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Housing  
Association**

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## Written Evidence: Race Equality Commission Sheffield

**18 September 2020**

### **1. Introduction, organisational overview and our reason for submitting evidence**

In 2022 South Yorkshire Housing Association will celebrate 50 years of providing homes and services to people across South Yorkshire. We are an organisation deeply rooted in the region, driven by our social purpose “with SYHA you can settle, live well and realise potential”.

At SYHA we work with over 20,000 people and our work spans housing, health, social care, employment and the voluntary sector- we provide services in all these systems. Our system reach, scale, assets and partnerships put us in a unique position to help tackle structural racism in our city.

We have a long history of commitment to diversity and of tackling social injustice, however the events of the last 5 months -the murder of George Floyd and the way that Covid-19 disproportionately impacted on BAME people has led us to hold ourselves to account on whether we are doing enough to tackle structural racism. We have the privilege of holding many valuable resources - jobs, housing, health and care services, influence, talent and financial acumen. The questions we have been asking ourselves are:

- Are we leveraging our privileged access to resources effectively enough to tackle the issue? Are we acting as part of the solution to structural racism?
- How are we contributing to the structural inequality that exists? How much are we part of the problem?

We welcome the Commission as we believe all sectors, systems and leaders across the city should be asking those same questions.

One of the defining features of work on diversity and on tackling structural inequality is the high failure rate. This dire lack of progress has been highlighted by the Blacks Lives Matter movement and the Fenton report. There is a growing frustration that we've been having the same conversation for decades with very little real change. Making the urgent progress that is required will require a huge collective effort across our City - a pulling together of all of the major institutions - including the City Council - that day in day out make decisions which deepen structural racism. We want to be part of that collective effort to learn, share, and be humble enough to ask for help and admit where we have all collectively failed the BAME citizens of the City. We hope that the Commission and the recommendations will be the kickstart for that collective movement

## **2. Evidence of racial inequality in Sheffield**

For the purposes of this section we will focus specifically on **housing**. It is impossible to address structural racism without looking at housing. We were surprised that housing was not noted as a specific category of interest for the Race Equality Commission.

We believe that housing is of fundamental importance in considering the issue of structural racism in Sheffield for the following reasons;

- Housing shapes many of the other things that people do e.g. where they attend school, work, how much access to green space, clearer air and community resources they have. Our homes are fundamental to our wellbeing and have a significant impact on a whole range of wider system outcomes.
- Housing attainment is a spatial expression of social attributes in our City. Sheffield is one of the most spatially divided cities in the UK. The impact of this has never been more evident than in the way in which the Covid-19 pandemic played out so differently across the City. The history of Sheffield plays directly into this polarisation - the middle classes/rich citizens built their houses in the west away from the industrial fumes of the Don Valley in the east. You can see a clear pattern of housing in the city - larger/better homes on south facing slopes in the west with "worker" terraces on north facing slopes. The geography played directly into the location and quality of homes; then council housing was added in the north and the south on land that was open fields.

Tackling racial inequality will need to involve consideration of the way this history and geography impact on social cohesion, the fairness of resource allocation across the City and the wider social outcomes across different neighbourhoods.

- Housing is a precious resource and as such is a significant area of policy and practice within the Council. It is subject to a high degree of national political influence and quick shifting sands. It is an area where responding to the political agenda can, and does, quickly deepen structural racism; we need to place housing at the centre of our thinking on structural racism if we are to counter this.

### **The evidence**

The evidence base on race and housing specifically for Sheffield is poor - in fact notable by its absence. The latest Housing Market Assessment for the City has very limited reference to racialised inequalities, underpinning factors or the experiences of BAME citizens. Seemingly no specific research on race, racism and housing is available since 'Housing Black and Minority Ethnic People in Sheffield' in 1999 (Gidley, Harrison and Robinson)

Given the points outlined above we would challenge the Commission to consider why there is an absence of evidence and how this might be improved.

