



# Towards Anti-Racist Further Education: Qualitative research on the lived experiences of learners and staff

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy

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Qualitative research on the lived experiences of learners and staff

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Views expressed in this report are views of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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# Towards Anti-Racist Further Education

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# Introduction

## Background and aims of the research

**As part of its action plan to achieve Wales' anti-racist ambition across further education (FE), the Welsh Government commissioned this research into the extent of racism in FE and its impacts on learners and staff.**

This research took place following the launch of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan in 2022<sup>1</sup>, which set out the Welsh Government's commitment to creating a more inclusive society for all. Included in the plan are co-produced actions to be taken over the next five years to address racism, tackle hate crime and promote diversity and inclusion in public life. A key goal set out in the plan is to dismantle inequalities in education.

A scoping study was undertaken, on FE's contribution to Wales' Anti-racist Action Plan<sup>2</sup>. The recommendations from the study highlighted a need for qualitative data collection, monitoring and reporting, including to better understand lived experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (hereafter 'ethnic minority') ethnic minority learners, apprentices and staff.

This research team were commissioned to begin building that qualitative evidence base. The Towards Anti-Racist FE study has, through in-depth interviews with FE staff and learners, built a basis of understanding of lived experiences in the FE, apprenticeship and adult learning sectors. Lived experiences of racial discrimination and harassment have been discussed, along with views on what needs to change in order to achieve the anti-racist Wales ambition from staff and learner's perspectives. Identifying practical changes to be made has been a key aim, with these presented as 'strategic opportunities' towards the end of this report.

The study has been led by researchers from strategic innovation consultancy DK&A, along with researchers from charity Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team (EYST).

The Welsh Government's Anti-racist FE Steering Group, which is comprised of members of FE institutions, stakeholders and experts, had oversight over the project.

**Steering Group members were involved in co-constructing the research at key stages, including:**

- Identifying themes and priorities which were incorporated into the research specification.
- Meeting the research team at the start of the project, to help inform the scoping of the research and identify areas of interest.
- Disseminating the call-out to learners and staff, to help recruit participants.
- Meeting the research team to discuss the interim and final findings of the research, in order to identify emerging themes, discuss the implications of the research findings, identify priorities for action, and consider how learners, staff and providers can best be supported to respond to the findings.
- Providing expert advice and reflections to help shape the final presentation and the recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, 2022 | <sup>2</sup> An Initial Assessment of the FE Sector's Contribution to the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, 2022

# Introduction

## Background and aims of the research

**The initial scoping study, along with the Anti-racist FE Steering Group's work identifying key topics to explore, formed the basis of the research specification. The project set out to:**

Identify **practical actions** that could be taken to tackle discrimination, **improve the experience** of ethnic minority learners and staff, and **build the confidence** of learners and staff of all ethnicities in understanding and discussing anti-racism.

Put the lived experiences of ethnic minority people **at the centre of the design and delivery** of the research.

Provide a **robust basis** for future qualitative and quantitative research on learner and staff experiences by Welsh Government and partner organisations, including ways to measure progress and change over time

As such, outputs from this research include research findings themselves and practical recommendations, along with guidance for the Welsh Government and partner organisations on how to repeat this process, and ensure action taken on recommendations is measurable.

The FE sector in Wales represents a vast range of learning programmes, delivered by general FE colleges, designated adult learning institutions, college and independent apprenticeship providers, and college and local authority adult learning providers. Programmes from Entry Level to Level 4 and above are delivered across over 50 subject areas, from ICT for Users to Environmental Conservation.

This study had the wide remit of understanding staff and learner experiences across FE sub-sectors and varied institutions.

**For the purposes of this study, FE sub-sectors are considered as:**

- **Apprenticeships:** Including all pre-degree level apprenticeships from public and private providers
- **Adult Learning:** Including all adult learning programmes delivered by college, local authority and community providers
- **FE:** Including all vocational and A-Level courses delivered by college providers

Throughout this report, FE sub-sectors will be labelled as above.

# Introduction

## Executive summary (1/2)

**This study has been a process of looking beneath and beyond. Beneath data trends, and beyond the known challenges the FE sector faces in its journey towards fostering and maintaining anti-racist environments.**

The commitment to anti-racism had already been made when this study launched, with the FE sector poised for strategic change. An initial scoping study had concluded, which set out prioritised recommendations, to help the Welsh Government progress development of the Anti-racist Wales action plan. Actions were being taken centrally, and locally, with the development of an anti-racist curriculum taking place and FE providers having recently developed their own action plans. An FE anti-racist steering group had been established to support and challenge this work.

Despite the progress and commitment, the Welsh Government knew that unknowns remained around the challenges FE faced on its anti-racist journey. What was not known about the extent and impacts of racism in FE? What does it mean to either have, or not have role models who look like you, or resonate with you as a learner, staff member, or potential learner or staff member? How prepared

are predominantly white workforces and learner bodies to take a position of allyship? What, in practice, did it feel like, to go through the process of reporting a racist incident?

Because racism is a social and systemic issue, its drivers and impacts are multi-faceted. Some insight can be extrapolated from survey data, representation statistics and attainment rates, but it is also vital to create a safe space to ask questions, and importantly, listen to the answers.

This study has focused on exactly that. It has been a collaborative process of listening and sense-making, involving 52 staff, learners, a community partner, and a host of leaders in both FE and anti-racism. Thanks to the time, thought, action and attention of these contributors, it has engaged with some previously unknown nuances and subtleties.

This report maps out lived experiences of a sample of ethnic minority learners and staff in Welsh FE environments, along with perspectives of white Welsh/British staff.

The results indicate a turning tide on anti-racism in FE. Senior staff recalled a time when overt racism was a normalised experience. Now, many no longer recognise this as being the case. A majority of learners enrolled on A-Level, BTEC and other

vocational college courses had chosen a college experience for a 'fresh start', and were satisfied with their decision. There was a distinct willingness to learn and challenge internalised bias amongst white Welsh/British staff, some of whom had found anti-racism training helpful. Staff and learners described specific events in FE, such as culture days, as bringing FE communities together.

However, there were also experiences of racism which had gone unchecked and unchanged, along with emerging issues that urgently need to be addressed.

Staff across the board were aware of a lack of ethnic diversity at senior levels in their organisation, with that homogeneity discouraging some staff from seeking progression themselves.

Research found that overt racism, in general, was no longer a normalised part of the FE experience, but that racial discrimination is still very much present. There was a consensus that racism manifests less often in name-calling, and more in microaggressions and othering. Covert racism has increasingly become the experience of racism faced by ethnic minority staff and learners. The confidence of white Welsh/British staff to actively challenge covert racism was low, and there was a recognition

# Introduction

## Executive summary (2/2)

of the role this lack of confidence can play in perpetuating patterns of discrimination.

There was an exasperation around some anti-racism training revolving around 'obvious' forms of racism. It was felt that this did not build the required competencies to recognise and challenge covert racism.

A particularly important finding is the current experience of reporting a racist incident as a learner or staff member. Reporting processes were found to be either unknown or unclear to staff and learners, and carried out in inconsistent ways. They had not met the expectations of any learner or staff member involved in the study, and had in some cases reinforced trauma or exacerbated racism. Recommended practical actions to be taken to address this issue can be found on page 63.

### Towards new solutions:

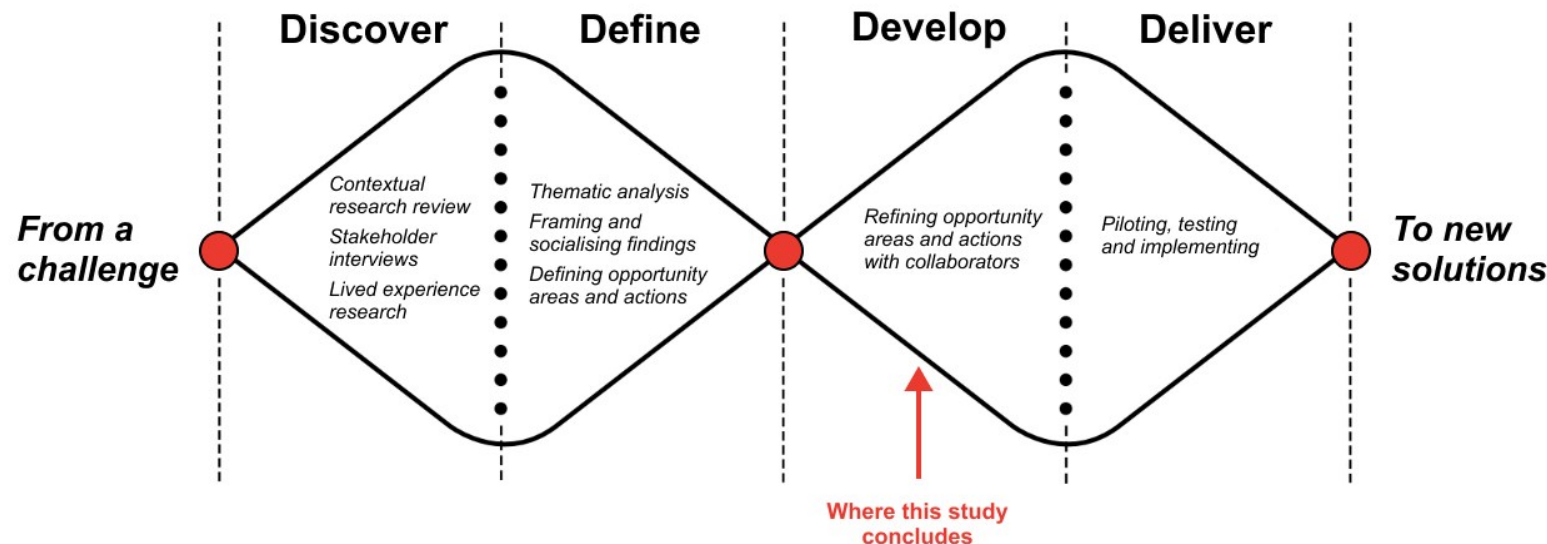
Members of the Anti-racist Wales FE steering group and EYST have provided guidance around the analysis of critical issues, drawing of conclusions, and development of recommendations from the research.

Section 4 of this report outlines these actions, within 6 key opportunity areas. Across each area, actions

range from those achievable in the short-term (such as asking victims of racism what they would like to achieve when reporting racism), to longer-term agenda items, (such as providing all ethnic minority staff members with the option to be supported by a trained, objective anti-racist point of contact).

Lived experience research, through its focus on emotion, needs, memories, frustrations and ideas, results in a specific type of conclusion and recommendation. Recommendations do not take the form of fully scoped actions to be taken, but sparks of opportunities to be developed and validated.

As such, it is now the role of the Welsh Government and FE stakeholders to build out, pilot and test specific interventions. It may be that FE providers notice actions that can be adjusted to local contexts and brought into the next iterations of their own action plans. Guidance from the research team around how to move from 'developing' actions to 'delivering' them, can be found on page 49.



# Introduction

## How contextual research shaped approach

**Prior to defining the methodology, the research team carried out a series of interviews with key stakeholders across FE, and reviewed existing datasets and resources on anti-racism and FE.**

The six key stakeholders interviewed included representatives from National Union of Students (NUS) Wales, University and College Union (UCU) and FE institution leadership. This contextual stage informed the ultimate methodology, shaping the tone of the research process and final recommendations. Details of resources and datasets reviewed can be found in the references section of this document.

### **Implications of contextual research findings on methodology:**

#### **1. White Welsh/British members of the FE workforce were included in the staff sample.**

All key stakeholders interviewed were aware of a gap in ethnic minority representation within FE workforces. The data trend matched the anecdotal trend, with 93 per cent of senior leaders in FE describing themselves as white in a recent survey<sup>3</sup>.

