patients.

It is for these reasons that Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) programme was introduced across the NHS in 2015.<sup>12</sup> The WRES seeks to prompt inquiry to better understand why it is that BME staff often receive much poorer treatment than white staff in the workplace and to support NHS organisations in closing of those inequality gaps.

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<sup>10</sup> Priest et al. Promoting equality for ethnic minority NHS staff – what works? *BMJ*, 2015, 351: doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h3297>

<sup>11</sup> Kline, R. *The snowy white peaks of the NHS*. Middlesex University Research Depository, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/equality-standard/>

The strategic approach to the WRES programme has its foundations in two key concepts: (i) the values and principles that underpin the NHS Constitution for England<sup>13</sup>; and (ii) the evidence-base of the conditions needed to turn the ‘dial’ of workplace race equality.<sup>14</sup> It is important to look at the latter in more depth.

Evidence indicates that in order for behaviours and cultures in organisations to improve on workforce race equality, attention needs to be paid simultaneously to ensure that on this agenda there exists the following:

- Demonstrable leadership
- Accountability
- Mandatory metrics
- Effective communications
- Celebration of successes
- Resources and support

The WRES programme in the NHS is focussed upon all of the above conditions. If we take just one of these conditions, mandatory metrics, we can see that since 2015, all NHS trusts are required to submit data against nine WRES indicators of staff experience and opportunity – comparing BME and white staff with regard to aspects such as pay band; likelihood of being appointed from shortlisting; likelihood of going through the formal disciplinary process; experience of bullying and harassment; and the make-up of the organisation’s board.

NHS trusts are required to report on such data annually to the national WRES team within NHS England. Data are analysed and published openly, and organisations develop and publish their WRES action plans for continuous improvement. The WRES team provides a focus on those organisations and parts of the NHS that require concerted support to make continuous improvements.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Priest et al. Promoting equality for ethnic minority NHS staff – what works? *BMJ*, 2015, 351: doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h3297>

The above is an example of the mandatory metrics element of the University of Michigan model. Practical expressions of the other conditions (leadership; accountability; communications; celebration of success; resources) are also at the heart of the WRES programme.

So what does WRES data collections from NHS trusts tell us of the state of play in the NHS? The 2017 WRES data for NHS trusts<sup>15</sup> indicate:

- White shortlisted job applicants are 1.60 times more likely to be appointed from shortlisting than BME shortlisted applicants, who continue to remain absent from senior grades within Agenda for Change (AfC) pay bands.
- An increase in numbers of BME nurses and midwives at AfC Bands 6 to 9 is observed once again in 2017; this pattern has persisted since 2014.
- The number of Very Senior Managers from BME backgrounds increased by 18% from 2016 to 2017 – from 212 to 250 in England. This is 7% of all VSMs, which remains significantly lower than BME representation in the overall NHS workforce (18%) and in the local communities served (12%).
- BME staff are 1.37 times more likely to enter the formal disciplinary process in comparison to white staff. This is an improvement on the 2016 figure of 1.56.
- BME staff remain significantly more likely to experience discrimination at work from colleagues and their managers compared to white staff at 14% and 6% respectively.
- Similar proportions of white (28%) and BME (29%) staff are likely to experience harassment, bullying or abuse from patients, relatives and members of the public in the last 12 months.
- The overall percentage of BME staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from other colleagues in the last 12 months dropped from 27% to 26%. BME

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/workforce-race-equality-standard-data-reporting-december-2017/>

staff remain more likely than white staff to experience harassment, bullying or abuse from other colleagues in the last 12 months.

- There is a steady increase in the number of NHS trusts that have more than one BME board member. There are now a total of 25 NHS trusts with three or more BME members of the board, an increase of nine trusts since 2016.

## **Multi-factorial challenges – multi-factorial interventions**

Workforce race inequality is a multi-factorial challenge that requires a multi-factorial response. The current patchwork of initiatives and interventions that operate in silos, across both private and public sector organisations, will not provide the impact that we need and will only have limited effect. It is clear that a more holistic and coordinated approach is needed, one that will have greater and more sustainable impact.

