

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Race Action Plan 2024/25

OUR VISION

To deliver high quality and timely independent investigations and work closely with partners to achieve tangible benefits for the safety and confidence of those in custody and under community supervision.

WHAT WE DO



WHAT WE VALUE



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Ombudsman's foreword

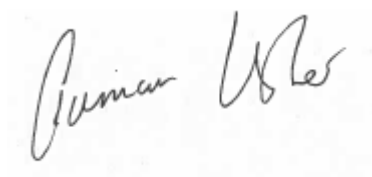
During my pre-appointment hearing for the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's role I was asked about the PPO's Race Action Plan. I explained that addressing racial discrimination would most definitely be a priority for me as Ombudsman and an issue I would continue driving forward.

Since joining the PPO, and in all my discussions with staff, there has been a strong consensus that we should, alongside our PPO staff-focused race equality work, be investing more resource into ensuring race is considered within our casework and addressed appropriately for our service-users.

We have taken the time to consider how we address this, having valuable conversations with leaders and staff within the PPO as well as external stakeholders. The 2024/25 plan includes a clear focus on our service users, but we also remain wholly committed to ensuring development opportunities and support for our black, Asian and minority ethnic staff.

This summer we saw unacceptable racism and violence which upset and affected many of our colleagues and, no doubt, our service users too. This plan shows our commitment to addressing racial inequalities faced by our black, Asian and minority ethnic service users and our intention to invest time and effort into educating our staff on racial disparities.

We will continue to have difficult conversations whenever necessary so we can empower our investigators to be curious and call out racism when we see or hear it. This is the right thing to do and it reflects our vision and values.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Usher', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

October 2024

Introduction

This plan seeks to put greater emphasis on ensuring the PPO addresses race for our service users. As such, we have changed some of our chosen principles and objectives to reflect our broader focus.

We have chosen 5 fundamental principles that underpin our Race Action Plan:

- Racial inequalities manifest themselves in daily situations, processes, and behaviours. They are not necessarily overt or isolated incidents.
- If we are to tackle racial disparity effectively, we need to achieve long-term organisational culture change.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff are not a homogenous group. People from different ethnic backgrounds have different experiences and those complexities need to be considered.
- If criminal justice bodies cannot provide an evidence-based explanation for disparities between ethnic groups, then reforms should be introduced to address such disparities.
- To ensure fair treatment, decision making and data should be brought into the open and exposed to scrutiny.

Our new objectives are:

- 1. Supporting our black, Asian and minority ethnic staff**
- 2. Improving investigator knowledge and addressing race in our case work**
- 3. Reviewing, strengthening, and analysing our data**

We have set out our priority actions to support the new objectives and ensure that they are resourced appropriately. We have taken time to consider which objectives would be the most helpful and undertook a literature review to help inform our priorities.

This plan will be overseen by both the PPO's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group's Race sub-group and our Learning, Analysis and Business Services team. Nevertheless, this plan is a cross-office commitment, and actions will be led by individuals in our Complaints, Fatal Incident Investigations ('FII') and Research, Data and Analysis teams.

All PPO staff are expected to be aware of this plan. We will not be promoting unconscious bias training for our staff. Research has indicated that such training has little impact on long-term behaviours and attitudes. Instead, we will try to decrease bias by taking actions which increase our exposure to and understanding of diverse perspectives and equality, diversity, and inclusion issues, including race-related issues.

Language disclaimer:

We have continued not to use the acronym BAME but rather refer in full to people from black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups, including those from white minority ethnic backgrounds. We are aware of the limitations of grouping together such a wide range of people and their diverse lived experiences. As we monitor our progress of this plan, we are committed to checking whether a particular ethnicity or ethnicities face distinct challenges that need to be recognised and addressed.

Objective one: Supporting black, Asian and minority ethnic staff

Action	Measure of success	Lead
To continue the existing PPO mentoring scheme and encourage participation from black, Asian and minority ethnic staff.	Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff take up the opportunity to be involved in the mentoring scheme. This leads to increased confidence, job satisfaction and engagement. Mentees report a positive impact on their career development.	EDIG Race sub-group.
To celebrate and commemorate events which champion racial diversity and inclusion such as Black History Month and South Asian Heritage Month.	Increased awareness among all staff, and for black, Asian and minority ethnic staff to feel valued by the PPO.	EDIG Race sub-group.
To continue our annual PPO Culture Day, showcasing the diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds of staff.	An increased sense of belonging and engagement among black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and an opportunity for all staff to learn more from and about each other.	EDIG Race sub-group.

Objective two: Improving investigator knowledge and addressing race in our case-work

Action	Measure of success	Lead
Develop training for complaints and fatal incident investigators on how to detect more subtle forms of racism within casework.	Investigators have an increased understanding of how indirect and subtle racism can be experienced within the services in our remit.	Policy Officer.
Working with stakeholders, and drawing on relevant wider research, we will develop questions for fatal incident investigators to ask in death investigation interviews to help uncover any potential issues of racism.	FII investigators feel comfortable to ask probing questions. Increased competency within the PPO to uncover issues which may be related to race.	Policy Officer working alongside Deputy Ombudsman for Fatal Incident Investigations.
Complaints investigators to begin recording on our case management system any evidence of racism when investigating complaints.	The Complaints function has a record of complaints cases where race was an issue.	Deputy Ombudsman for Complaints.
Complaints team to review use of force data (including reviewing race disproportionality) and Fatal Incidents team to contribute evidence to feed into expert advisory panels.	Complaints and FII teams contribute valuable information on our use of force data to help benefit the panel.	Deputy Ombudsmen for Complaints and Fatal Incident Investigations.

Objective three: Reviewing, strengthening, and analysing our data

Action	Measure of success	Lead
Review a sample of our race data. If necessary, amend processes at the PPO to help strengthen our data on race.	Our data on race is robust and we can draw conclusions from it.	Deputy Ombudsman for Learning, Analysis and Business Services.
<p>Analyse our complaints data to understand:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners complain to the PPO and whether this is proportionate to the estate. 2. Our complaints uphold rates for black, Asian and minority ethnic prisoners and whether there are any discrepancies. 3. For certain complaints categories such as adjudications, incentives and earned privileges scheme, and segregation, whether there are discrepancies between ethnicities. 	We understand the outcomes we produce for service-users based on race and are empowered to address any disparities if necessary and share information with HMPPS.	Deputy Ombudsman for Learning, Analysis and Business Services.
As a result of anti-immigration riots in summer 2024, monitor race-related complaints and any increases.	We understand whether the riots in summer 2024 had any impact on the prison estate.	Deputy Ombudsman for Learning, Analysis and Business Services.

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