White Welsh/British members of the FE workforce were included in the sample, because they currently account for a significant majority in the workforce and are therefore central to the change dynamic on anti-racism. Many insights around allyship deriving from these interviews are layered into the findings.

#### **2. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were the sole research method used with staff and learners.**

The profile of learners the FE sector serves is multi-faceted, including work-based learners, Post-16 students, adults in community settings and some higher education students. In 2021/22, nearly 50 per cent of FE learners in Wales were aged 20 or over<sup>4</sup>, meaning research methods had to be appropriate for learners of a wide range of ages. Just over 12 per cent of learners had a disability or learning difficulty<sup>5</sup>. While the current figure for FE is unavailable, it is estimated that over 130 languages are spoken in Welsh schools<sup>6</sup>.

In addition to ensuring methods were appropriate to diverse staff and learner profiles, there was a need for a trauma-informed approach given research was to cover lived experience of racism.

Researchers utilised semi-structured in-depth interviews as a research method, over other qualitative methods, such as focus groups. This kept engagement personal and developmentally appropriate. The ultimate insights have an individuality and depth to them, because participants spoke from a one-to-one safe space.

More information is available about the trauma-informed approach taken, on page 14 of this report.

<sup>3</sup> Understanding Leadership in the FE Sector in Wales, 2023 | <sup>4</sup> Unique learners enrolled at further education institutions by age group, mode of learning and level, 2021/22 | <sup>5</sup> Unique learners enrolled at further education institutions by primary disability and/or learning disability and gender, 2021/22 | <sup>6</sup> Experiences of Racism and Race in Schools, 2018



# Introduction

## How contextual research shaped approach

### 3. Current knowledge gaps were prioritised as research topics

There was a known issue around lack of availability of ethnicity data, due to lack of disclosure through equalities forms. This could make it difficult to track representation rates at a national level. Contextual research surfaced an additional knowledge gap around the process and experience of reporting racism as a member of staff or learner. Data was lacking around what this process looked like, reporting rates and outcomes.

During this study, staff and learners were asked about their experiences of reporting racism, and for their perspectives on disclosing ethnicity data on equalities forms. The findings shed light on some of these unknowns, providing a sense of the current reality of reporting racism, and views on disclosing ethnicity data.

### 4. The resulting actions from the research (presented in Section 4 of this report) must:

#### a) embed anti-racism into FE culture and ways of working, so it is not an added layer of responsibility, or 'lens through which to look':

*"We need to establish ways of embedding anti-racism into work without it being an addition, an outside of the job responsibility, without it being education and..."*

**Expert stakeholder**

#### b) locate anti-racism in a broader equity context, addressing intersectional issues without diminishing the central ambition:

*"You don't want racism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, sexism or anything else. The irony of breaking up each of these agendas, is you risk impacting the others."*

**Expert stakeholder**

#### The questions this study set out to explore included:

- What is the experience and impact of covert, overt and institutional racism?
- What is the experience of reporting racism? What drives staff and learners to report incidents, and are they aware of and confident in the process?
- How much confidence do staff and learners have in talking about equality issues and challenging racism?
- How well do teaching, curriculum and qualifications address anti-racism and equality issues, and what could be done better?
- What, if anything, are staff and learners aware their provider does to promote anti-racism and create an equitable environment?
- What is the impact of visibility, or lack of visibility of diverse role models?
- What are the key drivers for not disclosing ethnicity on equalities forms?
- Do practical issues present barriers to access and success for learners?
- Do FE environments reinforce or offset the impacts of systemic racism in wider society?
- How does the experience of learners and staff vary on a regional basis?

# Methodology and approach

## FE staff and learner participants: Sampling

### A priority of the sampling and recruitment process was to engage staff and learners from the widest possible range of FE institutions.

The purpose of the study was to understand the lived experiences of ethnic minority people in FE, but both FE workforces and learner bodies are predominantly white. For example, over 95 per cent of FE teachers whose ethnicity was known in 2022 were white<sup>7</sup>, and 95.5 per cent of apprentices were white<sup>8</sup>.

To ensure ethnic minority staff and learners in all FE sub-sectors were well-represented in a relatively small sample, quota sampling was used. Quota sampling is a way of choosing the number of different types of people to include in a research study, by dividing them into sub-sets. Rather than choosing numbers that are representative of the population, researchers adjust numbers considering whose voices are most important to include in order to answer the research questions.

The Anti-Racist FE Steering Group was involved in the development of the quota. The sampling process took into account the relative sizes of each FE sub-sector and the ethnic minority representation in each FE sub-sector. It also considered if there was anybody else who could provide insights, who was missing from available datasets.

### Example: Make-up of whole FE learner body by sub-sectors, versus the number of participants in the sample:

Make-up of whole FE learner body by FE sub-sectors (2021/22):



The learners who participated in this study:



- FE learners (A-Levels, BTECs and vocational courses)
- Apprentices
- Adult learners
- Former learners (who previously started an FE journey but withdrew before completing it)

The chart on the left shows that in the case of the FE learner sample, researchers decided to speak to more adult learners than is representative, and slightly fewer FE and work-based learners than is representative. An additional sub-set was added, 'Former learners', so that the experiences of those who had withdrawn from FE before completing their courses could be explored.

The refined quota was then taken into the recruitment process, with researchers selecting participants that aligned to the quotas fixed during sampling. Details on the recruitment process can be found on the next page.

<sup>7</sup> Annual Education Workforce Statistics for Wales, 2022 | <sup>8</sup> Apprenticeship learning programmes started by quarter, year and ethnicity, 2021/22

# Methodology and approach

## FE staff and learner participants: Recruitment

### The opportunity to participate in research was shared with FE staff and learners across Wales.

To maximise reach, the recruitment process relied on individual staff and learners responding to call-outs that a range of organisations shared with their networks. Organisations included national bodies such as ColegauCymru, individual FE institutions, unions and EYST. Thanks to the sixteen organisations that shared call-outs with their networks, a total of **165 staff and learners** accessed and responded to the screener survey.

### Breakdown of the recruitment process:

#### Organisations shared the opportunity with their networks

In most cases, call-outs reached staff and learners by email. EYST personally reached out to learners.

#### Staff and learners completed a short screening survey

Respondents reviewed an information sheet, and then shared select personal details. It was emphasised that responses were anonymous and identities would be protected.

#### Participants were shortlisted against quota and contacted

Responses were reviewed against the specification, and participants selected on this basis. Researchers then contacted participants, inviting them to book an in-depth interview.

### Participant sample

Below is a breakdown of the participants who were shortlisted and ultimately took part in the research. There are more details on the staff and learners who participated on the next page.

#### Group 1: FE learners from ethnic minority backgrounds

- 15 FE learners, 6 Apprentices, 6 Adult Learners, and 4 'Former Learners' (who had previously started an FE journey, but withdrawn before completing their course)
- Covering a spread of ethnicities, ages and genders, and both learners who are learning in FE for the first time, and learners who have tried multiple FE routes

#### Group 2: FE staff from ethnic minority backgrounds

- 5 FE staff, 4 Apprenticeship staff and 3 Adult Learning staff
- Covering a spread of roles, tenures, ages and genders

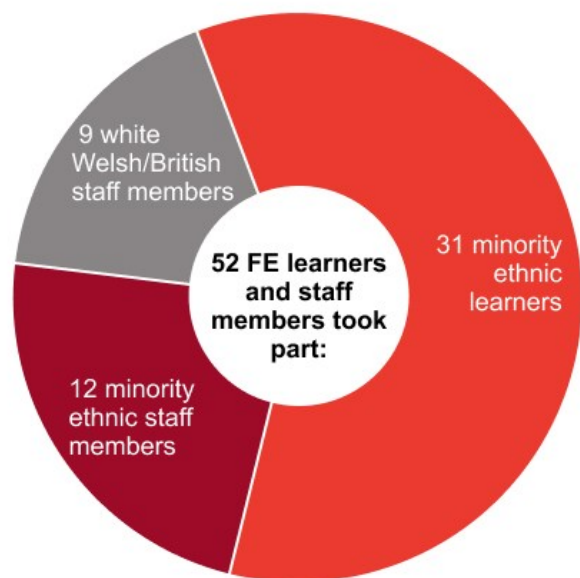
#### Group 3: FE staff from white Welsh/British backgrounds

- 4 FE staff, 3 Apprenticeship staff and 2 Adult Learning staff
- Covering a spread of roles, tenures, ages and genders

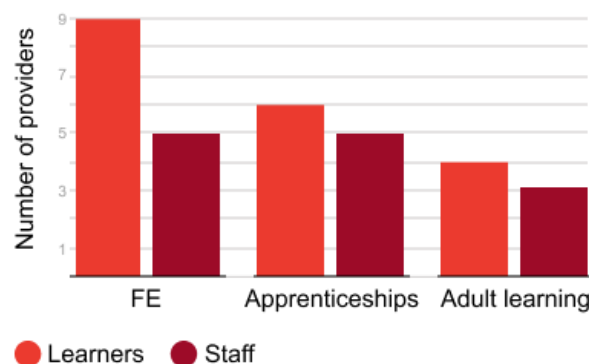
## Methodology and approach

### FE staff and learner participants: Who took part

The group of staff and learners who took part were from a wide range of Wales' FE, apprenticeship and adult learning providers. All insights, experiences, ideas presented as findings in this report derive from these individuals.



Learners and staff worked for or were enrolled with 12 separate FE providers:



Across each sub-sector, participants came from a range of FE providers across north, south and mid-Wales. The particular FE providers that learner and staff participants were enrolled with or worked for are not disclosed in this report to protect participants' identities.

Efforts were made to ensure ethnic minority learners and staff could access the opportunity to participate in this study, with EYST actively recruiting on the ground from

their networks. The intended representation was achieved, with all 31 learner participants describing themselves as being from ethnic minority backgrounds, along with just over half of staff participants.

Across all ethnic minority participants, a total of **38 unique ethnicities were described**. This was in part, due to the choice to request information about ethnicity in a free-text field in the screener survey, meaning respondents were not constrained to ethnicity categories.

Learner participants were of a wide range of ages, from 16-64. Staff members came from a range of roles including wellbeing officers, assessors, lecturers, administrators, learning support officers, and internal quality assurers.

# Methodology and approach

## Fieldwork and analysis

### **52 staff and learner participants took part in semi-structured in-depth interviews.**

As previously mentioned, semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed as the core research method to keep engagement personal and developmentally appropriate, given learners and staff have a range of needs, and topics to be covered required a trauma-informed approach.

These interviews each lasted between 50 and 70 minutes. They were one-to-one sessions, moderated by skilled researchers experienced in collaborating with young people moderating conversations about challenging topics, and lived experience of racism.

Discussion guides used in the interviews were based on the key research questions presented on page 9. Following the first 5 interviews, discussion guides were evaluated and refined based on the soft pilot.

A semi-structured approach was taken, meaning the discussion guides could be seen as a 'menu' of questions, to spend more or less time on depending on participants' individual contexts. As an example, a topic well-covered in all interviews, was general awareness of what FE providers do to promote anti-racism and create an equitable environment. Topics such as experiences of reporting racist incidents were a key focus of some interviews, but not others, depending on whether participants had had exposure to these processes.

### **Analysis process**

52 interviews culminated in close to 60 hours of rich qualitative data. Transcripts were immediately anonymised to protect participants' identities, and data organised into analysis grids.

Anonymised data was then visually mapped out using a process called affinity mapping, during which quotations and insights are organised based on their similarities and relationships with each other.

As recurring themes began to emerge, the findings were scrutinised by the Anti-Racist FE Steering Group. Collaboration and discussion aided understanding of where the most important findings lay, along with which findings were more or less surprising.

