



Supporting Our Staff

Incidents of Racism

Guidance Document for Managers

Racism – whether overt or subtle – continues to exist within our society; including in our workplace and within the communities we serve. It can take many forms from explicit discriminatory language to microaggressions and biases that are less overt, but equally harmful.

As managers, you have a responsibility to acknowledge this reality and actively support our staff when they are affected by racism. The Trust is unwavering in its commitment to **Anti-racism** and maintains a **zero-tolerance** approach towards any form of racism. We must embody our Trust values of **compassion** and **inclusivity** in our actions and interactions.

Experiencing racism can have profound and lasting effects on individuals. It impacts not only their mental and emotional wellbeing, leading to stress, anxiety, isolation and reduced self-worth but can also affect physical health, job performance and career development. Staff who regularly face racism may disengage, lose trust in the leadership and/or choose to leave the Trust. Racism is not a personal matter – it affects staff morale, cohesion and organisational integrity.

By providing immediate and meaningful support, managers can help mitigate these effects. Providing a safe space to speak up, validating experiences and actively demonstrating respect and care.

This guidance has been created to help you respond effectively and compassionately when a staff member experiences racism – whether it comes from a colleague, patient or a member of the public within the working environment.

Supporting staff through these incidents is not just about responding in the moment – it is about building a workplace culture where everyone feels respected, seen, and safe. It requires proactive leadership, empathy and a commitment to equity and wellbeing.

This document provides practical steps, reflective prompts, and examples to help you navigate these challenging but critical conversations. Your actions matter.

By standing alongside your staff, you send a clear message: racism has no place here - and everyone deserves to work in a space where they are treated with dignity and respect.



Practical Steps for Managers:

1. Respond Promptly

- a. Thank the individual for raising the incident and sharing it with you.
- b. Ensure the conversation takes place in a private environment. Consider; do you need to close the door? If there isn't time to have the conversation in private, explain this and ask if they want to arrange a follow up conversation [if appropriate and no immediate concern for welfare].
- c. Listen attentively and without interruption.

2. Acknowledge and Validate

- a. Acknowledge the courage it takes to raise concerns.
- b. Use affirming language such as 'I am sorry this has happened to you'.
- c. Avoid defensiveness or making excuses for others behaviour.
- d. Show empathy and understanding. Acknowledge the feelings of stress, anxiety and fear are normal reactions.

3. Assess Immediate Needs

- a. Ask questions to understand what they may need immediately such as 'how are you feeling right now?' or 'what do you need from me to support you today?'
- b. Do they need to be given downtime or time away from their current work duties?

4. Take appropriate action

- a. Document the discussion and the incident, if appropriate.
- b. Escalate accordingly if required to Senior Management and/or HR.
- c. Encourage the individual to raise via internal processes if appropriate.
- d. Signpost to relevant support services such as SALs, Health & Wellbeing Website and the Staff Networks.

5. Follow up and stay engaged

- a. Check in with the individual over the next few days/week or over a mutually agreed period.
- b. Consider the following for any onward catch ups:
 - **Frequency:** schedule meetings and/or catch up with team members that are affected.
 - **Approach:** Create a safe, non-judgmental space for employees to express their feelings. Use open ended questions to facilitate dialogue and encourage conversation.
 - **Listening:** Practice active listening. Acknowledge their concerns and feelings.



Example Scenarios

Scenario 1: Racism from a patient

An individual reports that a patient was verbally racially abusive towards them whilst they were on a job. The employee felt shaken and was visibly upset.

Response:

- Immediately acknowledge the incident and express support.
- Review reporting mechanisms and if appropriate, report accordingly.
- Consider whether the staff member requires any downtime and/or time away from work.
- Signpost the wellbeing services available
- Follow up at an agreed time with the member of staff to ensure they have the appropriate support in place and you can feedback any action taken if appropriate.

Scenario 2: Microaggressions from a colleague

An individual tells you that their colleague repeatedly mispronounces their name and makes comments such as “you speak English so well”.