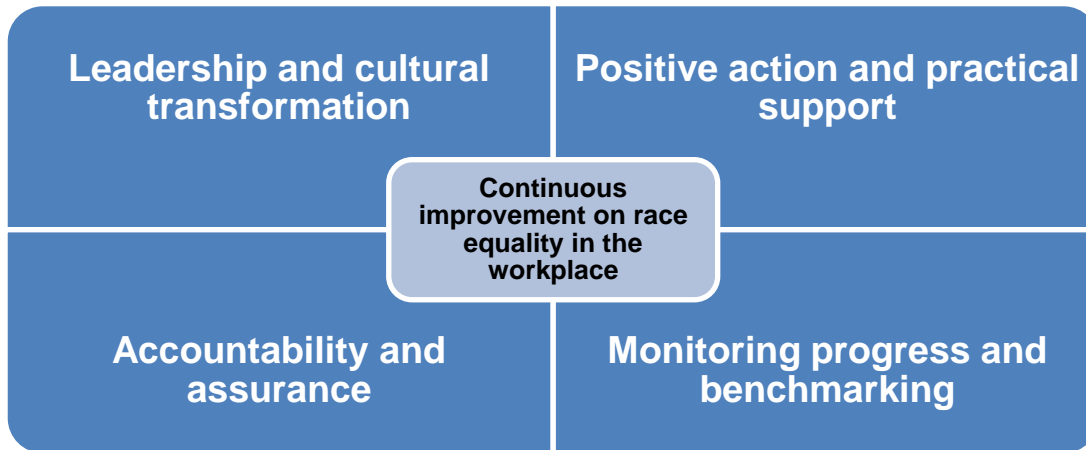
Studies and practical examples, both internationally and in the UK, present good practice examples of what works to improve workforce race equality – some of these examples have been touched upon above. In the main, these can be crudely sectioned into two broad areas: (i) operational interventions, and (ii) cultural transformations. A combination of operational and cultural interventions, over a period of time, is needed to have sustainable impact on this agenda.

The various reports reviewed above present a plethora of recommendations and practical interventions for improving workforce race equality. When brought together, these can be allocated into four core overarching strategic themes: (i) leadership and cultural transformations; (ii) positive action and practical support; (iii) monitoring progress and benchmarking, and (iv) accountability. Simultaneous focus, over a given period of time, on all of these strategic themes (and their operational expression) is more likely to have the system-wide positive impact that is needed on this agenda.

Those that argue for a silo approach of operational interventions alone – the notion that if you do something repeatedly, and for long enough, you will eventually change people's views and beliefs – are operating under a false pretence. For example, increasing the number of BME leaders through operational interventions is one thing,

but if the 'organisational system' and culture are not ready or affirmative to such action, then you have a problem.

**Figure:** Key strategic themes for improving workforce race equality



We need to be in a place where organisations, and people within those organisations, focus upon improving workforce race inequality because they *want to*, and not just because they *have to* as a result of contract, assurance and/or regulation – although these are useful enablers. People need to believe in what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Communication is essential in driving forward cultural change within organisations, particularly so with regard to equality. It is one of the key methods of highlighting the 'what', 'why' and 'how' to all staff (not just BME staff) with regard to workforce race equality. This is essential as it helps to foster good relations between all staff and across all characteristics given protection under the Equality Act 2010. And of course, interventions need to be designed and positioned in a way that benefits everyone over time. Communication, along with initial strategic planning, will enable everyone to see some benefit for themselves in the interventions undertaken.

Accountability is a key condition and enabler in this area. When individuals know they will need to justify their decisions on recruitment or on whether or not to take formal disciplinary action to a more senior manager, they are likely to undertake more complex thought processes before doing so. Holding staff accountable for their actions and

monitoring, through periodic appraisals of their performance on workforce race equality, is an area where all organisations should be moving towards.

Those senior leaders, and middle managers, that already focus on this agenda as part of their day-to-day work will have a plethora of examples of striving towards race equality in their organisation. We know that without demonstrable leadership on equality, diversity and inclusion, work is very often short-lived, or at best, has minimal organisational impact. Work in this area will only make a difference when it is positioned within mainstream business and governance of the organisation.

Other commonly applied operational initiatives include:

- ***Name-blind recruitment***

Studies indicate that BME applicants perform better in the sifting stage of an application process where name-blind recruitment practices are utilised. Numerous studies show that applications from ‘white-sounding names’ receive a higher response rate than those applications with names typically associated with certain ethnic groups. Of course, name-blind practices are now a common feature across much of the public sector. But this is not always the case where, for example, the application process may involve the submission of a C.V.