Where participants had directly volunteered ideas and suggestions, or experiences clearly pointed towards resolvable issues, these notes were kept aside, and directly informed recommendations made in this report.

# Methodology and approach

## Research ethics and safeguarding

**Given the nature of the topics being covered, psychological safety of participants was the ultimate priority.**

A trauma-informed approach was designed into the process. The practical steps researchers took to ensure the process aligned with the five principles of trauma-informed practice<sup>9</sup> (safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment and cultural consideration), include:

- Making it clear to participants that they could terminate a session, or move on to a different subject, at any point.
- Agreeing upon a safeguarding process, with researchers able to refer participants to support services if necessary.
- Protecting participant's identities, and anonymising interview data at the earliest possible point.
- Using Appreciative Inquiry techniques, to focus conversation on strengths and advantages.
- Not over-promising on the impact the research could have on their experience.
- Being re-contactable for a period post-interview, in the event further conversation would benefit participants.

**The research team agreed upon the following ethical principles:**

### Transparency:

- Communicate research processes and their aims in a simple, jargon-free way
- Clarify why we are carrying out research and how findings will be used as early as possible

### Respect:

- Treat participants as collaborators not subjects
- Keep any promises made
- Ensure there is a tangible benefit to participation

### Sensitivity:

- Ensure personal information is protected
- Ensure nobody is harmed or adversely affected by working with us
- Be aware of our own positionality and bias

### Independence:

- Exercise independent professional judgement in research design
- Communicate research findings with objectivity, ensuring individual meaning and emphasis comes through

<sup>9</sup> Working Definition of Trauma Informed Practice, 2022

# Methodology and approach

## Limitations

**Research took place over 7 weeks between May and July 2023 and therefore serves as a ‘snapshot’ of FE staff and learner experiences.**

The approach taken allowed for a unique depth of insight. Reasons why depth, not scale was prioritised for this research include:

- Experiences of racism are complex and difficult to quantify: Lived experience of racism can be difficult to put into words, let alone summarise in a survey question. An in-depth qualitative process creates time and space to articulate experiences.
- A co-production approach is essential to driving meaningful change: Achieving Wales’ Anti-racist ambition in FE requires culture change through learner and staff commitment. To identify the right change and ensure commitment, the approach needed to be deeply collaborative.

### Limitations of the approach taken, include:

- A ‘snapshot’ is always a partial picture. A qualitative research approach with a small sample provides texture and depth of focus, but not a birds-eye view of wider patterns. Findings reflect needs coming to the fore for the 52 FE staff and learner participants, during this timeframe. Longer-term evaluation with greater reach would produce more generalisable results.
- The recruitment approach relied on organisations sharing the opportunity with their networks. Some organisations shared the opportunity more widely than others, meaning it was more likely for some staff and learners to see the opportunity than others. In some cases, seeing the opportunity relied on having access to the Internet.
- Participants self-selected to participate. While it was vital that participants were personally motivated to step forward for the opportunity, self-selection can impact findings. For example, some individuals may be more inclined to participate in a study if they have had a negative experience that has been poorly handled.

# Methodology and approach

## A note on language

**This report adheres to language set out in the Welsh Government's A-Z of anti-racism. Where direct quotes from staff and learners are presented in this report, terminology may vary to preserve original meaning.**

Language can be loaded, and it is important to rationalise choices when writing about and referring to marginalised groups. This page lists common words and phrases used in this report, along with their definitions and rationales for use. The Welsh Government provided these standard definitions.

\* In this report, we use the term 'ethnic minority' to describe people who belong to any other group than 'white Welsh/British'. Many of the people described as 'ethnic minority' also identify as Welsh or British. The choice was made to use the terms 'ethnic minority' and 'white Welsh/British' to broadly distinguish between FE staff and learners who participated in this study as non-racialised, and racialised, without disclosing personal information such as actual ethnicities and nationalities. A limitation of this approach is that it does not communicate the nuance of individual ethnicities and nationalities.

### Definitions of key terms used in this report:

#### Allies, allyship:

People who try to use power and influence to magnify the voices of underrepresented or marginalised groups. Effective allies don't just talk about change, they take action to lead the change they want to see. Performative allies are allies only in name.

#### Anti-racism:

Actively identifying and eradicating the systems, structures and processes that produce radically differential outcomes for ethnic minority groups.

It involves acknowledging that even when we do not regard ourselves as 'racist' we can, by doing nothing, be complicit in allowing racism to continue.

#### Ethnic minority\*:

Refers to racial and ethnic groups who are in a minority in the population.

#### Institutional racism:

Refers to the way institutions discriminate against certain groups, whether intentionally or not, and to their failure to have in place policies that prevent discrimination or discriminatory behaviour.

#### Intersectionality:

Refers to the fact that people ethnic minority groups also have other protected and personal characteristics (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, migration status, religion/faith, disability) which influence their experience, needs and outcomes.

The concept was introduced by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw to articulate the ways in which multiple, disadvantaged identities, namely race and gender, simultaneously converge, and negatively impact upon lived experiences.

#### Micro-aggression:

Refers to small, apparently innocuous ways in which ethnic minority people can be treated differently, for example incorrectly pronouncing a name, not including ethnic minority people in a conversation, asking someone where they are 'really' from. Being on the receiving end of microaggressions has a cumulative impact over time which can negatively impact on an ethnic minority person's mental health.

#### White Welsh/British:

Refers to white people with Welsh/British nationalities.



# 3a

## A primer on intersectionality

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Due to the qualitative approach taken, the insights to follow inevitably engage with intersectionality. This has been crucial to building a rich overview of staff and learner perspectives on anti-racism.

# A primer on intersectionality

## Overview

Participants engaged in the research as their whole selves, bringing into focus dimensions of identity beyond ethnicity, and in many cases, additional protected characteristics.

- Therefore, wider equality causes and forms of discrimination naturally arose during the interviews, from feminism and body positivity to ableism and transphobia.
- Researchers fully recognise that to do right by ethnic minority people in Wales, the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan must be a dedicated, standalone resource. As such, the main body of this report focuses wholly on racism and anti-racism. However, some of the examples and quotations reproduced in the report reflect participants' wider experiences.

**Intersectional perspectives will be critically important for understanding research findings for the four following reasons:**

1. An intersectional perspective deepens understanding of diversity and nuance in the ways in which people hold power.
2. Wider experiences of equity serve as useful gauges of inclusivity within an institution, particularly where there is less diversity: This may particularly be the case within Wales' less ethnically diverse FE institutions.
3. The qualitative approach inevitably engages with intersectionality: 'Digging deeper' into experiences allows us to see people as multi-faceted, and the range of drivers behind privilege and disparity they may face.
4. Building confidence in a joined-up approach: Work around equity is ongoing at national and institution level, for example The Welsh Government have in parallel launched an 'LGBTQ+ Action Plan'. There is both an excitement around work on equity, and sense of 'initiative fatigue', with a number of participants mentioning a need for a 'joined up' approach to tackling equality issues.

# A primer on intersectionality: Wider issues of equity that came to the fore

## Class and socioeconomic factors cannot be minimised

The cost of living and how it relates to accessing and succeeding in learning came up repeatedly as being innately linked to equity.

*'The cost of living crisis, post-pandemic, inflation creates a perfect storm really, it is a hard time for my generation. That was why EMA [Education Maintenance Allowance] was such a win. If you're needing to work two jobs a week on top of studies, or a young carer, it just wasn't enough....'*

FE learner

*'The apprenticeship wage is really low. If you're a teenager and live with your family, that's not as bad to suck up. But if you're a woman of 35 with three kids, it is hardly manageable. What if they need the bus fare to college, what if they need a drink while in college? It's two pounds for a drink from the vending machines. Just having to think about silly little things like that really affects your learning. Sure, you're giving them a certificate and training fees are paid. But is that good enough?'*

Apprenticeship staff member

## Impact of mental health crisis on learner wellbeing

A large proportion of staff participants had observed that more learners were struggling with anxiety, depression and other mental health issues since the start of the pandemic, with some learners mentioning similar challenges.

*'There's a lot of mental health issues at the moment. A lot of our learners are a bit more mature, in their early 20s, and mental health for that age group has declined rapidly. There are learners who are too scared to get on buses. So anxiety is bad.'*

FE staff member

*'Minority ethnic communities are more likely to experience mental health challenges because of the racism they're experiencing, indirectly or directly. We should be looking at providing additional support to ethnic minority learners. It should be a multi-disciplinary approach,*

FE staff member

## Strain on staff handling complex intersectional issues

FE staff across sub-sectors recalled times that learners had made a worrying disclosure or exhibited challenging behaviour that stemmed from a range of equity issues. It was clear that contending with multi-faceted prejudices, or learners who face a range of inequities took specialist skill.

*'We do have learners bringing up topics that can be quite sensitive, so money, different ways of living, gender. Things come up that I need to neutralise in class as objectively as possible, because people can feel offended, of course.'*

Adult Learning staff member

*'An apprentice may be facing many difficulties in their personal life. An assessor will say, "What can we do to help", and they may disclose a personal trauma. The assessor is then stuck thinking, 'how am I going to get this person through the qualification when their life is in chaos?''*

Apprenticeship staff member

# A primer on intersectionality: Wider issues of equity that came to the fore

## Challenging the idea of normalcy when neurodivergent

A number of staff and learners mentioned that they had seen greater availability of support and adjustments for neurodivergent people in recent years. But it was clear there was a long way to go, with learners describing being neurodivergent as remaining a compounding factor when also from an ethnic minority background.

*'People just need to be more aware that some people take more time than others to learn. I just wish people knew that not all disabilities are visible. There are things you wish that people knew, beyond what's in front of the eyes. These days, a lot of people call me "normal". But I'm not "normal", and "normal" seems quite overrated these days, doesn't it? Like, what's it even mean?*

*Back in the day, when people called me that, and before knowing I was autistic, I would take it as a compliment. Looking at it now retrospectively, I should have just asked them "What does normal mean to you?"*

FE learner

## Access to neurodevelopmental assessment as a migrant or in later life

A number of participants cited being a mature learner and/or migration status as being barriers to obtaining a neurodevelopmental assessment and funding for Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

*'We find that often, adult learners have a lot of difficulties in life, which normally come from childhood where they've just not had the support. There might be undiagnosed additional learning needs, because the support just wasn't available to get a diagnosis.'*

Apprenticeship staff member

*'I think ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners can access funding for ALN if they had a diagnosis in their own country or in their own language. But that's not often the case, so it's difficult for them to meet the requirements for support.'*

Adult Learning staff member

## Blurred line between language barriers and learning barriers

Particularly in the Adult Learning and Apprenticeship sectors, staff described challenges in assessing where learners needed additional pastoral support or learning support when English was limited or not a first language.

*'Where there's been a language barrier for some of our learners where English hasn't been their first language, then I think it's been harder for them to get the right support they need because I think then staff are trying to navigate, "is this a language barrier, or is this a learning barrier?"*

*So does this learner need more ALN support, for example, or are they just struggling with the language?'*

Apprenticeship staff member

# A primer on intersectionality: **Wider issues of equity that came to the fore**

## **Transphobia is currently a key issue in FE**

Whether in terms of exclusionary practices, misgendering and offensive language, or simply dismissal of transgender issues, staff and learners repeatedly described transphobia as a considerable issue within their organisations.

*'We had an incident where a transgender learner was in fear due to bullying. The learner understanding of gender is low, and it isn't helping people who are transitioning. There's a low understanding amongst staff as well. I've seen very negative behaviour. You can see why people wouldn't want to openly express their real selves.'*


**FE staff member**

*'I have a colleague who doesn't understand what it means to be trans, and it comes out in classes. It is due to lack of understanding, but that isn't an acceptable excuse when you're in a position of authority over a class. This is a really important issue and something that is so easy to actually get a handle on. All of these issues relate to one another.'*

**Adult Learning staff member**

## **Individual identities, individual experiences of racism**

In a number of cases, learners and staff reflected on how their individual identity shaped their experience of racism, and how this had changed over time.

