Rethink
Mental
Illness.

Anti-Racism

Progress Report

**Leading the way to a better
quality of life for everyone
severely affected by mental illness.**

Foreword

The murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis in May 2020 was not, sadly, an isolated incident. But what it did do was light the touchpaper for a level of global outrage that had not been seen for many decades, if ever before. It also caused a long overdue reckoning. Across the world, organisations both small and large were forced to confront the lack of progress that had been made in driving change for racialised communities.

In the UK, it is a well-established fact that Black people are more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act and to remain in care longer than any other group. People from Black and minority ethnic groups also regularly report being discriminated against within the mental health system and receiving poorer quality care.

Recognising that we, ourselves, had not made the progress we ought to have in relation to the intersection between mental ill health and race, Rethink Mental Illness brought in an expert independent consultancy, Oxytocin-Learning, to review our practice around race. The eventual report published about our practice was a painful read for colleagues - senior and junior - as we came to terms with the significant gap between the organisation we wanted to be and the one we were.

As a result, in my role as the Executive Team Sponsor for race equity at Rethink Mental Illness and Mental Health UK and with other colleagues, we embarked on a deliberative but ambitious programme of work. This Anti-Racism Progress Report is an open, honest and frank assessment of the progress we have made and the distance we have still to go. We hope it will be read in that spirit.

Brian Dow

Deputy Chief Executive, Rethink Mental Illness

Chief Executive, Mental Health UK

Introduction

This Anti-Racism Progress Report is not a list of everything we have done over the last two years. The progress report focuses on the key activities and the foundational changes we have made to becoming a truly anti-racist organisation. It has been a busy period of sustained activity and reflection.

We published our Race Equality Action Plan[1] and Anti-Racism Statement[2] in June 2022 on Windrush Day.[3] The Action Plan sets out the short, medium and long-term actions, co-produced with our Black and racially minoritised colleagues and beneficiaries. The statement outlines how racial disparities in access, experience and outcomes in mental health stem from historical and societal prejudice, racism and discrimination and that this unfair treatment also applies in the workplace. The statement openly admits that the charity has not been immune from this injustice; but we are committed to influencing and delivering change in becoming a truly anti-racist organisation.

Like other organisations around the world, when we set out on our anti-racist journey in 2020. we were responding to the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement and calls from our Black and ethnic minority colleagues, stakeholders and partners for immediate and meaningful action. We embarked on a period of introspection and, at times, honest and uncomfortable conversations on systematic racial injustice and inequities with our Black and racially minoritised colleagues across the charity. We were clear that we wanted to take bold, committed and collective action and be actively anti-racist.

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1   Rethink Mental Illness Race Equality Action Plan
2   Anti-racism statement (rethink.org)
3   Windrush Day - Wikipedia

We invited Oxytocin-Learning (Oxytocin)[4] to conduct an independent review on our progress and what more we need to do to achieve our anti-racist commitment. Oxytocin is a social enterprise that provides tailored interventions to equip organisations and individuals to work effectively with racially, ethnically and culturally diverse populations. The review was led by Dr Jacqui Dyer and Dr Anthony Salla who both brought considerable experience in mental health, racial equality and mitigating the effects of racial bias in mental health services. Oxytocin was asked to provide an honest and impartial view on our organisational culture, policies and procedures.

The purpose of the review was to make recommendations to support Rethink Mental Illness' decision-making on what we need to become a truly anti-racist organisation and, throughout the charity placed no boundaries on the independent scrutiny. We published a summary of the Oxytocin review[5] in September 2021. We regret that it took some time from the commission of the Oxytocin review to move to action, but we think that this progress report highlights the concrete actions taken to fulfil our anti-racist commitments and to hold ourselves to account.

We have periodically published progress updates[6] of what we are doing to become a truly anti-racist organisation with the most recent in May 2023[7]. We are pleased that we were awarded the Race Equality Matter Trailblazer Bronze Award[8] in July 2023 for our work on tackling racial inequality and being shortlisted in the Inclusive Awards[9] in August 2023 and the British Diversity Awards[10] in January 2024. It is humbling to receive this independent recognition but, nonetheless, we know that we have only started this anti-racist journey and that there is so much more to be done.

