

Active Anti-Racism

A multi-agency Charter for tackling racism

2025

Introduction

Racism is a critical safeguarding issue, as it causes harm and negatively affects the opportunities for some children to thrive. Denying its existence is unacceptable. Racism has led to poorer outcomes for children in education, safeguarding, health, and criminal justice contexts, which is far from the desired or expected standards.

As a partnership committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, we maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards racism and pledge our commitment to eradicating it. This Charter outlines a framework designed to achieve this goal. It specifies expectations for addressing racism and aims to help children and their families recognise and experience the change we are striving for. Additionally, it acknowledges the diverse demographics of our local workforce and the personal and professional impact of racism on many of them.

The Charter complements existing single-agency initiatives by providing an overarching structure within which organisations can develop and assess their own guidelines. All agencies represented on the LSCP have formally endorsed the Charter's content, which is integrated into our written safeguarding arrangements, and adherence by all agencies is expected.

Any hesitance, uncertainty, or resistance will be addressed by our Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner, who is authorised to lead and advocate on behalf of our local children and families.

Aims and Outcomes

The main aim of the Charter is to improve how the safeguarding system proactively addresses the issue of racism. The broad outcomes to be achieved include the following:

- All leaders and practitioners implement the Charter's principles within their respective organisations.
- All practitioners possess the confidence and competence to recognise and challenge racism in all its forms.
- The safeguarding system and its workforce reflect the communities they serve.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures routinely incorporate active anti-racism both in their wording and objectives.
- Children and families actively participate when engaged by practitioners, and they are treated with dignity and respect.
- There is curiosity towards children and families about their unique struggles due to societal factors and/or systems that disadvantage them because of their culture and/or ethnicity, action is taken in response and an openness to learn where this can be improved upon.
- Families are willing and able to raise concerns about racism and discrimination and are informed of the process for complaints.
- Families have confidence that organisations take racism seriously, hold individuals and systems accountable, and implement necessary changes.
- Disproportionality in the system is reduced, ensuring the cultural and ethnic background of the children and families worked with is proportionate to the diversity of the community.

- Children, families, and communities provide input, and the effectiveness of anti-racism measures is assessed and verified.
- We implement thorough processes to facilitate evaluation, learning, and enhancement.

Definitions

Racism

Racism involves oppressing and marginalising individuals based on skin colour, ethnicity, nationality and citizenship. It includes prejudice, hatred, or discrimination, both visible and hidden. Racist acts can be committed knowingly or unknowingly by individuals and systems and often intersect with other forms of oppression like disability, class, gender, and sexuality.

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

Combating racism goes beyond addressing overt hatred. The most harmful elements of inequality and racism are deeply rooted in society, requiring significant effort to counteract. Anti-racism involves recognising all forms of racism and taking action to challenge and reduce it.

Structural Racial Inequality

Structural racial inequality refers to the disparities created by societal structures that disadvantage certain groups more than others, both currently and historically. It is imperative to collaborate proactively with partners to address this imbalance. This does not necessarily entail treating everyone identically; rather, it recognises that some individuals may require additional support or attention due to their greater disadvantages and places responsibility on agencies to remove barriers to accessing services.

Institutional and Systemic Racism

Institutional and systemic racism refers to covert and unchecked discrimination within systems, including prejudice, assumptions, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and stereotyping of ethnic minorities. Sir William Macpherson defined it in his report on Stephen Lawrence's murder.

'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,

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

attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.'

Addressing cultural racism requires actively challenging personal beliefs and values, taking steps to redress inequality, and rethinking systemic biases that disadvantage diverse groups.

Adultification

Adultification is a form of psychological harm, it is a persistent and ongoing act of dehumanisation, which explicitly impacts Black children, and influences how they are safeguarded and protected. The concept of adultification is where notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children. This is determined by people and institutions who hold power over children and young people. When adultification occurs outside of the home it is always founded within discrimination and bias. There are various definitions of adultification, all relate to a child's personal characteristics, socio-economic influences and lived experiences. Regardless of the context in which adultification takes place, the impact results in children's rights being either diminished or overlooked.

The LSCP's Anti-Racist Standards

The LSCP expects everyone to actively combat racism, discrimination, and inequality. This Charter section outlines the standards for leaders and practitioners.