 **Staff experience**


### **Ukrainian refugees treated differently**

"The war in Ukraine has been the first time I have seen an influx of 'western' refugees and asylum seekers. I do observe that they can be treated more favourably, or at least differently than African or Middle Eastern refugees and asylum seekers, who have often arrived in the UK due to very similar circumstances."

 **Staff experience**

### **Being seen as 'white passing'**

"You can't tell what my ethnicity is that easily, and people often assume I'm from the UK. I don't tend to lead with explaining where my family is from, so it doesn't come up. What it does mean, is you can hear very offensive things sometimes. Sometimes when people know my ethnicity, it is followed with 'We don't mean you'."

 **Learner experience**

### **Islamophobia became an issue after the 'Arab Spring'**

"When I think about my earlier years as I grew up, I don't remember ever being made to feel different to anyone else in my class. This changed very suddenly around the time of the Arab Spring. Suddenly, you'd get comments and people in your class would say offensive things. It all changed overnight."

# 3b

## How racism manifests in FE

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Here we present a view of how racism occurs within FE, its drivers and impact.

## How racism manifests in FE: Overview

There was a consistent sense amongst participants that incidences of overt racism are decreasing. Covert racism is increasingly the experience, and is inadequately addressed.

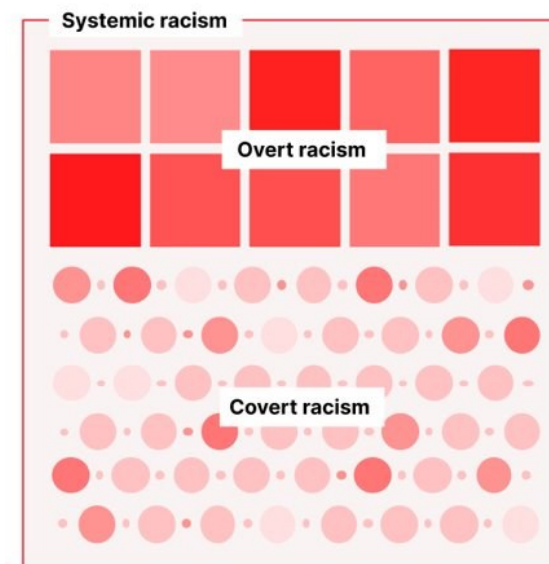
A majority of ethnic minority FE staff and learner participants had been a victim of overt racism in their FE environment at at least one point. However, the prevailing feeling was that most racism experienced now fell into the category of covert racism for both staff and learners.

There was a recognition of what the term 'institutional racism' meant amongst participants when researchers described it to them. The vast majority of staff and learner participants did not describe their FE environments as 'institutionally racist'. The majority of participants did however acknowledge that their experience was to some extent shaped by historic structures of bias and prejudice.

Ethnic minority staff and learners described the cumulative impact of covert racism on their confidence and wellbeing, along with the challenges of a) identifying covert racism as racism and b) reporting it, fearing covert racism is 'subjective' and may not be taken seriously.

While some White Welsh/British staff were confident in actively calling out overt racism, there was less confidence around covert racism. Participants recalled situations where they had seen or heard something they perceived to be wrong, but didn't know how to act on it.

**Covert racism was described as being the most harmful and difficult to challenge form of racism in FE.**



# How racism manifests in FE: Themes

## ‘Harmless banter’, with a harmful effect

A number of staff and learners described experiencing racially-driven name calling and jokes, framed as ‘banter’.

In several cases, learners who had been victims of overt racism described ultimately landing in trouble themselves, having become angry and frustrated. Some staff had learnt how to dampen their response for this reason, creating a build-up of frustration.

In vocational routes, there was a sense that ‘colloquialisms’ from the world of work were accepted even when problematic.

*‘It comes down to how you look, whether you fit in with boys in your class. I get called names, and can’t control my anger, I don’t know how to deal with it.’*

**FE learner**

*‘There can be blatantly racist language, but it comes with the retort “That’s what it’s like in the trade”. It’s provocative and offensive.’*

**FE staff member**

## Microaggressions, ‘othering’ and its cumulative impact

The (to use a learner’s phrasing) ‘drip, drip, drip’ impact of microaggressions and covert racism was described with considerable frequency, tending to relate to staff:staff and learner:learner interactions.

It was felt that such incidents can appear trivial when individually examined, making it hard for victims or witnesses to articulate or call-out such racism. Due to this, the pattern goes unchecked and perpetuates itself.

*‘It’s just that drip, drip, drip of looks and passing comments. They build up and you suffer in silence with them.’*

**FE learner**

*‘It would have seemed like such a huge over-reaction if I’d said anything. So I didn’t. I never do, for exactly that reason.’*

**Adult Learning staff member**

## Sense of feeling like an outsider

Some staff described feeling like an ‘outsider’ in the workforce, while particularly in FE there were cases of learners feeling ‘left out’, e.g. in group work.

Both were most prominent in predominantly White Welsh/British departments.

A regular follow-up comment was a perception that this was unintentional, stemming from homogenous groups not understanding or fearing difference.

*‘I wear a hijab, and it’s like... people just don’t know how to talk to me, what to talk about. It’s like it stops them from really wanting to be my friend.’*

**FE learner**

*‘What I haven’t experienced in my career is out and out racism. It’s more this feeling of... I can’t describe it.. Not feeling as part of something as you could be, not being taken seriously.’*

**Adult Learning staff member**



# How racism manifests in FE: Themes

## Contending with a build-up of trauma

The majority of ethnic minority staff and learner participants specifically described racism they had experienced prior to FE.

Particularly in the case of staff and learners over the age of 35 or so, memories of racism often included overt experiences that remained clear in their minds.

Regardless of age, participants reflected on histories of racism in their lives, along with experiences of racism not being appropriately dealt with by institutions and authorities.

*'Racism has always been a part of my life, for instance the words that people use to describe Black people, even without knowing that they can be offensive.'*

**FE learner**

*'I'll always remember hearing comments when I was younger that made me feel like I was different. Like a teacher telling me my Dad wouldn't go to heaven because of his faith.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

## White Welsh/British staff struggle to challenge covert racism

While some White Welsh/British staff were confident in actively calling out overt racism, there was less confidence around covert racism. Participants recalled situations where they had seen or heard something they perceived to be wrong, but didn't know how to act on it.

In the case of participants in this research, this type of inaction didn't come from a place of disinterest or unwilling. White Welsh/British members of staff demonstrated concern and regret over not knowing how to respond.

*'I witnessed learners making negative comments recently, but didn't do anything about it because it was a fleeting moment and they weren't my learners. But I still think about that to this day, it was months ago.'*

**FE staff member**

*'I didn't know whether I was right to find it offensive, or was being oversensitive, but it is something I have often dwelled on.'*

**Adult Learning staff member**

## Lack of exposure to multiculturalism and diverse experience

When asked what would best empower white Welsh/British staff to be champions of anti-racism, a frequent answer was "exposure to multi-culturalism". There was a clear recognition amongst participants of the difference between intentional racism and unconscious bias.

*'If someone is being outright racist, you want them to out of your space because they're making you feel unsafe. If someone is simply being ignorant, you just want them to be corrected and move on. People need to be able to tell the difference between hostility and ignorance to do anything about racism.'*

**FE learner**


*'You sometimes see people looking when a Black person walks into the room. They're often doing it due to sheer lack of exposure to other cultures.'*

**FE staff member**

# How racism manifests in FE: Learner and staff stories

Presented here is a range of incidents staff and learner research participants recalled to provide a sense of their experiences\*.

← Overt ————— Covert →


 Staff experience

## Receiving a racist gift

“Several of my colleagues once decided to buy me a birthday present. I was surprised they were being so kind to me. They handed me a bag. Inside the bag was a joke gift related to rocket launchers and terrorism...

I was thinking, “You know, you’ve said we’re friends, you’ve taken this a bit too far...”



 Learner experience

## An offensive drawing

“During the time I popped out of a class to go to the loo, a very offensive drawing had been added to the page I was working on. When I saw it I was thinking to myself ‘Who did this?’.

I was angry and upset. It quickly became obvious who the culprit was, and they found the whole situation really funny. My teacher shouted at me for being aggressive and the person wasn’t immediately punished.”



 Staff experience

## Being singled out

“A colleague I hadn’t spoken to before sidled over to me and asked me where I was *really* from. They said they had been “trying to figure it out for weeks”.

I thought to myself, ‘is that really what preoccupies people about me?’ I get it all the time.”

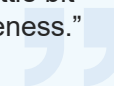


 Learner experience

## Outdated terminology

“I’ve only met with my assessor a couple of times. Recently while we were talking, she used the term ‘coloured’ to describe Black people. I was really surprised because for Black people, that word has such negative connotations attached to it, and I find it quite offensive.

I just thought that she would have had a little bit more cultural awareness.”



 Staff experience

## Feeling othered

“One of my colleagues invited us to go for a coffee during a break, but I notice that they don’t look at me much.

I mentioned that I had plans to celebrate Diwali, and I could tell that they had heard of it but didn’t really know what it is. It’s clear they don’t really want to understand or learn more.”



\*These stories are not direct quotes. Details have been redacted to protect participants’ identities.

# 3c

## Being an anti-racist ally in FE

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Perspectives of white Welsh/British staff on capabilities and confidence around anti-racism and allyship.

## Being an anti-racist ally in FE: Overview

Participants felt achieving the Anti-racist Wales ambition required the work of the many, not the few. There is a need for awareness raising and capability building to ensure this is the case.

A number of participants rationalised that, given FE services across the nation are delivered at this time, by predominantly white Welsh/British staff, there is a particular need for anti-racism to be championed by this group.

This was a key reason for the inclusion of white British/Welsh staff in the small sample. This section is dedicated to perspectives on anti-racism within this group, along with perspectives on what is required of this group from ethnic minority staff and learners.

There are champions of anti-racism amongst the white British/Welsh workforce. Many had the characteristics of being reflexive (examining the influence of their own experience on their actions), and open (to new perspectives and ideas). Staff members from this group recalled pro-actively stepping in to challenge racism on numerous occasions. A small proportion of ethnic minority learners specifically recalled or named members of staff

who had challenged racism on their behalf.

Another requirement for fostering an anti-racist environment described predominantly by ethnic minority staff and learners, was being pro-active. It appeared that to be pro-active around anti-racism currently required a level of personal confidence and self-motivation. White British/Welsh staff who saw themselves as being particularly 'pro-active' felt this stemmed from their own beliefs and experiences, and not a mindset fostered by their employers themselves.

White Welsh/British learners, who comprise the majority of FE learners, were not included in our sample. To set the expectation for anti-racism within this group, all staff need support in being pro-active, which requires cultural change and safe space for learning via anti-racism training.

# Being an anti-racist ally in FE: Themes

## Reflexivity and open-ness key to the anti-racist mindset

These were considered by all participants to be the key components of an anti-racist mindset. The majority of white Welsh/British staff participants described reflexivity and openness to be characteristics innate in staff in a learning environment. There are skills there that are already being practised.

*'To be anti-racist, you have to be willing to accept that everyone has got racism inside them, you can't just decide to stop being racist – it doesn't work like that.'*

**FE learner**

*'You don't always get it right, sometimes you look back and you think, "I wish I'd done this differently". But these situations do help you learn. Sometimes you've got to be in that situation to know how to best support the next time.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

## Staff require support to be pro-active in their allyship

It appeared that for white Welsh/British staff, being pro-active in anti-racism currently required a level of personal confidence and self-motivation.

