

Who is this for? LSC staff | LSC provider partners | The general reader

REFRESHING YOUR THINKING RELATING TO 'RACE'

What is 'race'?

UK race relations law defines "racial group" as a "group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins" (s.3 RRA 1976). Going beyond compliance requires organisations to be critically conscious of the time specific nature of the terms 'race' and 'racial groups' as used by legislators. Social and scientific research has verified that there is only one race of people: the human race. So, it is more accurate to use the terms ethnicity and ethnic group rather than 'race' or 'racial group'.

Who does BME describe?

It is also common to find the term Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) being used in legislation, ethnic monitoring forms, equality policy or action plans as an overarching classification of specific people and groups.

Within this classification Black is being used in a specifically political and inclusive context: it refers to people who, as a consequence of their skin colour, are likely to have a shared experience of discrimination and disadvantage as minority ethnic groups in the UK. This would typically include people of African, Caribbean, Asian, Arabic or Chinese heritage and/or nationality.

The latter part of this classification - and Minority Ethnic - refers to those people whose skin colour is white, but who constitute minority ethnic groups in the UK. This would cover people of Irish, Polish, Albanian, Romanian, Traveller or Serbian heritage and/or nationality. It is also being used in a specifically inclusive and political context: people from these groups are also likely to have a shared experience of discrimination and disadvantage due to their heritage and/or national origins. This is particularly, but not exclusively, true of people from white minority groups who are newly arrived or settled.

Something to do...

- When you find yourself obliged to use these terms because of their use in official monitoring forms, enclose them in inverted commas (e.g. 'race') to indicate you recognise the problematic nature of the term.
- Ensure your staff, learners, partners and stakeholders understand the debates about these terms.

Something to do...

- Check that where you use the term BME in your equality policies, action plans and EDIMs that you are using it accurately and ensuring proper monitoring, analysis and activity of all the social groups covered in relation to both employment, service provision and procurement.
- Amend/update the above accordingly.
- Ensure your staff, learners, partners and stakeholders understand this term and who it incorporates.

Monitoring: What is it for?

Four things about ethnic monitoring generally trouble people. Typically, staff, learners and stakeholders want to know:

- Why you want this information;
- What you are going to do with it;
- What you have done with the information you have collected in the past;
- How this information has changed anything for the better.

They are often unaware that the purpose of monitoring is to identify discrimination and inequality and to demonstrate both the successes and failures of policy and practice.

Something to do...

- Support all staff and learners to *really* understand why the information on their ethnicity is so important.
- Use existing data to identify and interrogate the *patterns* that emerge in relation to staff and learners in the areas of recruitment, retention, progression, achievement and grievances.
- Use the analysis from the above to identify relevant future activities and targets to close the gaps.
- Create an open communication network, for staff, learners and stakeholders, to share what you have learnt from monitoring, what you are going to do as a result, and what improvements have been achieved.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Race Relations Act 1976 (amended by the Race Relations Amendment Act, 2000)

Human Rights Act 1998

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