The wider national evidence base on the issue is clear on the many ways that housing contributes to structural racism:

#### **Housing and tenure**

In every socio-economic group and age group, White British households are more likely to own their own homes than all ethnic minority households combined. 63% of White British households own their own homes compared with 20% of Black Africans

White British households are less likely to rent social housing than households from all other ethnic groups combined. In Yorkshire, 20% of BAME households live in social rented accommodation as opposed to 17% of white British households

*(Source: Gov.uk, Rented Social Housing, Feb 2020)*

#### **Housing and place of residence**

With the exception of the Indian ethnic group, people from an ethnic minority are more likely than White British people to live in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England

Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are 3+ times more likely than White British people to live in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England

Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are 3+ times more likely than White British people to live in the most income-deprived neighbourhoods, and Pakistani people are more than twice as likely as White British people to live in the most employment-deprived areas

White British people are least likely to be living in the most income-deprived neighbourhoods of England

(Source: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/british-population/demographics/people-living-in-deprived-neighbourhoods/latest>)

### **Housing Deprivation**

Ethnic minorities are particularly disadvantaged in terms of housing: all ethnic minority groups had higher levels of overcrowding than the White British group across all types of localities. Lower home ownership rates among ethnic minority people partly explain ethnic inequality - overcrowding is much higher in rented accommodation.

The Bangladeshi and Black African groups were the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in terms of housing in 2011 across classification areas

(Source: **Lymperopoulou, K., & Finney, N. (2017)** Socio-spatial factors associated with ethnic inequalities in districts of England and Wales, 2001–2011. *Urban Studies*, 54(11), 2540–2560)

### **3. Your organisation's or your own analysis of the cause or causes of racism or racial inequality in Sheffield**

There are a complex and wide range of causes of structural racism in our City. We would draw attention to what we believe are the most significant contributing factors:

- **The lack of diversity in leadership and the impact of white privilege**

The lack of diversity in leadership across every mayor institution and system across our City is striking. The most fundamental issue impacting on structural racism is that the major systems we all rely on e.g. education, health, housing are designed primarily by white people for white people without due consideration of the impact on non-white citizens.

Covid-19 has flushed out the some of the consequences of this lack of diversity in power and decision making. The national and local response failed to design the pandemic response with the specific needs of BAME people in mind e.g. tailored communication, how different cultural factors might impact ability to adhere to the measures. The consequences for the impact of Covid-19 were stark but the reality is that this lack of diversity is reinforcing structural racism day in day out across all of our systems

- **Lack of architecture to drive change. Not responding to the already known**

This is not a new issue and many of the causes of the structural racism are well known and evidenced e.g. The Lammy Review, The Angiolini Review and the Baroness Mc Gregor- Smith Review have made a series of well researched recommendations, most of which have not been implemented at national or local level. The Equalities Act should drive improvement but is often poorly applied or ignored. One example of this is that Equality Impact Assessments into major decisions in our City are largely ineffective - often a tick box exercise which does not truly influence decision making. This has resulted in austerity having a negative impact on BAME communities e.g. the number of BAME organisations offering services to their communities has declined during the last 10 years due to lack of opportunity and investment. Council insourcing is making this worse.

Part of the reason for this lack of implementation on existing recommendations is that the architecture to drive improvement on racial equality does not exist. Without addressing this, recommendations from the commission will not be implemented.

- **Exclusive governance and lack of system leadership on this issue**

Our city has complex governance arrangements across a range of areas of policy and strategy. Often the complexity of these arrangements, their exclusivity and the existing politics of the City are a significant barrier to creative action which delivers lasting impact. As a City we mistake

consultation for co-production. Collecting the views of BAME people or offering them a temporary seat at our table is not co-production. Co-production means that BAME people have power in all aspects of the cycle of decision making and change - from co-design, through to co-delivery, co-evaluation and co-governance.

SYHA is a key agent in much of the decision making across many of our systems. On reflection we believe that very little, if any, consideration is given to the issue of structural racism at system leadership level. Driving change will require a system leadership approach. There is a risk that following a flurry of activity after Black Lives Matter and The Fenton Report our system leaders move on to the next pressing issue. We already sense this is happening.