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4   Experts By Experience (oxytocin-learning.com)
5   Becoming an anti-racist organisation: Oxytocin report (rethink.org)
6   Becoming an anti-racist organisation (rethink.org)
7   Becoming an anti-racist organisation: progress update May 2023 (rethink.org)
8   Rethink Mental Illness achieves recognition for work tackling racial inequality
9   Rethink Mental Illness nominated for inclusivity award
10   Britishdiversityawards.com)

Anti-Racist Leadership and Governance

We have created a robust and appropriate anti-racist leadership and governance framework to support the implementation of our anti-racist strategy and plans. We recruited an Associate Director for Race Equality in February 2022 to co-produce the Race Equality Action Plan with its three workstreams:

- Through leadership, governance, and accountability we will embed strategic oversight and implementation of our Race Equality Acton Plan.

- We will be an anti-racist employer where our workplace practices will enable our ethnically diverse colleagues to thrive and progress as valued employees.

- We will be an anti-racist service provider that knows its minoritised service users so that we can provide them with the optimal support and service where and when it is needed.

An initial action we took was to sign up to the Business in the Community Race at Work Charter with its seven calls to action on tackling racial inequality in the workplace by:

- Appointing an Executive Sponsor for race.

- Capturing ethnicity data and publicising progress.

- Committing at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying.

- Making it clear that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers.

- Taking action that supports Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse people's career progression.

- Supporting race inclusion allies in the workplace.

- Including Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse-led enterprise owners in supply chains.

> **We have delivered and are continuing to deliver on all of these seven activities along with the interventions in our Race Equality Action Plan.**

Our Chief Executive, Mark Winstanley, chairs our Race Equality Programme Board which provides strategic oversight of our anti-racism strategies, and, through his Chief Executive report, he provides regular updates to the Board. The Board of Trustees has also commissioned regular verbal updates on the progress the charity is making on the delivery of the Race Equality Action Plan. To support this high-level strategic governance, we created a Race Equality Delivery Group with leads from across the divergent functions in our three Directorates: External Affairs, Corporate Resources and Operations to deliver our Action Plan collectively, collaboratively and at pace.

We will repurpose the Delivery Group into a Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF) Implementation Steering Group to support the development and delivery of our PCREF plans to address the inequalities in our mental health support and services. We have established an Equity and Inclusion Practice Forum to support the delivery of our internal workplace practices on Equality Diversity and Inclusion and anti-racism set out in our Equity and Inclusion Roadmap and Staff Network Action Plans.

We have a thriving and engaging Race Equality Action Leaders staff network, which we launched at the same time as our Race Equality Action Plan. The network is a supportive and safe space for its racially diverse members to convene, discuss topical issues and share experiences and to help shape and drive our anti-racist agenda. Network members have been prominent contributors to our some of our cultural and religious events such as Black History Month, South Asian Heritage Month, Windrush Day, Ramadan and Eid. We are immensely proud of our Race Equality Action Leaders (REAL) staff network, and we will continue to do what we can to support it with the resources it requires to thrive and participate and with the executive sponsorship of our Deputy Chief Executive, Brian Dow.

Our anti-racism plans have been supported with investment by the setting up of an Equity, Inclusion and Involvement Team. We have elevated the original Associate Director for Race Equality role into a permanent role of Director of Equity, Inclusion and Involvement, who is part of our new Directors Group and supported by a team of five, including an excellent Head of Equity and Racial Justice. The new Director's portfolio includes Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework and our lived experience governance forums: Lived Experience Advisory Board and Carers Advisory Board, including improving the ethnic and other diverse representation on those key strategic boards to further support our mental health influencing, policies and services.

Anti-Racist Employer

We are clear that inclusive recruitment is a fundamental part of our aim to be an anti-racist employer and is one of the key actions in our Race Equality Action Plan. Due to internal, complex projects on pay and rewards and a restructure of the People and Organisational Development department , we know that have not been able to make the systems changes into our inclusive recruitment practices that we had envisaged. Now that we have completed these complex projects our People and Organisational Development department have prioritised developing a comprehensive People Strategy which will include delivery plans on employer brand and inclusive recruitment.

And, as a result of our efforts, we can see improvements which are taking us in the right direction on improving the ethnic diversity of our workforce. We are encouraged that our overall ethnic minority workforce has increased over the last three years from 11% in 2021 to 15% in 2023.

