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Corporate publication

Commit, understand, act: our anti-racism strategy

Supporting healthcare organisations to eliminate racism and reduce health inequalities through commitment, understanding and action.

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Chapters

Foreword

Anti-racism is more than a statement for us at the NHS Confederation. Being an anti-racist organisation means that we actively target, challenge and remove systemic barriers that enable racism, recognising this as a corporate responsibility. For us, commitment, understanding and action to eliminate racism and reduce health inequalities really matters.

Commitment matters – because for years we have lacked concerted action to diversify the leadership needed to assist in creating anti-racist organisations.

Understanding matters – because evidence informs the personal and

the strategy will not be an easy process, but we can do no less if we are serious about healthcare leaders, and us as their membership body, being actively anti-racist.

In a time of increasing inequality, thrown into sharp focus by the unequal impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic communities and the global Black Lives Matter protests, it is imperative that we as the NHS Confederation lead the agenda and support our members to tackle inequality and racism. Tackling racism - including institutional and systemic racism - is key to better governance, service transformation, workforce retention and delivering our Public Sector Equality Duty. Anti-racist practice improves conditions for all communities.

With a diverse and committed body of executive and non-executive healthcare leaders, we can tackle racism that facilitates health inequity. It's time to commit, understand and act.

Matthew Taylor
Chief Executive
and Equality
NHS Confederation

Joan Saddler OBE
Director of Partnerships

NHS Confederation

**The evidence for the most effective interven
change racist cultures is pretty clear – the c
leaders make the most difference to culture**

Lord Victor Adebowale
Chair, NHS Confederation

Our approach

We are committed to driving action to tackle racism and are working with organisations across our membership to confront these issues. We recognise, however, that commitment and action must start at home, with our staff empowered to speak up and tackle racism as core and central to their roles.

Our strategy - centred on commitment, understanding and action - applies equally to us as it does to our work on behalf of members and our support to them. Tackling racism systematically improves care quality and organisational cultures for all.

This document explores how we will support our members to be anti-racist organisations and systems.

Our strategy reflects an asset- and evidence-based approach, demystifying racism, tackling racism in the workforce and supporting members to focus on reducing health inequalities.

While acknowledging that racism has a personal dimension, our approach rejects the proposition that institutional racism can be addressed through individual solutions. Rather, our 'commit, understand and act' approach supports both us and our members to address structural change.

Commit	black and minority ethnic leaders from racialised commun tackle inequality in access, experience and outcomes.
Understand	**the scale of institutional racism** and the personal and org leadership and accountability it will take to tackle racism.
Act	**in partnership with racialised communities of NHS staff a** to reform power structures and systems that legitimise rac impacting communities. Tackling racism and broader hea inequalities is intrinsic to all our work, underpinning NHS tro

Our approach is consistent with the NHS Constitution's principles of respect and dignity, and the Human Rights Act. It is aligned with the Marmot report's analysis that, traditionally, government policies have focused resources only on some segments of society, whereas to improve health for all of us and to reduce unfair and unjust inequalities in health, action is needed across the social gradient.

Moreover, it is consistent with our member-led equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) programme's objectives of supporting improved diversity in NHS leadership, increased community engagement and improving robust accountability processes, ensuring that EDI counts.

It also aligns with our commitment to tackle racism and broader inequality as intrinsic to all our work – from elective backlogs to mental health, to place working through to anchor institutions and beyond. The NHS plays a vital role in enabling social justice both as an employer and as a public service.

Being on the receiving end of racist behaviour or institutionally racist policies is hurtful and can have long-term damaging effects. [1] Research shows that poor morale and engagement among NHS staff have an impact on the quality of patient care. [2] This suggests that tackling equality and inclusion issues for staff will benefit patients too; it should improve patient care and help the NHS, at least in part, to address its workforce crisis. [3]

"Race is a function of racism. Racism is an action."*

*Taken from our response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic

experiences of the range of people from racialised communities. The NHS Race and Health Observatory's Power of Language report points to the need for an ongoing conversation on this issue.

Our support for members

We are currently using our three-stage approach to support members to commit, understand and act to tackle racism across the workforce and with people using services. We will continue to build on this approach as we develop our support to members further.

Responsibility for actively driving anti-racism across the NHS Confederation does not only rest with our chief executive and chair. The chairs of our networks and directors all have a role in implementing and measuring the actions in the strategy, along with further member support. Communicating our work well will be an important step in turning our anti-racism commitment into tangible actions.

1. Commit

Commit to inclusive leaders leading anti-racist organisations focused on reducing health inequalities. Realise targeted increases in the number of black and minority ethnic leaders from racialised communities and target action towards tackling inequality in access, experience and outcomes.

Current member support   +

Enhanced member support   +

2. Understand

Understand the personal and organisational leadership and accountability it will take to tackle racism, using data and insight to also help drive change.

Current member support   +

Enhanced member support   +

transformation as detailed in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Current member support   +

Enhanced member support   +

Executive leadership of our anti-racism strategy is underpinned by our executive directors, accountable for the areas of work mentioned in this strategy, both corporately and for our members.

Our EDI programme is led by executive director Joan Saddler, who will develop a strategic action plan that sets clear deliverables, monitoring and evaluating ambitions, outcomes and impact. To find out more about the work of the EDI programme, please email us.

References

1. The Synergi Collaborative Centre. Nesta website. And Williams, D. R., & Mohammed, S. A. (2013). Racism and Health I: Pathways and Scientific Evidence. American Behavioral Scientist, 57(8), 1152–1173. And Clark, R., Anderson, N. B., Clark, V. R., & Williams, D. R. (1999). Racism as a Stressor for African Americans: A Biopsychosocial Model. American Psychologist , 54, 805-816.

2. Dawson, J (2018). Links between NHS staff experience and patient

Suggested citation

NHS Confederation

Theme	Population health	System working	Workforce

Keywords	Equality, diversity and inclusion	Leadership

Region	NHS European Office	NHS Wales Employers
	Northern Ireland Confederation	Welsh NHS Confederation

Network	Acute Network	Community Network	ICS Network
	Mental Health Network	NHS Employers	
	Primary Care Network		

Leadership support	BME Leadership Network
	Health and Care LGBTQ+ Leaders Network
	Health and Care Women Leaders Network

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