- ***Diverse interview panels and batch interviewing***

Diversity in interview panels can be one method of reducing potential unconscious bias that may reside within interviewers – thus reducing the chances of BME candidates being unfairly disadvantaged. There is an emerging rise in the number of CEOs and senior leaders publically pronouncing their personal commitment to having diverse interview panels within their organisation’s recruitment processes. This is, by no doubt, a positive trend that can contribute towards the overall aspiration of reducing bias in interviews, but on its own this intervention will not solve the complexity of issues associated with increasing BME recruitment, particularly in senior leadership roles.

- ***Interventions to reduce disproportionate disciplinary action against BME staff***

There will be some occasions where disciplinary action is necessary and appropriate. But the different volumes of disciplinary action by race are striking: BME staff are more likely to undergo formal disciplinary action than their white colleagues. This is most clearly seen across the NHS in England, not because the likelihood of such action is greater in the NHS compared to other parts of the public or private sectors, but because data are now routinely collected on this indicator via the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES).

What is clear in the NHS is that those organisations with low levels of disciplinary action against all staff, and/or similar levels of disciplinary action against white and BME staff, are more likely to have a learning culture than a blame culture.

It is across the NHS in London that four models aimed at reducing disproportionate disciplinary action against BME staff are being piloted. The four models and their relative pros and cons are outlined in the table below.



**Table 1:** Four models of reducing disproportionate levels of disciplinary action against BME staff

<b>Model</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<b>Decision tree checklist</b> - An algorithm with accompanying guidelines and poses a series of structured questions to help managers decide whether formal action is essential or whether alternatives might be feasible.	Keeps responsibility for considering all evidence with frontline managers. Offers them a very clear, evidence-based framework for considering the evidence.	No way to reduce or eliminate subjective variations in decisions.
<b>Post-action audit</b> - In this model, managers are made aware that all decisions to put staff through the formal disciplinary process will be reviewed on a quarterly or bi-annual basis using robust information on each case to discern any systemic biases or underlying drivers of adverse treatment of any staff group.	Keeps responsibility with the frontline managers If supported by good evaluation, feedback and development can help embed better practice in those areas identified as needing support.	In the short term it cannot prevent unnecessary formal action.
<b>Pre-formal action check by a Director level member of staff</b> - In this model, a Director reviews all cases and decides whether they should go to formal action.	Consistency of approach.	Reduces responsibility of frontline managers to make the appropriate decision and take responsibility for it.
<b>Pre-formal action check by a trained lay member of staff</b> - In this model, a specially trained lay member of staff reviews cases and challenges any perceived bias in the process before cases go to formal action.	'External' scrutiny approach can reduce the risk of unconscious bias.	Increased risk of loss of confidentiality.

- ***Developmental opportunities and talent management***

The first and most crucial point to consider is that employers should beware of the reliance upon a “deficit” model for aspirant BME staff that assumes BME staff do not have the capabilities to undertake certain roles and need development. Whilst there will inevitably be some element of development needed, essential is the confidence that their organisation is serious about supporting development into more senior roles.

Organisations should avoid a reliance on sending staff away on courses and programmes as the primary means of encouraging more BME staff development. Such courses can be invaluable but there is growing evidence that the key to staff development is whether such courses are complemented by opportunities for on-the-job experience, for example via secondment opportunities, 'stretch assignments' and 'acting-up'.

A key point to note here relates to the concept of 'positive action'. Positive action does not mean people will be employed or promoted simply because they share a protected characteristic. This is a misconception. The aim of positive action is to encourage and assist people from disproportionately under-represented groups to overcome disadvantages associated with the protected characteristic. For example, it can help create a level playing field to enable people to compete on equal terms and promote equality of opportunity. This ensures that all applicants are treated in an equal way or treated differently, depending on their needs, to preserve equal treatment and recruitment based on merit.

- ***Setting aspirational targets for improvement over time***

There is robust evidence for the effectiveness of target setting that is based upon a commitment to specific goals, monitored by frequent feedback.<sup>16</sup> Organisations are more likely to focus on an issue at hand if an official goal or aspiration exists to act as a reminder of what needs to be achieved. Targets should embody challenge, specificity, and need to be reinforced by accountability.

