

London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement

Purpose of statement, how it was developed, what next?

- To ensure there is a consistent approach across London, adopted by all local authorities, that is further underpinned by the CELC Tackling Racial Inequality Standards.
- The primary audience is the public and stakeholders who can hold local government to account.
- The statement has been developed by a working group of officers convened by CELC. We started by generating ideas about the key features we would want to see in a statement. This enabled some very open discussion about what to include and why. The statement was then refined over the course of two sessions.
- It has been reviewed by all other working groups on the Tackling Racial Inequality programme.
- The Anti-Racist Statement and CELC Standard was tabled at CELC on 21 October 2022 and we gained with regards to authorities adopting the statement and further.
- The Anti-Racist Statement and CELC Standard was briefed to Leader's on 24 October 2022 with the aiming of achieving sign-off by 13 Dec 2022 Leaders' Committee.

The statement

Local authorities in London are committed to achieving racial equality because we recognise that persistent racial inequalities are unacceptable and adversely affect all Londoners.

We know that certain groups are more likely to face inequality, experience poor outcomes and to live in poverty than others. Often these outcomes are used as an excuse not to acknowledge racial inequality, but groups are not more disadvantaged by chance. Structural disadvantage is rooted in racism and discrimination that is both historical and current.

We do have legislation to protect against overt racism, negative attitudes and treatment, but many of the systems that discriminate do so because of more subtle and covert unchecked “prejudice, assumptions, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping.”

This wording draws on the Macpherson Report 1999 definition of institutional racism which is still relevant today. This is a dehumanising process that is unacceptable and communities are tired of being treated this way. We cannot let another generation down by not actively responding to what remains a clear and compelling articulation of what needs to change.

Why it matters that we take an anti racist approach

All local authorities should be committed to taking an anti-racist approach because the most damaging aspects of inequality and racism are embedded in society. It is not enough to “not be racist” or to focus on tackling conscious hatred, like racial abuse. It is everyone’s responsibility to proactively and continuously:

- Unpack and reset beliefs, assumptions and values;
- Take action when we observe racism come into play, in beliefs, assumptions and values and the decision and actions that follow, however subtle;
- Be humble and educate ourselves in what we don’t know about racial inequalities and racism that exists, rather than putting the onus on others to educate us.

The commitment

Our collective commitment to achieve racial equality focuses on what London councils can do together to have a positive impact on life outcomes at all stages, including in relation to health and wellbeing, employment and education. This is about social justice and promoting equality because all Londoners should be able to reach their potential in all spheres.

To be proactive in meeting this commitment, we expect all local authorities to:

1. Build a picture of what the key inequalities are in their area and look at what is driving these.
2. Shape solutions by listening to residents, communities and frontline staff and by responsibly drawing on their lived experience to understand what the issues are and what works, without putting the burden on them to educate us.
3. Set expectations of leaders to make the connection between achieving positive outcomes, their own leadership style and diversity, and to take personal responsibility for what they can do now to bring about change. This acknowledges that residents have worked hard to achieve social justice and rightly expect to see leadership that reflects their position, to see action, and to be part of solution.

The common approach

This commitment to achieve racial equality should be publicly adopted by all local authorities using a consistent approach driving change. Everyone should:

1. Work together as a whole system across London and influence other public bodies and civil society to adopt a common commitment and approach to tackling racial inequality.
2. Build on strengths in communities and be ready to devise solutions with them.
3. Focus on changing our institutional leadership and organisational cultures.
4. Understand and acknowledge that racism is a form of trauma, which impacts on individuals and communities, and can also be intergenerational and that the answer is not just about support for individuals but undoing the systems and processes within our organisations which continue to do harm.
5. Use the disaggregated data intelligently to inform policy and planning. We need to look at where there are patterns of discrimination experienced by ethnically diverse groups, but also move beyond the 'broad brush' data about communities from Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic backgrounds. This means understanding specific needs, impacts and experiences of distinct groups and taking an intersectional approach to identifying and tackling issues by recognising that there is diversity within all groups: socio-economic background; gender; sexuality; faith and other identities that can exacerbate and compound racial inequalities. A central component and initial step is for all local authority to openly publish ethnicity pay data.