Overall Workforce, Ethnic Minority Diversity:

2023 **15%**

2022 **14%**

2021 **11%**
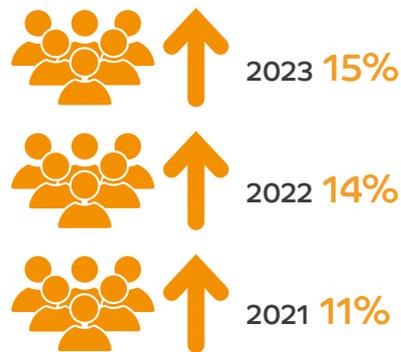
We are also encouraged with increased representation on our Board of Trustees and our Senior Leadership Team (SLT).[11] We have recruited a new Executive Director for Corporate Resources and have made two promotions to Director and one appointment at Associate Director, which has increased the ethnic diversity of our SLT. This contrasts to where we were in 2021 and 2022 where we had no ethnic minority representation in our Executive Team and, in 2021, with no ethnic minority representation at Associate Director level. We know that we still have more work to do but these numbers show that we are achieving the results we want to see in improvements to the ethnic diversity at senior levels in the organisation.

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11   People and governance (rethink.org)

Senior Leadership Team, Ethnic Minority Diversity:

2023
Executive Team: **25%**

Directors and Associate Directors: **11%**

2022
Executive Team: **0%**
Associate Directors: **13%**

2021
Executive Team: **0%**
Associate Directors: **0%**

NB: Since August 2023, the charity restructured its senior leadership team as follows: Executive Team, Directors Team and Associate Directors

We are similarly encouraged by the increased ethnic diversity in our 'Head of' and Manager pools since 2021 although representation at 'Head of' has remained static between 2022 and 2023 and, more disappointingly, we had a 1% decrease in the ethnic minority representation in our Manager pool in 2023. Ethnic minority representation in our frontline and administrative grades increased by 4% since 2021 from 12% to 16% in 2023.

Heads of and Managers, Ethnic Minority Diversity:

2023
Heads of: **15%**
Managers: **14%**

2022
Heads of: **15%**
Managers: **15%**

2021
Heads of: **12%**
Managers: **9%**

Frontline and Admin, Ethnic Minority Diversity:

2023
Frontline/Admin: **16%**
Auxiliary: **0%**

2022
Frontline/Admin: **15%**

2021
Frontline/Admin: **12%**

We will intensify our efforts to ensure that we maintain our gains and close the gaps in our ethnic minority representation where we need to at all levels in our workforce. We will continue to collect this ethnicity workforce data (and for other protected characteristics) to support our aims on inclusive recruitment and diversity. Our Occupational Development and Equality Diversity and Inclusion teams are working closely on new diversity targets on ethnicity and other protected characteristics to help us achieve our aspirations on making our workforce more representative of the diverse communities in the UK.

Our Senior Leadership Team and members of our Race Equality Action Leaders staff network took part in our Mutual Mentoring 'Discovery' Programme. We are pleased that these co-mentors enthusiastically participated in the programme to make it the overall success it was. We are especially thankful to the ethnic minority co-mentors for their time and sharing their lived experience.

Mutual mentoring is a collaborative, non-hierarchal developmental relationship where both parties are responsible for mentoring and actively supporting each other's development. It combines the key elements of traditional mentoring (junior mentee seeks advice and support from a senior mentor) and reverse mentoring (the senior person receives mentoring from the more junior person in the mentoring relationship). In mutual mentoring, the two participants come together as equals (co-mentors) to share their lived experiences and learn from and with each other in a mutually supportive and developmental process.

We wanted to break down the hierarchy which normally exists in mentoring programmes so that the co-mentors entered the learning experience as equals to share their expertise for the benefit of each other based on the notion of mutuality.

Our mutual mentoring programme ran for six months from January to June 2023 (some of the pairings completed the programme in October 2023). The two main objectives of the programme were to strengthen understanding among our (overwhelmingly white) Executive, Director and Associate Director groups of the lived experience and insights of the ethnic minority co-mentors and provide the ethnic minority co-mentors with career mentoring and advice through conversation and career plans. There were three briefing sessions with the participants - at the beginning, middle and end of the programme and the participants were supported with a comprehensive mutual mentoring toolkit. The evaluation shows that it was a mostly positive and unique experience for the participants as shown by a selection of the feedback from some of the co-mentors:

"My co-mentor and I have a lot of common ground and good synergy. Relationship is developing organically but at the moment it isn't a mutual mentoring relationship. My co-mentor is helping me with our career conversations, and I am keen to help them on EDI and anti-racism."

"I was sceptical about mentoring someone in a more senior position than me, but the sessions have been really good and have helped bridged the gap in terms of seniority. Sessions have made me think about my personal development which I'd never thought about before and inclusive leadership and what this means to me."

