Prisons & Probation Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Race Action Plan 2026 to 2027

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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

- Resolve complaints
- Investigate deaths
- Identify and disseminate learning
- Ensure trust and confidence in the criminal justice system
- Special investigations

WHAT WE VALUE

- Ambitious thinking
- Professional curiosity
- Diversity & inclusion
- Transparency
- Teamwork

OGL

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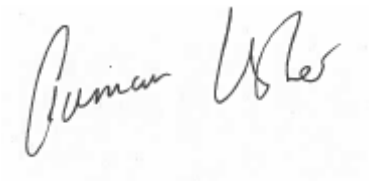
Ombudsman's foreword

I am continuing the PPO's commitment to tackling racism as set out in this year's Race Action Plan. Last year, fatal incident investigators participated in a session held in partnership with the Independent Office for Police Conduct, setting out an approach on how to investigate issues of racism in our investigations. It is important that, this year, this work is embedded further and investigators become more confident investigating these issues. It is also important that this work is mirrored for complaints investigators.

Alongside this work to equip our investigators, we will continue supporting our ethnic minority staff and celebrating diversity. Going forward, our research team will be analysing our data to highlight trends in relation to ethnicity. Progress on last year's Race Action Plan will be available in our annual report for the year.



Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman **July 2026**

Introduction

Five fundamental principles 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.
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds 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 minority 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 staff from ethnic minority backgrounds**
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 (EDIG) Race sub-group and our Learning, Analysis and Business Services (LABS) 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 to people from ethnic minority backgrounds to include all ethnic minority groups, including white, mixed or other ethnic minority groups. 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] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unconscious-bias-and-diversity-training-what-the-evidence-says

Objective one: Support our staff from ethnic minority backgrounds

Action	Measure of success	Lead
Facilitate mentoring opportunities and encourage participation from ethnic minority staff.	Participation from 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 staff across the office. Increased cultural awareness.	EDIG Race rub-group
Continue our annual PPO World Culture Day, showcasing the diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds of staff.	An increased sense of belonging and engagement among 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
Circulate guidance for complaints investigators on how to identify and investigate potential racism in complaints.	Complaints investigators recognise potential issues of racism and these are discussed with managers and, where appropriate, addressed.	Deputy Ombudsman for Complaints EDIG Race sub-group
The approach to investigating racism is further embedded within the FII team. FII investigators and managers to ensure issues of racism are identified and addressed in PPO investigations and reports.	Potential issues of racism are identified, discussed between investigators and managers in case reviews and addressed in reports.	Deputy Ombudsman for Fatal Incident Investigations EDIG Race sub-group
Consult with other 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 Deputy Ombudsman for Fatal Incident Investigations 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. An 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 Deputy Ombudsman for Fatal Incident Investigations

Objective three: Strengthen and analyse our data

Action	Measure of success	Lead
Assessment and support teams to continue cross-checking ethnicity on our case database (PPUD) against the National Offender Management Information System and to amend accordingly.	Increased accuracy of ethnicity data on PPUD.	Deputy Ombudsman for Learning, Analysis and Business Services Deputy Ombudsman for Complaints
Analysis of PPO uphold rates of complaints by ethnicity. Research team to periodically check for any discrepancies in casework arising from ethnicity.	To check our uphold rates to understand whether these are the same for each ethnicity. To spot trends and any potential issues in relation to prisoner ethnicity.	Head of Research

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