Response:

- Thank them for raising it with you and validate how they feel.
- Discuss how the individual would like the concern resolved; did they just want a safe space to discuss it with you? Did they want support to raise it directly with the individual or did they want to raise formally?
- Take any appropriate action in line with how they wish to resolve the matter.
- Follow up with the member of staff on how the situation evolves and how they are.

Remember: You are not expected to be an expert on racism. It is important that you create a safe environment and dialogue where staff can raise any concerns regarding racist behaviour and can come to you to seek guidance and support for next steps.

You may feel worried about saying the wrong thing or not knowing how to correctly respond. This should not deter you from supporting staff; ensure you use active listening skills and if you need additional support, contact your local HR Representative. Please find link to contact details for local HR Representatives: [HR Contacts](#)

While we will always seek to understand how a member of staff would like their concern to be handled, there may be instances where the nature of the conduct being reported to you falls short of our Trust values and may need to be considered under our Disciplinary Procedure. In such cases, it is your responsibility to ensure the concerns are addressed appropriately. Please liaise with your local HR Representative to discuss further if needed.



Support

Consideration for Adjustments

As with any other staff welfare concerns, please bear in mind any adjustments that can be made under relevant Trust policies such as Flexible Working Policy and Leave/Time Off for Domestic Reasons Policy.

We encourage a solution focused conversation to understand the root cause of the individuals concerns and to see if we can mitigate these by offering any adjustments/support.

All Trust policies are accessible via [PP002 - Document Management System - Power Apps](#)

Signpost the avenues to raise concerns

Make it clear to all how they can raise concerns should they have them. If they experience any incidents of hate or discrimination, encourage reporting mechanisms such as;

Police – if there is an incident of violence and aggression; staff have the right to report this to the Police. It should be noted that as a Trust, we cannot report an incident on behalf of an individual.

Direct management and/or another Trust Manager

Human Resources - [HR Contacts \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Staff Networks – [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

FTSU - [Freedom To Speak Up - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Trade Unions

Support Services:

Ensure all employees are aware of the available support services, this can include:

- **Internal Resources:** Health and wellbeing support via [WMAS Wellbeing | Health and Wellbeing](#), SALs, Mental Health First Aiders, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion support and FTSU, Staff Networks, Diversity Champions Management, HR
- **External Resources:** Support is available from Tell Mama, a confidential support service for those suffering from anti-Muslim hate and discrimination across the UK. Their website features a number of different ways to report anti-Muslim incidents, including via phone or WhatsApp: Report in Anti-Muslim Hate or Islamophobia [Tell Mama: Report in Anti-Muslim Hate or Islamophobia \(tellmamauk.org\)](#)



Reflective Prompts

Self – Awareness & Bias:

How has my own background shaped how I perceive and talk about race?

What assumptions might I make about different groups, even unintentionally?

Responding to Racism:

How comfortable am I addressing racism or microaggressions?

What holds me back from intervening or speaking up? i.e fear, uncertainty or discomfort?

Leadership & Culture:

Have I created an environment or culture where people feel safe raising concerns?

What proactive steps have I taken to foster racial equity in the workplace?

Growth & Learning:

Have I explored how I can deepen my understanding of anti-racism?

Who do I turn to or learn from when I need to challenge my own perspectives?

Systems & Support;

What mechanisms are in place for individuals to raise concerns, am I aware of them all?

Are there improvements I can raise or make to support individuals further when raising concerns of racism?

These reflective prompts are intended to support you in thinking critically and compassionately about your response to staff raising concerns of racism, your role in fostering an inclusive environment, and any further action that may be appropriate.

The prompts are not about having all the answers but about guiding you into thoughtful consideration and understanding.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this guidance, explore a situation further, or seek support in your role, please do not hesitate to contact your local HR representative and/or Chaz Dheensa, HR Manager – Charanpreet.dheensa@wmas.nhs.uk.

We are here to support you as you navigate these important conversations.