

Race Equality Commission
Policy, Performance and Communications Team
Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
Sheffield
S1 2HH

Friday 25th June 2021

Race Equality Commission Call for Evidence Response.

Dear Bashir,

I am writing to respond to the Race Equality Commission's call for evidence to support your current inquiry. Sheffield Chamber of Commerce is a community of members working together to make business stronger in our city. Our mission is to lead the way in making Sheffield the best place in the UK to start, grow and run a successful and sustainable business. We seek to achieve this by:

- Making sure our members get the support they need when they need it.
- Helping our members build lasting and meaningful relationships.
- Leading the debate and making sure our members voice is heard in government.

The Chambers primary revenue and funding stream is via membership income. Without our members the Chamber would not exist, and we would not be able to undertake the work providing the support that we do.

The Chamber views engagement with BAME businesses as important. The development of an inclusive economy is a priority we are committed too. We seek to have a diverse representation of people on our Board and Chamber Council, which is our governing body of the Chamber. It is important that these groups reflect the diverse society we have in Sheffield as they provide the strategic oversight and direction of the Chamber.

To provide an overview of recent activity we hosted several diversity and inclusion events in partnership with Business in the Community (BITC), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Sheffield City Region Chambers and Sheffield Business Together (SBT) earlier in the year. Included below is a brief synopsis:

- Embracing Diversity and Inclusion – 24th February 2021 – The purpose of the event was focussed on raising awareness of diversity, equality and inclusion and sharing best practice on creating an inclusive workforce.
- Unconscious bias and micro-aggressions – 24th March 2021 – The event focussed on unconscious bias and micro aggressions and how they impact our decisions, recruitment, and retention in our organisations.

The Chamber is also committed to making a difference within communities in our city. Recently, we announced the launch of our partnership with SBT. We have teamed up to create a citywide network of 1000s of businesses, charities, and schools across Sheffield. The focus of the partnership is to scale and grow the work that SBT is already doing. We seek to bring like-minded businesses together to collaborate, connect, share, and harness resources to address some of the key challenges facing our city and communities. Through a simple and easy to access brokerage service our aim is to align support where it is most needed and tackle the social challenges we face.

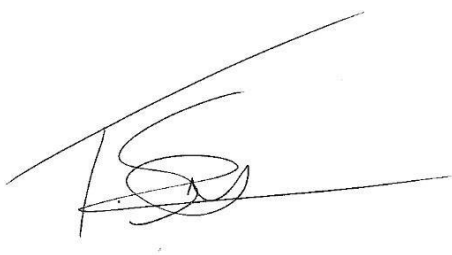
Through a funding initiative with Sheffield City Region and Sheffield City Council we have been supporting businesses with issues they are experiencing as a direct result of Brexit. Our support service has covered both import and export related challenges with the sole aim of helping our business communities overcome and solve their problems. As the project has been funded, we have been able to take our reach to a wider audience and the service has been open to all. The project has enabled us to support more than 130 local companies with their international trade challenges and to connect the relevant expertise where required.

Currently, we are in the process of launching our new Chamber Hubs. These will be places where our members can gather, share ideas, knowledge, and insight. One of Hubs will have a distinct focus on the inclusivity and diversity agenda. The Healthy, Diverse and Skilled Workplaces Hub will work towards making Sheffield the healthiest, happiest, and most diverse city to work. Our Hubs will be open to all members allowing us to influence and reach as many businesses as possible within the scope of this agenda.

We recognise that the Chamber has work to do in this space to truly make our city a fully inclusive place to operate a business, work and live. An area of future focus for the Chamber is start ups and the associated support in Sheffield. We have an outline of a plan to help people from disadvantaged backgrounds start a business.

We hope by outlining our recent activities and the future direction of the Chamber it will help the Race Equality Commission with your inquiry. Our support for the Commission remains as a key stakeholder and we look forward to continuing our ongoing collaborative work together.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Sutton

Head of Policy & Representation

Sheffield Chamber of Commerce

