

Active Anti-Racism

A multi-agency Charter for tackling racism

2024

Contents

Introduction	2
Aims and Outcomes	2
Definitions.....	3
<i>Racism</i>	3
<i>Anti-Racism</i>	3
<i>Structural Racial Inequality</i>	3
<i>Institutional and Systemic Racism</i>	4
The CHSCP’s Anti-Racist Standards.....	4
<i>Leaders</i>	4
<i>Practitioners</i>	5
Practice Guidance.....	6
<i>Ask and Understand</i>	6
<i>Communicate Clearly</i>	6
<i>Think, Plan and Engage</i>	6
<i>Respond</i>	7
Learning, Impact and Improvement	7

Introduction

Racism is a safeguarding issue. It causes harm and undermines the opportunities for some of our children to thrive. Denying it exists is simply not good enough. Because of racism, children have fared worse in education, safeguarding, health and criminal justice settings. This is not what we want or what we expect for them.

As a partnership responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, we have zero tolerance for racism, and we are committed to playing our part in eradicating it. This Charter sets out a framework to help us do just that. It describes a range of expectations for how racism can be tackled and how we can help children and their families see, hear and feel the change we seek. It also recognises the demographics of our local workforce and how for many of them, the impact of racism resonates in both their personal and professional lives.

The Charter does not replace any single-agency initiatives, rather it provides the '*umbrella architecture*' against which organisations can test and create their own guidance. All agencies represented on the CHSCP have formally agreed to its contents. The Charter is referenced within our written safeguarding arrangements, and we expect all agencies to adhere to it.

Where there is hesitance, uncertainty or resistance, this will be managed by our Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner in line with their delegated functions for discharging both leadership and advocacy on behalf of our local children and families.

Aims and Outcomes

The main aim of the Charter is to improve how our safeguarding system proactively tackles racism. The broad outcomes we want to achieve include the following:

- All leaders and practitioners apply the Charter's principles within their respective organisations.
- All practitioners feel confident and competent in challenging racism in all its forms.
- Our safeguarding system and its workforce reflect the communities they serve.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures routinely focus on active anti-racism in both the way they are written and what they are trying to achieve.
- Children and families are active participants when engaged by practitioners and they are treated with dignity and respect.
- We learn from children and families about their unique struggles because of society and/or the systems that place them at a disadvantage due to their culture and/or ethnicity.

- Families are willing and able to raise their concerns about racism and discrimination.
- Families are confident that organisations take racism seriously, that they will hold people and systems to account and make change where necessary.
- Disproportionality in our system is reduced, so that the cultural and ethnic background of the children and families that we work with is proportionate to the diversity of our community.
- The voices of children, families and communities are heard, and evidence of active anti-racism is evaluated and tested for impact.
- We maintain robust processes that support scrutiny, learning and improvement.

Definitions

Racism

Racism is the oppression and marginalisation of individuals based on the colour of their skin, ethnicity, nationality and citizenship. It is also a form of prejudice, hatred or discrimination and it can be both visible and hidden. Racist acts can be committed knowingly or unknowingly by individuals and systems. It often interacts and overlaps with other kinds of oppression, such as disability, class, gender and sexuality and in contrasting intersectional ways.

Anti-Racism



‘Anti-racism is a belief that all races and ethnic groups are equal and deserving of the same opportunities. But the most important part of anti-racism is the next step, which is to do something about the existing inequality.’¹ Being actively anti-

racist does not stop at tackling conscious hatred, like racial abuse. The most damaging aspects of inequality and racism are far more embedded in society and being anti-racist takes a lot of work.

Structural Racial Inequality

By structural racial inequality, we mean the inequality that is created by the social structures that disadvantage some groups more than others, now and historically. We need to continue to work

¹ Ibram X. Kendi (2019) How to Be an Antiracist

with partners proactively to redress this balance. This does not mean always treating everyone equally, it means that sometimes people need more support or focus because they are more disadvantaged.

Institutional and Systemic Racism

By institutional and systemic racism, we mean the ways that systems can discriminate through often covert and unchecked prejudice, assumptions, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping about people from different ethnic minority backgrounds. The late Sir William Macpherson gave the following definition in his report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence:

'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.'

To see the ways that inequalities and racism are embedded in society (**cultural racism**), it takes proactively working on your own beliefs, assumptions and values, taking action to redress inequality and rethinking the system to eliminate the ways that unchecked bias can disadvantage people from different backgrounds.

The CHSCP's Anti-Racist Standards

The CHSCP wants to see a robust and proactive stance from everyone towards tackling racism, discrimination and inequality. This section of the Charter sets out the multi-agency standards expected from both our leaders and practitioners.