Leaders

- Recognise that racism exists in society and acknowledge the importance of being actively anti-racist.
- Establish the tone for your workforce.
 - Discuss anti-racism to encourage staff to do the same. Highlight successes and good practices observed.
 - Model the LSCP's standards and any additional standards developed by your organisation.
 - Take steps to address racism and lead, support, and challenge other agencies and partners as needed.
 - Take steps to ensure services recognise and remove services barriers for children and families, including the role of racialised trauma.
 - Take steps to eradicate adultification and recognise this as a form of racial bias when it does occur.
 - Clearly communicate the attitudes and behaviours expected from your workforce.
 - Set agency-specific expectations and standards for active anti-racist practice.
 - Promote and seek feedback about anti-racist practice. Communicate positive examples and address racism whenever it is identified.
 - Train your workforce and provide opportunities for them to develop their knowledge, skills, and experience regarding anti-racist practice.
- Address criticisms or concerns promptly and constructively.
 - Implement systems and processes to log all incidents and observations of racism, with procedures established to address them upon identification.

- Clearly outline in the organisation's code of conduct that racism is unacceptable, and ensure effective processes and sanctions are in place.
- Maintain accountability while supporting team members to adhere to the required standards for their practice.
- Ensure your workforce reflects the diversity of Lambeth, including in senior leadership.
- Acknowledge the impact of racism on employees' lives and provide support. Focus new strategies and policies on anti-racism.
- Confirm that commissioned services meet anti-racism standards.

Practitioners

- Acknowledge the existence of racism and commit to being actively anti-racist.
- Follow this Charter's standards and those of your organization.
- Educate yourself on anti-racist practices, engage in discussions to improve your understanding, and recognise that creating an anti-racist workplace involves vulnerability for everyone.

Practice Guidance

This guidance offers examples of active anti-racist practices for working with children and families. While these are not standards for every organisation, the LSCP endorses their use as best practice within our multi-agency arrangements.

Ask and Understand

- When engaging with children and families, inquire about their self-identification in terms of culture and ethnicity. Gather information regarding their cultural heritage, customs, and experiences with racism, ensuring these details are meticulously recorded in your documentation. This is not just a paper exercise, consideration also needs to be given to how their unique identity impacts upon their lived experience and any relationship to risk and vulnerability, considering all intersecting factors of their identity.
- Determine whether English is the first language for children and families, and if not, offer interpretation services in their preferred language.
- During referrals or sharing information through multi-agency processes, always include comprehensive details about the family's ethnicity, culture, and religion. Document their lived experiences and the impact of factors such as stereotyping, profiling, biases, racism, and discrimination.

Communicate Clearly

- Use clear, appropriate language.
 - Refer to 'ethnicity' instead of 'race'.
 - Provide verbal and written explanations of processes, including complaints.
 - Amend historical records with harmful language as needed.
 - Avoid labels that trigger racism; describe behaviours in detail instead.

Think, Plan, and Engage

- Approach engagement with an anti-racist perspective.
- Recognise cultural diversity in parenting; there's no universal method.
- When assessing parental behaviours, consider whether experiences of racism are a contributing factor.
- Inquire about how ethnicity, culture, and religion are included in multi-agency practices.
- Reflect on how personal beliefs and biases influence interactions.
- Take responsibility to access further supervision, training and support to safeguard against assumptions and bias which influence interactions and decision making.
- Engage with respect for identities and heritage, prioritising child protection.
- Stay vigilant about abuse within contexts of faith, belief, and harmful practices.
- Be aware of the risk of adultification when working with children.

Respond

- Treat racism disclosures as safeguarding issues.
- Prioritise the emotional and psychological safety of the child or family.
- If an adult working with children and is involved in racist behaviour or discriminates against a child in any way on the basis of any protected characteristic defined under the Equality Act 2010, consult the LADO for advice.
- Ensure any concerns about racism or racial bias towards a child or family within the multiagency partnership are escalated in line with the LSCP Escalation Policy.

Learning, Impact, and Improvement

The LSCP will oversee the application of this Charter to ensure it facilitates change and creates avenues for learning and enhancement. The focus will be on the following areas:

- Gathering feedback from children, families, and communities.
- Collecting input from the multi-agency workforce, including through the LSCP's staff survey.
- Conducting audits, including the LSCP's self-assessment and auditing program.
- Reviewing cases with careful consideration of ethnicity and culture in context.
- Evaluating data to identify themes, patterns, and trends that highlight disproportionality.
- Learning from best practices and horizon scanning for lessons from other regions.