

Deeds Not Words

A pledge to end racial equality in housing



Baseline Snapshot

Nov 2020 – Feb 2021

**Deeds Not
Words**



Background

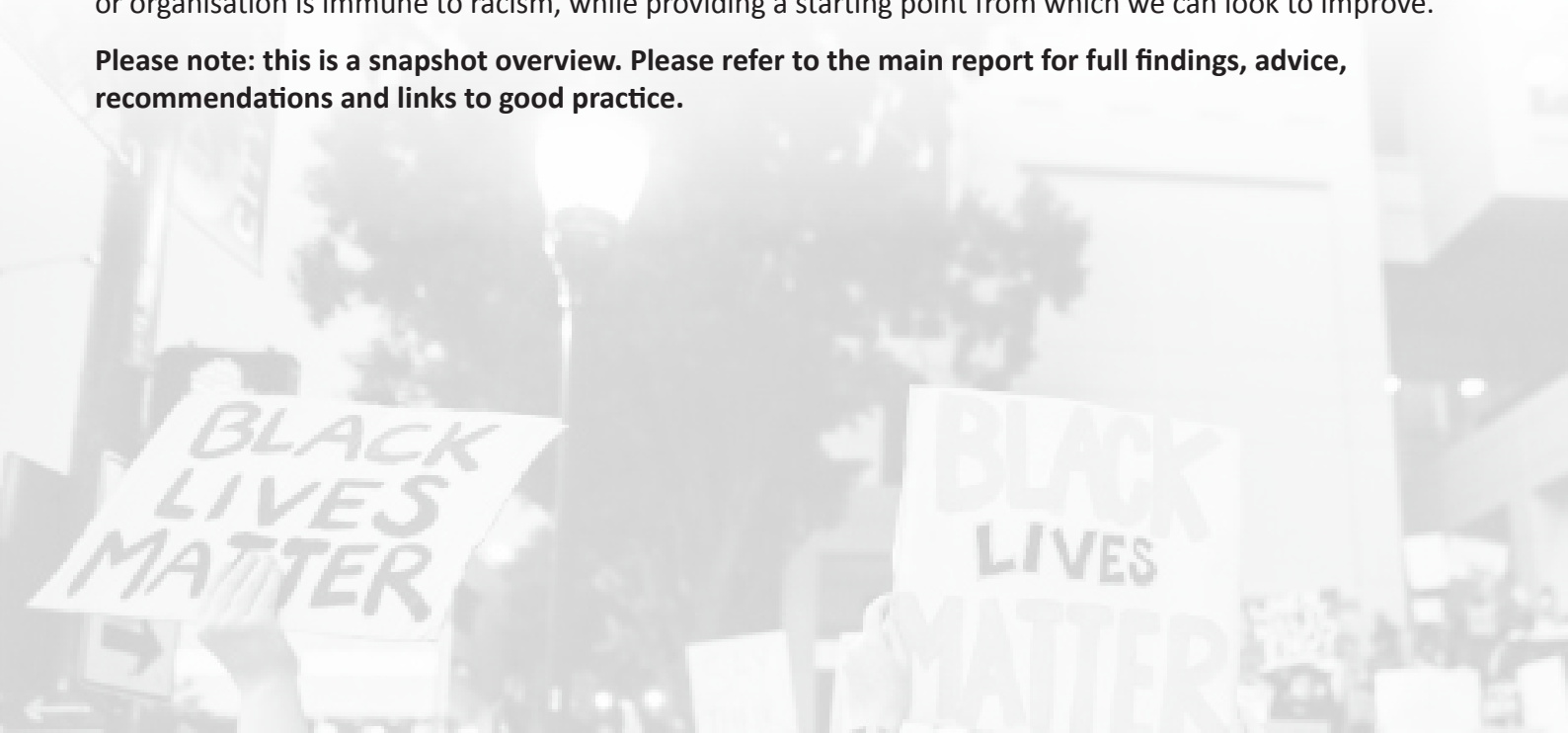
Below is a snapshot of findings, recommendations and suggestions for action from the Deeds not Words Baseline Report into race equality in organisations participating in the initiative. The report was based on the evidence from a survey of over 830 employees working in housing organisations signed up to **Deeds not Words** and evidence from organisations taking part in the initiative.