"The programme has been a really valuable experience so far, especially for someone who is relatively new to Rethink Mental Illness. It has been a really good opportunity for me to learn more about career progression within the organisation with someone I likely have not crossed paths with outside of the mutual mentoring programme."

"We have discussed race and privilege, and this is something that has resonated with me from my past career experience in other organisations."

The challenge for the charity (and rightly raised by the REAL network co-mentors) is what we need to do to help the ethnic minority co-mentors who participated in the mutual mentoring programme develop and sustain career development. We will develop and rollout positive action interventions for our REAL network with a focus on building leadership skills and a mindset of continuous improvement and self-development. These interventions will include mentoring circles with external guest speakers, who will share how they navigated their careers and overcame barriers as well as other topics chosen by the REAL network. We are developing a digital mentoring platform, which will be hosted on intranet (Workplace) for our staff networks, where they can access mentoring to support their professional and personal development.

Our Learning, Organisational Development and Engagement and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) teams worked together to design and deliver training on diversity, race, privilege, inclusive leadership and plans to become a truly anti-racist organisation to colleagues at all levels, including our Trustees, Executive Team, Directors and Associate Directors and frontline managers. Our challenge is to build a system of sustained continuous learning, training and access to EDI and anti-racist resources at an individual and organisational level. We have created and posted 'Bite Size' videos and other resources on our intranet (Workplace) on topics such as anti-racism; microaggressions; language guides, cultural and religious events and other areas to support colleagues' awareness and understanding of what it means to be anti-racist. These learning resources have been well received.

We will launch our Equity and Inclusion Roadmap in the Summer of 2024. The roadmap has been developed in consultation with our staff networks and Equity and Inclusion Practice Forum in setting out our practical EDI blueprint to further help us create a diverse, inclusive and anti-racist organisation with a focus on diverse representation, inclusion, underserved communities and accountability and will be delivered through our Staff Network Action Plans (Gender, LGBTQIA+ and Disability) and our Race Equality Action Plan.

Rethink Mental Illness Staff Neworks

Race Equality Action Leaders Network

Pride and Progress Staff Network

Gender Equality Staff Network

Ability Inclusion Staff Network

Anti-Racist Campaigner

We recognise that racialised communities, particularly Black communities, have been subject to disproportionate and adverse inequalities in their access, experience and outcomes in mental health services in the UK for far too long.

As a leading national mental health charity, we are committed to tackling this inequity by using our influence and reach through our policy and campaigning. We are encouraged by the progress we have made but are nonetheless aware that there is still a long way to go. We provided both written and oral submissions with recommendations that were accepted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Draft Mental Health Bill[12] to include our proposals on tackling mental health inequalities in their pre-legislative report on the draft legislation. Our recommendations included:

- A statutory right to culturally appropriate advocacy[13] and help people effectively advocate for the mental health care and treatment they need.

- A statutory right to an advance statement[14], which we know from evidence particularly supports people from minoritised communities; and

- Abolishing Community Treatment Orders[15] which we know that Black people are 11 times more likely to be placed on when they are discharged from hospital. We have called for an alternative non-coercive model to provide care to everyone who is discharged from hospital.

12   Draft Mental Health Bill 2022 - Joint Committee on the Draft Mental Health Bill (parliament.uk)
13   Culturally Appropriate Advocacy - Gaddum
14   Planning for your care - Advance statements and advance decisions (rethink.org)
15   Our position on Community Treatment Orders (CTOs) (rethink.org)

We are working with the North West London Integrated Care Board and the UK Association of Black Psychologists to deliver a project with Emotional Emancipation Circles to a cohort of 12 to 14 young Black men between the ages of 16 to 36. The project will focus on Black Male suicide prevention and the determinants of why young Black men are more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act. The evidence-based outcomes with its clear recommendations, co-produced with the cohort, will help strengthen our policy work, campaigning and influencing on tackling mental health inequalities in Black and minority communities.

The charity has worked with a range of partners such as Mind, Centre for Mental Health, Black Thrive and Ubele to co-produce a Black Mental Health Manifesto. The manifesto seeks to address structural change which must be actioned to close the inequality gap for Black people within mental health services in England. It sets out specific demands that we believe need to be taken by government, commissioners, local service providers, practitioners, educational institutions, voluntary, community or social enterprise organisation (VCSEs) and others to work together to improve the mental health access, treatment and outcomes for Black people by focusing on the six demands in the manifesto:

- The Government should develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to eradicate racism from society and appoint a cabinet level minister to oversee this.