- **Lack of data to drive the right action**

One of the defining features of structural racism locally is the lack of progress. As a City we have been guilty of spending time on initiatives that change the optics and make us “look” committed to diversity but that don’t actually tackle structural racism or deliver real change. Data and insight into diversity and structural inequality are poor; without improvement in this area we will continue to make ineffective choices on how to drive change. We need sound data in which to ground interventions that will deliver the urgent and enduring impact which is required

- **Paradigm shift and shifting practice**

We will turn specifically to housing for our final point. Over the last 20 years there has been a significant paradigm shift in politics from viewing housing as a social asset to an economic asset. This shift has impacted on all aspects of housing policy and regulation. Most significantly it has influenced policies underpinning the fair allocation of housing and this in turn has exacerbated structural racism. The table below summarises the impact of this shift over the last 20 years;

Some of what we have lost	Some of what we have gained
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• race equality strategies - monitor and challenge (staffing &amp; provision)</li> <li>• BME housing needs surveys</li> <li>• support for BME-led housing orgs</li> <li>• cultural sensitivity in design and provision</li> <li>• social housing as an option for recent refugees</li> <li>• asylum contracts with local providers / social landlords</li> <li>• analysis, investigation and regulation re: race equality in housing (e.g. CRE; Housing Corporation)</li> <li>• translation and interpretation services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• equality and diversity - promote and champion (staffing)</li> <li>• strategic housing market assessments</li> <li>• Homes England and the localism agenda</li> <li>• migrants blamed for the housing crisis</li> <li>• state-sanctioned discrimination e.g. local residency test</li> <li>• privatisation of asylum housing; "unacceptably poor" accommodation</li> <li>• limited analysis and investigation (EHRC); light touch regulation (e.g. HE); focus on market stimulation</li> <li>• LAs urged to stop spending on translation</li> </ul>

#### 4. Examples of good practice in relation to reducing racism or racial inequality (from Sheffield, elsewhere in the UK or overseas)

There are 3 areas of good practice from SYHA that we would draw attention to

##### Co-production

At SYHA we have developed a rigorous method of co-production. Our approach has been highlighted by The World Health Organisation as an example of best practice internationally. This approach delivers impact. We applied our co-production method on the Sheffield Age Better programme in order to increase BAME participation and this increased BAME representation from 4% on the programme to 22%. Appendix 1 provides a range of case studies and examples of our co-production work. We continue to offer a co-production service to the city through our Co Create service.

##### Pay Gap Reporting

National policy on Gender Pay Gap reporting has flushed out inequality and driven improvements in practice. SYHA is one of only 3% of organisations nationally that measures the Ethnicity Pay Gap.

##### Be overt in strategic intention

In 2018 we developed a new strategy for LiveWell, our health, care and wellbeing service. An overt focus of this strategy was to improve our performance on racial equality. Over the last 2 years this strategy has helped us to reach a much more diverse group of customers, BAME

representation across a number of our services has significantly increased.

## **5. What you or your organisation believe to be the best way to tackle racism or racial inequality in the city**

### **Put racial inequality at the heart of the Covid-19 Recovery Planning**

Covid-19 is changing the fabric of our City and all aspects of life. This offers a once in a generation opportunity to implement radical change. There is a risk that Covid-19 Recovery Planning is too far removed from the work on tackling structural racism. The Commission should make specific recommendations that tether the decisions on recovery planning to the aspirations on tackling structural inequality.

### **Drive a greater ambition and a more robust approach to co-production**

We will reinforce white privilege and repeat past errors without a clearly articulated aspiration and robust method of co-production. Any recommendations from the Commission should be underpinned by a clear statement of intent on how improvements in our City will be designed, delivered, evaluated and governed by BAME citizens. Put bluntly, if we do not tackle the lack of power sharing in our city then it is unlikely that anything will change.

### **Take a system leadership approach to progress**

Sheffield City Council is in a privileged position to activate wider system leadership on this issue - a key agent in existing governance structures. We would like to see SCC utilise this position to bring system leaders together around this issue so that we can collectively consider how to drive change, support each other and share learning. SYHA would be keen to be involved and help with this work.

### **Do the basics brilliantly**

Every day across the City hundreds of leaders take decisions which impact on the lives of BAME people. There is existing guidance and legislation on how these decisions can be made much more fairly. The Commission should consider how to drive improvement in the application of existing legislation e.g. The Equalities Act. A starting point would be to address the significant weakness in the application of Equality Impact Assessments.



## **Remember that home is the foundation of wellbeing**

Given the fundamental impact that our homes and neighbourhoods have on all other quality of life indicators we would like to see the Commission make specific recommendation on tackling housing inequality and the spatial divide in the City. These should be developed in conjunction with BAME residents and the Strategic Housing Forum. This must start with the collection, sharing and bench-marking data on allocations, employment and place-making. It could then develop to cover issues such as lettings policies, training, new development and procurement.