When we launched the race equality challenge in 2020, Tai Pawb and participating organisations, committed to obtaining a baseline for measuring progress of Deeds not Words with the organisations which signed up to the initiative.

The report reflects the strong commitment from Deeds not Words organisations to an open and honest reflection on where we are on race equality in housing at the beginning of our journey – a baseline from which we can start to measure the challenge, the effectiveness of our actions and the progress made in the next 5 years.

The evidence presented in the report marks the beginning of a 5-year journey. It presents evidence of extensive work, commitment, positive efforts and leadership shown in many organisations while also painting a challenging but honest picture of where we are now. The evidence clearly shows that no sector or organisation is immune to racism, while providing a starting point from which we can look to improve.

Please note: this is a snapshot overview. Please refer to the main report for full findings, advice, recommendations and links to good practice.



Key findings | Employees

Fewer people of colour felt that they **belonged in their organisations, much fewer felt so strongly and much more felt undecided** compared to white British colleagues.

On average, a sense of belonging for all employees taken together was much higher than indicated by other research on this topic, with up to 3% of all people feeling like they did not belong ².

Nearly **a third** of people of colour often worried about **not having things in common** with others in their organisations, compared **to a tenth** of white British employees.

Fewer people of colour than their white British colleagues felt able to **voice contrary opinions and speak up**, with their views valued and no fear of negative consequences.

Fewer people of colour & white Europeans felt respected and valued by their teammates. There were no major racial or ethnic differences in whether people felt **respected and valued** by their managers.

Nearly all people of all races thought that race equality and diversity **was important** to them.

A third of people of colour did not know whether racial equality and diversity was important to their managers and senior leaders compared to only **one tenth** of white colleagues.

There were very small differences in views on fairness in promotion decisions, performance evaluation and development opportunities between different races and ethnicities. Large proportions of all respondents were undecided in their views on fairness in promotion, performance and development (27 to 47%).

In the past year **1 in 9 people of colour** stated that they experienced racist treatment from colleagues, compared to **1 in 100** white British employees. In the past three years **1 in 9** people of colour and **1 in 14** white European employees experienced racism/xenophobia from colleagues, compared to **1 in 100** of white British people.

White British and European colleagues had much more positive view of how accessible their organisations' services are, than their counterparts from black, Asian or mixed heritage backgrounds. While only 3% of white British colleagues thought the accessibility of their organisation's services for ethnic minority people was poor or very poor, 16% of people of colour had that view.

There is a clear indication that Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, and Deeds not Words have increased organisational consciousness of race issues and sparked work towards change. Despite some of the continuing challenges described in this report, it is evident that there are many positive efforts, good practice, leadership and commitment in organisations: from smallest changes and adjustments to leadership and strategy.

While some organisations have raced ahead with planning and implementation of their Deeds not Words commitments, some colleagues were disappointed with little movement from commitment, aspiration and conversations to planning and action.

Key findings | Organisations

Covid-19: All organisations were either using a **COVID-19 risk assessment tool** that takes account of ethnicity or were planning to incorporate it into existing practices. The vast majority of respondents stated that they have been or were offering support to ethnic minority staff. However, almost **a fifth** said they are not.

Overcrowding: When asked about investigating and addressing overcrowding, **majority** of stock-holding organisations said they had either investigated/were investigating (43.5%) or would do in the future (39%). However **4 organisations** (17%) said they had not and did not specify that they are planning to do so.

Diversity: The racial diversity across different levels of staff is **low across most roles**, the lowest average being for **'other managers'** (0.6%) followed by **senior management** (3.7%), non-managerial roles (4.4%) and board members (5.5%). **4.9% of staff** as a whole were from black, Asian or ethnic minority backgrounds. Two organisations said 25% or more board members were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Two organisations said 20% or more of their staff were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Unconscious bias: Almost two-thirds of organisations indicated that 25% or fewer staff had been trained in unconscious bias. **Five organisations** said that 75% or more staff had been trained.

Recruitment panels: Many organisations were actively working **on increasing racial diversity** on recruitment panels. This included some creative thinking and, at times, working with external partners.