Where staff from this group saw themselves as 'do-ers', who weren't afraid to step in and challenge discriminatory behaviour, this was an internal attitude, as opposed to something facilitated by FE environments.

*'Sometimes you're just waiting for your teacher to jump in and say something...and they don't!'*

**FE learner**

*'It's a difficult line to tread because it's always about how somebody else perceives what you're saying. It's worrying that when you think you're doing the right thing, you might be doing the wrong thing.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

## Racism is learnt, and learners follow cues

Some teaching staff had histories in schools, and described previously hearing racially-charged language they suspected had been picked up from home or the community. They drew the conclusion that racism was learnt, and then either validated or invalidated in society.

Many participants described suspecting that racism was learnt, and that therefore learners followed cues from FE staff. Where the cue was that racism was unacceptable, or the converse that racism would not be directly challenged, this had an influence on the overall environment.

*'I'll find that a lot of what learners do, comes from taking a cue from the tutor. So if the tutor's up there not challenging racism or mangling a learner's pronouns, then the learners are going to do it, and they're going to see nothing wrong with it.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

*'Racism is learnt, so you're dependent on staff member's abilities to engage with the subject.'*

**FE staff member**

# Being an anti-racist ally in FE: Themes

## Low awareness of the impacts of racism

Some white Welsh/British staff had little knowledge about how racism impacts ethnic minority staff and learners. This lack of knowledge often stemmed from 'not being able to imagine'.

Ethnic minority staff and learners doubted that people without that lived experience understood how covert racism in particular shaped their day-to-day experience.

*'It is hard to ask for change without telling someone they're doing something wrong, or there's a better way to approach something.'*

*A lot of our older Welsh/British staff are more likely to say something that could maybe just be adjusted in tone than our staff who are from a minority background themselves. And so I think it makes it really hard to talk about these things without blame, or somebody taking something the wrong way. I do think sensitivity training would help. It's about being trauma informed, essentially.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

## Lack of time, space and support to learn how to better challenge racism

As has been introduced in Section 1 of this report, participants felt there was a lack of confidence around identifying covert racism. The recurring theme was that staff often didn't know what to do upon seeing or hearing something that felt 'wrong' but was 'subtle' or 'subjective'.

It was felt that additional support for learning, both through formal training, and informal structures such as open forums, would empower white Welsh/British staff to have greater knowledge of how to challenge incidents of racism.

The caveat to this, was available time for learning. Staff participants felt that any resistance to change or lack of buy-in could stem from workload and 'initiative fatigue'. It may be that creating continuous opportunities for learning, rather than focusing on session learning could make learning feel achievable and natural.

*'Often when people talk about racism, they talk about very overt forms of racism. Everyone can recognise a racist slogan, We need to look at the bigger picture.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

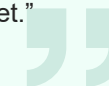
*'There is opposition when new training comes in. So there is a certain amount of breaking down the barriers there. And that sense of time, we have no time, there really is no time to learn anything new.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

 *Staff experience*

## Generalised training

*"I did do some training online, but I don't think I could tell you how it could be applied day to day, or what the college process is for reporting something, if I'm honest. I imagine it's in one of the policies, written down somewhere. But I haven't been pointed towards that yet."*



 *Learner experience*

## Lack of empathy

*"I remember how the teacher reacted when I reported the incident because she barely asked me any questions. I don't think she took it that seriously because I doubt she gets how much it affects me."*



# 3d

## Reporting racism in FE

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Drivers of reporting experiences of racism, and impact of positively or negatively received outcomes on learners and staff who have been victims of racism.

## Reporting racism in FE

### Overarching findings (1/3)

Across FE, whether a member of staff or a learner, there are reservations around reporting racism. Where racism had been reported, the outcome was often unsatisfactory, which had a negative impact on the victim.

#### **Awareness and understanding of racism reporting mechanisms, but trepidation about what processes might involve and create**

- The majority of learners were aware that some sort of process existed for reporting racism, and broadly how they might initiate that process. But there was a low understanding of what would then happen, and the extent to which they would be supported.
- Amongst staff, there was a recognition that reporting racism meant escalation, and some fears around that. Where staff recalled describing negative experiences to managers and colleagues, they mentioned reservations around using the word “racism”.

*'I asked what the procedures are for reporting racism, and not even the supervisor knew. Not even the manager knew. They said to me, 'Oh I will have to talk with HR and see what the procedure is'. HR don't even really know either.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

*'When my problems started, I talked first with my supervisor, who did nothing. I went on to my manager, but didn't really receive any understanding, so sort of gave up...'*

**Adult learning staff member**



## Reporting racism in FE

### Overarching findings (2/3)

Across FE, whether a member of staff or a learner, there are reservations around reporting racism. Where racism had been reported, the outcome was often unsatisfactory, which had a negative impact on the victim.

#### Significant fears and reservations around reporting racism

- Most learners had reservations around reporting racism, often for fear a complaint wouldn't be taken seriously.
- Of ethnic minority staff who had reported or considered reporting racism, there were fears around being viewed to be 'overreacting', and fears that the process itself could impact career opportunities.
- In the case of both staff and learners, these fears and reservations had actively disinclined ethnic minority people from speaking about their experiences. Many of the experiences of racism recalled had not been formally reported.

*'Learners are often desperate to get the qualification, and that's probably another reason why I'm a little more wary when I look into a setting. I have to ask myself what they might be willing to put up with to get what they need.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

*'Again and again, when I have tried to get help, I feel I have been punished, and told I am too 'full-on'. Even when I am just voicing an opinion or explaining something that has happened in a calm, conversational way, I am told I am being hostile and aggressive..'*

**FE learner**

*'A lot of our learners come from vulnerable backgrounds, and are happy to have the opportunities that they have. So they don't want to cause any drama or create any issues. So this can get to a point where they put up with racism, because they don't want to create a challenge or make someone else feel uncomfortable.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

## Reporting racism in FE

### Overarching findings (3/3)

Across FE, whether a member of staff or a learner, there are reservations around reporting racism. Where racism had been reported, the outcome was often unsatisfactory, which had a negative impact on the victim.

#### The reporting of racism rarely had the impact the person had hoped for

- When staff and learners were asked what drove them to report racism, they most often answered that it was a desire for an apology, recognition of the hurt caused, and assurance that the racism would stop. In the case of learners who had reported racism, the most frequent outcome (they were aware of) had been a perpetrator being disciplined, meaning the process concluded in their eyes without the apology or assurance the racism would stop.
- In the case of staff who had reported racism, none had felt the outcome was satisfactory. At the extreme end, reporting racism had exacerbated challenges faced.

*'I was told the person was given a disciplinary, but I just wanted an apology. I had to keep working with this person who had now been given a disciplinary. It was the last thing I wanted to do.'*

**FE staff member**

*'Nobody ever apologised for what happened, which was all I wanted, just an acknowledgement that it shouldn't have happened and was regrettable.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

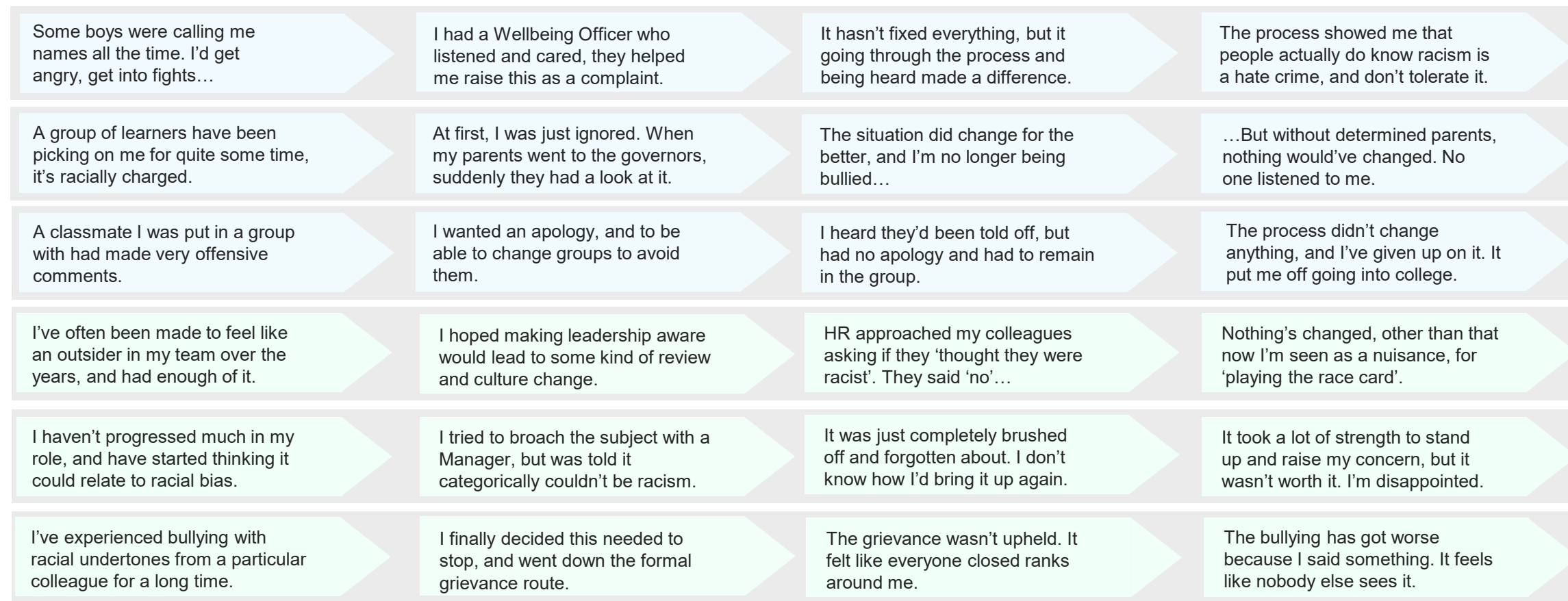
*'I honestly don't know what happened when I reported it. I don't know what they said to the perpetrator. Whether they were told off, put on a warning, or just let off it. No one told me after. Whatever they did it didn't stop them from making comments again. It makes it feel a bit pointless if I'm honest.'*

**FE learner**

# Reporting racism in FE

## Staff and learner journeys

Below are six example experiences of staff and learners going through reporting processes\*:



\* These stories are not direct quotes. Details have been redacted to protect participant's identities.

# 3e

## Achieving ethnic minority representation in FE workforces

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There were clear benefits to diversity of experience at all levels of the FE workforce, but institutions were at different stages in the journey of increasing representation.

# Achieving ethnic minority representation in FE workforces

## Overview

There were clear benefits to diversity of experience at all levels of the FE workforce, but institutions are at different stages in the journey of increasing representation.

Several ethnic minority staff reflected on their career's beginnings, being one of very few ethnic minority students on a PGCE. In many cases, this had set a longer-term tone, with staff describing their institutions as remaining homogeneously white Welsh/British. Other staff felt their institution or team was gradually becoming more ethnically diverse.

No participants felt that a lack of diversity was symptomatic of an overarching bias in recruitment at institution-level. The roots of the issue were in-part seen as relating to regional demography, and in-part down to wider representation issues, for example in certain trades for vocational FE careers, or in ethnic minority Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students.

In both scenarios, staff mentioned being aware of a lack of diversity at senior levels in their organisation. In some cases, staff felt capable of stepping up to a more senior role, but hadn't considered doing so due to lack of diversity, and the view of 'not wanting to be what they couldn't see'.

Across all staff participants, there was a recognition that increasing ethnic minority representation in FE was key to achieving the Anti-racist Wales ambition.

Many staff and learners offered the watch-out that tokenism is not acceptable. This relates to a disinclination to disclose ethnicity on forms, and being 'singled out' on account of ethnicity without permission.

