

Sheffield Race Equality Commission: Call for Evidence

Submission from Sheffield Futures

Sheffield Futures is a young people's charity, providing mentoring and specialist support for those who need it most

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Evidence of Racial Inequality in Sheffield

- **Leadership:** BAME people are significantly under-represented at senior leadership levels across public sector and VCF organisations
- **Police & Criminal Justice:** BAME people are disproportionately affected by SY Police 'stop and search'; BAME people - both adults and young people – are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system.
- **Education:** young people from particular minority ethnic backgrounds are over-represented in fixed term and permanent exclusions from school – Roma young people especially so. There is local anecdotal evidence to suggest that whilst many BAME young people progress to higher education and gain under-graduate and post graduate qualifications, they struggle to access graduate employment opportunities locally – leading to a 'brain drain' where BAME graduates relocate outside Sheffield.
- **Health:** BAME people are over-represented in specialist mental health services, but under-represented in early intervention & preventative mental health services. Some minority ethnic groups are over-represented in physical health services – in some cases this has clear links to poverty.
- **Poverty** – some minority ethnic communities are significantly over-represented in formal classifications of poverty – as such are more likely to be living in poor quality and over-crowded housing; to be victims of crime; to live in areas with poor air quality; and to suffer illness associated with poverty. Sheffield is a largely physically divided city – with BAME people more likely to be living on the poor side than the affluent side.
- **Hate Crime** – referrals for hate crime have been rising in recent years locally – including racism. This is often attributed to better reporting systems. However, it could equally be due to a rise in intolerance.

Analysis of the Cause of Race Inequality in Sheffield

The evidence listed above is not unique to Sheffield, but can be found across the UK, and is entrenched. Improving race equality in Sheffield appears stagnant however. This is because it has not been prioritised at a co-ordinated strategic level and a robust shared strategic plan with clear measurable targets is not in place. Any positive practice happens in silos – though there are still pockets of excellent practice in the city.

Examples of Good Practice in Relation to Reducing Racism or Race Inequality

There are many examples at city/borough wide and organisational levels of good practice. These are some of the things we have done at Sheffield Futures. We need to do more and we will build on this practice as a starting point:

- We established a cross-organisation working group to develop our internal Cohesion Plan. This was endorsed by Cohesion Sheffield which we are a member of. The group has been set up to review actions on a regular basis.
- We have reviewed our Equality & Diversity Policy

- We have signed up to the ACEVO Diversity Pledge
- We have had a whole staff conversation in light of action following the murder to George Floyd and the body of evidence demonstrating that BAME people have been disproportionately negatively affected by COVID-19 in the UK. A set of actions were agreed.
- We are in the process of reviewing equality of access to our services; and whether they are culturally appropriate. We have recently been offered the opportunity to work with a researcher at a local university to understand BAME access to our emotional well-being & mental health services.

In the next few months:

- We will review our recruitment practices to ensure they offer equality of access to BAME candidates. We will review opportunities for BAME staff to progress in the organisations – and are involved in a wider piece of work in the city re: BAME leadership pipeline. We will also review our staff training needs re: anti-racist practice and invest in training as appropriate.

Best Ways to Tackle Racism or Race Inequality in the City

There should be a multi-agency strategy which is prioritised and has clear actions and targets. This should be managed by an independent organisation/individual. Organisations should be asked to sign up to the strategy and commit their time and expertise. Signatories should be expected to account for their agreed commitment.

Individual organisations should develop and implement their own action plan. Anchor organisations in the public and VCF sectors should lead by example on this. This should include workforce development; equality of access to services; culturally appropriate services; and strong user voice mechanisms. To support this, structures should be established which share good practice.

There needs to be genuine commitment to tackling inequalities at senior management and Board levels through clear affirmative action.

Education is key. The national curriculum on Black & Asian history is limited. Whilst there should be continued attempts to lobby Government to make changes to this, Sheffield schools could commit to providing children and young people with an alternative (additional) curriculum – in addition to anti-racist training for staff and young people. This opportunity could be expanded to youth provision taking place outside school hours.

There needs to be safe spaces where people of different backgrounds and ages can come together and share their experiences and commit to learning together. There should also be more opportunities available for different communities to come together to take part in shared activities – including educational and leisure activities. There should be opportunities for interested residents to take part in anti racist training.

Black & Minority Ethnic People should be at the heart of the agenda and driving the agenda. However, it is not the responsibility of BAME people to educate others about racism. It is everybody's responsibility, and this should be clear in the strategy.

** We have used the term BAME throughout this submission but recognise that this may not be the preferred term moving forward. This is something we will explore as a staff group.