Communication and accountability: **Two thirds** of organisations had already published an initial statement on race equality or anti-racism, with **a fifth** planning to do so. Only **two thirds** of organisations had issued information on specific race equality challenges or areas of focus for the organisation with **three quarters of organisations** outlining specific actions they would take.

Data: Use of ethnicity data was limited. Although **three quarters** of organisations used ethnicity data to varying degrees, **a quarter** did not use ethnicity data at all. Only **a fifth** of all organisations used other insight channels (e.g. engagement to inform service delivery or feedback).

Engagement: **Half** of organisations said they had worked with ethnic minority community groups in their area and provided some examples (these are provided in the report). However, more than **40 per cent** said they had not, with **7%** unaware of these links.

Housing refugees: Most organisations said they didn't work in dispersal areas, but in cases where organisations did (two thirds) some provided an insight into their current practice. **A quarter** of organisations in dispersal areas did not have links with refugee organisations. Several referred to Syrian Resettlement Scheme (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme) and others provided **great examples** of providing housing through partnerships with one organisation leasing housing to a refugee organisation.

Anti-racist culture: Nearly **one third** of organisations self-reported that they actively promoted inclusive and anti-racist culture 'to a great extent or 'considerably' while almost half said they had done so 'moderately' and **a quarter** reporting 'slightly'.

Governance: **One in ten** boards responding have reported scrutinising race equality issues ‘to a great extent’ or ‘considerably’. **One in ten** boards have not scrutinised race equality issues at all. **40%** of boards scrutinised the issues to a moderate extent, with similar percentage of those who scrutinised to a slight extent.

Early practice: The survey was undertaken in the first few months of the initiative and it is clear that many organisations were in the **early stages** of their anti-racism work, however several organisations scaled up and moved beyond engagement and conversations early on. Pockets of good practice have been highlighted throughout this report.



What can we do? |

Advice and recommendations

Belonging and inclusion

Prevention is better than cure, therefore preventing racial exclusion from happening is the best way forward, however, as highlighted in the report – exclusion is real and already there therefore conscious effort is required to tackle it. When focusing on belonging and inclusion, it is important to acknowledge two dimensions of any approaches: how to prevent exclusion and how to support colleagues who might feel excluded and involved them in developing solutions and influencing change. Ultimately no one can make people feel like they belong if the culture of the organisation does not acknowledge its own failures or blind spots. Our report contains the following suggestions for action (check the report for more detail):

- Be deliberate in your action
- Measure inclusion & listen
- Bring people together
- Support mutual mentoring and coaching
- Develop managers' skills and confidence in discussing and tackling racism
- Support meaningful training and education:
- Take time to include everyone
- Encourage allyship
- Support employee networks
- Reflect on your vision and values
- Check your assumptions
- Check latest research
- Adopt a framework

Performance & Career

Deeds not Words includes pledges related to increasing diversity in recruitment and progression within organisations. It is important to further explore and implement the below opportunities for increasing racial diversity, opportunities and equal outcomes in these areas.

- Measure diversity & engage
- Support mutual mentoring and coaching
- Target recruitment and development
- Develop inclusive culture (see above)
- Tackle bias
- Be clear and transparent on progression and development routes
- Make it strategic

Experiences of racism

There is nothing novel that can be said about approaches to tackling racism shared by colleagues in this report. What is really needed is a concerted effort to embed a zero-tolerance approach to racism while recognising the need for proactive discussion, monitoring and support:

- Prevent racism from occurring (with the understanding of the many forms in which racism occurs from the more subtle forms of exclusion, through unintended consequences of policies, racist ‘banter’ all the way to overt forms of racist behaviours)
- Challenge racism when it occurs
- Enable colleagues to report it and support them
- Enact consequences for those who perpetrate it
- Measure experiences and ask the right questions
- Provide colleagues with confidence and skills to challenge discriminatory views and hold respectful discussions

Yet, there are some themes from this research, our conversations with Deeds not Words panel and our own work with organisations which those responsible should pay particular attention to and take action (please refer to the report for more detail):

- It is not a rouge minority issue
- Avoid defeatism
- Learn how to challenge
- Encourage and support reporting
- Zero-tolerance does not mean ‘no discussion’
- Check your assumptions