To achieve greater ethnic minority representation in FE, there is a need to start early, ensuring careers in FE are attractive and accessible to diverse staff early in their careers. There is also a need to provide pathways to upward progression for ethnic minority staff already in the FE workforce.

# Achieving ethnic minority representation in FE workforces: Themes

## Benefits of diversity of experience in FE

In several cases, learner participants named a single member of the staff team who understood and could relate to their experience as a key support. Many ethnic minority staff were conscious of the unique support they were able to provide.

*'I have a counsellor I go to and he's got a similar background to me. I've told him about everything I have experienced in terms of racism, and I feel like he understands. Other than that, none of my teachers are from diverse backgrounds.'*

**FE learner**

*'I feel like especially with Wales being predominantly white, ethnic minority learners do need to have more emotional support. Often that only comes when there are staff that you can relate to.'*

**FE learner**

*'It's great that there is more diversity here. When students hear they're from the same place as you, they get quite inspired. It excites them, I guess. And it's quite a nice feeling to be in that situation, I've never had that before. It really suits me.'*

**FE staff member**

## Experiences of being an ethnic minority member of staff in a largely homogenous team

Nearly all ethnic minority staff participants described themselves as being one of a small number of non-White Welsh/British members of the workforce they could think of. They often described the experience as being 'othered'.

*'I am used to being in that situation where I'm the only, non-white person around. So it's kind of become the norm. My interview for this job was online with three other people who were all white. I guess I just feel like... I've got used to it.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

*'There was a time when we had race equality training, and there was only one Black member of staff on the training. Somebody made a comment which singled them out in a way that I felt was inappropriate and offensive.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

*'I thought, this could be a great place for me to be a role model. I haven't really had that opportunity before in my career, because where I've taught the students have been predominantly white background.'*

**FE staff member**

## Barriers to 'getting in' for ethnic minority staff

In some cases, ethnic minority staff described a sense of nepotism and informal recruitment practices limiting their scope to develop their careers. White Welsh/British staff participants reflected on recruitment processes.

*'We see that in this institution in particular, where people are getting jobs because they know someone like a husband or a family member. And I look and I think in over a decade years, I have been one of the only Muslim members of staff this college has employed.'*

**FE staff member**

*'We're recruiting at the moment and have had lots of different applications come through, some of which are from overseas. It's been interesting reviewing these and noticing my own bias. When I read an application from overseas, I feel an element of dismissal that they could have the right skills.'*

**FE staff member**

# Achieving ethnic minority representation in FE workforces: Themes

## Equalities forms can feel like a tick box exercise

A number of participants had reservations around disclosing protected characteristics such as ethnicity on equalities forms. There was a lack of understanding around how this data was used, and what the benefits were of providing it.

*'We shouldn't need to be reaching 10% of our staff being one ethnicity, 10% of staff being disabled, etc to see the college become more inclusive. It feels like we have to reach a quota to see the change.'*

**Adult Learning staff member**

*'Having "Other" as a word on ethnicity forms separates you and literally feels othering itself. I know you can't list every single ethnicity, but surely something could be done there. There's surely a more inclusive word than "Other".'*

**Adult Learning staff member**

*'Sometimes you're filling out an equalities form and you're thinking 'this is just for a tick box'. They'll say "How many of you are disabled? How many of you are LGBTQ+? How many of you have a different ethnic background?'*

**FE staff member**

 *Staff experience*

## Diversity of thinking

“When I first joined, I think my colleagues saw me being so successful in the way I interacted with students and became resentful. My life experiences allowed me to relate to students much more easily than other tutors. I was kicked out of every school I went to and I didn't get into college, so I have a very different life experience to most of my colleagues. This, alongside being one of the only ethnic minority staff, means I have my own unique way of building that rapport with students.”

 *Staff experience*

## Grouping of minorities

“Every learner with an ethnicity somehow adjacent to mine got put with me. And I was like, guys, you know their ethnicity isn't the same, right? Our families come from different places and we speak different languages. And they were like, 'We just thought like they might see you and be more comfortable'. I can understand that to a certain extent but also then, did they maybe feel a bit like 'Well, hang on, you've just given me the token non-white person here, and she's not even the same ethnicity as me.’”

# Achieving ethnic minority representation in FE workforces: Themes

## Lack of representation at senior leadership levels

Staff members across various organisations commented on the lack of diversity in their senior leadership teams, with some commenting on the glass ceiling mindset this creates amongst ethnic minority staff.

*'Wherever I've worked, I've had no interest in becoming a senior leader in teaching. I think that's come because I definitely don't see myself fitting in with any of the senior leadership teams that I've worked with. So it has kind of held me back from wanting to take that next step.'*

**FE staff member**

*'There's no ethnic minorities in the senior leader team. Which has always been the case everywhere I've worked, if I'm honest.'*

**Adult Learning staff member**

## Meaningful representation versus tokenism

Staff spoke of efforts to improve representation at a surface level, without addressing the systemic cause of the issue or considering more meaningful ways to take action.

*'There are lots of ethnic minority staff coming through, but their levels of responsibility and pay are lower. So if you can change statistics, to make it look like there's a representation, but you have to look at the positions of people.'*

**FE staff member**

*'I went to this meeting recently, and the theme was wanting more non-white learners. We can't just blow a puff of smoke and expect them to appear, we need to change the underlying system.'*

**Adult Learning staff member**

*'I don't actually care if the person teaching me is white or not. People think this is what makes the difference but it isn't – it makes it forced if you focus on that. I want the person to be a good teacher, and I don't want them to be racist, that's all.'*

**FE learner**

## Making known how rewarding a career in FE can be

Many staff suggested there was a need to raise the profile of how rewarding their role can be, and suggested this would attract a diverse workforce.

*'[We do advertise how] North Wales is a wonderful place to work and live. You've got beaches, you've got the mountains, you've got all this. It's only an hour away from Manchester and Liverpool. But yeah, I just think they need to be more proactive in trying to recruit a wider representation of what society is, really'*

**FE staff member**

*'I think they need to celebrate their diversity a lot more. That would attract more staff. I've done a lot of work to promote teaching in Wales in previous roles and would love to do more...'*

**FE staff member**



# 3f

## Sub-sector specificities

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While the majority of experiences cut across FE sectors, contextual differences between Adult Learning, Apprenticeships and FE did mean there were differing experiences of racism and journeys ahead on anti-racism.

### The inclusive approach employed in adult learning has wider applicability in FE

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It was clear from participants that adult learning courses regularly provide an approach to learning that focuses on inclusivity, and succeeds in its goal to offer life chances along with qualifications.

- Some described teaching techniques and approaches to creating a safe space for discussing subjects like racism that could have wider applicability in FE.
- Learners within adult learning most regularly described enduring racism in wider life outside of their learning provider. It was clear that services and society could better welcome and accommodate ethnic minority learners. Staff felt a responsibility to shield their learners from such inequalities, in some cases describing stepping in to provide support outside of the learning environment.

 *Staff experience*

#### Language barriers in wider life

“The English barrier is a huge issue. There is a general view in society that if you don't speak English, people don't have to treat you the same. One of our learners was having issues with their phone bill, and asked for help. They had been refused help in the shop. Staff said they couldn't understand what the learner said ...I could understand what they were saying. The learner was so surprised how different the service was when I stepped in to help.”

*'In my department, we aren't really only there for learning to be honest. We're there also for sociality. A lot of my learners are maybe long term out of work. They might have no particular social network, or be older. Some will come with additional needs like dyslexia, autism, ADHD, and will always have felt left out or will always have felt different.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

*'It's not just learning really, it is a place to be and a place to make friends. There are expectations of us for sure, but learning is informal.'*

**Adult learner**

## Sub-sector specificities: The apprenticeships landscape

### Responsibility for anti-racism falls on individual providers, and individual assessors


Individual staff, and the providers they worked for, were passionate about ensuring apprenticeship routes were accessible to all.

- Apprenticeships typically have low ethnic minority representation within learner populations, relative to Adult Learning and FE. With Apprenticeships being an FE route that requires independence and autonomy, it may be that language, financial and learning barriers can come into play for learners. These barriers may disproportionately affect ethnic minority learners, making apprenticeship routes less attractive.
- Apprenticeship learning can feel detached from a wider FE experience. While many learner participants were comfortable with work-based learning being more independent, the knock-on effect was unknowns existing around where to go to access support.
- Many Assessors described a 'dual role': providing learning, and being 'everything else' for learners, and were aware of the role they had to play, despite boundaries of accountability between employers and Assessors that could be blurry.

 *Staff experience*

#### Helping an apprentice explain religious needs to an employer

"We had a learner who was fasting, but didn't know how to explain this to his employer or colleagues, they didn't fully understand what it meant. We came into the discussion to help, as he was a bit nervous about bringing it up. We had nice feedback from both the employer and learner. It's about encouraging these conversations. Some learners have no or limited experience of work, so this is all new to them."

 *Learner experience*

#### Struggling with workload without support

"Because I already had a lot of experience in my field and went for the qualification to progress further, I expected the learning to be manageable – it is much more full-on than expected. I've been overwhelmed juggling the workload on top of a full-time job. What doesn't help is how detached I feel. I speak to my trainer coach occasionally over the phone when busy at work, and that's about it. It doesn't feel like there's anyone looking out for me."

*'Because they're not coming into a college four days a week, you do have to be a bit more hands-on. Otherwise, they could slip through the net in terms if they have experienced any racism, or even something else that's just making them feel uncomfortable.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

## Sub-sector specificities: The FE landscape

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### Greatest opportunity to foster culture of anti-racism

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For many FE learner participants, a college experience was chosen as a ‘fresh start’. Many colleges succeed in fostering and maintaining an inclusive environment, while there is room for improvement around structures and processes.


- Education was seen as a linear, immersive experience for full-time learners in college. All learner participants could recall their first day and first term, and whether these met their expectations. There is an opportunity to set the tone for FE experience and present an anti-racist ethos at this point.
- More so than in apprenticeships and adult learning, FE learner participants could describe the pastoral support and structures they had access to. However, this was patchy – with some ethnic minority learners beginning their FE journey after experiencing challenges at school for a variety of reasons, there may be a need for more targeted support.
- With FE encompassing multiple routes from vocational to academic, there is a need for a multi-faceted approach to embedding anti-racism in learning and culture. Incidence of racist ‘banter’ came out most prominently in this sector, and it appeared that colloquialisms from trade and industry could make their way into the learning experience.
- For staff participants, there were the most unknowns around how to report racism and wider concerns within FE. There was a sense that ethnic minority staff could feel alone or unheard in a ‘micro-culture’ within their substantive organisational structure. This indicated a need for adjustment of HR processes, and greater support for ethnic minority staff.

*‘I think there could be more done, perhaps, at the early stages of college, when they come from high school into the college. I think the induction process could be a bit more informal to get people mixing. Because it’s very clear to see there’s pockets of cultures. I would like to see an opportunity earlier on for them to have a bit more chance to get to know each other, get to know people on your course, who are perhaps outside your friendship group. I think that could be done a bit better.’*

**FE staff member**

*‘The thing that has helped me the most is my counsellor. They’re always telling us, “If something happens to you, you tell me straight away and I’ll get it sorted’... And really gets involved. Whatever happens, you know you can call on them and they have your back.’*

**FE learner**

 **Learner experience**

#### Daunted by college, but pleasantly surprised

*“I was quite terrified going into college, I had previously been to an SEN (Special Educational Needs) school and did not know what to expect at all when I started. When I got there, it was really different to what I thought and a lot calmer. People treated each other fairly. Because when you go into college, you find people who just want to be there and people who actually want to study and not just goof around. They’re here to go to uni or do something post 18.”*

# 3g

## Embedding anti-racism in culture and experience

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Participants reflected on the Anti-Racist Wales action plan itself, and what could prepare FE to maintain anti-racist environments.