Indeed, across the public and private sectors there are organisations that are located within both national and local footprints. In such cases, locally defined targets across the workforce pipeline (pay grade), tailored to an organisation's BME workforce composition will support delivery of an overarching national goal of leadership representing the workforce that it serves.

As highlighted above, we know that workforce race equality requires organisations to go beyond operational change as a result of compliance and regulation against

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<sup>16</sup> Jayne, M.E., & Dipboye, R.L. (2004). Leveraging diversity to improve business performance: Research findings and recommendations for organisations. *Human resource management*, 43(4), 409-424

metrics and targets. Whilst these features are critical, the parallel challenge here is that of cultural and transformational change on this agenda – winning hearts and minds. Such an approach will be critical when setting targets and supporting the organisation to meet those targets.

Cultural and transformational interventions compliment and support operational intercessions and need to be reinforced by the leadership of the organisation – filtering down through middle-management and the rest of the organisation. Policies and procedures are not enough; organisations also need to adopt strategic approaches to creating cultures of inclusion.

- ***Compassionate culture and leadership***

There is an emerging focus upon the concept of compassion at work – particularly so in the field of health. The NHS itself was founded in 1948 as an expression of a core national value of compassion: free healthcare for those that need it, regardless of wealth, status, age, gender, ethnicity or any other characteristic. This value was enshrined into the constitution for the NHS.

The behaviour of its leaders is what helps to define the culture of an organisation. The leaders are the ‘carriers’ of culture – what they pay attention to, what they talk about on platforms, what they seek to influence, not only informs the workforce of what they should value, but also gives a strong signal to the outside world as to the nature of the organisation and its vision.

Compassionate leadership helps to nurture: inspirational vision and strategy; inclusion and engagement; dedicated and enthusiastic teams; and autonomy for staff to innovate. In the NHS, those leaders that truly express compassionate leadership also show patterns of continuous improvement with regard to workforce race equality agenda within their organisations. However, it is critical to note that such improvements are not restricted to their BME workforce, but there are positive impacts for the whole of the workforce; for example, this is clearly seen from North East London NHS Foundation Trusts’ WRES data.

It has been argued that organisations should focus on developing the following key enablers of compassionate culture and leadership<sup>17</sup>:

- A strong vision and lived set of values focused on compassionate, continually improving and high-quality service.
- A strong focus on clear goals and performance management in every team and department at every level.
- Enlightened compassionate and collective leadership that ensures engagement and well-being of staff, psychological safety, a just and fair culture, where diversity and inclusion are valued in practice at every level.
- An enacted strategy promoting innovation, learning and quality improvement at all levels.
- Effective and committed team-working, cross-team working; collaboration and co-production across boundaries.

- **Staff engagement and networking**

One key element of workforce race equality is the networking and engagement of BME staff. Staff networks often provide a place for staff to come together, to share experiences and to facilitate learning and continuous development. Networks can assist in the shaping and delivery of organisational strategy and policy, and can focus on improving staff experience and opportunities. If structured well, networks can also facilitate and foster good relations between staff with different equality (protected) characteristics.

Employers have reported many benefits to enabling staff networks including:

- Greater commitment, engagement, and satisfaction from their employees.
- Higher external application rates for open positions and greater retention levels of employees that engage in staff networks.
- A shift in the public image of the organisation (e.g. caring employer).
- Improvement to the perceived inclusiveness of the organisation.
- Greater competitive advantage for attracting talent within the sector or industry.
- More connections to diverse community stakeholders, and improved development of community presence.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Coghill, Y; West, M. & Naqvi, H. BME staff are still struggling: here's what you can do about it. *Health Service Journal*; 1 February 2019: <https://www.hsj.co.uk/workforce/bme-staff-are-still-struggling-heres-what-you-can-do-about-it/7024327.article>

- A more personalised workplace in which employees are able to engage their work with their whole identity.<sup>19</sup>

When viewed as a body of internal advisers that already understands the business, procedures, its customers, clients or patients, staff networks, with the right support and investment, can provide an opinion and insight on business decisions that can prove invaluable. They can draw on the skills and understanding of their community to help employers to manage and harness the potential of an increasingly diverse workforce. Through their collaboration, 'entrepreneurship', and innovation, successful staff networks can help to shape the culture of an organisation.