Strengths and weaknesses

Many of the comments and views shared by colleagues on organisational strengths and weaknesses provide the answers organisations need. There was certainly no scarcity of ideas and suggestions. We would encourage organisations to engage with these views, and hone on the ideas and challenges laid by colleagues. (please refer to the report for more detail):

- Use ideas already there
- Use existing solutions
- Engage with ideas from black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues
- Define inclusive service and work towards achieving it
- Understand why racial equality is important
- in areas of low diversity
- Move from words to deeds
- Learn from other Deeds not Words organisations
- Have a clear strategic governance approach
- Get the data and use it
- Invest time into building relationships

Employees' good practice examples

Despite some of the continuing challenges described in this report, it is evident that there are many positive efforts, fantastic work, leadership and commitment in the sector: from smallest changes and adjustments to leadership and strategy. We asked colleagues to share what they thought their organisations did particularly well in relation to race equality and the report contains great examples of:

- Inclusive leadership and culture
- Conversations for change and engagement
- Improving data and insight
- Inclusive and targeted services
- Targetted recruitment
- Action Planning
- Awareness, learning and celebration

Employees' own recommendations

We asked colleagues to share what they thought needed to improve in their organisations on race equality issues. Colleagues of all races and ethnicities shared their thoughts here, many of them chimed with other recommendations in this report. Key areas where colleagues thought improvement was needed are below. Please refer to the main report for more detail:

- Clearer approach to race equality in non-diverse areas
- Better governance and leadership
- Better Deeds not Words implementation
- Better engagement
- More focus on inclusive and anti-racist values and culture
- Better communication and accessibility
- More diversity in recruitment
- Better data and insight
- Higher awareness and improved learning

Other organisational recommendations

- Consider and learn from suggestions for action presented in the above sections, including: fostering greater sense of belonging and inclusion, supporting fair performance and career opportunities, tackling racist behaviours, inclusive services and learning from employees' recommendations.
- Ensure formal or informal support is available to colleagues affected by increased risks of COVID-19. As vaccinations reduce the risks, organisations may want to further consider the racial equality impacts of indirect effects of Covid-19, e.g. new ways of working and financial fallout.
- Organisations which have not already done so, should revisit their commitments on overcrowding
- Use diversity data to increase racial and ethnic diversity at underrepresented levels as a strategic priority overseen by boards. Those organisations which did not have data should prioritise collection and analysis. Learn from the advice and good practice presented in this report and elsewhere.
- Plan for training all staff in unconscious bias. Bias training can at times be part of other training packages. Organisations should also consider training, sessions, raising awareness on other topics such as white privilege, microaggressions, how to challenge and hold conversations and specific session for people of colour wishing to explore their experiences.

- Continue on the journey to increase diversity on recruitment panels. Examples presented in the report can help explore options. Organisations should carefully consider how to avoid tokenism when adopting this practice.
- Publishing anti-racist statement, information on challenges and actions to address them forms part of the Deeds Not Words pledge. We recommend that all organisations look to publish these in keeping with the commitment. Where organisations were still working on gathering information and analysing the state of racial equality in some areas, and therefore felt unable to publish, we would encourage them to simply provide information on the work they were doing in conducting their analysis and engagement, which is an action in itself.
- Improve ethnicity (and other diversity) data collection and analysis as well as other forms of ascertaining views and feedback from black, Asian and ethnic minority tenants, service users and communities. Improvement in this area is crucial to consider and ensure equitable experiences, access or outcomes from services between different groups are fair.
- Undertake an audit of what black, Asian and ethnic minority community groups/organisations exist within their area of operation with a view to reaching out to under-represented groups.
- All organisations working in asylum dispersal areas should consider how they can provide support and accommodation as per Deeds not Words pledge.
- Organisations, led by boards and senior leaders, should use this report (and other available tools/resources) to a) define what inclusive and anti-racist culture means in their organisation b) assess where they are on the journey to achieving it c) create smart plans for how this is going to be achieved and d) monitor and scrutinise the adoption.
- Boards to actively scrutinise race equality issues by adopting the CHC Code of Governance and introducing a strong leadership, performance, assurance and accountability framework on race equality and broader equality, diversity, and inclusion issues.