## Embedding diversity in culture and experience: Conclusive themes

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### **Opportunity to create a unified anti-racism approach that cuts across varied organisational contexts**

With some institutions welcoming increasingly diverse learner populations year on year, and a lack of diversity in other institutions, Welsh FE institutions face different challenges when it comes to fostering and maintaining anti-racist environments. Recognising the differences in the journey ahead will be key to achieving the Anti-racist Wales ambition.

Contributing to and delivering the action plan is something that institutions can do in equal measures, regardless of their individual context.

Overall amongst staff, there was a low awareness of the work and an opportunity to empower more members of staff to engage in its development and delivery.

### **From anti-racism as a mindset to employ, to anti-racism as a core skill in FE**

Staff and learners alike spoke highly of initiatives to promote multi-culturalism such as culture days and international food events.


When it came to the day-to-day FE experience however, it appeared that the embedding of anti-racism was irregular and in some cases felt strained, for example, diverse learners being visually represented in advertisements, but not within learning materials.

There was a sense that without a unified approach and central bank of teaching resources, embedding anti-racism into FE experience relied on individuals.

# Embedding diversity in culture and experience

## Expanding the view of Welshness: What's working in FE


Across the board, participants called out initiatives that had been successful in exposing learners and staff to difference. Some of these have wider applicability.

 *Staff experience*

### Wellbeing focus

“We've got a heavy wellbeing focus in Jobs Growth Wales. While learners get qualifications, there's also that focus. So once a week, they'll have an enrichment day where they'll go climb a hill or go to a therapeutic farm. You can't teach anyone if they're in a state of survival. So they're trying to focus on wellbeing, resilience, and building up self-esteem, so it is a lot easier to go on and manage a qualification.”




 *Learner experience*

### Multicultural social events

“We did a big live stream of the World Cup. And, it wasn't just like, a celebration for Wales playing against Iran. We were qualifying for the World Cup for the first time in 64 years, and everyone in the college got together from different backgrounds. You didn't have to support the Welsh side, or be from Wales to support Wales, so it was a really lovely event.”




 *Staff experience*

### The power of food

“We run cooking courses and demonstrations at the college. ESOL students have come in, made a dish that's important to them and taught other learners to make it. That's been an overwhelming success. We also have international food day, where students from all different departments bring in the dish that they're most fond of from their own country, and others will come to try it. It's a simple thing but it just starts the dialogue.”



 *Learner experience*

### Culture days

“The culture day was a massive eye opener, I think, for everybody there. They'd never done that before. You could tell that everyone felt a part of it.

They were videos going on TikTok and everyone was saying, 'oh, we wish we went to your college, it looks such a good day'. It's kind of hard to explain, you had to be there to feel the pride.”



# 4

## Opportunity areas and actions

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# Opportunity areas and actions

## Introduction

### As a reminder, this section introduces sparks of opportunities to be developed and validated.

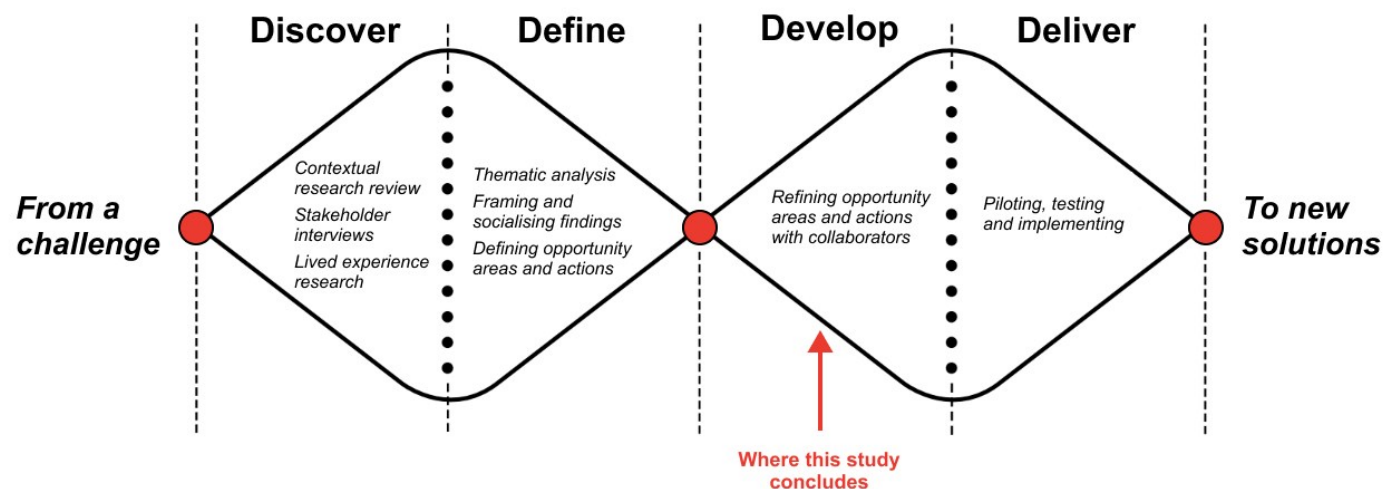
Some of these opportunities may be achievable in the shorter-term. For example, the set of recommendations on page 63 around improving the experience of reporting racism, which could be addressed at local levels. Improving the experience of reporting racism would rapidly make a perceivable difference to ethnic minority staff and learners in FE who are victims of racism.

Other opportunities may be longer-term agenda items, which will benefit from discussion, development and iteration.

The research team advise keeping the stories and real-world scenarios shared by FE staff and learners in this report front-of-mind. Each opportunity presented in this section can be developed by 'starting small' and running experiments. Each recommendation can be broken down into smaller parts to pilot and test.

Once again, referring to the 'Double Diamond' model followed throughout the process to-date, at the conclusion of this study, the Welsh Government and Welsh FE sector is left with a process of 'Development' to complete. This will involve building out specific interventions around opportunities. There may be some reframing and adjustment to come on the basis of that development.

This study was solely focused on realities for FE staff and learners. Addressing these recommendations will do justice to all of those who generously shared their experiences and perspectives.



## Opportunity areas and actions

# Fostering and maintaining a culture of anti-racism is dependent on systemic change

Racism is a systemic issue in society, and as such the array of recommendations that can be made based on this research are each interrelated and co-dependent. Across the following pages, recommendations are presented against the following opportunity areas:

## Research has surfaced 6 key opportunity areas:

<u>Opportunity 1:</u>	<u>Opportunity 2:</u>	<u>Opportunity 3:</u>	<u>Opportunity 4:</u>	<u>Opportunity 5:</u>	<u>Opportunity 6:</u>
Improve understanding of what constitutes racism and its impacts	Increase confidence in challenging all forms of racism	Enhance career support provisions for ethnic minority staff	Enhance learning support provisions for ethnic minority learners	Increase ethnic minority representation at all levels of FE workforces	Improve experience of reporting racism for learners and staff

# 1. Improve understanding of what constitutes racism and its impacts

Opportunity areas

## Key evidence

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There was an inconsistent understanding of what constituted racism, and how racism could impact staff and learners. The level of understanding varied depending on institution and department, team and classroom culture, and on an individual basis.

Additionally, there was a low level of knowledge of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan overall, with over half of staff participants not aware the work was taking place. Staff had stepped forward to take part in this research because they had experience and ideas to share, and there was a clear opportunity to bring more of the workforce into the development work.

*'Racism is learnt, so you're dependent on staff member's abilities to engage with the subject.'*

**FE staff member**

*'I've been in education for a decade and this is the first time anybody has asked me about [racism and anti-racism]. So I jumped at the opportunity – I have so much to say.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

# 1. Improve understanding of what constitutes racism and its impacts

*Opportunity areas*

## Recommendations

Actions	Impacts	Considerations
1a: Ensure that members of FE workforces have the opportunity to contribute to the development and review of individual provider Action Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empowers individual members of staff to contribute to the plans in their next iterations, or begin formulating the contributions they would like to make.</li> </ul>	
1b: Develop FE communities of practice, that frame anti-racism as a core skill, and give staff opportunities to share practical ideas and examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local teams empowered to contribute to development of national-level initiatives.</li> <li>Cross-sharing of good practice eg. inclusive teaching practices promoted locally and nationally.</li> <li>Increased distinction between FE roles and other education roles, raising sector prestige and appeal to newly qualified teachers.</li> </ul>	
1c: Develop and maintain a 'central bank' of anti-racism focused learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anti-racism is discussed more regularly in the classroom.</li> <li>FE staff supported by accredited resources, reducing fear around 'thinking on one's feet' and individual bias when discussing challenging topics.</li> <li>Anti-racism resources are 'living' as opposed to static, meaning resources are available to support discussions around current topics in the news and zeitgeist.</li> </ul>	Resources should be regularly reviewed to ensure their relevance and dynamism.
1d: Ensure anti-racist curriculum development work extends to work-based-learning routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigate against an 'experience gap' around level to which anti-racism is embedded in academic and vocational learning.</li> <li>Long-term impact on awareness and understanding of racism and anti-racism in the workplace.</li> </ul>	
1e: Extend 'Hate Hurts Wales' campaign, bringing in an allyship perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normalisation of challenging racism as a non-racialised person and demonstrating the positive impact this can have on victims of racism.</li> </ul>	

## 2. Increase confidence in challenging all forms of racism

Opportunity areas

### Key evidence

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Amongst staff, there was a lack of confidence around challenging covert racism. The recurring theme was that staff often didn't know what to do upon seeing or hearing something that they knew to be 'wrong', but was 'subtle'.

A number of staff described previous training experiences that had been beneficial, such as 'Show Racism the Red Card' training. But the sentiment was that training often found focus on overt racism, such as name-calling. Additionally, a number of ethnic minority staff had experienced feeling singled out during training, which had resulted in colleagues focusing on their experiences, as opposed to reflecting on their own behaviour.

There was a clear need to use real world scenarios to demonstrate what forms of covert racism such as 'microaggressions' mean and how they play out, taking them from being abstract concepts to something tangible in the FE environment.

*'I would say there's a fear of how to step in, what to say, how to say it. Especially when racism is veiled behind little comments, looks...'*

**FE staff member**

*'Racism can be very subtle. I think sometimes people of ethnic minorities find it very difficult to actually approach certain things. At least for me, sometimes I might not know if I'm blowing something out of proportion or if I'm not. So sometimes it can be very difficult to know how you deal with it. And I do think that has a very big negative impact on how you do things.'*

**Adult learner**

*'It needs to be made into something relevant to everyone. In [Anti-racism] training, I feel so aware of being one of the only non-white people in the room. I do sense that some people switch off when talking about it because it doesn't feel relevant to them or their lives.'*

**FE staff member**

## 2. Increase confidence in challenging all forms of racism

### Recommendations

*Opportunity areas*

Actions	Impacts	Considerations
<p>2a: Develop and maintain ‘anti-racist behaviours’ CPD tailored to FE environments, which includes tangible examples of racism in FE including covert racism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency of approach to anti-racism training.</li> <li>• Increased confidence to challenge racism as a white Welsh/British person.</li> <li>• Training that feels up-to-date and relevant, increasing confidence in institutional and national commitment to anti-racism.</li> </ul>	
<p>2b: Create an ‘anti-racist behaviours’ toolkit for employers taking apprentices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased assurance for Apprentices from ethnic minority backgrounds that workplace settings will be inclusive and welcoming.</li> <li>• Added value for participating workplaces.</li> <li>• Less pressure on individual assessors for evaluating workplace settings from a distance.</li> </ul>	
<p>2c: Offer an additional ‘anti-racist behaviours’ scheme for FE staff who wish to deepen their knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower FE staff with a personal drive to champion anti-racism with the skills to do so.</li> <li>• Growing cohort of FE staff with additional anti-racism training who are able to provide additional support to learners and staff where they are victims of racism.</li> </ul>	<p>This could specifically be made available to line managers, and focus on anti-racism in a position of leadership. It is of the utmost importance that anti-racism is of everybody’s responsibility, and that such a scheme does not perpetuate an idea that pro-active groups can champion it alone.</p>

### 3. Enhance career support provisions for ethnic minority staff

Opportunity areas

#### Key evidence

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As FE staff reflected on their career experiences, researchers noted that ethnic minority staff had much more variable experiences. Some were very satisfied in their careers, while others were very dissatisfied.