Leaders

- Acknowledge that we live in a society where racism exists and that it is not good enough to be non-racist. We all must demonstrate that we are actively anti-racist.
- Set the tone for your workforce.
 - Talk about anti-racism. If you aren't, it's unlikely your staff will be either. Celebrate successes and emphasise good practice where seen.
 - Role model the CHSCP's standards and any additional standards developed by your organisation.
 - Take action to address racism and proactively lead, support and constructively challenge other agencies and the wider partnership as required.
 - Be clear about the attitudes and behaviours you expect from your workforce.

- Set agency specific expectations and standards for active anti-racist practice.
- Proactively promote and seek feedback about anti-racist practice. Communicate positive examples and robustly challenge and tackle racism whenever it is identified.
- Train your workforce and provide opportunities for them to develop their knowledge, skills and experience regarding anti-racist practice.
- Respond in a timely and constructive manner to criticisms or concerns.
 - Ensure there are systems and processes in place that log all incidents and observations of racism, and that there are processes in place to respond to these when identified.
 - Ensure that your organisation is clear in its code of conduct about the unacceptability of racism and that effective processes and sanctions are in place.
 - Hold people to account, whilst supporting those you lead to meet the required standards for their practice.
- Focus on ensuring your workforce is representative of the diverse communities we serve in both Hackney and the City of London. This is at all levels, including senior leadership.
- Recognise the psychological impact of racism on those within your workforce and how this can affect their personal and professional life. Leaders need to ensure appropriate support in this context.
- Ensure that new strategies, policies or procedures have a clear focus on anti-racism.
- Seek reassurance that any services that your organisation commissions / contracts meet our collective expectations for active anti-racism.

Practitioners

- Acknowledge that we live in a society where racism exists and that it is not good enough to be non-racist. In our practice we must demonstrate that we are actively anti-racist.
- Adhere to the standards set out within this Charter and any additional standards developed by your own organisation.
- Educate yourself about anti-racist practice through self-directed learning.
- Participate in opportunities to talk, think, learn and improve your anti-racist practice.
- Recognise that in creating an anti-racist workplace, we will all experience moments of vulnerability, both for those speaking up about hurt personally experienced or witnessed, and for those needing to hear that, acknowledge it, and repair the harm.

Practice Guidance

The following guidance provides examples of how the principles of active anti-racist practice can be applied when working with children and families. Given the various roles and responsibilities of different practitioners across our system, these are not framed as standards for every organisation. However, where applicable, the CHSCP endorses their use as best practice within the context of our multi-agency arrangements.

Ask and Understand

- When working with children and families, ask how they self-identify their culture and ethnicity. Ask about their cultural heritage, customs and experience of racism, ensuring these details are accurately recorded in your records.
- Ask children and families whether English is their first language and if not, always offer to provide an interpreter in a preferred language.
- When making a referral, or sharing information through other multi-agency processes, always include details about a family's ethnicity, culture and religion. Include information about their lived experience and the impact of factors such as stereotyping, profiling, biases, racism, discrimination.

Communicate Clearly

- Use clear, straightforward and appropriate language in communication and records.
 - Use the term 'ethnicity', rather than 'race'.
 - Explain processes verbally and in writing, including any complaints process.
 - Where historical records contain inappropriate and harmful language, amend / qualify and repair them as needed.
 - Wherever possible, avoid recording labels that can trigger preconceived ideas related to racism (such as 'aggressive', or 'emotionally unavailable'). Instead, describe patterns of behaviour in detail.

Think, Plan and Engage

- Consider how to best engage children and families from an anti-racist perspective.
 - Acknowledge that there are cultural differences in raising children and there is no 'one size fits all' blueprint for parenting.
 - Ask questions of other practitioners about how factors relating to ethnicity, culture and religion are being considered as part of multi-agency practice.
 - Think about how your beliefs and biases may influence the way you view children and families and interpret their behaviour, as well as the way they might view you

and interpret your behaviour.

- Plan and engage with families in a way that respects identities, heritage and freedoms, but ensure that child protection always takes primacy. Be alert to how children can be abused in the context of faith, belief and harmful practices.
- When working with children, be alert to the risk of adultification.

Respond

- Respond to disclosures about racism as you would for all other forms of harm - treat it as a safeguarding issue.
 - Take all concerns seriously and prioritise the emotional and psychological safety and wellbeing of the child and/or family.
 - Where concerns involve the racist behaviour of an adult who works or volunteers with children, and the criteria has been met, the LADO in the City of London or Hackney should be engaged for advice.

Learning, Impact and Improvement

The CHSCP will oversee how this Charter is being used to deliver change and how it is creating opportunities for learning and improvement. This will focus on the following areas:

- Feedback from children, families and communities
- Feedback from the multi-agency workforce, including through the CHSCP's staff survey
- Auditing – including the CHSCP's self-assessment and auditing programme.
- Reviews of cases will always consider ethnicity and culture in context.
- Evaluating data to identify themes, patterns and trends identifying disproportionality.
- Learning from others and horizon scanning for lessons from other areas.