

Appendix 2



Guidance for Chairs, Members and Officers: Talking about racial inequality

Aim: The aim of this document is to provide Chairs, Members and Officers guidance on how to talk about diversity and racism in a way which is respectful and sensitive, avoiding racist slurs or microaggressions, particularly during formal committee meetings at the City of London Corporation.

Background: The Tackling Racism Taskforce, set up in June 2020 following the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests, aims to consider whether any action could be taken to tackle racism. Whilst the importance of more conversations about diversity in relation to race is recognised, it is also acknowledged that these conversations can be highly emotive, hurtful and, sometimes, racist.

Definition of racism: The Taskforce have agreed to adopt the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's definition of racism as *"when you are treated differently because of your race in one of the situations covered by the Equality Act. The treatment could be a one-off action or as a result of a rule or policy based on race. It doesn't have to be intentional to be unlawful."*

Some tips to get you started:



1. Listen!

If you have not personally experienced prejudice and racism in the UK, and/or are not from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background, do not assume you know how it feels or what the experiences of BAME people might be. Ask questions and be curious. Take direction and learn from colleagues of BAME background.



2. Educate yourself.

If you have not personally experienced prejudice and racism in the UK, you might not realise that a number of our colleagues from BAME backgrounds are tired and drained from explaining their hurt and defending their pain and trauma. Remember that someone's ethnicity is not always obvious.

You can take responsibility for educating yourself on the issues facing BAME people. There are a number of resources, which may help you to see things from a different point of view, such as *Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge or *So you want to talk about race* by Ijeoma Olu, as well as many others.



3. Think, before you speak...

It is right and encouraged that people of all ethnic backgrounds contribute to the discussion of tackling racism. It is not just an issue for those who have

suffered it to deal with – we all have a duty to play our part in the fight against racism. However, before you speak, think:

- a) Is what I am about to say accurate and relevant to the discussion?
- b) If I were of a different ethnic background, would I feel encouraged and respected by what I am about to say?
- c) Am I being influenced by pre-conceived generalisations, prejudices and stereotypes in what I am about to say?
- d) Is it necessary for me to quote racist terms to explain a point? Might these racist terms alone trigger traumatic memories for those listening?



4. **Speak out!**

Talking about racial inequality is difficult. But don't be silent on the topic. The fear of saying the wrong thing often keeps people from wanting to engage in a discussion about race and equality in the first place. Start by acknowledging that this is a difficult conversation and setting out why you want to have it (e.g. to understand, to solve a problem).

If, during the course of a committee meeting, you feel that someone has said something which is racist, hostile or offensive, you will want to consider how you respond. If you are the Chair of that meeting, there is a particular onus on you to shut down conversations that are offensive. You could interrupt and calmly state that you disagree with that language and that the conversation now move on. Members and officers should also feel empowered to challenge offensive language or racist behaviour. However, shaming or accusing the individual is unlikely to change the behaviour but cause defensiveness. You might feel a better course of action is to privately message the Chair and explain your concerns. The Chair, if they agree, can then respond to the individual and stop any further discussion.

Some problematic phrases used when talking about racial inequality

- **"I don't see colour"** - "When you say, 'You don't see colour,' that [can be] offensive to people of colour," Dr. Lorenzo Boyd, associate professor of criminal justice and assistant provost of diversity and inclusion at the University of New Haven said. "Because you are reducing major parts of their characteristics and their culture to nothingness."
- **"All Lives Matter"** - Boyd explained, "When I say 'Black Lives Matter' and somebody else says 'Blue Lives Matter' or 'All Lives Matter,' to me that's akin to going into a cancer hospital and screaming out, 'You know there are other diseases too.' "
- **"My life was hard too"** – If you have not personally experienced prejudice and racism in the UK, that "does not mean your life is not hard. It means that your race is not one of the things that makes it hard," Dr. Amanda Taylor, senior adjunct professorial lecturer, School of International Service at American University explained.
- **"Where are you from?"** – "Simply put, this question is alienating. You are implying that I couldn't possibly be from Britain, so you need to know where I really come from." While it is often used as a simple and courteous ice-breaker, be aware that it is also sometimes used as a coded way of implying a person does not belong.