Drivers of poor experience for ethnic minority staff ranged from unresolved racist incidents at work, to wider senses of lack of progression or lack of kinship at work.

*'Racism has always been a part of my life experience, while I was at uni, and ever since when I've been working. It isn't something that goes out of the equation in the workplace.'*

**FE staff member**

*'One of the problems is how disjointed everything is. Outside of education, I've worked in places where you'll be given a tour of your new workplace when you join, meet people in other departments. These things make a huge difference, they mean you can see beyond the place you're in and work you're currently doing.'*

**FE staff member**

### 3. Enhance career support provisions for ethnic minority staff

#### Recommendations

*Opportunity areas*

Actions	Impacts	Considerations
3a: Create a standard wellbeing and equity-focused approach to appraisals and one-to-ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency to appraisal processes.</li> <li>• Appraisals and one-to-ones with line managers become open forums for discussing wellbeing and career aspirations, beyond 'business as usual'.</li> <li>• Potentially increased upward internal career progression for ethnic minority staff.</li> </ul>	
3b: Ensure all staff are assigned with an anti-racism point of contact, who is trained to listen and in a position to be objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of a 'safe space', in there being an objective party trained to listen, who understands the impacts of racism.</li> <li>• Improved experience of raising either a complaint racism, or wider career or workplace-related concern, in this point-of-contact being detached from both a staff member's immediate team, and formal HR system.</li> </ul>	Objectivity will be crucial here. Points of contact could be external community advocates, or staff from the same institution who have no other working relationship with the staff they represent.
3c: Provide opportunities for ethnic minority staff to be part of sector-wide communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides space for ethnic minority staff to share experiences, views and ideas beyond their direct colleague community.</li> </ul>	This may relate to Action 1b. While the 'communities of practice' described there could be open to all members of the workforce, these particular opportunities should be limited to ethnic minority staff.



## 4. Enhance learning support provisions for ethnic minority learners

Opportunity areas

### Key evidence

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Reflecting on wider life experience, the majority of ethnic minority learner participants described feeling a lack of support or understanding at some point in their education.

In some cases, FE had been different: Learners knew where and how to access support and knew somebody was there for them, which provided assurance. In others, FE was no different: Additional learning needs could be misunderstood to be language barriers, or there could be no clear pastoral point of contact to reach out to.

It was clear that it was possible to make an FE experience a distinctly supportive and inclusive one. Ensuring this is delivered to learners on a consistent basis is key.

*'School was always hard, I always felt different, so it was definitely a choice to move on and go to college and be in a completely different place. So far, it has actually been better. The environment is much more open minded, more people watch out for you.'*

**FE learner**

*'It's so hard to work a 9 to 5 and find a moment to get back to your tutor within that 9 to 5. So just finding a way to provide some support out of those hours would be useful.'*

**Apprentice**

*'I've noticed that a lot of people around me don't really know the names of anyone they can go to in the college if they have a problem. I know, because I make it my business to find out, but just the fact that they don't even know who to look for is worrying. I think there needs to be more support on the off for people who might have been victims of racism.'*

**FE learner**

## 4. Enhance learning support provisions for ethnic minority learners

### Recommendations

*Opportunity areas*

Actions	Impacts	Considerations
4a: Assign Wellbeing Officers to all learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethnic minority learners have a named person to call upon, should they need pastoral support, reducing uncertainty about the best route to attaining support.</li> </ul>	Wellbeing Officers will need training on how to best support ethnic minority learners for this to be effective.
4b: Ensure all learners have a consistent induction to available support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sets the tone for a welcoming and supportive FE environment.</li> <li>A pastoral induction becomes a consistent part of the FE experience, whether a learner is on an apprenticeship, in adult learning or in wider FE.</li> <li>Provides an early opportunity for setting out the process for reporting racist incidents.</li> </ul>	
4c: Provide funding flexibility for all learners requiring extra time, including ESOL learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Means all learners have the same opportunity to access additional support.</li> <li>Alleviates the pressure on individual institutions for redirecting funding towards learners in need who are not formally allocated it.</li> </ul>	
4d: Develop and maintain CPD on inclusive pastoral care techniques to reduce language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces the extent to which language barriers exacerbate inequalities.</li> <li>Alleviates the pressure on pastoral teams who have a desire to deliver the same support to all learners, but without the tools to do so.</li> </ul>	This may include non-verbal therapeutic techniques.

## 5. Increase ethnic minority representation at all levels of FE workforces

Opportunity areas

### Key evidence

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Several ethnic minority staff reflected on their career's beginnings, being one of few ethnic minority students on a PGCE. In many cases, this had set a precedent, with staff describing their institutions as remaining homogeneously white Welsh/British today. Others felt their institution or team was becoming more ethnically diverse.

In both scenarios, staff were aware of a lack of diversity at senior levels in their organisation. Some staff felt capable of stepping up to a more senior role, but hadn't applied for one due to the lack of diversity and sense of not wanting to be what they couldn't see.

There was general recognition that diversity of experience in the FE workforces would help achieve the Anti-racist Wales ambition. Many participants offered the watch-out that tokenism is not acceptable.

With a majority of staff participants cognisant of a lack of diversity at senior levels in their organisation, it was clear that creating short-term and long-term plans to diversify senior leadership should be a priority.

*'I wonder whether sometimes deeply challenging [racism] needs to come through more exposure to difference. I think the more exposure there is, for learners to understand there is diversity, and people are different but can relate to one another, the better. That familiarity makes quite a big difference. So having diversity within the staff team, I think, is something that's a really helpful thing.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

*'Wherever I've worked, I've had no interest in becoming a senior leader in teaching. I think that comes because I definitely don't see myself fitting in with any of the senior leadership teams that I've worked with. So it has kind of held me back from wanting to take that next step.'*

**FE staff member**

## 5. Increase ethnic minority representation at all levels of FE workforces

### Recommendations

*Opportunity areas*

Actions	Impacts	Considerations
5a: Incentivise senior leaders from diverse backgrounds to relocate/retrain as FE leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates opportunities for ethnic minority leaders in other professions and/or outside of Wales to make a career move and begin inspiring the next generation of talent.</li> </ul>	
5b: Develop a campaign celebrating FE roles and distinguishing them from other teaching roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empowers ethnic minority FE staff to lead the conversation on why diversity is important in FE.</li> <li>Encourages newly qualified teachers and other potential candidates for FE roles to consider FE early in their careers.</li> </ul>	
5c: Ensure that professional learning on anti-racism includes staff who are responsible for recruitment processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff who are responsible for recruitment processes have a practical understanding of how they can promote equity in their work.</li> </ul>	
5d: Increase visibility of FE career opportunities by listing them more widely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removes barriers to accessing potential opportunities for potential ethnic minority candidates for FE roles.</li> <li>Encourages a wider range of potential ethnic minority candidates for FE roles to apply for them, whether or not they meet every requirement on a person specification.</li> </ul>	
5e: Provide apprenticeship routes into FE roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for work-based entry into FE roles, opening them up to candidates who haven't considered a PGCE.</li> </ul>	
5f: Add a multiple choice question to equalities forms, asking staff why they may not be willing to disclose their ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring results will build a picture of the roots of disinclination to disclose ethnicity, allowing institutions and the Welsh Government to provide greater understanding of reservations.</li> </ul>	<p>The way this question is asked is important. It must be clear <i>why</i> it is being asked, and how the information will be used.</p>

## 6. Improve experience of reporting racism for learners and staff

Opportunity areas

### Key evidence from the learner perspective

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There was a low understanding of what then would happen if learners reported racism, and the extent to which they would be supported. Most learners had reservations around reporting racism, often for fear a complaint wouldn't be taken seriously. Most of the experiences of racism learners recalled during research had not been formally reported.

Where experiences had been formally reported and the process had not met a learner's expectations, this had a significant effect on the learner's confidence in staff, their institution, and their general level of confidence that racism was taken seriously.

*'If everyone started reporting it, it would make a difference. If people just knew that you can call the police if you are experiencing racism and in danger of it... Not everyone knows racism is not legal. People think if you call the police, they probably just don't care. They tell you to just go home... It would just be way better if everyone knew they could do that and how.'*

**FE learner**

*'The way I've been treated by some members of staff has completely put me off continuing in education. My experience has been that if anyone treats me unfairly and I react to it, then I'm punished for doing so. I get tone-policed quite a lot.'*

**FE learner**

*'I hope it isn't the case, but it could be that learners are experiencing racism but we just don't get to hear about it. Learners are often desperate to get the qualification. That's why I'm a little bit more wary when I go into a setting.'*

**Apprenticeship staff member**

## 6. Improve experience of reporting racism for staff

Opportunity areas

### Key evidence from the staff perspective

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There were reservations from some staff around using the word 'racism' to describe negative experiences to managers or colleagues. This could stem from fear of being perceived as over-reacting, or fear of initiating a career-impacting process they would have little control over. As with learners, most experiences recalled during research had not been formally reported.

Of staff participants who had reported experiencing racism, none had found the process resulted in a desirable outcome. At the extreme end, reporting racism had exacerbated challenges faced.

*'You get told to read all the policies and things, and obviously when you start a new job, you get sent them all. There wasn't anything, from what I remember, about what to do if you face racism.'*

*'It was all, 'we are an inclusive organisation' and all that kind of stuff. But there wasn't the flip side of what to do if it does happen.'*

**Adult learning staff member**

*'There needs to be that feeling that you can go and say something. You shouldn't have to have any scepticism about that. You should be able to feel completely comfortable. Not just to talk to your colleagues next to you, but anybody in the college, really.'*

**FE staff member**

## 6. Improve experience of reporting racism for learners and staff

### Recommendations

*Opportunity areas*

Actions	Impacts	Considerations
6a: Develop national guidance around ideal reporting journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardises the approach to handling reports of racism.</li> <li>Reduces ambiguity about touchpoints in the journey, for example, when a report should be dealt with internally or externally (police involvement).</li> </ul>	This may be dependent on 6.2c: tracking desired outcomes would inform work on ideal journeys.
6b: Ensure information about the reporting process and what it will entail is readily available and up-to-date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates that racism will not be tolerated in any form.</li> <li>Learners and staff members more likely to report racism when they experience it, or witness it.</li> <li>Provides assurance around what to expect from the process, such as how long it may take, what support will be available, and what the outcome may be.</li> </ul>	
6c: Directly ask individuals reporting racism what they aim to achieve from the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces uncertainty on the learner or staff member's part, around what potential outcomes may be and what is feasible.</li> <li>Reduces uncertainty on the handler's part around what the desired outcome is.</li> <li>Recording and monitoring desired outcomes versus actual outcomes at a national-level will inform the overarching guidance.</li> </ul>	
6d: Ensure anybody who reports a racist incident is provided with an update about the outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures the entire process is followed through, and presents a moment to challenge the outcome.</li> <li>Increases likelihood victims will report racism again if they experience it.</li> </ul>	
6e: Provide a route to reporting racism that guarantees anonymity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces likelihood of learners or staff members being disinclined to report racism for fear of this negatively impacting their experience of learning, career or educational opportunities.</li> </ul>	

# 5

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**DK&A**



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