- The next government must prioritise the reform of the Mental Health Act, 1983.

- The Department of Health and Social Care should actively fund and co-design social prescribing approach to mental health in Black communities.

- All NHS Trusts, voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE) and mental health service providers should embed the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF) by March 2025.

- The Department of Education should work with racialised communities to develop and embed an anti-racist and diverse curriculum that incorporates the histories adn contributions of all racialised communities in the UK.

- Policymakers, academic institutions, and funders should actively invest in and engage with community research conducted by and for Black communities in a meaningful way.

We are working with these partners to launch the Black Mental Health Manifesto in the Summer of 2024. Through our various social medium platforms, we proactively and publicly comment on cases where there is a clear intersection between racial injustice and severe mental illness. For example, in cases where Black men have tragically lost their lives following police contact when experiencing a mental health crisis. We have also discussed with key stakeholders such as the Home Office and the Independent Office for Police Conduct to explore how we can work together to support the police to better manage situations where mental health is a key factor.

Anti-Racist Service Provider

There are longstanding and unacceptable inequalities faced by racialised communities in their access to and experience of mental health services.

Our Evidence and Impact team have worked hard to improve the collection and evaluation of our service user data. This will enable us to better understand who is using our mental health services, remove barriers to access and adapt our service delivery to meet the needs of Black and racially minoritised communities. We have come a long way in collecting the protected characteristics of our service users. The collection of our data was inconsistent with data missing in some areas.

We took an organisational-wide drive to improve the recording of protected characteristics of our service users. Our new service user data collections show the wide range of the different demographics of our service users. But it also shows that we have much more to do to close the gaps in the missing data in the system, particularly the gaps in the collection of our ethnic minority data where are missing 54% of service users. We are taking steps to address this by creating resources and guidance to improve the capability of our operations so that we can improve the data collection of our ethnic minority service users and other protected characteristics. We will build on the improvements to this data collection so that it becomes an integrated part of our Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF) development and delivery so that we can co-produce equitable improvements to our mental health service provision. We will create a complex data model to forecast trends on the protected characteristics of our service users. This will improve our capability to identify specific populations of underrepresented communities in our services and strengthen the development of our PCREF implementation plans.

As part of Birmingham City Council's Neighbourhood Network Schemes, the charity was commissioned to carry out a gap analysis by engaging with the Birmingham's Gypsy Roma and Traveller Communities and other key stakeholders. The goal was to identify community strengths alongside the sort of activities and support they would like to see to enable them to live happy, healthy lives in their own homes and communities. The gap analysis shows that the health status of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities is considerably poorer than other English speaking minority ethnic groups.

This is attributed to poor accommodation, poor access to health services and education, discrimination and a lack of understanding of the needs of Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers by health professionals. Our recommendations have included priorities for small grant funding and capacity building activity and regular engagement with the working group. The gap analysis also showed that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities experience high levels of racism and discrimination and are often stigmatised because of their identity. This highlighted that we do need to do more work in this area across the organisation to tackle these issues affecting these communities.

We are building close partnership-working with key external stakeholders such as the Care Quality Commission and NHS North West London Integrated Care Board. This will be key to supporting our implementation of PCREF, embedding our anti-racist service provision to produce equality of access and outcomes for racialised service users and meeting our statutory obligations under equalities and human rights legislation as a mental health service provider. This will require the involvement of service users and carers from racially diverse communities to help us understand what we need to do to achieve our mental health equality objectives. The work that we are doing to improve the diversity of our Lived Experience Advisory Board, Carers Advisory Board and in our regional model is critical to this.

Looking Ahead

This Anti-Racism Progress Report has provided an update on what we have done and what we want to do. We are encouraged by the feedback from our Black and ethnic minority colleagues, external partners and stakeholders on the progress we have made and who have helped to keep us on track. In truth, we will always be striving to be a truly anti-racist organisation because the work in this crucial area is never complete. It is a continuous, iterative process of change, requiring adjustment and particularly against external challenges.

We are not and can never be complacent. We see the 'anti-woke' challenges and criticisms directed at EDI and anti-racism, but we will not be deterred. We are clear as to why we made a commitment to anti-racism. It was the right thing to do then and remains so now. We will continue to work with a particular focus on implementing PCREF for our diverse workforce and service users.

We look forward to presenting our next This Anti-Racism Progress Report in 2025 where we hope that we will be able to highlight the continued, positive progress we have made to become a truly anti-racist, employer, campaigning organisation and service provider.

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**For further information
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