- ***Celebrating success and role models***

BME individuals face substantial obstacles to joining the labour market; and when they do join, they are less likely to find themselves in senior positions. There are relatively higher unemployment rates amongst BME individuals and disproportionately low representation in senior roles. This is important not least because a lack of positive role models discourages BME graduates from successfully securing graduate employment.

BME individuals in senior managerial and leadership positions are often missing in large organisations. Where they are present, these individuals should be positive role models and should help support others to escape those 'sticky floors' and 'glass ceilings' – and to climb the ladder of success. Seeing people that look like you in senior positions encourages others to strive for similar positions and gives them the belief that it is possible to get there.

Whilst celebrating the success of our staff is good, celebrating the success and achievements of minority staff is critical. BME staff have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to our labour market and to public services.

Recognising success is very powerful. Employee recognition brings fulfilment because it reinforces the meaning of determination and collaboration.

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<sup>18</sup> Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (2013) "Aboriginal Peoples: Practices in the Area of Aboriginal Employee Networks": <https://ccdi.ca/media/1067/20130717-ccdi-report-aboriginal-ergs.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Geren, C. (2015). *Why Employee Resource Groups Need Support*, Web Long Post

An organisation can motivate an employee by showing gratitude and appreciation towards the employee's accomplishments. By being motivated by the organisation, staff are more likely to try harder and contribute more – the extra discretionary effort without which many organisations and institutions would simply not function.

- ***Sponsorship, mentoring and reverse mentoring***

This is a key enabler with regard to providing the BME person with the opportunity to gain invaluable knowledge and experience from a senior leader (mentoring), that can lead to the establishment of a web of essential and influential contacts – opening up doors of opportunity (sponsorship); it can also help transform the often deep-set perceptions, thinking and cultural structures within senior white leaders (reverse mentoring).

**Table 2:** An overview of the key recommendation in published reports and reviews on race equality in the workplace

		Race at Work (BITC)	Equality, Diversity and Racism in the Workplace	Race in the Workplace (McGregor-Smith)	Ethnic Diversity of UK Boards (Parker Review)	Insecure Work and Ethnicity (TUC)
Strategic theme	Recommendation					
Leadership and cultural transformation	Mentoring and sponsorship	X		X	X	
	Undertaking bias training	X		X		
	Amplifying then business case	X				
	Listening to lived experience of racism		X			
	Inclusive staff networks					
	Guidance on talking about race			X		
	Sharing good practice			X		
Accountability and assurance	Race equality in contractual relationships	X	X			
	Policy development	X				
	KPIs and objectives for managers	X		X		
	Annual government review		X			
	Explain progress in (public) annual reporting				X	
Positive action and practical support	Increased access to work / board experience	X		X	X	
	Eliminate Employment Tribunals costs for staff		X			
	Reject non-diverse applicant lists			X		
	Ensure diverse interview panels			X		
	Fair rewards and recognition			X		
	Ban zero contracts					X
	Better trade union representation					X
Monitoring progress and benchmarking	Establish and monitor recruitment targets	X	X	X		
	Collect and monitor workforce race data	X		X	X	
	Monitor the workforce pipeline	X		X	X	

## Summary and next steps

The reports reviewed above all recognise the challenge we face on improving workforce race equality. What is clear is that the challenge, like its remedies, is multi-faceted. This is a system-wide issue that requires a system-wide response. The launch of the Race Disparity Audit by the Cabinet Office is very much a welcomed initiative. Within the public sector at least, this will further encourage organisations to place concerted effort on making improvements. However, the challenge here is for those sectors and organisations to also work together in co-designing common interventions for common problems, and sharing replicable good practice as they go about it.

The use of a mandated diversity policy with data-driven accountability is not only the way forward on this agenda, but is also a clear recognition that previous voluntary approaches have, in general, not provided the system-wide impact that we need. Yet, a mandate and a contractual obligation will not be sufficient on its own to ensure that staff feel respected, valued, engaged, and supported. A parallel and simultaneous focus needs to be given towards establishing and nourishing compassionate and learning cultures within organisations.

Transforming deep-rooted cultures and hardwired processes can both take time and be challenging. At the same time, we also know that tackling workforce race inequality cannot be an optional extra: the positive benefits impact upon the whole of the workforce. Returns on investment on this critical agenda are cumulative and measurable in terms of greater staff engagement and satisfaction, greater productivity and innovation and more efficient use of resources. We simply cannot afford the cost to staff, the public and to organisations that comes from unfairness in the workplace.