

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Race Action Plan

2025/26

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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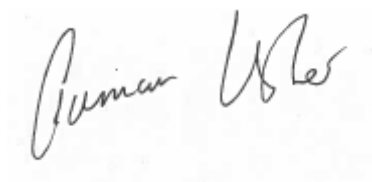
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Ombudsman's foreword

In October 2024, we published a Race Action Plan which invested more resource into ensuring race is considered within our casework. In the past six months, we have made significant progress.

- We have developed a framework for our fatal incident investigators providing guidance on how to consider racism within their casework. Our complaints investigators have started recording where we feel, or the complainant felt, there were issues relating to race.
- We reviewed a sample of our ethnicity data and have amended processes to strengthen its accuracy. We also analysed a set of our complaints outcomes and certain complaint categories by ethnicity.

We will be providing a more comprehensive update on our progress in our Annual Report for 2024/25. This year's Race Action Plan continues and deepens our focus on addressing racism in our casework. We will continue working hard to ensure our investigators feel equipped to recognise and address more subtle forms of racism. Alongside this, we will continue supporting our own ethnic minority staff and celebrating diversity. This work is a priority for me and something I am proud to continue driving forward.



Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

April 2025

Introduction

We have 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 ethnic minority 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, 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.

We will continue using our three objectives from last year, namely to:

- 1. Support our black, Asian and ethnic minority staff**
- 2. Improve investigator knowledge and address race in our casework**
- 3. Strengthen and analyse our data**

We have set out our priority actions to support these objectives and ensure that they are resourced appropriately. Once again, 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.¹ 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 continue not to use the acronym 'BAME' but instead refer in full to people from black, Asian, and ethnic minority groups, including those from white ethnic minority backgrounds. We are aware of the limitations of grouping together such a wide range of people and their diverse lived experiences. We will continue to follow civil service guidelines on how we write about ethnicity. As we monitor progress of this plan, we are committed to checking whether particular ethnicities face distinct challenges that need to be recognised and addressed.

¹ Unconscious bias and diversity training – what the evidence says - GOV.UK

Objective one: Support our black, Asian and ethnic minority staff

Action	Measure of success	Lead
Facilitate mentoring opportunities and encourage participation from black, Asian and ethnic minority staff.	Participation from black, Asian and ethnic minority staff. Mentees feel the mentoring was valuable.	EDIG Race Sub-group
Celebrate and commemorate events which champion racial diversity and inclusion such as Black History Month and South Asian Heritage Month.	Participation from all staff. Increased cultural awareness.	EDIG Race Sub-group
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 ethnic minority staff and an opportunity for all staff to learn more about each other.	EDIG Race Sub-group
Share information on race-related issues with the organisation through EDIG briefings.	Staff engage with this information and are better informed about race issues.	EDIG Race Sub-group

Objective two: Improve investigator knowledge and address race in our casework

Action	Measure of success	Lead
Using research, data and through consultation with complaints investigators, develop guidance for complaints investigators to support their ability to detect the presence and impact of racism in the complaints they investigate.	Complaints investigators understand how to recognise and investigate more subtle forms of racism.	Deputy Ombudsman for Complaints EDIG Race Sub-group
Using research, data and through consultation with FII investigators, continue to develop and embed the guidance created for FII investigators to help uncover potential issues of racism. FII to hold a forum for experienced stakeholders to discuss the guidance with investigators and to gather feedback. Investigators to also discuss FII case studies involving racism.	FII investigators better understand how to investigate potential issues of racism.	Deputy Ombudsman for Fatal Incident Investigations EDIG Race Sub-group
Continue consulting with stakeholders on how best to consider racism during our investigations.	Our guidance for investigators is developed and refined by different approaches used by relevant stakeholders.	Deputy Ombudsman for Complaints and FII EDIG Race Sub-group
Complaints investigators to continue recording on our case management system any concerns about racism when investigating complaints.	Record of complaints where we felt racism was potentially an issue. Ability to spot trends and address issues systematically.	Deputy Ombudsman for Complaints

Quarterly review of all complaints about racism and any complaints where investigators have flagged issues of racism.	Timely updates on any race-related issues arising in our complaints investigations.	Policy Officer
To share operational knowledge throughout the office, deputies to summarise and circulate any issues of racism in casework to the office.	Staff are aware and well informed about issues relating to race arising in our casework.	Deputy Ombudsman for Complaints and FII

Objective three: Strengthen and analyse our data

Action	Measure of success	Lead
Assessment and support teams to continue cross-checking ethnicity on PPUD against NOMIS and to amend accordingly.	Increased accuracy of ethnicity data on PPUD.	Deputy Ombudsman for Learning, Analysis and Business Services
Further and more in-depth analysis of our complaints data to understand whether we receive a proportionate number of complaints from ethnic minority prisoners, our uphold rates, and an analysis of certain complaints categories by ethnicity.	<p>An understanding of our complaints data using a larger sample size so we can draw conclusions.</p> <p>A breakdown of our complaints data over time to understand trends in our complaints data.</p> <p>We have evidence to address any disparities if necessary and share information with HMPPS.</p>	Deputy Ombudsman for Learning, Analysis and Business Services
Analysis of deaths in custody by ethnicity to check whether this is proportionate to the prison population, broken down by establishment type.	We understand whether ethnic minority prisoners are overrepresented and can share these findings with HMPPS.	Deputy Ombudsman for Learning, Analysis and Business Services

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